

NEASDEN'S RAILWAY VILLAGE

The Metropolitan Railway Company opened the world's first underground railway, from Paddington to Farringdon, in 1863. Within five years it was planning a branch line out from Baker Street that would allow people from St John's Wood to travel to and from Central London. Acts of Parliament in 1873 and 1874 allowed further extensions of this line to a new



terminus at Neasden, with sidings and workshops, and then on to Harrow-on-the-hill. Within a year the Metropolitan Railway had agreed to buy around 250 acres (around 100 hectares) of land at Neasden from the Prout family for £83,450.

A terrace of early 1880's homes in Quainton (originally "A") Street, Neasden Railway Village.

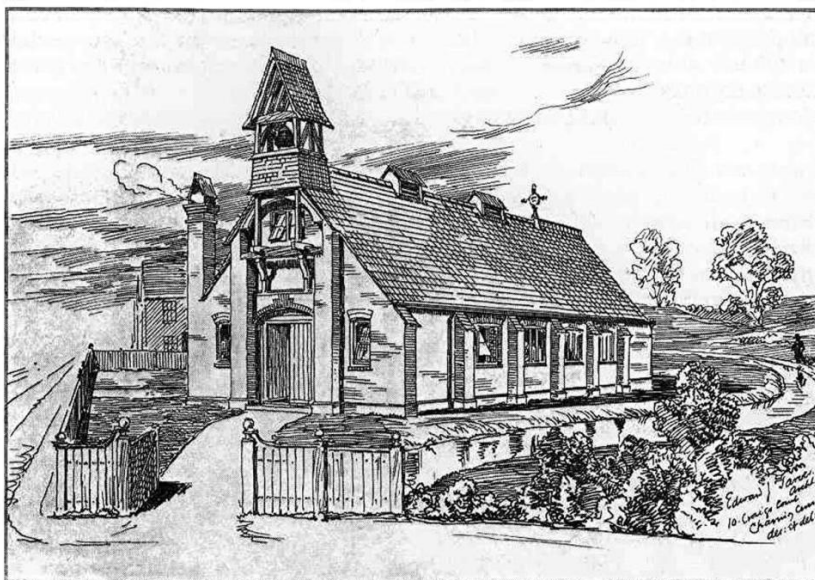
[Photograph by Philip Grant, 2009]

The railway line to Harrow opened in 1880, with a station in Neasden Lane (as insisted on by the Prouts, for the convenience of themselves and their neighbours) called Kingsbury-and-Neasden (now just Neasden). Building a large railway works in the middle of a country area meant that the company also needed housing for its workers. An area at the northern end of the site, bounded by the Grand Junction Canal Feeder and the Neasden to Kingsbury road, was earmarked for the estate. By Easter 1882 Metropolitan workers and their families were moving in to 60 two-storey terraced houses in "A Street", which ran from Neasden Lane to the Railway Works, and 40 houses in "B Street". In between these parallel streets were ten shops, with two floors of accommodation above, on the south side of what the company called "Kingsbury Road" (now part of Neasden Lane North).

The following year, the Church of England sent the Reverend James Mills to act as a priest for the railway village. He held services in one of the shops and lived above it, but quickly started to raise money to pay for a "mission church". The company gave him a site for this at the corner of A Street and the Feeder, and St Saviour's Church opened on Christmas Day 1883. Mills then started a school for village children in the shop at 1 Kingsbury Road, and soon had around fifty pupils. By 1885, this had moved into the church building and was an elementary school under full Government inspection, which was to serve the local community until the Second World War.

St Saviour's Mission Church, with the Feeder flowing to its right, from the architect's 1883 drawing.

[From Ken Valentine's book: "Neasden – A Historical Study"]

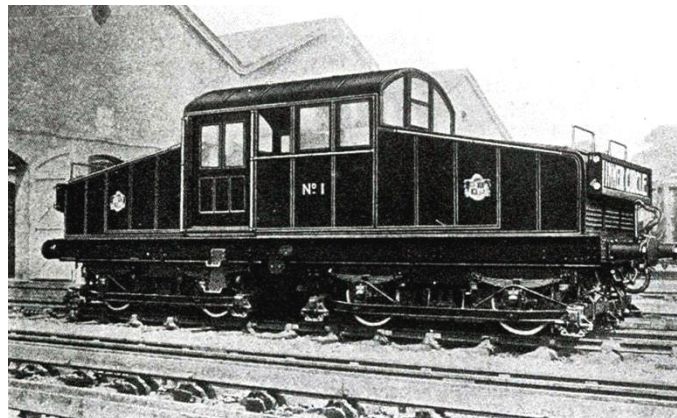


The 1891 census records show 570 people (300 males and 270 females) living in Neasden Railway Village, with most of the adult men employed in a variety of railway occupations. Among them was William Mapperson (born at Ashford, Kent) at 18 B Street, a *coach bodymaker*, while at No. 10 William Gooch was a *platelayer* and his lodger George Painwell (both born in Suffolk) was an *engine fitter*, and Edward Edwards (from Liverpool) was a *locomotive engine wheel turner*. A number of men worked as *gas makers*, as the railway

Administrative County of <u>Middlesex</u>										The subpartitioned Houses are shown within the Boundaries of the										Parliamentary Borough or Division										Parliamentary Division or Division									
Civil Parish										Urban Sanitary District										Town or Village or Hamlet										Rural Sanitary District									
<u>St. Andrew</u>										<u>St. Andrew</u>										<u>St. Andrew</u>										<u>St. Andrew</u>									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through									
Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through										Mansement-Through																			

A British Westinghouse electric locomotive at the Neasden Works in 1905.

[Source: the Metropolitan Vickers collection]



Just before the First World War the railway company had the idea of developing the spare land it owned near its stations for housing. This scheme had to be delayed, but by 1919 the Metropolitan was laying out the roads for what was misleadingly called its Kingsbury Garden Village. Plots were

sold to developers who built houses for sale in North Way (which was soon to become part of a new arterial road, the North Circular), Village Way, Elm Way and other streets on the 40 acre site. Originally it was planned to keep the workers' village separate from the "Garden Village", but a need for more employees at the railway works and government subsidies to build new "working class" housing in 1923/24 saw this change. The three railway streets were built-up down to Chesham Street, which itself was extended to join Village Way, and many new homes were constructed.

By this time the people of the railway village had formed the Neasden Village Welfare Association. They rented the land between the Feeder and the river, next to Neasden Lane, and in 1922 built themselves a village hall.



After the new homes had been built, they added a second hall, and a playground for the children (now around five hundred of them) who lived in the village, with the railway company donating swings and see-saws.

A 1920's Metropolitan electric train.

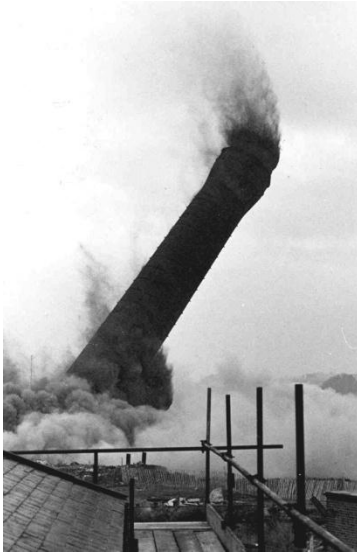
[Source: Brent Archives – from the 1924 British Empire Exhibition edition of "Metroland"]

After the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park had attracted twenty-seven million visitors in 1924/25, many more people wanted to move to leafy suburbs around London. The electric trains operating from the Metropolitan Railway's depot offered a quick and easy journey into Central London, and the area of new 1920's and 1930's housing estates close to stations on the line out beyond Neasden became known as "Metroland". The railway company which had given its name to this part of suburbia was about to disappear. In 1933, its commuter services were taken over by the London Passenger Transport Board, but the "Metropolitan" name was retained for these lines within the London Transport system.



Looking down Quainton Street towards Neasden Power Station in 1961.

[From Len Snow's book: "Willesden Past"]



One of the power station chimneys being demolished in 1969.

[Source: Brent Archives – Wembley History Society Collection.]

Neasden Power Station was converted to burn oil rather than coal soon after the Second World War, but was still a cause of air pollution. As “clean air” became more important from the 1950’s onwards, it was closed in 1968 and demolished the following year. The building of the nearby Chalkhill Estate, and an influx of Asian families driven out of Kenya and Uganda, meant that the area needed a new secondary school by the early 1970’s. Brent Council purchased the former power station site, and built Neasden High School in 1973/74 on land reclaimed from its cooling water reservoir. A new bridge across the Feeder served not just this school but the Roman Catholic voluntary aided Saint

Margaret Clitherow School, which opened for infants in September 1973, with a junior school being added in 1977.

Although seen by many as a successful school, pupil numbers at Neasden High began to fall in the 1980’s, as they did at other Brent comprehensives. The school also suffered from fears about asbestos that had been used in its construction, and from several arson attacks, with two classrooms destroyed in the most serious of these. Despite strong objections from parents, Neasden High School was closed as part of a Council schools reorganisation scheme in 1989. Its buildings were demolished, after only 16 years in use, and the Quainton Village housing scheme was built on its site by the Metropolitan Housing Trust.

Some of the “new” P.C.H.A. houses in Verney Street, with an 1880’s Metropolitan Railway terrace beyond >

[Photograph by Philip Grant, 2009]

More than 100 years after the Metropolitan Railway first built cottages for its workers at “A Street” (Quainton Street), Paddington Churches Housing Association constructed twenty-three new homes there in 1990. Neasden Village was further added to by 1993, when P.C.H.A. built forty-seven new homes in Verney Street and forty-nine in Chesham Street. On the south side of Neasden Lane North, the land which had been the site of the Neasden Village Welfare Association’s community halls became the Quainton Street Open Space. This now allows people to enjoy a walk alongside the Canal Feeder, in surroundings similar to the countryside it was first dug through, while looking across at the back of Neasden Railway Village.



© Philip Grant, October 2012 and May 2013

This article was written for the Willesden Local History Society Journal [No.37, Summer 2013]. Back copies of this Journal can be read at Brent Archives. It is based on research undertaken in 2009 for an exhibition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of St Andrew’s New Church in Kingsbury. It was the willingness of Rev. James Mills to take on the old St Andrew’s Church alongside his St Saviour’s mission church in 1885, as part of a new Neasden-cum-Kingsbury parish, which saved Old St Andrew’s for posterity (see the article “St Andrew’s Old Church, Kingsbury” for details).