



VILLAGE WALK 2

Palaces, People, Trees and Snowdrops (in Feb) Village Green to Havering Country Park

There were originally two palaces. One situated just at the rear of the church and used by royalty till 1638 when it became uninhabitable. Originally known as **The Royal Manor and Park** it is commonly called **Havering Palace**. The mainly timber construction was associated with Saxon Kings, particularly Edward the Confessor, who may have used it as a place of retreat. It is written in Harold Smith's History of Havering-atte-Bower that '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 made it clear that this was superb hunting land providing royal sport and patronage for successive monarchs. As well as deer, cattle and pigs were reared for various court functions and feasts. In 1267 the park, manor and house of Havering were committed to Queen Eleanor of Provence and Consort to Henry III. This began the long connection of Havering with the Queens Consort or Dowager which lasted down to the time of Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles I. 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. A west wing was added to existing medieval buildings. Plans show 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 by a reigning monarch was Charles I in October 1638. By 1650 the palace was in ruins and attempts to restore it in 1652 failed.

Saint 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 split, (knapped), flints showing the black interiors of the stone. The subsequent dense stone will

remain clean and attractive almost indefinitely. The roof is slate in keeping with other historical buildings in the area.

Focussing on **the churchyard there are several people of note**. James Theobald MP, the Pemberton's and Pemberton Barnes of The Hall, Howard Smith and family author of A History of the Parish of Havering-atte-Bower, Knighton's the butcher and the McIntoshes' of Havering Park.

Alongside the churchyard is **Havering Park Stables**. **Havering Park** was another mansion in the village, again demolished, with only the stables remaining. An article from Havering Libraries states 'In 1828 the Crown sold the manor of Havering to Hugh McIntosh, a contractor who had built the East India and London Docks. The Crown's estate of around 1530 acres, included Havering Park Farm, Havering Little Park Farm, Hainault Lodge farm and Bower farm. Around 1850 **David McIntosh**, a nephew who had succeeded Hugh in 1840, moved to Havering-atte-Bower and began the building of **Havering Park**, a substantial house completed around 1870 **on the site of Bower Farm**. After the death of David McIntosh in 1879 his widow Charlotte, continued to live at Havering Park until her death in 1923. The farms on the estate were very successful and Mrs McIntosh was particularly known for a herd of prizewinning Jersey cattle. The grounds and gardens were of particular note, not least the early avenue of Wellingtonia trees.' The house was demolished in 1929 but proposed development plans were stopped by Green Belt policies! Part of the park was sold off in 1 acre plots and huts were erected in the park. In 1970 Greater London Council cleared the huts with a compulsory purchase order and Havering Country Park opened in 1975. In 1986 ownership was transferred to the London Borough of Havering.

Wellingtonia Avenue. This ancient avenue of conifer trees in the Country Park was planted from seeds brought back to Britain from North America by William Lobb in the early 19th century and were marketed by Veitch and Co as 'Wellingtonia', a fashionable and fitting tribute to **Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington**. The official botanical name for the trees in our local woodland is now **Sequoiadendron Giganteum**, or more simply Giant Redwood. The name also honours Sequoia (1770-1843) of part Cherokee heritage. The trees are known to live for more than 3000 years and reach staggering heights and girths. The trees have thick spongy bark, containing protective tannin which helps the trees survive forest fires. If you put your ear to the trunk after rain you may hear the sap rising. The trees in our avenue were planted to line the

entrance way to Havering Park house for the visiting friends of Charlotte McIntosh who would arrive in their carriages and cars from the Collier Row end. The trees could now be about 140 years old. Mrs McIntosh had a beautiful, magnificent garden looked after by 34 gardeners. Wellingtonia Avenue was a wide weed free gravel path and had pristine lawns on either side.

There are many short or longer walks in the country park down to the Furry Field on the right, where you will find picnic areas, and beyond. Further into the Park you will find a lovely patch of snowdrops in late February.