

STREETWISE

The history of the streets of Strawberry Hill

Spencer Road

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Streetwise - Spencer Road

Streetwise is a history of the streets of Strawberry Hill. Strawberry Hill Residents' Association will be publishing, via its website, a series of street histories (www.shra.org.uk). They are based on research undertaken by members of SHRA, using commercially available genealogical websites, the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames Local Studies Library and other public information sources.

Abbreviations used in this document:

LBRuT: Richmond upon Thames Local Studies Library

SHRA: Strawberry Hill Residents' Association

Introduction

At first glance, Spencer Road seems like an ordinary Southwest London residential street, which indeed it is. It is interesting to local historians because all its houses were built in the three major periods of Strawberry Hill's expansion:

- Late Victorian/Edwardian: the first 16 houses are typical of large semi-detached middle-class villas, built following the improved access to the area after the construction of Strawberry Hill Station in 1873 and the later widening of the roads by London United Tramways¹. There are many roads with similar houses such as Walpole Road, Upper Grotto Road, Holmes Road, Bonser Road and Waldegrave Gardens.
- Between the wars: the availability of cheaper motor cars stimulated the construction of detached and semi-detached houses with garages. Built in the late 1920s, the southern end of the road has typical examples. More houses were probably built in Strawberry Hill in this period than in any other. Other examples include houses in Orford Gardens, Wellesley Crescent, Preston Close, Michelham Gardens and part of Pope's Grove.
- Late 20th century: terraced townhouses built in the 1970s and 1980s. Examples can be seen in Shaftesbury Way, Hollies Close, Tower Road and Hawkesley Close.

This document describes the development of each of these phases, the occupants of some of the houses and the long-drawn-out battle against the development of the West Twickenham Hard Court Club. It includes an account of the road at the time of the Second World War by Ray Manning who lived here as a boy.

Origins

The earliest known topographical record for the area is Ralph Treswell's 1607 map *'A Plott of the Whole Mannor of Sion within the County of Middx'*² (Fig 1). This shows the position of Spencer Road to be in centre of *'Twicknam South Feilde'*, just south of Hounslow Heath. There are figures on the map: horses, grazing animals and ploughing, showing that the area was in agricultural use at the time. The surface layer is Kempton Park sand and gravel, a sedimentary deposit laid down between 116 and 12 thousand years ago³ and suitable for arable farming.

The next oldest map, Moses Glover's 1635 map of the Isleworth Hundred (not shown), shows enclosed plots of land to the west, but the site of Spencer Road remains open and presumably still used for agriculture.



Fig 1: Detail from Ralph Treswell's map showing the approximate position of Spencer Road. The original map is oriented with south east at the top but it has been rotated here so that north is to the top

¹ The Making of Modern Twickenham, J. M. Lee, Historical Publications, 2005

² Present-day Twickenham lies within the bounds of the mediaeval Manor of Sion

³ British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain online map, beta version



Fig 2: Detail from the 1865 Ordnance Survey showing the approximate position of Spencer Road

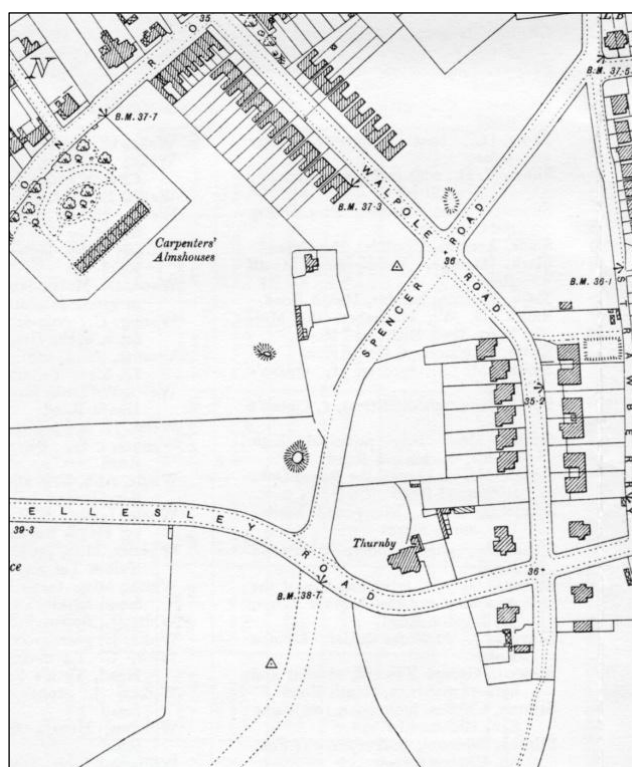


Fig 3: Detail from the 1894 Ordnance Survey. Spencer Road appears for the first time

Later maps show no significant change of land use until the 1865 Ordnance Survey Map (Fig 2). There is a small building to the east of what is now Walpole Road connected to a grove of trees by two paths to the south crossing the line of Spencer Road⁴. A tree-lined path or road runs from the end of Pope's Grove up to Hampton Road.

By 1888⁵ Spencer Road had been laid out and is clearly shown in the 1894 Ordnance Survey (Fig 3). There was a planned extension, never built, shown dotted on the map, running southwest from Wellesley Road to Stanley Road. There is a pond at the south in what is now the garden of number 64 and possibly a marl pit on the site of number 16. The small building referred to above remains with what may be a row of outhouses but without its grove of trees.

Despite the road being constructed before 1888, the first house would not be built for at least 17 years.

What's in a name?

People have often wondered why the name Spencer was chosen for the road. Most roads in Strawberry Hill have obvious associations with famous people or physical features (Pope, Walpole, Grotto, Tower etc). There is no known association with a Spencer except a tenuous connection with Lady Diana Spencer (1734-1780), artist and friend of Horace Walpole, whose married name was Beauclerk. The Beauclerk Tower at Strawberry Hill House is named after her.

At the time of the construction of the road, names were assigned by the Local Board - the forerunner to today's Council. The Board minutes for the 1880s and 1890s shed no light on the matter. In 1887 a committee to "superintend the naming of streets and numbering of houses" was created but there is no detailed record of their deliberations so the origin of the name is destined to remain a mystery.

⁴ This may be a surviving part of Abraham Prado's (d. 1782) estate. See the Twickenham Museum's website.

⁵ Bacon's map of 1888

The first houses and their occupants: 1 to 17

The first houses were semi-detached brick-faced villas mostly with two-stories (but six with three stories), all on 32 foot wide plots. The main rooms at the front of the houses were designed to impress: they had 10 foot ceilings, moulded cornices, solid wood doors with moulded fielded panels with decorative door knobs and fingerplates. However, the rooms to the back of the houses are smaller with lower ceilings, simpler doors and cheaper door furniture - clearly designed for servants to work and to sleep in.

Building plans⁶ submitted to Twickenham Urban District Council help to determine when the houses were built, although only four such plans are available. The first, for number 1, was submitted in February 1905 (it was not built until 1912) so it seems reasonable to assume that 1905 is the approximate starting date of the development. However, numbers 2 to 17 were probably built in sequence, so the fact that numbers 10 to 15 were occupied by 1906, suggests that all 16 were built in less than 2 years. This seems unlikely so it's likely that the lower-numbered house were built earlier, although there is no documentary evidence for this.

Street directories⁶ give an approximate date for the first occupation of each house, though there are some omissions. This analysis is summarised in this table:

House numbers	Plans submitted	First recorded occupation	Probably building date
1	Feb 1905, Dec 1911	1912 ⁷	1912
2, 3	-	1910	?-1910
4, 5	-	1907	?-1907
6, 7	-	1910	?-1910
8, 9	-	1907	?-1910
10 – 15	Apr 1905 (one plan)	1906	1905
16, 17	Jun 1906	1910	1906-1910

Number 1 was a detached house on a very large plot at the junction with Pope's Avenue. In February 1905, a plan, captioned "Proposed House for Mr W. A. Slade Esq.", was submitted for what is almost certainly this house. A Mr W. A. Slade was Chairman of the Council at about this time. The house was occupied from 1912 until 1965/66 when it was demolished, to be replaced by Cortayne Court.

The 1911 Census gives us an insight into the type of people who were living in houses like these at the beginning of the 20th century:



An original brass fingerplate from a house in Spencer Road

⁶ LBRuT

⁷ Is shown on the 1912 Ordnance Survey. The first recorded occupation is 1914.

House number	Primary occupant	Profession or occupation	Age	Other occupants
2	Herbert Saxty	Architect and surveyor	42	Wife, daughter, servant
3	Charles Read	Clerk, Gas, Light & Coke Co.	38	Wife, 2 x sons, servant
4	Fred Pearce	Surveyor	44	Wife, 2 x daughters, son, servant
5	Frank Surridge	Clergyman	48	Wife, housemaid, cook
6	Emma Haxell	(nil)	70	Son, 'visitor', servant
7	William Cooper	Stockbroker's manager	34	Wife, 3 x sons, 4 x sisters-in-law
8	Francis Ruddle	Architect and surveyor	54	Wife, servant
9	Richard Ord	Builder	55	Wife, daughter, son
10	Montague Tattershall	Assessor of water rates	35	Wife, daughter
11	Edmund Laine	Accountant	54	Wife 2 x daughters, servant
12	(no record)			
13	Joseph Broad	Printer	43	Wife 2 x daughters, servant
14	(no record)			
15	Katharine Goodbun	Independent (widowed)	55	(nil)
16	Leontine Campbell	Widow	47	servant
17	Conrade Kupp	Architect, secretary, accountant	33	Wife, daughter, visitor

Those primary occupants who had jobs were mainly professional (7) or managerial/clerical (5). The developer had clearly set his sights on the aspiring middle classes. Most houses had a domestic servant, an exception being number 7 which was occupied by 9 members of one family - clearly no room for servants!

We know little of the lives of the occupants with these exceptions:

- Herbert Saxty (no 2) was architect and surveyor of London County Council Tramways.
- Fred Pearce (no 4) was Twickenham Borough Surveyor for 30 years from 1898 during which time the borough developed from a village to a town. He was also Deacon and Secretary of the Congregational Church on the Green (now the United Reformed Church). He died in the house in 1928⁸.
- Frank Surridge (no 5) was vicar of Holy Trinity on the Green⁹.
- Richard Ord (no 9) probably built all the houses in this section of Spencer Road. All of the surviving plans mentioned earlier have his name on them¹⁰. Oddly enough, he is recorded as living in no 10 in the 1912 Electoral Register but was back in no 9 by 1921. At one time he probably owned the freehold of most of the houses in Spencer Road but by 1990 his grandson was living in the top flat of number 16, the rest of the estate having been sold off in the intervening years.

There seems to have been a fashion among some residents for giving their houses names: at various times no 6 was called Lennox, no 10 Meadowside and no 15 Doghurst.

The 1939 Register (Appendix A: page 11) shows us that three of these families were still living there in 1939 and most of the occupants still had managerial or professional jobs, but the number of paid domestic servants was much reduced.

In 1961, a planning application was submitted for number 10, titled "the conversion of existing dwelling house into two self-contained flats". This was to be the start of a 25 year period when many of the houses would be converted into flats. By 1985, at least 5 houses had

⁸ Twickenham Museum website: www.twickenham-museum.org.uk

⁹ Spencer Road seems to have been home to a number of church ministers: no 17 was later occupied by Rev. George Douglas Castleton, vicar of All Saints, Campbell Road. See also Fred Pearce at no 4.

¹⁰ LBRuT

been converted¹¹ but this is an underestimate as some houses had two internal entrances inside a single outer door and were not recorded as separate dwellings. All the recorded conversions are for numbers 10 to 17 probably reflecting the fact that these houses have more extensive first floors than numbers 2 to 9. It is, however, known that some of the lower numbered houses were in multiple occupation in the 1980s. The trend began to end in the late 1980s as larger families moved in and they were converted back to single occupancy. By 1999 the reconversion was complete.



Fig 4: An early 20th century postcard showing the first 16 houses. This must be before 1912 as number 1 has not yet been built. The message on the reverse from the anonymous sender says: "This is the house where we live, the one hidden by a tree. Is it not a pretty road? On the right side, opposite our house is a lovely field".



Fig 5: Spencer Road in 2020. The houses are much as they were 100 years ago though the iron railings and hedges at the front have been removed and Velux windows have appeared in the roofs.

¹¹ Planning applications and LBRuT, Electoral Rolls.

Numbers 38 to 68

Two plans for houses in this part of Spencer Road were submitted to the Council in early June 1927. The first was for a detached two-bedroom house on the plot of number 59. The second was for a pair of semi-detached houses but the design does not resemble any of today's houses and may have not been built. A sequence of three plans, each for four semi-detached houses, was submitted between January and August 1929. Of these, one is clearly for numbers 66 and 68 but the remainder cannot be positively identified.

In July 1929 a plan was submitted for a detached house designed by the architectural practice of Sir Banister Fletcher. Fletcher was a well-known and successful early 20th century architect and was responsible, amongst other buildings, for the Gillette Factory on the Great West Road. He is remembered for being the author of "*A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*" which is still a standard reference work for students of architecture. This design, probably for number 38, is very much in the arts and crafts style. There is no house in the road which remotely resembles it which probably explains why another plan was submitted by Fletcher's practice in September that year. This, with some modifications, is number 38.



Fig 6: The two plans for number 38: the first was rejected but the second closely resembles the house as it is today

Kelly's Directories for those years show that numbers 43 and 53 to 59 were first occupied in 1929. By 1930, all but numbers 38, 40 and 41 were occupied. Numbers 38 and 40 were occupied the following year and 41, a detached house in a very different style from those surrounding it, in 1932. Numbers 38, 40, 41 and 59 were the only detached houses in Spencer Road but all the others in this part of the road are of very similar in design

The sequence in which the houses were built cannot be accurately deduced but number 59 was probably built in 1927/8, most of the remainder in 1929 with numbers 38, 40 and 41 a year or two later. Like numbers 2 to 17, most of the working occupants had professional or managerial jobs and domestic servants were common thus firmly establishing Spencer Road as a haven for the middle-classes: see Appendix A: The 1939 Register on page 11.

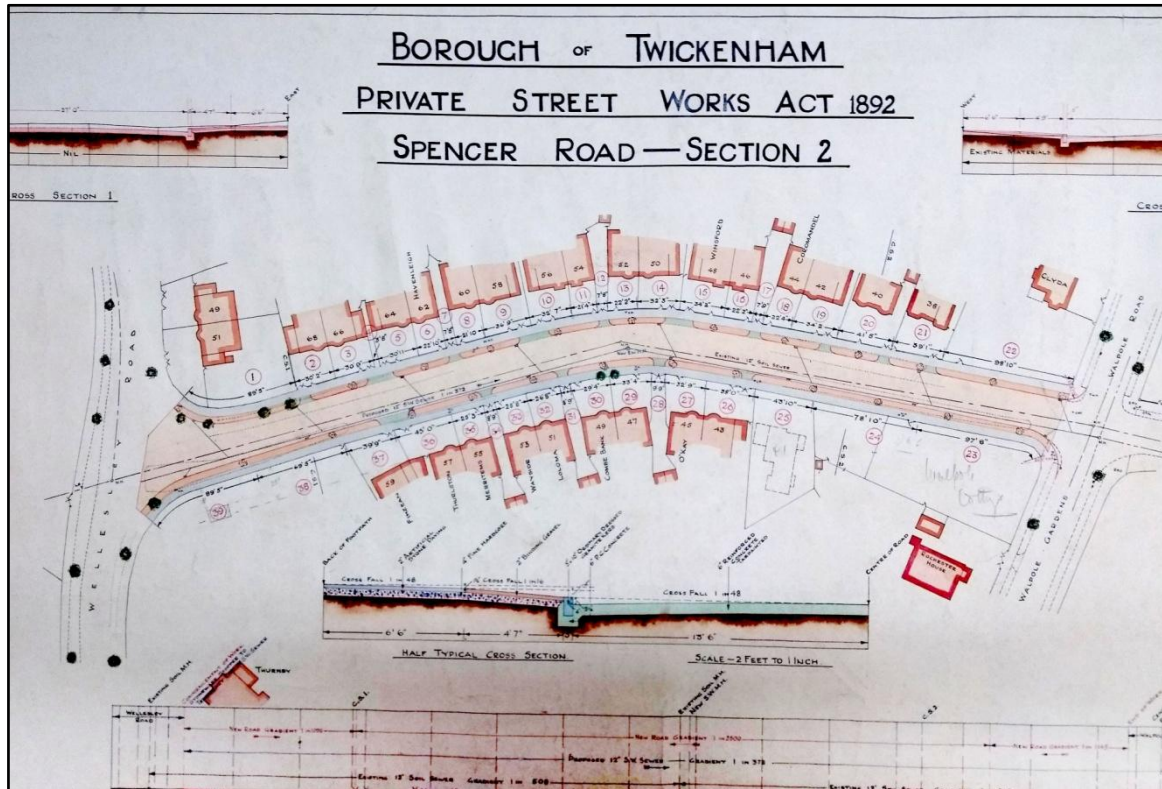


Fig 7: A Council plan of the houses dated September 1930. All houses have been built except number 41, which has been pencilled in. Some of the houses have been given names.

The West Twickenham Hard Court Club and numbers 19 to 39a

The 1934 Ordnance Survey map shows for the first time a tennis club with 5 courts, a clubhouse and a small cottage filling the triangle of land between the northeast of Spencer Road and Pope's Avenue. The 1940 Ordnance Survey map shows this more clearly (Fig 8).

The club, on what was known locally as the 'Glenside site', was built in the early 1930s by one W E Aires. Ray Manning lived on the site as a boy and remembers that his father, Victor, answered an advertisement for a husband and wife team to run 'an exclusive tennis club' in 1936 (see Appendix B: on page 13). Accommodation was provided in 'The Lodge', the small cottage-like building at the west of the site. The site was fenced with spiked steel railings which were removed during the war presumably to help the war effort. Ray's mother provided afternoon teas and ran the bar in the clubhouse on most evenings.



Fig 8: The tennis club is clearly shown on the 1940 Ordnance Survey

In 1941 eleven incendiary bombs fell on the tennis courts but fortunately the clubhouse and the Lodge were spared. Membership declined during the war and the fortunes of the club never recovered.

The development of the Glenside site

In 1969, a planning application was submitted for an indoor sports centre with squash and badminton courts¹². This was refused after local opposition and objections by the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association¹³. This proved to be the first skirmish in a 13-year battle against a series of attempts to develop the site.

The clubhouse burned down in 1976. Another application for more courts was refused in April 1978¹⁴ and yet another in November 1979¹⁵.

The final application in 1981 by Crest Homes was for 28 houses on Spencer Road and Pope's Avenue, designed by Colin Bottomley and Associates. This was initially refused by the Council on the basis that the land was protected from development by a restricted covenant but the developers appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. A group of local residents, determined to resist the development, raised funds, estimated at £950, for legal and professional representation at the subsequent public enquiry, to be held in December 1981. SHRA offered to guarantee of £400 out of the Association's funds¹⁶. By January 1982, £1441 had been collected from residents.

¹² There were two earlier applications for limited residential development in 1947 and 1958. Both were refused as being contrary to the County Development Plan

¹³ SHRA Bulletin No 12, May 1969

¹⁴ SHRA Bulletin No 49, April 1978

¹⁵ SHRA Bulletin AGM minutes, April 1981

¹⁶ SHRA Special committee meeting minutes, November 1981

Toby Jessel, Conservative Member of Parliament for Twickenham, spoke in the House in May 1982 noting that the land was protected by a restricted covenant and that *“local people objected individually or through their excellent Strawberry Hill Residents Association”*. Neil Macfarlane, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, reassured him that *“all the relevant factors that he has put forward will be taken into account before any decision is reached”*¹⁷.

It was to no avail: in July of that year, the Surrey Comet reported that Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, had decided that the restrictive covenant should be overturned on the basis that a similar covenant on an adjacent plot (now Ajanta in Walpole Gardens) had been overturned in 1968.

The final cost of the residents’ appeal was £1537¹⁸ of which £1475 was from personal donations with SHRA funding the deficit. As a result, the Association raised its annual subscription from 25p per household to 50p¹⁹.

Construction started in 1983 and in July 1984, the Richmond and Twickenham Times reported that *“there are three houses available from £89,950 to £92,950 and two and three more are due to be released”*. The first houses (33 to 39a - the block of eight at the junction with Walpole Gardens) were occupied by October that year. Later that year another seven houses had been occupied (19 to 27a - the block at the Pope’s Avenue end - and 31a). Number 31 was occupied in 1989, 19a in 1991 and, finally, 29 in 1994 – some 12 years after permission was granted.

In 2012 and 2013, numbers 2 to 17 were listed as Buildings of Townscape Merit and in February 2019, all houses in the northern part of the road were incorporated into the Pope’s Avenue Conservation Area.

House numbering

Those responsible for the contiguous numbering of 1 to 17 obviously did not expect the remainder of the road to be developed otherwise they would have chosen either all even or all odd numbers. However, the developers of numbers 38 to 59 in the 1920s showed more foresight: they left a very reasonable gap of 20 between the numbers of those earlier houses and theirs, presumably anticipating the later development of the northeast section of the road.

This would have allowed the 18 houses in the 1980s development on the Glenside site to have used numbers 18 to 37 except that a decision was taken to follow modern practice and give them all odd numbers. Since there are only 10 odd numbers between 18 and 37, it was necessary to insert 27a, 29a, 31a, 33a, 35a, 37a, 39 and 39a into the sequence. As a consequence, the road has no even numbers between 20 and 36. Thus, Spencer Road is probably the most illogically numbered road in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames, confusing visitors, postmen and taxi drivers alike.

¹⁷ Hansard 11 May 1982

¹⁸ Approximately £5500 today (Bank of England inflation calculator)

¹⁹ SHRA AGM Minutes April 1983

Appendix A: The 1939 Register

The 1939 Register was taken on 29 September 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War Two. The information was used to produce identity cards and to issue ration books. It was also used to administer conscription and the direction of labour, and to monitor and control the movement of the population caused by military mobilisation and mass evacuation.

Each occupant is recorded with their occupation, age and marital status. Some houses appeared either to have not been occupied or the enumerators were unable to complete their survey – these are shown as ‘(no record)’ below. Some records of occupants in the original register are marked as ‘Closed’ because the individual may be still alive. For clarity, they have been omitted here.

House number	Name	Profession or occupation	Age	S: single M: married W: widowed
1	Percy Wise	Builder & Decorator	56	M
	Frances Wise	Unpaid domestic	55	M
	Lucy Smith	Domestic Servant	23	S
2	Herbert Saxty	Architect retd	72	W
	Amelia Standen	Unpaid domestic	54	M
	Dorothy Brown	Private means	41	S
3	Frederick Moore	Rate collector, retd	82	S
	Alice Moore	Unpaid domestic	72	S
4	Dorothy Pearce	Bank clerk	46	S
	Audrey Pearce	Domestic Service Teacher	40	S
	Muriel Nutley	Teacher	33	S
	Rosa Rhys	Housekeeper	26	S
5	(no record)			
6	(no record)			
7	Frank H Bell	Civil Servant	46	M
	Julia Bell	Unpaid domestic	42	M
8	(no record)			
9	(no record)			
10	Constance Plumbly	Unpaid domestic	62	W
	Philip Plumbly	Civil Servant, Inland Rev	22	S
	Joyce Plumbly	Dentist's Secretary	34	S
	Constance Spurgeon	Private Secretary	30	S
11	(no record)			
12	Elizabeth Topham	Private means	72	W
	Alice Cox	Private means	83	S
13	Philip H Mahalski	Motor Car Salesman	40	M
	Edith M Mahalski	Unpaid domestic	29	M
	Sophia Chapman	Unpaid domestic	43	S
14	(no record)			
15	Katharine Goodbun	Private means	83	W
	Ethel M Page	Domestic Servant	54	S
	Florence Turner	School Matron	58	S
16	Noel Smith	Bank clerk	39	M
	Doris M Smith	Unpaid domestic	38	M
	Veronica Smith	at school	16	S
	Daphne Smith	at school	8	S
17	John A Bennett	Civil Engineer	48	M
	Jean D Bennett	Unpaid domestic	45	M
	John B Bennett	at school	11	S
	Alan C Bennett	at school	8	S
38	Walter Voss	Import & Export Merchant	40	M

House number	Name	Profession or occupation	Age	S: single M: married W: widowed
	George Voss	Bookkeeper retd	71	W
40	Ernest Payne	Civil Servant retd	61	M
	Ethel Payne	Unpaid domestic	59	M
41	Robert Wilson	Bank officer	34	M
	Ena Wilson	Unpaid domestic	28	M
42	Seymour Booth	Director	65	M
	Georgina Booth	Housewife	61	M
	Phyllis Booth	Groom (horses)	24	S
43	William Oke	Professional Golfer	47	M
	Victoria Oke	Unpaid domestic	49	M
44	Martha Geary	Household Duties	44	W
	Daphne Geary	Unemployed	17	S
45	(no record)			
46	George Bodman	Surgical Appliance Maker	37	M
	Dorothy Bodman	Household Duties	40	M
47	Percy Scott	Bank Clerk	49	
	Muriel (?) Scott	Unpaid domestic	38	
48	Frederick Gorton	Cabinet Maker retd	71	M
	Alicia Gorton	Unpaid domestic	72	M
49	Elizabeth Phelan	Private means	69	W
50	William Kay	Draughtsman	43	M
	Rhoda Kay	Unpaid domestic	40	M
51	Ethel Godfrey	Private means	61	S
	Florence Mallinson	Private means	73	S
52	Frederick Woodford	Electrical Engineer Foreman	51	M
	Amy Woodford	Unpaid domestic	48	M
	Eric Woodford	Electrical Engineer	24	S
53	(no record)			
54	Georgina Denne	Private means	84	W
	Florence Bisset	Unpaid domestic	58	W
55	Arthur Boucher	Surveyor	66	
	Emily Boucher	Unpaid domestic	63	
56	Eric Lynde	Quantity Surveyor	54	M
	Anastasia Lynde	Unpaid housewife	49	M
	Peter Lynde	Articled pupil	17	S
57	Charles Taylor	Quantity Surveyor	51	M
	Alice Taylor	Unpaid domestic	51	M
	Vera Underwood	Stenographer	26	S
58	Maurice Gillett	Banking retd	67	M
	Alice Gillett	Unpaid domestic	65	M
	Irene Francis	Unpaid domestic	34	S
59	Arthur Wood	Architect	59	M
	Winifred Wood	Unpaid domestic	50	M
60	Gerald Backway	Architect	41	M
62	Winifred Whitehouse	Clerk, Civil Service	38	S
64	(no record)			
66	Percy Willsher	Civil Servant	50	M
	Evelyn Willsher	Unpaid domestic	44	M
68	Charles Horne	Solicitors Clerk	58	M
	Jane Horne	Unpaid domestic	62	M
The Lodge	Victor Manning	Steward tennis club	54	M
	Gladys M Manning	Unpaid domestic	39	M
	Ronald Manning	at school	11	S

Appendix B: Ray Manning's account

Raymond Manning lived in Strawberry Hill, from 1936 in the Lodge at the West Twickenham Hard Court Club. Raymond's parents were employed as caretaker and cook.

The first part consists of extracts from one of his many articles in BoTLHS newsletters. The second is an edited version of correspondence with Raymond.

Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, Newsletter 150, April 2009

In 1926, after serving 21 years in the army my father, Victor Manning, answered an advertisement in the paper for a husband and wife to run an exclusive tennis club. House provided, they were to be general factotums and a very busy life it turned out to be. The house called "The Lodge" was very nice but I remember it had a bathroom where the bath and wash basin only had one tap each - "COLD", so surreptitiously we used the pavilion's very nice showers at slack times. The West Twickenham Hard Court Club (WTHCC) was built in the early 1930s by a certain W E Aires who sold it on to an Anglo-Indian named Mr Temple, just before the War, who then sold it to the members in the mid-War period.

The Club was situated in the large triangle formed by Spencer Road, Pope's Avenue and Walpole Gardens, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham. The whole Club was fenced in with steel spiked railings which were removed in about 1940 for the War Effort. It had a gravel car park which at weekends was filled with sleek black cars of which the "Hudson Terraplane" was my favourite. There were 5 doubles courts and one singles court. The courts were of red sand with lead lines nailed down by lengthy nails and painted white with a spirit based paint, the smell of which will always return to me these days. The courts needed a lot of maintenance and sometimes it was my job to "mat" them with a homemade contraption of rush matting nailed to a board and pulled along by hand; it was hard going but it did leave the surface with a nice pattern. The pavilion was of wood structure faced in wavy-edged boards; it had a dance hall, bar, changing rooms and secretary's office.

My mother's job was to provide afternoon teas, making and serving tiny and neat sandwiches, and also cakes bought in from a shop opposite the Luxor Cinema, Twickenham, called "The Spinning Wheel". (Also she used to serve behind the bar most evenings, especially at weekends, thus from the age of 6 years I spent most of my evenings on my own. I would often walk over to the pavilion and "tap" on the side door to ask "when are you coming over?" The reply was always "about half an hour" but it never was.)

The Club's colour scheme was Wimbledon green which even went down to the crockery, the teapots for 6, 4, 2 and even 1 were green – this small size used to fascinate me as a child. I think the Club membership fee was 7 or 11 pounds per annum, which would have been many, many, weeks wages for the working man in those pre-war days. Spencer Road was quite high-brow with large Victorian houses. In 1975 I took my family down to have a look at the area and when we motored into Spencer Road the fire brigade was there, having just put out a fire which saw the end of the old pavilion - how ironic that I should have chosen that certain day. I still retain a small piece of charred wood which I picked up.

The pre-war days of the Club were the best and from 1939 onwards the club went downhill. All the young members joined up and received commissions.

When the blitz came only the courts were hit but our house did get hit by a nose cap of a shell which I kept. I don't have it now, unfortunately. I well remember one Friday night in 1941 when Twickenham got a real pasting from the Luftwaffe. Eleven incendiaries landed on courts and when I lifted the blackout curtains everywhere was brilliantly lit by a blue light. I don't know why, but

my father never applied to the Council for a proper shelter such as Anderson or Morrison; he said we'd be safe under our stout kitchen table! The nearest big blast was in Wellesley Crescent where a land mine burst. (Actually a landmine is a huge seamine dropped by parachute to explode above ground which causes great damage.) I went round there the next day and was amazed at the destruction. Our Club's secretary, Mr Gillette, was standing there in dismay looking at his lovely house with many huge cracks in it. By this time in the War the Club was at a low ebb and Mr Temple had sold it to the members and the "labour direction" people were badgering my father to get work of better War Effort. He was forced to take a job at a huge underground complex at Corsham, near Bath, but as he couldn't find accommodation for the family he got his release.



Members of the Club at a summer dance at the Winning Post on Chertsey Road in 1939

Miscellaneous correspondence

I've been chatting to my brother [Ron] and he told me Mrs Goodbun's maid's [at number 15] name was the suitable Ethel.' Mrs 'G' was a staunch Victorian.

In 1976 the WTHCC pavilion burnt down. This was of course the start of the clubs slow decline. I did enter no 15 a few times and was fascinated with a highly polished 'BLUNDERBUSS' displayed in the hallway; and I wonder how Ethel fared after (I guess) a lifetime with Mrs G. and I can't imagine.

Donkeys roaming the club grounds! When we arrived in 1936 the whole club was fenced in with high steel spiked railings which in (1939) went to the war effort; leaving that large triangle looking run down; with sparse straggly privet and folk short cutting across.

The club had strict rules- players in whites only; annual fee £11 and new members by recommendation. I remember a very pretty Chinese girl applied and was rejected as they thought she might bring 'others' and only want to play with them. There was a water-well with an electric pump so one of those modern houses has a deep WELL under it.

There seemed to be two types of enemy raids; where one plane would drone round & round then drop a bomb; another when (it seemed) a whole squadron was overhead; Twickenham had a few of these; and one Friday night; we heard a peculiar Pop-Pop-Pop so I pulled aside the black-out curtains to see amazingly everywhere was brilliantly lit in a blueish light; and I counted eleven.

Incendiary bombs burning all over the eleven tennis courts, then My father shouted “one’s on our front path” soon Dad and two wardens were fighting to put it out; then they all laughed when Mrs Goodbun was screaming “put that light out”!

Then a bomb landed at the junction of Pope’s Avenue and Twickenham Green causing a large crater breaking the water main and snapping the large cross at the back of the church; it was down many years then replaced many years later (much smaller) several small bombs fell near Strawberry Hill station hitting Barclays bank twice. And the back of the end shop in the parade.

The most devastating hit was when a lone bomber was droning away overhead then we heard the loudest bang I've ever heard; and our front door burst in breaking the catch only. The next morning I heard that a land mine (that's a huge sea mine dropped by parachute to explode above ground to cause greater damage) had landed in Wellesley Crescent. I walked round there and I was shocked at the terrific damage; every roof/window/fence was gone and forlornly hundreds of curtains were blowing out horizontally in the wind; and the ground was covered with billions of tile fragments; and not a soul to be seen. Except in Spencer Rd. our club secretary Mr Gillette was standing the Rd. looking aghast at his lovely house severely damaged with huge ‘Staircase type’ cracks from top to bottom. My grandmother was bombed out when a ‘Buzz Bomb’ landed in Stanley Rd demolishing a row of Victorian shops and the Baltic Timber Yard; also the church heavily broken. I went to see Gran the next day. And I cut through Bushy Park from Hampton Hill (we lived in Church Street Hampton) then. And the USAAF men were clearing up the colossal damage everywhere a sergeant stopped me but let me through as I said my gran lives there. The damage assessment people were there and said it would have to be demolished; but it still survives and in good order, recently I spoke to a neighbour there and gran's house is now eight ‘bedsits’ one thing that struck me was the now bright brickwork. In my day all buildings were heavily soot blackened; and Gran's was very blackish.

My father helped Mrs Goodbun and her live-in uniformed maid; who was probably as old as her employer²⁰ and had my brother running errands for her. And when she wanted ‘Ronnie’ she would puff and blow her way to our side door and ‘hammer’ on it with her heavy walking stick, She took a liking to Ron and he told me she would want him to sit close to her in her arm chair, and make a fuss of him. However not long after she got ill with pneumonia and died in 1941. The maid told dad that just before she died our Airedale dog was howling at their door at the time she died, Peculiar!

They held an auction in the house and my father helped; and the auctioneer gave us everything unsold, loads of books and stuff and still today I have a well turned Victorian wooden ebonised bottle with a Guinness Label. Also several black shaped boxes which were bright copper inside, to fit a hat of ‘say a Lord Mayor. Her garden had lots of potted ferns which I used to water for her. She was probably born in 1850s.

²⁰ In fact, Ethel Page was 29 years younger than Mrs Goodbun