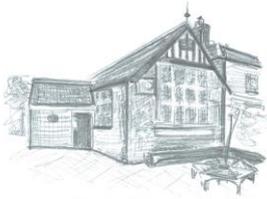


Havering-atte-Bower Heritage Walk

Introduction

This is a short walk, more a series of short walks out from the village green and back (so you will never be more than about 10 minutes from the green), to view the very large number of historic and other interesting aspects of a village first inhabited at least 1500 years and probably more than 2000 years ago. Start from the village green, put your back to the church, turn to the left which is to the North and walk down **North Road** for 200 yards past The Royal Oak to the village school.



Dame Tipping School, founded by Dame Tipping of Pyrgo and in 1724 according to the inscription on the school wall, remains a traditional village school, originally serving children of all ages but now just those up to the age of 11.

Dame Ann Tipping inherited the estate of Pyrgo from her father, Colonel, Sir Thomas Cheek of Pyrgo, Governor of the Tower of London in the Reign of King Charles II. In her will, Dame Ann provided for a charge of £10 per annum on the Pyrgo estate for the perpetual education of 20 poor children, boys and girls. The first school was held on The Green, close to the Vicarage. It is probable that the vicar was also the schoolmaster. In 1791 it is recorded that “John Fosbrook M.A. is master of the free school and perpetual curate of Havering-atte-Bower”.

In 1818, because the school was dilapidated, it was pulled down. However, in 1837 an enthusiastic new vicar started a fund to rebuild the school. He set up a public subscription list and took collections in Church. School records show that the contributors to the rebuilding fund not only included local dignitaries and landowners, but also the young Queen Victoria and the Queen Dowager, Adelaide, widow of William IV. The school was rebuilt, probably on its present site in North Road, next to Ivy Holt.

The new school opened on 2nd October 1837. Around 1874, an Infant School was held separately in a cottage on ‘The Green’ but this was amalgamated with the main school in 1880. The school was considerably enlarged in 1891, the building you see now, when it provided education for one hundred and twenty six local children.

Coming back up the hill and on the right, **Ivy Holt** is a double pile (a technical term meaning two rooms deep) house built in the early 19th century. It displays a most elegant facade with a pretty and functional arcade canopy. Although she may have lived in an earlier building on the same site, the house is known as the home of Elizabeth Balls, known as ‘The Goat Woman of Havering-atte-Bower’. In 1814 she kept 32 goats; in the following year she shared her home with 14 goats, 2 sheep, 17 fowls and a French dog. The ‘travel guides’ of the day emphasised that she was a ‘gentlewoman’. She kept a horse and a little cart in which she drove herself to Romford to buy hay for the goats. Somewhat reclusive, she only allowed one person into her home, about twice a year, in order to clean up after her extended animal family.



A newspaper article in the 1950s reported a motorist sighting a ghostly apparition of goats crossing North Road near Ivy Holt and that a strong smell of goats still permeated the walls and ground floor of the house.

The Royal Oak pub, slightly further up on the same side, first licensed in 1744 but given up in 1792, was reopened in about 1920 and has been at the centre of village life ever since. Since 2003, it has also incorporated an Indian restaurant, a great benefit for the village community who do not have to drive to have a meal out. You will find the staff most hospitable and willing to provide you with a great variety of dishes, including many that may not be on the menu officially. The space for the restaurant has been sensitively incorporated into the original pub building.



Within the bar of the pub itself are many fascinating photographs from the village's past. The walk will finish back on The Green so you can refresh yourself while viewing the pictures and, if you are really early, you can have breakfast there, too.

Approaching **The Village Green**, on the right hand side is an interesting row of houses and businesses, the timber framed buildings dating from the late 18th Century. On the corner was the blacksmith's workshop. The last incumbent was



Con Rowland, a great village character. Con doubled up as village postman but, well oiled with drink, not all the letters reached their destination without mishap! His son, Derek, who is a historian



and has written a book about the village, lived in the house till recently. Next door and facing the green used to be Knightbridge the butcher. Established in 1875, a butcher of the highest quality with slaughterhouse at the rear, customers travelled from far and wide.

Sadly, when the time came for the brothers to retire, modern health and safety requirements made it no longer practical to maintain a slaughterhouse in this location. After a short time as a craft shop and tea room, the building is now a private home as, indeed, is every one of the remainder of the buildings around the village green with the exception of the church, church hall and St Francis Hospice.

Turning now to look at **St Francis Hospice** across the road, you will first notice the well-built yellow brick wall which passes right through the middle of the pond, known in recent times as the ducking pond but evidence for which has not yet been unearthed. Behind the wall, the hospice administrative offices are now housed in the Victorian mansion which was constructed in 1858/1859 replacing an earlier L shaped house on the site. It was last a home in 1975 when it was purchased by St Francis Hospice. New buildings were constructed adjacent to the original structure. The garden still has examples of many fine trees. From the green one can see three huge London planes just to the left of the building and towering over it and two more nearer to you. Beside those three plane trees, but rather well hidden, is the 400 year old cork tree. There are also three old and substantial sweet chestnut trees, tall as well but with quite gnarled trunks and branches. Just poking above the wall is a recently planted monkey puzzle tree while on the corner by the road junction is a dark green evergreen bay tree – bay leaves being lovely for flavouring new potatoes.

Walk to the Southern end of the hospice wall and turn into **Broxhill Road**. The views South are some of the finest anywhere in Essex or London. On a clear day, you may see the Dartford Bridge on the horizon at the left, the river Thames in the distance – and occasionally a tall ship on it – Shooters Hill in South London then further to the right the Millennium dome (O2) before coming to the pyramidally topped Canary Wharf. As you walk along Broxhill Road, you can see further into the city of London. Just down the hill you can see the roof of The Bower House which you will view later.

Directly opposite the Hospice and a short way down the hill is a group of bushes which surrounds a small pond. It is where water comes up as a spring and there are a great many such examples in fields all around the top of the hill. This gives a clue to the geology as the village sits on a hill with a gravel top, only some few hundred yards down the hill does the underlying clay emerge. As clay is relatively impervious, rainwater that has drained freely down through the gravel top can go no further and drains sideways till it emerges at the side of the hill. The ponds were a most vital part of farming in the past as they provided natural drinking places for livestock. The clay also allowed the installation of artesian wells in the old buildings at the top of the hill which made the village a very pleasant place to live before modern piped water supply became the norm.

The Hall, for such it was called before the days of St Francis Hospice and **The Round House** to the East of it, but hidden behind the holly hedge, were both occupied by the Pemberton, Barnes and Pemberton-Barnes family. The last occupants - Emily Ann Pemberton-Barnes (in The Hall), and the Reverend Joseph Pemberton and his sister Florence (or Amelia Florence) (in The Round House) all died before the second world war. Before, during and after the first world war, Joseph, with Florence's willing assistance, set out to breed roses. Ever mindful of his family home and the happiness of childhood, he cherished his 'Grandmother's Roses'. He set out to breed such varieties, with the intention that they should outbloom his grandmother's, most of which were finished for the season in July, by flowering as long as the winter allowed, even up to Christmas Day. He wanted roses which would survive and bloom after all around them had perished, rather than those cosseted and nursed through their sickly lives by the showmen. He originated a group of varieties which he called Hybrid Musk. They are large bushes, in bloom more or less continuously, bearing flowers of varying size and doubleness, mostly white, pale pink, and pale yellow, in gigantic clusters. His reputation is considerable.

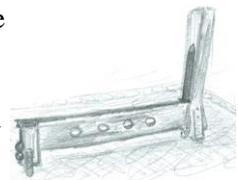
The family left a wonderful bequest which benefits the church to this day. They also provided the grounds for the village cricket club. It is interesting to note the lie of the land around the pitch. There is some evidence to indicate that this may be an ancient construction, perhaps even a fort from Iron Age or Roman times, for it is hard to imagine the Romans not living in the village with the control this would give from the high hill overlooking the main road from London through Romford to Brentwood and Colchester.

Very striking on the left hand side is the **Water Tower**, built in 1934 to give sufficient water pressure to the buildings on the hilltop. It still is a working water tower. When the land was provided by the Pemberton-Barnes family, it was a condition that it should be as you see it now, a remarkably attractive concrete structure, a landmark visible for miles around. During the war, it was used by the German bombers to guide them to and from London. As well as being the location of the air raid siren, it was used for years for radio transmissions by the armed forces.



Turning the corner comes the entrance to **Bedfords Park**. About half a mile in is the new and most excellent visitor centre, well worth a visit. It is on the site of yet another mansion, Bedfords, that was sadly demolished in the 1950s. In the park you will find a large herd of deer as well as much flora and fauna.

Return now to the village green, admiring the view as you do so. On the corner of the green are the **village stocks** which were being used in the seventeenth century and still being used in the nineteenth as a means of punishment for small time criminals. Just behind is the new **village sign**, the design of which alludes to the fabulous history of this small village. There were once **two palaces**. One, situated just at the rear of the church and used by royalty till 1638 when it became uninhabitable due, apparently, to the stench from the latrines, is perhaps correctly described as **The Royal Manor and Park** but is commonly called **Havering Palace**. The mainly timber construction was associated with late Saxon kings, particularly Edward the Confessor, who may have used it as a place of retreat. There is a legend that Edward, disturbed in his devotions by the singing of nightingales, prayed that these should be banished from the park forever.



It is written in Harold Smith's 1925 History of Havering-atte-Bower - 'From the time of Henry II (1154) at the latest, the royal manor house stood by Havering Green, with its adjacent park stretching down to the Forest.' The detailed records of the enclosed deer parks, including the payments made to named 'parkers' and foresters, make it clear that this was superb hunting land providing royal sport and patronage for successive monarchs. Timber from the park was felled and transported to London by command for various Royal projects as well as being used 'to ceil' (or panel) the royal chapel and, in 1246, to repair the king's great kitchen and stable in Havering itself.

Havering Park was a rich source for the royal larders as, in addition to deer, there are records of cattle and pigs being reared and fattened for various court functions and feast days. Gifts of bream from the King's fish-pond are also detailed in 1251.

"... In 1267 the park, manor and house of Havering were committed to Queen Eleanor (of Provence and Consort to Henry III). This begins the long connection of Havering with the Queens Consort or Dowager, which lasted down to the time of Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles I. and even later."

It is recorded that Elizabeth I made a number of visits to the royal manor house at Havering. Repairs and improvements were carried out in 1568 in preparation for one of her visits. After a west wing was added to existing medieval buildings, John Symonds produced a plan in 1578 for Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer to the Court of Elizabeth I, showing the Palace buildings stretching back from the chapel on the Western edge of the Green.. James I made quite a few visits as he loved hunting. The last recorded visit to Havering Palace by a reigning King of England, Charles I, was on October 29th-31st, 1638. By 1650 Havering Palace was reported to be a 'confused heap of old ruinous decayed buildings' though £200 was spent on repair work in 1662.

Another royal palace, **Pyrgo**, was situated in what are now fields to the North-East of the village. Indeed, the village was at that time a wonderful place, safe and healthy when London itself was far from that. In the sixteenth century, in the village at one particular time there were four children being educated who would all become king or queen of England, quite remarkable.

St John the Evangelist church was not the first on this site. The present building was built between 1876-1878. The stone is Portland and it is infilled with flints, both natural irregular whole flints and knapped (split) flints showing the black interiors of the stone. This wonderfully dense stone will remain clean and attractive almost indefinitely. The roof is, of course, slate as is that of the Hospice and several of the other buildings. If you are able to access the church, do look at the 800 year old font, the nightingales in the East Window (apparently these birds were cursed by Edward the Confessor) and the list of clergy in the sanctuary which goes back to the 13th century. You may notice some familiar names in the churchyard – Pemberton-Barnes, Pemberton and Harold Smith in particular – and also the large yew tree by the green. Yew trees are very slow growing and have often been associated with churchyards.



Come back to the village green and walk to the North along the wall, turning left at the end. Keeping alongside the churchyard you will find the **Havering Park Riding School** on the right. Havering Park was yet another mansion in the village, again demolished, with only the riding school and stables remaining. This school is at the centre of the horse riding activity for which the village is now so well known, with many, many stables providing facilities to people from the rest of the borough and beyond. There are many more horses in the village than people!



The riding school building itself dates from about 1860. Looking in from the West (it seems like it was built back to front, but it was not originally there to service the public but the mansion), the stables surround a lovely cobbled courtyard.



Walk a little further to the west and the path ahead continues into **Havering Country Park**. In the distance can be seen the towering Wellingtonia redwood trees after which the road – **Wellingtonia Avenue** – is named. However, turn left and proceed down **Elmer Avenue** along the back of the churchyard and notice the old cast iron lampposts which were reclaimed from other parts of the borough. At the end, by an entrance pillar surviving from the Havering Park estate, turn right and walk down **Orange Tree Hill** for about 400 yards till you are past the pub and can see **The Bower House** through its gateway. There is a



permissive bridleway just past and you can walk a short way along there for a better view. It was built in the Palladian style in 1729 by Henry Flitcroft, his first commission, with landscaping by Bridgeman. The stable block, which is the building that can be seen from the main entrance, may have been designed by Flitcroft or Bridgeman. Both structures are Grade 1 listed.

Returning back up Orange Tree Hill, you arrive at the **Orange Tree** pub and may well need a brief stop at this time. The original inn building dates from 1762 or earlier. The stables at the back were once a farm attached to The Bower House. Look in at the next entrance above the pub and you can see the lovely outline of the roof of the old barn.



Returning to the village green, as you reach it **Blue Boar Hall**, the village's oldest remaining building. Documented in 1710, with parts dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, it was refronted in the 19th century. It is a timber-framed house with a brick front, three windows wide, 2 storeys high. It has a larger stepped end stack on the west gable, a smaller brick stack on the front roof slope and sash windows to the front with cambered heads. Two small rear wings are also timber-framed. The building was a public house for part of the 19th century. On the left as you enter the green is a row of traditional cottages dating from around 1850.



Much more information about the history of the village can be found in the Havering Museum in Romford, the Local Studies and Family History Centre in Central Library, Romford, with other information about the village today and its community on the Havering-atte-Bower Conservation Society (HABCOS) website www.habcos.co.uk

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