

# THE HISTORY OF YOUR AREA

**Today's Northcote Road follows the course of the old Falcon Brook – a stream running above ground on its way to the River Thames, through the centre of the valley separating Wandsworth and Clapham Commons. The stream was named in honour of the Lord of the Manor, Lord St John, whose family crest bore the emblem of a falcon rising.**

The area had been little more than acre upon acre of agricultural land and country estates until the middle of the 19th century when the Brook was deepened and covered over to be used as a main drain in order that building development could take place around St Johns and Northcote Roads. Even so, this work was still disrupted by farm animals – particularly from the local piggeries – found wandering the newly built streets. Nearby Latchmere Road was called 'Pig Hill' until well into the 20th century.

The arrival of the railways from 1838 saw the population in Battersea treble in ten years. The first road to be built running off what would later become Northcote Road was Chatham Road, started in 1850 and financed by the British Land Society in its 'homes for votes' initiative. The houses were small and designed for working class labour voters. By 1880 the road had no fewer than six pubs – two of them 'The Gardener's Arms' and 'The Carpenter's Arms' reflecting the high number of its residents employed in these professions. By contrast the Conservative Land Society began work on houses aimed at a different market in Wakehurst and Belleville Roads - building larger houses with a servant's entrance at the side. These houses were the first major project of Alfred Heaver who later went on to build the Heaver Estate.

Northcote Road itself was developed piecemeal – linking each road as it was built. The plan had always been for it to stretch as far as Nightingale Lane but developers were restricted not only by how the land had been divided but also when it became available and in the end it was only possible to take it as far as Broomwood Road.

In the thirty years from 1850 the number of shops increased fivefold. Most people shopped every day for food and Northcote Road had as many as thirteen butchers, five fishmongers and several pawnbrokers and was the only parade of shops in the area with an outdoor market every Saturday.

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## Northcote Road c. 1915

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