

**THE BUILDING OF THE  
SOUTHFIELDS GRID  
c.1860-1910**

**Keith Bailey**

**Wandsworth Historical Society  
Wandsworth Paper 12**

**NB Eight illustrations appeared in the original version  
of this study when it was first published in 2003.**

**ISBN 0 905121 11 2**

**ISSN 0307 3181**

**© Keith Bailey and  
the Wandsworth Historical Society, 2003, 2018**

**<http://www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk/>**

The area of Southfields in Wandsworth known as the “Grid” is always a conspicuous feature on maps and aerial photographs of the district, and although it is not rectilinear as a Roman or an American street-plan, its unofficial name has become widely known and used, even in official circles. The superficial simplicity of the street pattern conceals a complex history of development which stretched over nearly two decades from 1890. The purpose of this paper is to examine the building history of the Grid from its days as part of Earl Spencer’s Wimbledon Park. It is intended to complement Neil Robson’s excellent study of the social history of the Grid.<sup>1</sup>

### **I: Introduction & Prehistory**

Although the Grid lies mainly in the parish of Wandsworth, it continues southwards as far as Ashen Grove, and it is to neighbouring Wimbledon that we must look for its origins. (The streets to the south, towards Wimbledon Park station, although they do not conform to the “Grid” pattern, are part of the same overall development.) During the time of the Cecils as lords of the manor of Wimbledon in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the manor house next to Wimbledon church had been developed into a substantial mansion surrounded on the north and east by a very extensive park.<sup>2</sup> The park also came to include large areas of western Wandsworth, reaching as far as Tibbet’s Corner in the north and the Merton Road in the east, where it abutted the South Field of Wandsworth. This land had been acquired by John, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Spencer by purchase from the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford in 1758, 247 acres for £7,000.<sup>3</sup> In so doing, the park overrode the ancient boundary between Wandsworth and Wimbledon from Merton Road to Parkside.

During the 1760s, the park was landscaped by Capability Brown, including the enlargement of an existing lake to form the centrepiece of the view northwards from the mansion on the hill.<sup>4</sup> Corris’s map of 1787 shows the layout of the fields and woods in the park. In broad terms, the area now occupied by the Southfields Grid covered about 96 acres.

**Table 1: The Grid Area in 1787**

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>
91c	Ladder Stile Field, east of hadland	27.30
92	The Thirty Acres	30.35
93	Plantation	2.80
94	South Paddock	5.25
95	The North Paddock	5.09
96	Dunsford Lane Field	16.25
97	The Three Cornered Field	9.25

Source: John Corris’s Map of Wandsworth, D. Gerhold, *Wandsworth Paper 11*, 2002

One notable landscape feature which survived from Brown’s work on the Park was the long curved drive with a double avenue of trees which ran south-east and south from the lodge which occupied the site of Southfields Station. This matured into a belt of woodland, clearly seen on the Ordnance Survey 25-inch plan of 1865-7, and formed an effective screen between the Park and Merton Road. It was called Ashen Grove, and gave its name to a farm, which lay in Wimbledon parish, and whose site is now covered by the eastern part of the street of the same name. The Ladder Stile Field had a western portion, not part of the Grid. The “hadland” which separated them was more or less followed by the railway in 1889. It is a dialect form of headland, the area at the end of a common field furlong where the plough was turned before following the next plough ridge. This shows that the area had once been part of the South Field of Wandsworth.

The first accurate large-scale plan of the Grid area is to be found in the Wandsworth Tithe Apportionment of 1841.<sup>5</sup> There had been little or no change in the layout of the fields in the area

since 1787, and certainly no hint of the suburban tide which was to engulf the area within seventy years. To the north of Park Palings lay the open-field strips of Wandsworth South Field, comprising the southern end of Clay Pit, Middle and Merton Way (or Lower) Shotts, from west to east. Fields within the later Grid are shown below.

**Table 2: The Grid Area in 1841**

<u>Tithe No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Occupier</u>
458		26.15	Field	Reynolds & Lee
459/460		10.11	Meadow	Reynolds & Lee
461	Avenue	4.37	Wood & rides	Earl Spencer
462	Ladder Stile	25.97	Field	W. S. Paterson
463	Thirty Acres	28.85	Field	W. S. Paterson

The total area is 95.45 acres, a little less than in Corris, no doubt due to more accurate surveying.

## **II: John Augustus Beaumont**

Fundamental changes came, however, when Earl Spencer became an absentee instead of a resident lord of the manor. Financial difficulties in the 1830s had already led to the sale of his freehold lands in the fields of Wandsworth and Battersea in 1835-6.<sup>6</sup> This had produced a significant change in the pattern of landownership. In parts of Battersea it paved the way for suburban building development in the 1840s.<sup>7</sup> Similar changes were soon to overtake the core of the Spencer estate, Wimbledon Park itself.

The park was sold in 1846 to John Augustus Beaumont for £85,000. Assuming that he acquired the whole of the park, the average price per acre was £97. This compares with an average of £130/acre for purely agricultural land sold by Spencer in Battersea in 1835-6, and £316 for land with existing buildings. Allowing for the fact that Beaumont was a speculator and entrepreneur who saw the park not as the grounds for an out-of-town mansion, but as an area for development, it can hardly be said that Earl Spencer had obtained the maximum potential sum for his land. Once the land was built on, it could be worth £2-4,000/acre.<sup>8</sup> Spencer was clearly anxious to dispose of the property for what he perceived to be a reasonable return, even though he would have made vastly more by emulating contemporaries like the Dukes of Bedford and Westminster. That, however, would have meant waiting until the time was ripe for development in such a far-off suburb.

Beaumont laid out a series of broad, curving avenues on the land, as well as turning Wimbledon Park Road from a footpath into a highway. The ground between the roads was divided into large plots, for the building of villas and mansions to the designs of purchasers' architects, or the leasing of those built under Beaumont's own auspices to wealthy merchants and bankers, and those of private means.<sup>9</sup> Although the late 1840s, immediately after Beaumont acquired the land, were years of peak building activity in the London area,<sup>10</sup> a sharp depression followed from 1853-4 as the Crimean War pushed up interest rates and diverted money away from building. The building cycle did not begin its next major upswing until after 1861, reaching a peak in 1867-8. The downturn in the 1850s, couple with the relative remoteness of Wimbledon Park from London compared with certain other select suburbs, even for the "carriage trade", meant that by the early 1860s, only the frontage on Parkside, with unobstructed views over the Common, was anything like fully built up. In 1862, there were about thirty large houses from Tibbet's Corner in the north to Seymour Road. A further ten houses had been built along Inner Park Road, but further east, Princes, Albert, Victoria, and the modestly-named Beaumont and Augustus Roads were virtually untouched. An auction sale in June 1860 had offered plots in the "new" Prince's Road, mostly of 1¼ acres. Only nine were sold, at an average of £380/acre.<sup>11</sup>

The south-eastern part of the Park in Wandsworth parish remained untouched by the speculator except along the extreme eastern edge, fronting the Merton Road. Here, on a strip of land about 265 feet deep, some 23 houses had been built by 1862 between the sites of the later Replingham and Brookwood Roads. They were described by the general name of Dunsford Villas, being just

opposite the farm of the same name although the terrace of seven cottages at the southern end was described as “Verandah Cottages” in the Census of 1871. Further south, just north of the later Lavenham Road, were two pairs of houses - Ashen Villas.

Beaumont’s unsuccessful attempt to develop an upper-class residential suburb at Wimbledon Park between 1850 and 1870 is less surprising when one considers the fact that the continuously built-up area had scarcely reached eastern Wandsworth and south Battersea by the latter date.<sup>12</sup> The Grid was safe from the attention of land and building speculators for almost another generation. Beaumont’s failure was reinforced by the inaccessibility of the area to those without transport of their own. Although railways were neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for triggering suburban development around 19<sup>th</sup> century London,<sup>13</sup> and although people were accustomed to walking fairly long distances to work,<sup>14</sup> there was nevertheless a disadvantage in seeking to develop an estate too remote from railway facilities, especially if it was aimed at those working in central London. The Grid lay between the line from London to Southampton (1838-41) and the branch from Battersea to Richmond (1846). Prior to the opening of Earlsfield Station in 1884, which was a response to, rather than a precursor of, development off Garratt Lane, there was no station nearer to the Grid than Wandsworth Town, Clapham Junction or Wimbledon, all 1½ - 2 miles distant, and with undeveloped land in their vicinities.

### **III: The Coming of the Railway**

A much more immediate catalyst for development in the Wimbledon Park area was the opening of the line from Putney Bridge to Wimbledon on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1889, with stations at East Putney, Southfields and Wimbledon Park.<sup>15</sup> This would not, however, have been built in its present form but for the intense political rivalry between the Metropolitan District and London & South Western Railways, which necessitates a brief discussion. The District was created to complete the Inner Circle after 1868, but soon began to develop suburban feeders, in order to help offset the crippling financial burden of building in central London. It reached Ealing and Richmond in the 1870s and the Thames at Fulham in 1880. It was then poised for an onslaught into the lucrative suburban territory which had hitherto been the monopoly of the LSWR. An early attempt to link the District at Brompton with the LSWR at Barnes failed, but could well have left Southfields without a railway and a very different history had it succeeded.<sup>16</sup>

In 1881, the Kingston and London Railway, fronting for the District, obtained authority for the line from Surbiton to Putney Bridge via Kingston Vale. Soon the District was scheming to reach Guildford, a threat which the South Western acted quickly to forestall on two fronts. First, it built the “New Line “ from Surbiton to Guildford via Effingham.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, the nominally-independent Wimbledon & West Metropolitan Junction Railway was created, to build a line from Wimbledon to an end-on junction with the District at Putney Bridge. The District obtained running powers over the latter in exchange for granting facilities to the LSWR to Kensington.<sup>18</sup> The LSWR also built connecting lines, seemingly without Parliamentary powers, on its own land, from East Putney to the Richmond line at Point Pleasant, Wandsworth, opened in July 1889. The section from Putney Bridge to Wimbledon remained in British Railways ownership until 1994, when it was finally passed to London Underground as part of the privatisation process. Main-line trains never used the running powers beyond East Putney.

The line through Southfields and Wimbledon Park was built between 1886 and 1889, and both these stations had an island platform with steps up to attractive “Early English” or Domestic Revival station buildings at road level.<sup>19</sup> The modest scale of these red brick booking halls reflects the completely undeveloped nature of the area in 1889. The District initially provided a half-hourly service to the City, while the LSWR started a spasmodic service to Waterloo via Wandsworth. At last, the Wimbledon Park area was within half an hour or so of the City and West End by public transport, and the die was cast for the future. The cost of an annual second class season ticket from Southfields to Charing Cross or Waterloo was £10/10/- (about 4d per single journey).

The railway marks the western edge of the Grid, and from Southfields runs in a shallow cutting along the boundary between the former Ladder Stile Fields. It then goes onto an embankment to

cross the broad, but shallow, valley leading from the Lake towards the Wandle, and curves to the east, leaving part of the old Thirty Acre field in the existing Park. The line returns to a cutting as it reaches Wimbledon Park station, where a spur of higher ground followed by Arthur Road runs east from the plateau of Wimbledon Common. Allowing for the land taken by the railway, and for the strip along Merton Road, the net area for building on the “Grid” in Wandsworth Parish was about 80-82 acres.

#### **IV: The Beginning of the Grid**

Shortly after the opening of the railway in 1889, in circumstances which unfortunately remain obscure, the Wimbledon Park Land Company Ltd. acquired the remaining undeveloped land in this area. In part this represented surplus railway land, compulsorily purchased in 1882-3, principally from John Augustus Beaumont. Most of the land was pasture, with some orchard. Part of Beaumont’s large estate was up for sale in March 1886, very shortly after the final line of the new railway had become known. It would appear that Mr. Beaumont had learned little about the timing of development since 1846. He sold the land to Glasier & Son, auctioneers and surveyors of Charing Cross, well before its true potential was known, and left others to reap the rewards, rather as Earl Spencer had forty years earlier! The sale particulars describe the land as “a freehold building estate about 73 acres, within one mile of Wimbledon Station”, although there is also mention of the “new Park Station” on the eastern edge of the estate. The land in question lay wholly in Wimbledon parish, and was offered in two lots. Lot 1 (58¼ acres) was bounded by Merton (now Durnsford) Road, Arthur Road and Home Park Road. Lot 2 (15 acres) fronted Leopold Road and a new road thence to Home Park Road. The total building frontages were assessed at more than 20,000 feet.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1891 the London County Council approved an application by Mr. W. Hunt on behalf of the Wimbledon Park Land Company for nine new streets: Replingham and Brookwood Roads and Astonville, Trentham, Elborough, Engadine, Clonmore, Heythorpe (sic) and Elsenham Streets. This covered only that part of the “Grid” north of Brookwood Road, although it set the pattern for subsequent development of long north-south streets punctuated at intervals by east-west roads, although they were not as regular as a formal grid pattern. This first step opened up a considerable area for building, enough for around 550 average sized houses and shops, itself a considerable building estate by local standards

Despite this bold move, there was a marked reluctance for builders to come into this area, as with Beaumont’s speculation at Wimbledon Park almost half a century earlier. There was still plenty of undeveloped land for lower middle-class building nearer to London, for example the area north of Battersea Rise.<sup>20</sup> The early 1890s also marked a low point in the building cycle, which did not reach another peak until the end of the century. This meant that demand in the Southfields area was unlikely to have been great, despite the arrival of the railway.<sup>21</sup>

The low level of demand for new housing in the period after the streets had been approved is reflected in the fact that not all of them were laid out immediately. The 1894-6 edition of the Ordnance Survey 25-inch plan shows only Replingham and Brookwood Roads and Elsenham and Heythorpe Streets in place, and only eleven houses, now nos.16-34 Elsenham Street, had been built by then. By the end of 1898, however, only Trentham and Elborough Streets had yet to attract any builders, although Astonville Street had only half a dozen houses to show. Tables 3a and 3b summarise the pattern of development in this first, hesitant, phase of the “Grid’s” building history.

**Table 3a: The Grid – House Building 1891-8**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Total</u>
1893	11	11
1894	13	24
1895	31	55
1896	5	60
1897	5	65
1898	19	84

**Table 3b: The Grid - Development of Streets 1891-8**

<u>Street</u>	<u>First Building*</u>	<u>Houses end 1898</u>	<u>Directory+</u>
Replingham	August 1894	37	1895
Brookwood	May 1896	3	1894
Astonville	September 1898	5	1898
Engadine	June 1895	6	1896
Clonmore	August 1894	10	1896
Heythorp	March 1895	11	1895
Elsenham	May 1893	12	1894

Source: Wandsworth Building Notices, WHerS; District Surveyors' Returns, LMA; Wandsworth Post Office Directories, WHerS.

Notes: \*Date of first notice of intention to build; +First mention in Directory of that year

Replingham Road, the main thoroughfare from Merton Road to Southfields Station, was obviously the most attractive site for building, and accounted for almost half of the houses built in the first phase. In order to provide room for building on the north side of this road inside the old boundary of the park, awkward curves were introduced at both the west and east ends, the latter being more acute because of the need to avoid the houses which had already been built along Merton Road. Table 3 emphasises the reluctance of builders to move far from the station, as only fifteen or so houses were more than 200 yards distant.

### **V: The Grid Completed**

After a slow start, things began to pick up at the end of the century as the building cycle made an upswing. This phase was also marked by the southward extension of the Grid to Lavenham Road, approved by the L.C.C. in 1899, and on to Revelstoke Road, approved in 1903. It is interesting that the opportunity to have another east-west road between Lavenham and Revelstoke was not taken, which would have broken the extremely long, uniform terraces built from 1904. The houses "lost" by such an insertion would have been largely regained by building in the east-west thoroughfare. The tempo of building after 1900 was not constant, however (Table 4a), but reached two peaks, in 1902 and 1904, separated by a sharp decline in 1903. This marks the completion of the two northern sections of the estate and the pause before the very rapid building of the southern part. Apart from most of the long terraces south of Lavenham Road, which were built as complete entities, development on the Grid was still piecemeal, with small groups of houses added by a variety of builders. Even so, the Grid became the largest privately-built estate in the Wandsworth area. Table 4b details the pattern of building by streets, and should be compared with Table 3b, covering the period up to 1898.

**Table 4a: The Grid – House Building 1899-1906**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Total*</u>
1899	82	166
1900	88	254
1901	283	537
1902	333	870
1903	79	949
1904	456	1405
1905	144	1549
1906	217	1766

**Table 4b: The Grid - Development of Streets 1899-1906**

<u>Street</u>	<u>First Building*</u>	<u>Hos. end 1906</u>	<u>Directory+</u>
Replingham	)	157	)
Brookwood	)	135	)
Astonville	)	181	)
Engadine	)see Table 3	181	)see Table 3
Clonmore	)	177	)
Heythorp	)	184	)
Elsenham	)	190	)
Trentham	February 1899	173	1898
Elborough	December 1901	175	1897
Lavenham	February 1901	144	1904
Revelstoke	June 1904	69	1906

Source: Wandsworth Building Notices, WHerS; District Surveyors' Returns, LMA; Wandsworth Post Office Directories, WHerS

Notes: \*Date of first notice if intention to build +First mention in Directory of that year

“North side only, south side is in Wimbledon parish/borough

One factor which undoubtedly helped to accelerate the completion of the Grid was the electrification of the District Railway in 1905. An infusion of American capital into the always financially-precarious District in 1901/2 transformed the company's fortunes.<sup>22</sup> There was already severe competition from electric trams in west London, and from deep tube lines further in, and developments south of the river meant that the intensive steam-operated service was outmoded. The line to Wimbledon was electrified on the third-and fourth-rail direct current system, and opened a new era in local transport on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1905.<sup>23</sup> This coincided with the occupation of large numbers of houses built on the Grid in the preceding eighteen months.

By the middle of 1906, the Grid was complete, a total of 1766 houses, maisonettes and shops. The three phases, 1891-8, 1899-1903 and 1904-6 had produced 84, 865 and 817 houses respectively (5%, 49% and 46% of the total), showing how slowly work had begun, and how rapidly it had been completed in the mid-1900s. Appendix 1 sets out in more detail the pattern of building in each street over the period. The principal feature to emphasise is the change from small-scale building of groups of less than ten houses in the 1890s, to the building of houses in blocks of up to fifty by the end of the period, although, of course, house building remained essentially a combination of hand crafts throughout the period.

## **VI: The Builders of the Grid**

It is now time to look in some detail at the men who created this substantial part of Wandsworth's townscape. Unfortunately, it is in the nature of Victorian and Edwardian builders that they were fairly ephemeral and have left few personal records to flesh out the bare detail of official records.<sup>24</sup> Large-scale contractors, employing all their own craftsmen and mass-producing standardised joinery and other fittings in their own works remained an exception throughout the pre-1914 era.<sup>25</sup> Many so-called “builders” were, in fact, craftsmen themselves and subcontracted the other work once they had entered into an agreement to build a house. It is also true that the deeds relating to houses on the Grid are not yet available in record offices, since there has been little redevelopment other than making good some bomb damage in Elsenham and Astonville Streets. This makes it impossible to trace in detail the relationship between the builders, landowners and sources of finance which would contribute so much to our understanding of the history of these streets.

In certain respects, the Grid did not conform to the model of “typical” builders set out above. During the thirteen years of building operations in the area, a total of forty-five builders (acting alone or in partnership) was involved, giving an overall average of just under forty houses each, although this masks large variations, as Appendix 2 shows. Only eight builders erected more than the average number, and nineteen built ten houses or fewer apiece, much more typical of

late-nineteenth century builders. Appendix 2 lists all the builders, separating firms which had a common partner, for example Ryan & Anwell and Ryan & Penfold.

Because of ambiguities in the sources, it should be noted that some of the builder identifications may be subject to correction. In about one-seventh of the total, there were applications to build the same houses by different builders at different dates. This reflects the protracted nature of the development of the Grid, and also the fact that builders often went out of business before they could start to build, or during the building process (see below). In the absence of complete access to all the deeds for houses in the area, these difficulties cannot yet be resolved. In Appendix 1, houses which fall into this category are identified, in Appendix 2, the builders' output is based on the person/firm most likely to have completed the houses.

The four largest builders, George Gale/Douglas Matthews, Ryan & Penfold, Charles Barwell and George Palmer (& James), built 60% of the houses on the Grid. Apart from Gale, these large totals were achieved mainly on the southern section after 1903. Gale, however, was mainly active in the first two phases of building, north of Lavenham Road, and examples of his work are to be found in virtually every street. He was not a builder as such, but an estate agent, who acted as a link between the surveyor Douglas Matthews of Fulham Road and the building craftsmen who actually erected the houses, presumably to designs supplied by Gale and/or Matthews. Gale also had a role in the letting and selling of property in the area, and was based at an office at the west end of Replingham Road, opposite the station, where the legend "Wimbledon Park Estate Office" can still be dimly read on an end wall.

Charles Barwell, of Merton, was a member of a family long known as builders in the Wandsworth area. J. W. Barwell built large numbers of houses in the Alma Road/East Hill area in the late 1870s, and in Thessaly Square/Mundella Road in Battersea in 1880/1. He came to the area from Peckham and later moved on to Croydon. Charles Barwell was his son.

No details have yet been traced of the various firms in which George Ryan participated. He has left a permanent legacy, however, both in bricks and mortar in Wandsworth and Wimbledon, and also in the name of Ryfold Road, a contraction of Ryan and Penfold, who came together late in 1902. The name Rywell Terrace in Replingham Road commemorates an earlier, short-lived partnership.

Even less is known of the remaining forty firms and individuals. The smaller ones especially are typical in that they appear briefly in the records applying to build a few houses and then disappear as quickly when they have been completed. Some came from local addresses, others from further afield. For example, George Kimpton, who built 81-143 Replingham Road, came from Shepherds Bush, as did George Ryan; Godfrey & Budd, who built 1-13 Heythorp Street, came from Hounslow, and H. S. Pillar from Wallington.

The slow start in building the Grid is reflected in a number of applications made early on which were not completed by the original builder (in some cases it is apparent that work had not even been started). For example, George Kimpton applied to build twenty houses in Replingham Road in June 1895, but they were not finished until 1899/1900. Another example is the large block of 48 houses bounded by Engadine Street, Clonmore Street and the south side of Brookwood Road, for which Christopher Serff gave notice in September 1900, shortly after the central section of the Grid had been laid out for building. In the end, the houses in Engadine Street were not finished until 1904, those in Clonmore Street by three different builders in 1903/4, and those in Brookwood Road in 1904. Although Serff had had another attempt at building four of the house in 1902, he is not heard of again. For many Victorian and Edwardian speculative builders, over-commitment of resources and bankruptcy were ever-present threats. People without substantial capital backing, who relied on being able to sell or mortgage each house as completed to finance the next operation, were not only at risk from the vagaries of demand for housing and the dangers of overbuilding in advance of that demand, but also from fluctuations in the money market.

Apart from the links between Douglas Matthew, surveyor, and George Gale, estate agent, and various unnamed builders, we get occasional glimpses of sub-contracting in the building of the Grid. In January 1903 King & Willkins applied to build twelve houses and shops in Brookwood Road (replacing part of Serff's original proposal of 1900), of which the fifth to the tenth plots (inclusive) were built by Henry Silvester.

### **VII: Housing on the Grid**

What sort of houses did all these builders erect? The vast majority are two-storey terrace houses, with red-brick and tile facades and slate or red tile roofs. There is a scattering of so-called half-houses (maisonettes, with two front-doors and shared gardens) throughout the area, barely distinguishable from the single-household dwellings. Replingham Road has several blocks of shops, some of them converted from earlier houses. The main concentrations of shops are at the western end, near the station, and at the north-eastern end. The only other group of shops is to be found on the south side of Brookwood Road, developed after 1900. Apart from this, local shopping needs were met by corner shops along Lavenham and Revelstoke Roads, although many of these in recent years have been converted into dwellings in the face of declining demand and competition from large stores in nearby centres.

Where builders obtained the designs for variations of detail around a few basic themes is never likely to be known in detail. The degree of variety, and the long time taken to complete the development would suggest that the Wimbledon Park Land Company itself exercised little detailed oversight and was more concerned in the basic laying-out of the streets and plots. One architect is mentioned in the building applications, J. M. Jones, of 18 Adam Street, Strand. He acted on behalf of the Lands Development Syndicate and was responsible for 50-84 Engadine Street and 45-55 Clonmore Street. (This organisation was also the developer of Pirbright Road, adjoining the Grid to the north.)

The similarity of many of the window, porch and gable designs in various parts of the Grid suggests the use of mass-produced joinery and decorative features, made offsite and assembled during building.<sup>26</sup> The main visual variety is provided by porch designs, and one of the hallmarks of the transition from "Victorian" to "Edwardian" is the use of a projecting porch roof continuous with the bay-window. Many gables surmounting the bay projections have large barge boards and finials in a variety of materials (although the latter are usually victims when re-roofing takes place). Although there is much tile hanging on the fronts of the houses, and some plaster decoration, there is little of the flamboyance which characterised houses built in the early 1890s. The generally "red" appearance of the Grid, marked by the switch from yellow-brown stock bricks to red bricks, indicates the diffusion of the "Queen Anne" or "Domestic Revival" movement in architecture to the suburbs. This school had developed in the 1870s with the work of Norman Shaw and others.<sup>27</sup> A small selection of representative designs of houses on the Grid is included here.

Apart from one or two examples of bomb damage, the Grid proper has so far been unscathed by redevelopment. This is not so in the case of villas and terraces erected in Merton Road in the 1860s, which have been swept away in 1968 by a council development called Hanford Close. It is instructive to compare these houses with those built three or four decades later. They were built in stock brick, with prominent, overhanging, slate roofs, and had classical decorative motifs, albeit rather debased. The terrace of seven houses north of Brookwood Road had an interesting projecting verandah along their fronts, supported on slender iron columns. This feature is also found on the villas built in Upper Richmond Road, Putney, around this time.<sup>28</sup>

### **VIII: Pioneer Settlers**

It is impossible to obtain full information on all of the people (potentially in excess of seven thousand) who moved into the hundreds of new houses on the Grid until the Census enumerators' returns for 1911 become available under the hundred-year rule. This can, however, be done for the houses built along the Merton Road frontage between 1860 and 1900, and for those completed on the northern section of the Grid proper by 1900, using the census enumerators returns for 1871 and 1901.

Twenty-eight houses had been built by spring 1871: 1-15 Dunsford Villas; 1-7 Verandah Cottages: 1-4 Ashen Villas and 1/2 Mayfield Villas. Seven of the Dunsford Villas were unoccupied on census night, a reflection of their newness and relative remoteness. The remaining 21 houses accommodated exactly 100 people (at average of 4.8/house, ranging from just one at 5 Verandah Cottages [Mr. Oldfield, a blind fifty-year-old language teacher], to eight at 3 Verandah Cottages and 4 Ashen Villas). There were 23 households (average size 4.3 persons), and nos. 1 and 3 Verandah Cottages were occupied by two families each. Eight of the households kept one general servant apiece, one had a boarder (a paying guest taking meals with the family), and five had relatives living in.

The most prominent family was that of Mr. Pasquier, an attorney and solicitor, at 5 Dunsford Villas. In contrast, there was a scattering of agricultural labourers and cowmen in nearby Verandah Cottages. Eleven heads of household belonged to what may broadly termed the middle classes, nine were skilled craftsmen or in domestic service, and three were semi-skilled. In terms of broad occupation groups, eight were professional, four had private means, including income from houses, four worked in agriculture, two in the building industry and one was a clerk. Very few of these people need have travelled very far to work. For example, Mr. Loudon was secretary to the Gas Light Company, whose offices were in Wandsworth Town.

In the following discussion, the houses along the west side of Merton Road will be treated separately from those on the Grid “proper”. There were 81 occupied and two empty properties between Replingham Road and the parish boundary, housing 503 people in 106 households (giving averages of 6.21/house and 4.75/household). Three-quarters of the houses were in single occupancy, the rest being shared by two households. The most densely packed properties were no.390, with seventeen inhabitants (a grocer’s assistant and a railway signalman and their families) and no.316, with fourteen people (a bricklayer’s labourer and a house painter with their dependants). Generally, however, the houses, most of them semi-detached, were uncrowded by the standards of the day. Four households had living-in servants, but fourteen had boarders and one a lodger (paying for the use of one or more rooms, but not eating with the family), indicating the need to supplement income with rent from paying guests.

In terms of social class, twelve heads of household belonged to the lower middle class (11.6%), fourteen to the semi-skilled (13.6%) and four to the unskilled (3.9%). This was very much an area of the skilled working class and those engaged in equivalent non-manual occupations such as domestic service and shop work – these groups account for 71% of household heads. The occupations of these individuals may be summarised thus:

Agriculture	1.0%	Manufacturing	17.5%
Building	24.3%	Private Means	8.7%
Retail/Distribution	14.6%	Professions	16.5%
Domestic Service	5.8%	Transport	4.8%
Industrial Service*	6.8%		

The preponderance of building workers is not surprising given the work in progress on the adjacent Grid. The area, right on the edge of London, also seems to have attracted people living on their own means, and those from the then very small public sector, such as civil servants and even a retired member of the royal household.

Turning now to the Grid, we find 179 houses occupied on census night in 1901, barely one-tenth of the ultimate total (of these 85 [47%] were half-houses, mainly in Astonville and Trentham Streets; clearly this form of building was much favoured in the first phase of development, although the two-storey single-family house was very much the norm subsequently). There were 36 completed, but empty properties and 71 houses under construction. The total population was 1,099 in 232 households (average 6.14/house and 4.74/household, virtually identical with the figures for Merton Road.

**Table 5: The Grid 1901: Houses & Population**

<u>Street</u>	<u>Occupied</u>	<u>Empty</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Households</u>
Replingham Road	36	6	0	217	45
Astonville Street	42	7	0	270	59
Trentham Street	33	1	24	213	58
Engadine Street	4	2	0	22	5
Clonmore Street	14	7	0	91	14
Heythorp Street	4	0	18	18	4
Elsenham Street	29	11	18	136	30
Brookwood Road	17	2	11	132	27

These figures show that the Merton Road end of the Grid was relatively more developed than the area by Southfields Station, indicating that use of the train was not necessarily important to many of the early inhabitants of the Grid. “Work in progress” was evidently a feature of life in some streets, which were probably unmade and unlit at this stage. Eight families had servants, all of them in Elsenham and Heythorp Streets, those unaffected by the half-house phenomenon. Boarders helped the finances of fifteen families, although there were no lodgers.

The socio-economic composition of the Grid in 1901 is shown below.

**Table 6: The Grid 1901: Social Class and Occupation**

<u>Class</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>%</u>
Upper Middle	0.8	Agriculture	0.8
Lower Middle	13.1	Building	24.0
Skilled, Non-Manual	38.8	Retail &c	13.9
Skilled, Manual	32.9	Domestic Service	6.8
Semi-Skilled	11.0	Clerks &c.	11.8
Unskilled	3.4	Manufacturing	19.4
		Private Means	4.6
		Professional	11.0
		Transport	7.6

The pattern here is very similar to that for Merton Road discussed above, and shows that the first generation of those attracted to the Grid were very much from the upper echelons of the working class, with 71% of household heads in those groups. The middle classes and lower working classes accounted for about one-seventh each. In this, the Grid more resembles the typical Battersea development of the 1870s and 1880s than those being created at the same time as the Grid in central and south Battersea. This structure is likely to have changed considerable as the remaining 1,500 houses were built on the Grid in the five years after 1901. In terms of occupation, building was again the most important sector. As usual with Victorian developments, the craftsmen and their labourers tended to rent the first houses, while continuing to work a few yards away. Few of the builders themselves are to be found in the area, however. John Gray, aged 51 and born in Hoxton, lived at 310 Merton Road. George Gray, aged 26, and presumably John’s son, lived at 400a Merton Road, and kept a servant. Thomas Fricker of 6 Park Terrace, Brookwood Road, was a builder and decorator, but is not recorded as having built any houses on the Grid.

These then were the pioneers at the suburban frontier of Southfields (and London) immediately after the death of Queen Victoria at the beginning of 1901. They lived very much in a “work in progress”, and were to endure five or six years of frenetic building activity was the Grid mushroomed to completion. Life in poorly-surfaced and lit roads, with dust in summer and mud in winter must have tried the patience of those making their way to the station, or to the shops. Ultimately however they would enjoy the fruits of local builders’ labours in generally well-built houses of substantial size for what now seem likely impossibly low rents.

.....

## References

1. N. Robson, *Roomy Villas* (2000); in contrast, S Catling, *The Changing Face of Southfields* (1978), devotes only two pages to this period.
2. C. S. S. Higham, *Wimbledon Manor House under the Cecils* (1962), 34-37.
3. R. Ensing, 'Dunsford Manor and the Brodrick Family in Wandsworth 2', *Wands. Hist.* 44 (1985), 11.
4. Higham, *op. cit.*, 34.
5. Wandsworth Tithe Map and Apportionment, Wandsworth Heritage Service at Battersea Library (hereafter WHerS).
6. Sale Plans and Particulars, WHerS.
7. For example in the vicinity of Falcon Lane and Usk Road.
8. Data derived from a sample of Battersea deeds, 1840-60, WHerS.
9. Catling, *op. cit.*; Wandsworth Census Enumerators Returns, 1861, 1871, WHerS.
10. J. Parry Lewis, *Building Cycles and Britain's Growth* (1965), *passim*.
11. Sale Plan and Particulars, WHerS.
12. R. Logan, *South Battersea: the Formative Years 1851-1900*, Wandsworth Paper 3 (1977).
13. See, e.g., T. C. Barker & M. Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, 2 vols. (1963-74); H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb* (1961); A. A. Jackson, *Semi-Detached London* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1991).
14. Dyos, *op. cit.*, 69.
15. *Putney and Wandsworth Borough News*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1889, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1889.
16. K. A. Bailey, "Hypothetical History, or some railways that never were" (1973), *Wandsworth Historian*, 8.
17. C. F. Dendy Marshall, *History of the Southern Railway*, 1968 ed., 127.
18. 45 & 46 Vict., c.CCXLVIII (18<sup>th</sup> August 1882).
19. *Putney and Wandsworth Borough News*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1889
20. There had been little or no development in the area bounded by Lavender Gardens and the Battersea/Clapham boundary, except in Sisters Avenue and by Lavender Hill. Many hundreds of houses were being built in this area at the same time as development was proceeding slowly on the first phase of the Grid.
21. Parry Lewis, *op. cit.*
22. Barker & Robbins, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, chap. IV.
23. C. E. Lee, *100 Years of the District* (1968), 22.
24. See, e.g., D. Cannadine & D. Reeder (eds.), *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History* by H. J. Dyos (1982), 154-189.
25. H. Hobhouse, *Thomas Cubitt, Master Builder* (1971).
26. S. Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (1982), chap. 4.
27. A. Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (1976); R. Dixon & S. Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture* (1978), 61-69.
28. The so-called "Nelson Houses".

## APPENDIX 1

The following lists give details of each group of houses on the Grid, together with the builder, date of building and first reference in local directories. Note that in some cases the houses were applied for by more than one builder, and these alternatives are shown in the final column.

### Replingham Road

1-5	North	1906	1908	
11-29	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	Station Parade
31-37	Wright	1894	1898-1900	
39/41	Castle	1902/3	1904	
43-67	Ryan	1902	1904	
69-79	Finch	1902	1904	
81-143	Kimpton	1895	1900	
145-169	Ryan & Penfold	1903	1904	Bicknell 1893/4
171-181	Hillman & Good	1899	1902	
183-201	Pillar	1904	1906	
2-8	Gale/Matthews	1903	1904	
10-18	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903/4	
20/22	Castle	1895/1902	1895/1903	
24-32	Godfrey & Budd	1895	?	
34-42	Walker	1897	1901/2	Lyons 1894
44-82	Ryan & Anwell	1901	1902/3	Rywell Tce. [64-82]
84-118	Ryan	1903	1904	
120-138	Gale	1899	1901/2	Grosvenor Tce.
140-186	Gray	1898/9	1900	Belgrave Tce.

### Brookwood Road

1-11	Merredew	1902	1904	
13-21	Atkinson	1902	1903/4	Riversdale Tce./Matthews 1902
23-41	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903/4	
43-49	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	St. Stephens Tce
51-61	Atkinson	1901	1903	St. Stephens Tce.
63-71	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	Barwell
73-81	Taylor	1900/1	1903	
83-101	Meech	1899	1901	
103-117	Gale/Matthews	1899/1900	1901	
2-14	Gale/Matthews	1901	1903	Southbrook Tce./Bishop 1902
16-26	Ward	1902	1903	Ward 1900
28-38	Palmer	1902	1903	Rossllyn Tce. [16-38]
38				Beckwith 1904
40-60	(King & Willkins	1903	1904	Serff 1900
	(Silvester [5 hos.]	1903		Serff 1900
62-80	Palmer	1901	1903	Brookwood Parade
82-102	Ward	1901	1903	
104-124	Ward	1901	1903	Lonsdale Tce.
126-144	Palmer	1901/2	1903	Park Tce.
146-150	Shaw	1896	1898/1901	Park Tce.

**Lavenham Road**

1-7	Atkinson	1901	1904	
9-23	Gale/Matthews	1901	1904	Bishop 1902
25-47	Ward	1901	1904	
49-67	Atkinson	1901/2	1904	
69-89	Palmer	1902	1904	Atkinson
91-109	Penfold	1902	1904	
111-131	Ward	1901	1904	
133-143	Palmer	1901	1904	
2-24	Barwell	1902	1904	
26-44	Barwell	1902	1904	
46-104	Ryan & Penfold	1902	1904	
106-128	Smith	1904	1906	
130-144	Smith	1905	1906	

**Revelstoke Road (north side)**

2-16	Barwell	1906	1907	
18/20*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
22-52	Barwell	1905	1907	
54/56*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
58-88	Barwell	1905	1906	
90/92*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
94-124	Barwell	1905	1907	
126/128*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
130-160	Barwell	1905	1907	
162/164*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
166-196	Barwell	1904	1906	
198/200*	Dilley	1904	1906/7	
202-210	Barwell	1905	1906/7	

Note: \* are corner shops

**Elsenham Street**

1/3	Mulliner	1901	1903	
5-11	Gale/Matthews	1901	1903	
13-37	Wright	1894	1895-8	
39-47	Gale/Matthews	1901	1902	
49-87	Atkinson	1900/1	1902	
89-111	Barwell	1905	1906	Darvill 1904/5
113-177	Barwell	1905	1906	
2-12	Gale/Matthews	1902/3	1903	
14	Baker	1896	1900	
16-34	Wyvill	1893	1894-6	
36-52	Woodley	1901/2	1903	
54-100	Gale	1900	1902	
102-202	Atkinson	1904-6	1906-8	

**Heythorp Street**

1-25	Gale/Matthews	1901	1903	
27-39	Merredew	1902	1904	
41-73	Gale/Matthews	1901	1903	
75-165	Barwell	1904	1905/6	

2-4	Godfrey & Budd	1895	1897	Hall 1895
6/8	Castle	1899	1900/1	Hall 1895
10-16	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	Hall 1895
18-50	Gale/Matthews	1901	1904	Ward 1900
52-74	Jenkins	1901	1904	
78-112	Bishop	1902	1904	Ward 1900
114-204	Barwell	1904	1905/6	

### **Clonmore Street**

1-23	Bobby	1894	1896-1900	
25-43	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	
45-55	Jones	1903	1903/5	Serff 1900
57/59	Byford	1904	1905	Serff 1900
61-79	Barwell	1904	1905	Serff 1900
81-179	Ryan & Penfold	1904	1905/6	
2-8	Lyons	1894	1898-1900	
10-20	McAteer	1895	1898-1900	
22-42	Gale/Matthews	1902	1904	
44-74	King & Willkins	1901/2	1904	Palmer 1902
80-178	Ryan & Penfold	1904	1905/6	

### **Engadine Street**

1-11	Godfrey & Budd	1895	1897-1901	
13-43	Merredew	1902	1903/4	
45-79	Ryan & Penfold	1904	1905	Serff 1900 Mitchell & Collins 1902
81-179	Ryan & Penfold	1904/5	1906/7	
2-32	Gale/Matthews	1901	1903	
34-48	Gale/Matthews	1901/2	1903	
50-84	Jones	1903	1903/4	King & Willkins 1901
86-182	Ryan & Penfold	1904	1905/6	

### **Elborough Street**

1-23	Ryan & Anwell	1901/2	1903	
25-45	Barwell	1902	1903	
47-79	Palmer	1902	1903/4	
81-175	Palmer & James	1906	1907/8	
2-12	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903	Barwell 1902
14-44	Gale/Matthews	1902	1903/4	
46-78	Palmer	1902/3	1903/4	
80-174	Palmer & James	1906	1907	

### **Trentham Street**

1-7	Gunn Bros.	1899	1902	
9-45a	Meech	1899/1900	1901	
47-79	Ward	1901	1904	
81-115	Geary	1904	1906	
117-155	Hoban	1904/5	1907	Bartholomew 1904
157-175	Wellings	1905	1906/7	Simpson 1905
2-22	Meech	1900	1901	
24-46a	Taylor	1900/1	1902	
48-80	Ward	1902	1904	
82-132	Williams	1902	1904	
134-170	Smith	1905	1906-8	

**Astonville Street**

<u>Nos.</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Directory</u>	<u>Alternative</u>
1-11a	Gale	1899	1900	
13-45a	Meech	1899	1901	
47-79	Palmer	1902	1903	Ward, 1901
81-171	Palmer & James	1905	1906/7	
2-6a	Gray	1898	1900	
8/10	Gilbert	1898	1901	
12-52a	Gale	1899/1900	1901/3	
54-96	Palmer	1901/2	1903	
98-190	Palmer & James	1905/6	1906/7	

**APPENDIX 2****Southfields Grid – Builders 1894-1906**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Hos.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Range*</u>
George Gale/Douglas Matthews	Fulham/Wandsworth	255	14.4	+10/-41
Geo. Ryan & Henry Penfold	Shep. Bush/Wandsworth	254	14.4	-25
Charles Barwell [& Co.]	Tooting/Morden	237	13.4	+11/-12
Geo. Palmer & Jones	Wandsworth/Tooting	189	10.7	
George Palmer	Wandsworth	117	6.6	+16/-27
W. H. Atkinson	Battersea/Wandsworth	96	5.4	+11
J. Ward	Wandsworth	85	4.8	+35
F.J. Meech	Wandsworth	57	3.2	
T.H. Smith	Wandsworth	39	2.2	
Ryan & Anwell		32	1.8	
G. Merredew	Kingston	29	1.6	
C.R. Williams	Wandsworth	26	1.5	
J.M. Jones [Lands Devt. Synd.]	Strand	24	1.4	-18
George Ryan	Shepherds Bush	22	1.2	
King & Willkins	Fulham	22	1.2	+18/-16
J. Hoban	Clapham	20	1.1	-20
G.H. Kimpton	Shepherds Bush	20	1.1	
James Geary	Wandsworth	18	1.0	
W.F. Bishop	Anerley	18	1.0	+14/-18
Sydney & H. Wright	Wimbledon	17	1.0	
G.F. Gray	Wandsworth	17	1.0	
A.G. Taylor	Wandsworth	17	1.0	
Godfrey & Budd	Hounslow	13	0.7	-2
R.H. Bobby	Brondesbury	12	0.7	
W. Jenkins	Fulham	12	0.7	
Roffey Dilley	Wimbledon	12	0.7	
Edward Wyvill	Wimbledon	10	0.6	
Henry Penfold	Wandsworth	10	0.6	
Wellings	Wandsworth	10	0.6	-10
H.S. Pillar	Wallington	10	0.6	
Woodley Bros.	Wandsworth/Fulham	9	0.5	
Castle & Son	Roehampton	8	0.5	-2
Finch Bros.	Wandsworth	6	0.3	
E. Hillman & Good	Wandsworth	6	0.3	
J. or P. McAteer	Wandsworth	6	0.3	
Henry Silvester	Grays Inn Road	5	0.3	
F. Walker	Wandsworth	5	0.3	-5

Cornelius Lyons	Wandsworth	4	0.2	+5
Gunn Bros.		4	0.2	
W.J. North	Teddington	3	0.2	
A.J. Shaw	Wandsworth	3	0.2	
Benjamin Gilbert	Battersea/Wandsworth	2	0.1	
William Byford	Wandsworth	2	0.1	
Mulliner Bros.	Wandsworth	2	0.1	
Baker Bros.	Peckham	1	0.1	
		1766		

Note: \* the figures given with +/- indicate houses which may or may not have been built by the builders concerned, and where the sources cannot be clarified. The builders listed below made applications for the number of houses shown, but at present there is insufficient evidence that they were actually built by these individuals. It is possible that one builder began the houses, and that another completed them, perhaps several years later.

Christopher Serff	Kensington	48
Mitchell & Collins		18
W. Bartholomew	Balham	13
Henry Dove	Fulham	13
Albert Spencer		12
E. Darvill		12
William Hall	Fulham	12
R.H. Simpson	Merton	10
A.C. Bicknell	Wandsworth	10-20
G. Sturges	Wandsworth	6
T. Beckwith		1

Source: Wandsworth Building Notices, WHerS; District Surveyors' Returns, LMA