

THE HISTORY OF YOUR AREA

Dating back to Tudor times, 'London Road' - no more than a narrow, bumpy lane - was until 1830 the main highway running west from central London. Around thirty years before this photograph was taken, when still rural with only a handful of buildings, it was renamed Fulham Road

The New King's Road was the King's private road throughout the 18th century which the reigning monarch used to travel between Westminster and Hampton Court via the Fulham ferry. Its proximity to Parsons Green no doubt played a part in the area becoming home to a succession of royal mistresses. East End House, on the east side of the Green, was lived in by Mrs Fitzherbert, twice widowed mistress and secret wife of the Prince Regent, later George IV. The couple 'married' in 1785 but the union was declared illegal due to her Roman Catholic faith. George's excessive lifestyle left him with crippling debts and he eventually agreed to a disastrous arranged marriage with his cousin Caroline of Brunswick. They had never met before their wedding day in 1795 and took an instant dislike to each other. They separated within a year and George continued his relationship with Maria Fitzherbert until his death.

Around the same time his brother William installed his own mistress, the Irish actress Mrs Jordan, in nearby Belfield House. The couple had ten children but were never allowed to marry. Belfield still stands today and in 1917 became Lady Margaret School.

Writer John Bowack in his 18th century account of the parish of Fulham said that Parsons Green was 'inhabited mostly by gentry and persons of quality'. However the route from London was a hazardous one for its wealthy residents at a time when highwaymen were 'as common as crows'. Gallows were often erected on the corner of Parsons Green Lane and Fulham Road and bodies of convicted highwaymen left hanging as a deterrent.

Rather than face the gallows, one highwayman, about to be captured at the crossroads, shot himself after flinging his purse into the crowd. He was buried here with a stake through his heart and Pursers Cross Road is named after him.

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