



No.340 Upper Richmond Road – ‘A Nelson house’

No.340 Upper Richmond Road is part of a stretch of homes commonly referred to as the ‘Captains houses’, however, over time the name has evolved and the houses were in fact first named the ‘Nelson houses’. The name of ‘Nelson’ originated from Francis Catherine Bolton, great niece of 1st Viscount Horatio Nelson of the Battle of Trafalgar, who married the landowner, Robert Petteward. No.340 Upper Richmond Road was completed in 1867 and first named ‘Rokeby Villa’.

Grand connections to Lord Admiral Nelson

Prior to the building of homes along this part of Upper Richmond Road, large parts of the area were still covered in farming fields, with most buildings concentrated around the high street and the area near the river. During the mid 19th century large portions of Putney were owned by the Petteward family. The heir to the estate, Robert Petteward married Francis Bolton, daughter of Thomas Nelson, 2nd Earl Nelson, in 1855. It was Francis’s grandmother who was the elder sister of the great Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson, national hero of the Battle of Trafalgar. Petteward was developing large sections of his Putney estate and to honour his wife’s grand connections decided to name the homes along Upper Richmond Road ‘the Nelson houses’.

The new railway

Great change had already begun in Putney in 1846 when the new London & South Western Railway line was built. This development drastically altered Putney, which was still a small rural town in Surrey. The railway allowed successful merchants and the rising middle classes to move out to ‘the country’, but still be within commuting distance to central London, something that was impossible for all but the very wealthy before this time.

Building development and the ideal ‘Villa’

This development inspired great building development in Putney, hence the building of new homes along Upper Richmond Road by landowner, Robert Petteward. During the middle of the 1860s, Nos. 328-356 were completed, but at this time the houses were named not numbered. House names included, Fairmont Villa, Springfield Lodge, Sandown Lodge, The Ferns and today’s No.340, Rokeby Villa, all further supporting the idea of a country escape. The name ‘Villa’ was very popular during the mid-Victorian period, inspiring the idea of the ideal home for the aspiring middle classes.

The first resident of Rokeby Villa

Rokeby Villa was completed and first occupied in 1869 by a Mr Henry Lawes, a wholesale draper. The 1871 census records Henry Lawes, aged 60, living in the house with his wife, Rosa and their three daughters. Henry Lawes also had three live-in servants, a nurse maid, general servant and a nurse.

The Harries and Vickers families

The Lawes family remained at Rokeby Villa until the late 1870s, but by the time of the next census, in 1881, the house was home to commercial clerk, Daniel Harries. The census records Daniel Harries, aged 56, living in the house with his wife, Caroline and their 24 year old unmarried daughter, Caroline. The Harries family also had two live-in servants. However, the Harries also did not remain in the house very long, as by the late 1880s the house had become the home of William Vickers. By this time, the house had also been renumbered, No. 232 (due to the number of additional houses built along Upper Richmond Road a reorganisation of house names and numbers was required).

Charles Norris – Silk manufacturer

By the time the 1891 census was recorded, the house was the home of a retired silk manufacturer, Charles Norris. Mr Norris, aged 57 at the time of the census, was living in the house with his wife, Ellen, aged 50 and two live-in servants, a cook and house maid. Charles and Ellen Norris remained in the house until around 1904 when the house became the home of a Mr Henry Attridge. It was also at this time that the house numbers were again rearranged and Rokeby Villa finally became 340 Upper Richmond Road.



chesterton
SINCE 1805
humberts
the history of...

Many residents of the early 20th century

The early 20th century saw a number of residents move into the house, including during World War One, Rufe Naylor and after the war period, William and Ruby McGill. By the mid 1920s, No.340 Upper Richmond Road had become the home of Charles and Julia Schebsman, who remained in the house throughout the inter-war period, only moving a short time before the outbreak of World War II.

The Robinson and Roberts families

In 1939, the house became the home of physician and surgeon, Maurice Robinson and his wife Muriel, along with two servants, Maud and Margery. Their son, Michael was Flight Lieutenant in Royal Air Force. Maurice and Muriel Robinson remained in the house for over 20 years, until the early 1960s. It was at this time that the house became the home of Derrick and Patricia Roberts, who lived in the house with their family for over 40 years.

© Melanie Backe-Hansen
Historian
October 2009