



## Colebrooke Row area - Islington

Colebrooke Row in Islington features some of the most picturesque Georgian homes in London. Until the early 18th century much of the area was open fields and gardens and when houses were built in the 1760s they overlooked the New River which ran down the centre of Colebrooke Row. The Colebrooke Collection is built on the site of the Colebrooke School and prior to this Nos. 37-40 Colebrooke Row.

### Colebrooke and early cottages

The name Colebrooke originates from James Colebrooke who owned the land in this area and was in fact the largest landowner in the parish. He also laid the foundation stone of the new parish church, St Mary's, in 1751. His son, Sir George Colebrooke continued as landowner into the late 18th century.

Building began around Colebrooke Row during the early 18th century with a pair of two-storeyed cottages (later Nos. 56 and 57 Colebrooke Row) built around 1717. More cottages were then built on the other side of the river, facing southwards, and later became a school run by Rev. Rule in the 1760s and 70s.

### Georgian townhouses

Large scale residential building did not start along Colebrooke Row until the 1760s when the distinct Georgian terraces were built. Bird's Buildings, named after Thomas Bird (today's Nos. 60-5 Colebrooke Row) were built on the north side of River Lane (St Peter's Street) in 1767 and Nos. 55 to 41; originally the only homes known as Colebrooke Row were built in 1768.

Nos. 34-36 and 40-41 Colebrooke Row, sitting adjacent to the new Colebrooke Collection were built by Richard Masefield in 1774, who, it is believed, built the original Nos. 37-40 that were removed in the early 20th century. The last house on the southern corner with Gerrard Road was originally the Colebrooke Arms but within a few years had become a girls' school and by 1828 a boys' school.

### Nursery gardens and William Woodfall

A large portion of the surrounding land was still open ground and to the east side of Colebrooke Row was a nursery garden covering six acres, run by William and James Watson in 1770. At this time, a house behind Colebrooke Row, numbered 32a Colebrooke Row (sadly demolished in 1952) was the former home of parliamentary reporter, William Woodfall, from 1772-6. Woodfall was a pioneer of parliamentary reporting and Hansard. The site is now occupied by Hermitage House.

### Charles and Mary Lamb

Until the 1790s the west side of the New River had remained largely undeveloped except for the former home of Charles Lamb and his sister, Mary, Colebrooke Cottage. Charles and Mary Lamb lived in their comfortable riverside cottage (today's No.64 Duncan Terrace) from 1823 to 1827. Charles was a writer and essayist who was friends with many eminent literary men, many of whom he entertained at Colebrooke Cottage, including John Keats, William Hazlett, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and Leigh Hunt. However, Charles also had to look after his sister Mary, who suffered from "fits of insanity" and who had killed her mother during one of her fits in 1796. [There is an L.C.C. plaque on the house]

### Further building around Colebrooke Row

Building began to extend towards the south when the architect and surveyor, James Taylor built New Terrace, later to become Nos. 50-8 Duncan Terrace on the west side of the river in 1791. It was extended south of Charlton Street in 1794 – later becoming Nos. 46-9 Duncan Terrace. Taylor also built homes in Charlton Place during the early 1790s, including the curved south side of Charlton Crescent.

Building continued throughout the early 19th century, with the extension of Nos. 11-21 and 22-32 Duncan Terrace in the 1830s; Duncan Street in 1834; and Nos. 33-9 and 40-5 Duncan Terrace were completed during the 1840s. James Rhodes was responsible for laying out Elia Street, first known as Alfred Street, as well as Sudeley Street and Vincent Terrace by 1837. Rhodes was also responsible for Quick Street, first known as Gordon Street in 1838. New homes went up along all these streets during the late 1830s and 1840s by builders William Beckingham, John Wilson and Thomas Allen. At the same time new homes were built between Elia Street and Vincent Terrace, later Nos. 13-19 Colebrooke Row.



Gerrard Street was built up during the 1840s by James Rhodes and Thomas Cubitt, over the ground of Watson's nursery – which had in fact been used for brick building since the 1820s. Noel Road along the canal was developed slightly later during the 1850s.

### **Many names and numbers**

With all the separate building that took place during the 18th and 19th centuries, Colebrooke Row was in fact known under many different names and conflicting numbers, until in 1864 River Terrace, River Terrace North, Montague Place, Colebrooke Row and Birds Buildings all came under the one name of Colebrooke Row. In 1890 New Terrace, Camden and Colebrooke Terrace were reorganised to become Duncan Terrace.

### **Colebrooke School**

Colebrooke School opened on the site of Nos.37-40 Colebrooke Row, in 1914, for mentally handicapped children. It was reorganised in 1951 for educationally 'subnormal' senior girls and again in 1960 as an all age school for maladjusted children.

### **Notable former residents in and around Colebrooke Row**

#### ***Caroline Chisholm***

No.32 Charlton Place

Caroline Chisholm spent many years in India and Australia helping to assist emigrants and on her return to London set up the Family Colonisation Loan Society. [G.L.C. plaque]

#### ***Alexander Cruden***

No.45 Camden Passage

Humanist and intellectual who is most remembered for creating the Concordance to the Bible in 1737. [Chapel Market Stallholders Association plaque]

#### ***Joe Orton***

No.25 Noel Road

Playwright, who wrote 'Entertaining Mrs Sloane' who was murdered by his partner here in 1967 [Islington Borough Council plaque]

#### ***Edward Suess***

No.4 Duncan Terrace

Geologist and educationalist

[Geological Society plaque]

#### ***Cyril Ray***

Journalist and broadcaster

No.57 Colebrooke Row (also formerly the Castle Inn and Tea Gardens)

#### ***Reverend George Burder***

No.13 Colebrooke Row

Preacher, writer and secretary of the London Missionary Society

Other notable early residents include politician and educationalist, **James Burgh** and political reformer and writer, **William Carpenter**.

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