

# **Earlsdon Terrace, part of Earlsdon Avenue South, 1861 to 1921**

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## INTRODUCTION

Earlsdon Terrace, set alongside the southern side of what is now Earlsdon Avenue South between the City Arms pub and what we know today as Holly Bank, was one of the original eight streets of the Earlsdon estate, which comprises some eight houses of varying ages and styles together with a number of flats to the rear of these houses. To add to this mix, Earlsdon Terrace today also has various recently-built accommodation complexes including 12 flats at Holly Bank, a further 16 flats at Woodlands Court, as well as 28 flats at Elsie Jones House. The street has a history going back over 170 years, stretching back to the very beginning of Earlsdon.<sup>1</sup>

This paper examines the early development of Earlsdon Terrace. It looks at the origins of the street and, using the earliest and the most recent personal census material available for Earlsdon between 1861 and 1921, describes who lived there, where they came from and what they did.

## THE GROWTH OF COVENTRY

Like any city, Coventry's history has passed through different phases, from being an important medieval centre, through industrialisation, to the development of a modern city. Its period as a major industrial centre has also depended on a variety of crafts and businesses. By the end of the 18th century, silk and ribbon weaving were the basis of the city's economy. During the nineteenth century, it became a centre of watch and clock manufacturing. In the later decades of that century there was growth in cycle manufacturing, later replaced by engineering and motor industries during the 20th century.

Present-day Earlsdon is one of the more diverse and affluent suburbs of Coventry. Its core area was laid out in the 1850s. It was one of a number of areas that were developed on the outskirts of the city, allowing better-off working people, especially watchmakers, to move their families and businesses away from poor conditions inside the city. Earlsdon Terrace was part of that core area.

As noted above, silk and ribbon-weaving were the basis of Coventry's economy at the start of the nineteenth century. Around 1820, 10,000 people were employed in the industry rising to a peak of 25,000 around 1857, at which time the total population of the city was approximately 40,000.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> What used to be called Earlsdon Terrace has undergone a number of name changes and house renumbering during its existence, details of which are set out below on page 18. To attempt to simplify matters, the name Earlsdon Terrace is used throughout this paper except where to do so would exacerbate any potential confusion.

The industry faced a decline in the 1860s, following an international treaty with France which allowed the importation of foreign ribbons and other products, duty-free. However, in Coventry, watch and clock making were well placed to take over as main employers. The city was already one of the three major centres of the trade in the United Kingdom, the others being Clerkenwell in London and Prescot in Lancashire. In 1860 there were 90 watch and clock manufacturers in the city, employing 2,100 people.<sup>ii</sup>

Coventry's early industries were home-based, rather than factory-based: many watch and clock makers worked in their own homes around the Spon End and Chapelfields areas of south-west Coventry.<sup>iii</sup> These were the high-earners of the day, said to see themselves above the likes of weavers.<sup>iv</sup>

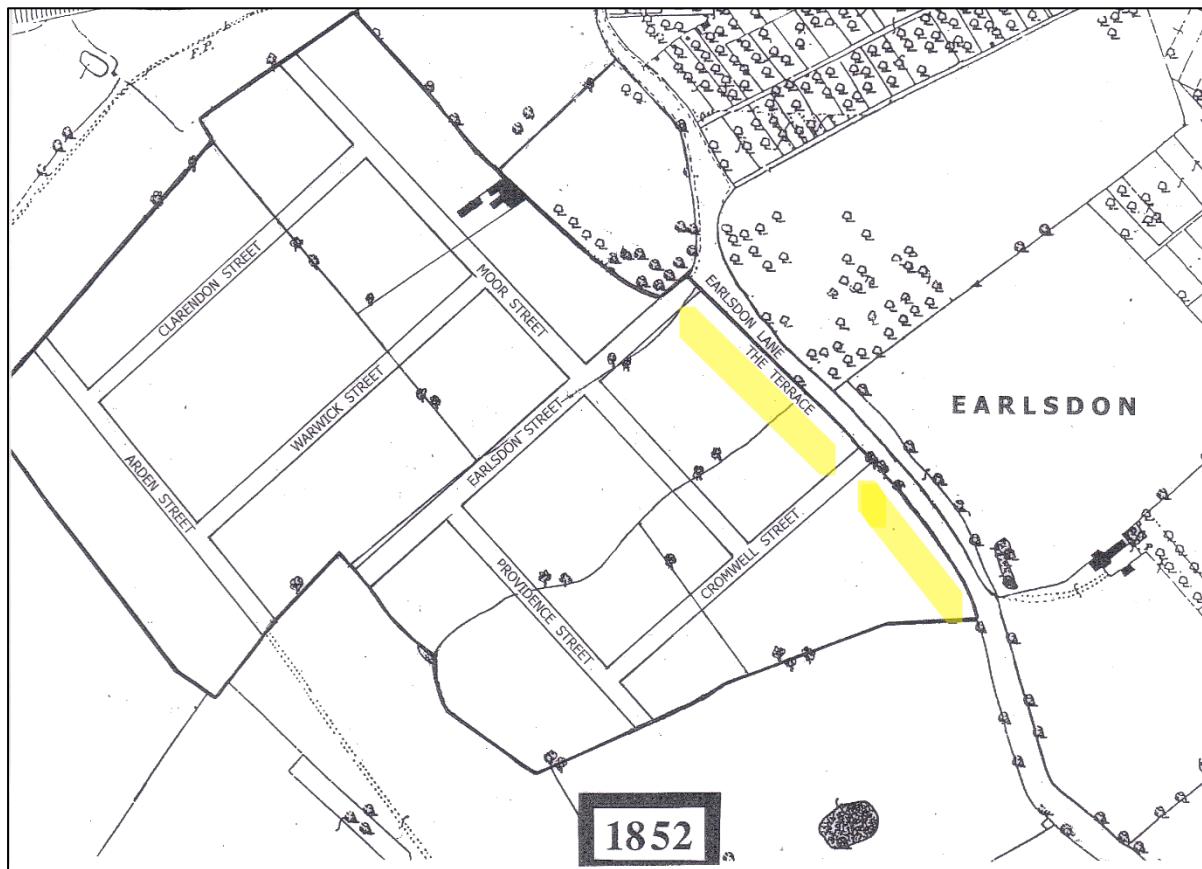
Unfortunately, their industry was eventually hampered by a certain reluctance to innovate as well as by the impact of trade policies in the second half of the nineteenth century – such as happened when the United States placed a tariff on imported English watches – thus increasing their cost and leading to a decline in watchmaking in England. However, the skilled pool of workers was vital in assisting the growth of cycle manufacturing and machine tools, which became major industries. It also later helped the growth of car manufacturing, following the establishment of the first car manufacturer in the country at the Motor Mills, Sandy Lane, Radford in 1896.<sup>v</sup>

Against this background, Earlsdon was one of a number of small communities originally established outside the urban area of Coventry, which is notable in that new building had tended to take place either within the city or beyond the "Lammas" and "Michaelmas" lands, where Freeman had the grazing rights<sup>vi</sup> (a situation similar to the modern-day Green Belt).

A local farmer and butcher, John Moore, had built a farmhouse (called "Six Fields") in 1830 off what is now Moor Street. The 31 acre estate was sold to the Coventry Freehold Land Society in 1852. Many of the better-off working people wanted to move their families and businesses out of the city and away from the over-crowded housing and associated public health hazards. Membership of a Freehold Land Society offered such people an opportunity to move into their own house, perhaps with a workshop attached. This was one of six such sites developed by the Coventry Freehold Land Society during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

The Society laid out eight streets – Earlsdon Street, Moor Street, Cromwell Street, Arden Street, Warwick Street, Clarendon Street, Providence Street and Earlsdon Terrace alongside Earlsdon

Lane. The following map shows the layout of these new streets superimposed upon the outlines of the original fields before any new buildings had been erected with the extent of the Terrace indicated in yellow:



A. The planned layout of the new Earlsdon estate in spring 1852 with Earlsdon Terrace highlighted

The resultant estate comprised 250 self-build plots, each being supplied with water, as well as drainage for waste and rainwater but not for sewage. The Society hoped to sell the plots to members, who would then take out a mortgage and commission a builder to design and erect a house.

John Flinn, a watch manufacturer originally from Prescot and a member of the Society, built the first house, Earlsdon House, on Earlsdon Street. Attached to it was a workshop where 14 men and 5 boys were employed in watchmaking.<sup>vii</sup> For Earlsdon as a whole, in 1861, out of 146 males in fulltime employment, 100 were employed in the watch trade.<sup>viii</sup>

The initial development of Earlsdon was slow and uneven, reflecting the cycles of the city's economic fortunes during the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of the plots remained unsold for years, whilst others were sold but not developed. There were 10 houses in occupation

in 1854, 107 in 1861, 95 in 1871 and 121 in 1881. Map 5 shows that less than half of the potential area had been developed by the 1880s. Indeed, a walk through the initial core area of Earlsdon will show that there are only short stretches of similar houses in any street – an indication of this gradual growth. Census figures also show that Earlsdon experienced considerable population change in its early years: about 60% of households listed in the 1861 Census had left by 1871; about 70% of households listed in the 1871 Census had left by 1881; and about 50% of households listed in the 1881 Census had left by 1891.<sup>ix</sup> Nonetheless, despite this pattern of piecemeal change, Earlsdon continued to establish itself during this period, with Frederick Smith describing the new community at this time as "... a kind of garden suburb, established mainly by Coventry watchmakers, but it was up-to-date and had a School Board of its own and a small sewage farm."<sup>x</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this pattern of incremental change gave way to a period of dramatic growth, thanks in large part to the incorporation of Earlsdon within the municipal boundary of Coventry in 1890, and towards the end of 1898 the opening of Albany Road which provided direct and convenient access to the city, at the very time when the population of the city was beginning to increase significantly – see Appendix Table 1<sup>xi</sup> – thanks in large part to the advent of the new cycle and motor manufacturing industries. In the period to the start of the First World War, these new developments saw the laying out of nearly forty streets and the building of over 2,000 houses on estates surrounding the original, mid-Victorian Earlsdon.<sup>xii</sup> Owing to the city's industrial contribution to the war effort, by 1918 the growth in the city's population had reached a peak of approximately 142,000.<sup>xiii</sup> Although there was a good deal of economic dislocation after the war as companies readjusted from wartime to peacetime production, giving rise to unemployment and even a slump by 1920, the fact remains that by the time of the 1921 Census Earlsdon was no longer a small, semi-rural settlement outside the city but instead a well-developed, integrated suburb of Coventry. As the Coventry Graphic on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1912 had put it:

Everybody here knows what Earlsdon is like – a thriving, active, progressive suburb with its fine schools (another one is being built), golf links, well-equipped clubs, wide roads, up to date shops, motor works, picturedromes and tram service ....  
There is no finer site within easy reach of the centre of the City.<sup>xiv</sup>

## THE GROWTH OF EARLSDON TERRACE

As with other streets on the Earlsdon estate, the development of Earlsdon Terrace and the details of those who lived there can help to shed light on the social and economic trends which affected the estate's inhabitants and those living nearby.

In the 1861 Census, the earliest we have with details for Earlsdon residents, it seems that only seven households existed on Earlsdon Terrace, most of them located towards the northern end near the City Arms pub<sup>2</sup> with two much more sizeable houses at the southern end, as shown in the earlier maps in the Appendix below. Although it would be completely rebuilt after the First World War, the City Arms pub as an institution was an important element of Earlsdon Terrace and indeed Earlsdon itself, as it was one of the earliest buildings erected and indeed the first purpose-built pub on the estate. The pub was built in 1853 by Benjamin Bird, who had run a number of pubs in the city centre as well as at Longford (where he had rented the Engine Inn) but in 1851 he was recorded as a licensed victualler living in Fleet Street. In common with other early settlers, Bird moved from his city centre residence to the new village of Earlsdon where he became the owner of a free house which he named the City Arms, which he ran until 1872 when he sold the pub to the Flowers brewery company in Stratford-upon-Avon and – again like many others – returned to the city to live out his days on Albion Street near the Butts. <sup>xv</sup>

A number of licensees then managed the City Arms, such as Edwin Pitman – originally from Somerset – as shown in the 1881 Census – and his successor shortly thereafter John Merifield – originally from Devon – who it is reported installed a popular bowling and skittle alley <sup>ibid</sup>. It would seem that he was keen to see the business succeed and to judge from court reports in the mid-1880s published in the *Coventry Times* it is clear he was not prepared to tolerate any disorderly or drunken conduct on the premises <sup>xvi</sup>.

This approach would no doubt have endeared him to the next inhabitant of the City Arms, namely a redoubtable Coventrian by the name of Mrs Mary Jane Cooper, who ran the pub for a quarter of a century between 1896 and 1921. By an intriguing coincidence, the 1871 Census shows the then unmarried Mary Seymour working in Warwick as nursemaid to the children of Edgar Flower, a master brewer from Stratford-upon-Avon. After leaving the household, Mary returned to

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<sup>2</sup> In the majority of the census returns used here, the City Arms was recorded as forming part of the Terrace and indeed the building throughout our period fronted on to this street. For the sake of consistency, the pub is included from here onwards, in spite of its reassignment to Earlsdon Street towards the end of this period.

Coventry and in 1883 married Robert Cooper, who was at the time the licensee at a city-centre pub near the Market Place called the Lamp Tavern. Upon his death in 1891, Mary assumed the running of the pub for a number of years until she then took on a post with the Flower family for a second time, but this time as the licensee of the City Arms in Earlsdon. <sup>xvii</sup>

In common with so many other buildings on Earlsdon Terrace, the pub today is very different from what Mary knew during her tenure, as the current Tudorbethan-style structure replaced the pub she had occupied after 1931. It was much larger than the original pub, for which reason the house adjoining Benjamin Bird's building – then numbered 79 Earlsdon Avenue South – was demolished to allow for the expansion. In spite of all these changes, the pub which she lived in until her death on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1921 was thereafter and is still today often known as Ma Cooper's.

Returning to the beginning of our period and progressing further up the street, from the 1861 Census we learn of the Reaves family (probably at 8 Earlsdon Terrace, now 73 Earlsdon Avenue South), with the head of the household – aged 69, making him the third oldest resident in Earlsdon at the time – recorded as a retired brush maker called Thomas, living with his wife Sarah. In fact, we can establish a much earlier Earlsdon connection for Thomas in a petition dated 6th May 1852, which was presented with a view to securing a water supply for Earlsdon from the Spon End in Coventry by those who had just bought land on the estate. <sup>xviii</sup>

In more detail, the list of petitioners in this document reveals the names of those who had recently acquired plots of land on the new Earlsdon estate, 55 of whom indicated that they did not intend in the short term to build a property on their land, with the remaining 32 giving it as their plan to have erected a house by the end of 1853. Within this latter group appears the name Thomas Reaves Senior, who was at the time a brush manufacturer resident on West Orchard in the city centre; indeed, the 1851 Census confirms that Thomas employed 4 men at this location where he also lived with Sarah and their son Thomas, a brush maker. In all likelihood, therefore, on the basis of this evidence the Reaves must have been among the very earliest inhabitants we find in Earlsdon.

Interestingly, two individuals who appeared among the other subgroup of 55 petitioners were William Reaves and Thomas Reaves Junior, both from West Orchard and both brush makers: they were of course the sons of Thomas Reaves Senior and Sarah. By the time of the 1871 Census, Sarah was recorded on Earlsdon Terrace as a widowed annuitant, her husband having died in

1864. At the same time, just nearby on Cromwell Street (now Berkeley Road South) was Thomas Reaves Junior with his wife and family, having followed in the footsteps of his parents so to speak and relocated in Earlsdon.

Another somewhat later resident somewhat further up the Terrace was Robert Waddington, a watchmaker who had a considerable impact on the development of Earlsdon. Born in Clitheroe, Lancashire, Robert is recorded in the 1871 Census as a watchmaker living in nearby Padiham and to judge from the baptism record for one of his daughters was still based there in September 1875. However, Robert had established commercial links with Coventry watchmakers (who commonly sourced so-called rough watch mechanisms from Prescot in Lancashire), which connection together with his wife Elizabeth preferring the area for health reasons prompted the family to relocate to Earlsdon. Accordingly, in 1877 he arranged for a house later named Wythburn to be built on a vacant plot on Earlsdon Terrace, which was to become 14 Earlsdon Terrace, his house still standing today at 65a Earlsdon Avenue South.<sup>xix</sup>

Within a few years of their arrival, as keen Methodists themselves the Waddingtons had clearly set down roots in their new community, in large part perhaps because of the strong Methodist presence in Earlsdon. Indeed, as documented later by his own grand-daughter Winifred Waddington, on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1883 Robert was involved in the acquisition of a plot of land on Cromwell Street – now Berkeley Road South – with the intention of erecting a building which would serve as Earlsdon’s first purpose-built place of worship. Indeed, it was Robert himself who two months later presented plans for the new chapel to the Methodist Quarterly Meeting, and with their approval the foundation stone for the building was laid on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1884<sup>xx</sup>, which today serves as the home of the Criterion Theatre.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to his involvement in the religious life of Earlsdon, Robert also played a significant role in his professional sphere, the details of which serve to illustrate wider changes affecting Earlsdon’s development. By way of background, within a few years of his move to Earlsdon, the English watchmaking industry was already experiencing significant change if not outright decline as cheaper, mass-produced watches imported from Switzerland and the United States started to supplant the more labour-intensive and thus more expensive models produced in Earlsdon. Also,

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<sup>3</sup> Looking ahead, it would no doubt have been a matter of great pride to him when some thirty years later on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1914 Robert gave away his daughter in marriage to William Henry Jones, the wedding and associated festivities held in the very church building which he had helped bring into existence.<sup>xxi</sup>

Coventry watch manufacturers such as Robert faced a direct threat from Lancashire, where in 1888 the Lancashire Watch Company started to produce and market fully completed watches to compete with the imported models, resulting in fewer rough watch mechanisms being sent to Coventry to be fitted to the cases made locally.

In response, in concert with other concerned watchmakers in the district, Robert helped establish the Coventry Watch Movement Company, which with the help of equipment and even a movement manufacturer relocated from Prescot began producing movements in Coventry in April 1889. Further attempts were made to introduce more modern equipment to allow for greater automation but the volume of sales was insufficient to justify further investment and so the company began instead to produce components for the nascent motor industry in Coventry, with the result that the company changed its name in 1912 to the Coventry Movement Company and continued trading until as late as the 1970s. <sup>xxii</sup>

In personal terms, it can only be surmised that the decline of the watchmaking industry must have been a personal disappointment to Robert and there is no doubting his commitment to it; indeed, three of his four sons had followed their father into the watch trade, while in 1892 Robert and his next-door neighbour Robert John took on the last two watchmaking apprentices in Earlsdon <sup>xxiii</sup>. Nonetheless, in common with other pre-eminent residents of Earlsdon, Robert was far-sighted enough to adapt to changing conditions and to take a lead in doing so, so much so that he was appointed Chairman of the Directors of the Coventry Watch Movement Company in 1901 <sup>xxiv</sup>. By way of an aside, the Lancashire Watch Company whose creation had originally prompted men like Robert to establish their rival organisation in Coventry collapsed in 1910 <sup>xxv</sup>.

In addition to the contributions outlined above, when Earlsdon was incorporated into the city of Coventry in 1890, Robert Waddington was appointed as a councillor to represent the interest of his fellow residents. In order to make concrete this assimilation, at one of his first council meetings Robert was keen to support the construction of a road linking Earlsdon directly with the Butts and by extension the rest of the city, arguing that “the scheme would be remunerative” by virtue of the fact houses erected along the new road would result in more rates to be paid to the city <sup>xxvi</sup>. While what was to become what we know today as Albany Road would not be opened until 1898, as has been mentioned above this new artery was critical in instigating the expansion of Earlsdon during the Edwardian period, in part thanks therefore to Robert’s involvement.

During the forty years on the Terrace until his death in 1917<sup>xxvii</sup> Robert Waddington experienced at first hand the scale of the developments affecting Earlsdon, and yet the changes which Earlsdon Terrace itself experienced during this period very much set it aside from the other streets on the estate. For example, from Table 2 in the Appendix below it is revealing to compare the numbers of households here with those on Warwick Street<sup>xxviii</sup>, another of the smaller streets in Earlsdon:

Earlsdon Terrace	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Number of Heads	7	6	10	12	12	11	14
Preceding census	N/A	4	2	6	5	3	5
Percentage	N/A	67%	20%	50%	42%	27%	36%

Warwick Street	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Number of Heads	3	6	10	13	21	25	27
Preceding census	N/A	1	1	1	3	3	9
Percentage	N/A	17%	10%	8%	14%	12%	33%

#### B. Heads of Household Living on Also Listed in Preceding Census on Earlsdon Terrace and Warwick Street

It is striking to note from the above that initially the number of households on both streets grew in very similar fashion until 1891 and yet from that point on, while there was almost no change on the Terrace, Warwick Street in contrast saw a doubling in the number of households – in fact, this pattern of growth in the second half of our period was repeated across the estate, with only Providence Street seeing an increase just short of this.<sup>4</sup> In parallel with this, until the First World War the proportion of heads and by extension that of their families appearing in the preceding census was almost without exception higher on Earlsdon Terrace than on any other street, indicative of a greater tendency for more of its household heads choosing to remain resident here over the long term.

An examination of the number of residents living on the Terrace and the size of their households as shown in Table 3 provides further evidence of how different this part of Earlsdon was, as confirmed by again drawing a comparison with Warwick Street:

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<sup>4</sup> Data from neighbouring Earlsdon streets has been drawn throughout this paper from other street surveys available at the following location: <https://earlsdonresearchgroup.org/street-stories/>

Earlsdon Terrace	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Households	7	6	10	12	12	11	14
People	28	22	54	75	52	45	49
Ave Household size	4	3.7	5.4	6.3	4.3	4.1	3.5

Warwick Street	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Households	3	6	10	13	21	25	27
People	14	26	50	57	80	117	136
Ave Household size	4.7	4.3	5	4.4	3.8	4.7	5

### C. Total Residents and Average Household size 1861 to 1921 on Earlsdon Terrace and Warwick Street

Again, there is evidence of a clear divergence from the 1891 onwards, with Warwick Street – along with all of the other streets on the estate at this time – experiencing sustained if not accelerated growth in the number of residents after this date as previously noted. In contrast, although the average size of households on Earlsdon Terrace was the highest figure of any street in Earlsdon in 1891, from this point on the total number of residents fell, a trend explained in large part perhaps by the tendency identified above for more heads of households on the Terrace to remain living on the street while their offspring moved out to establish their own households, which issue will be returned to below in the discussion of the average age of residents.

This sense that Earlsdon Terrace was rather different from the rest of the streets on the estate is an issue addressed by Fry and Smith <sup>xxix</sup>, who remarked that: “The character of Earlsdon Terrace was the nearest to a middle-class development in what was otherwise working-class housing with a few isolated larger scale houses.” As specific evidence of and indeed a possible reason for this distinction, in their discussion of Warwick Street, they point out that only four of the houses on the street were owned by their occupiers <sup>xxx</sup>. Since the 1911 Census shows that there were 25 households on Warwick Street at this time, owner occupiers represented only 16% of the total. In contrast, of the 11 households on Earlsdon Terrace, the 1910 Land Tax assessment showed that seven were owned by their occupiers, accounting for 64% of the total and so four times the proportion on Warwick Street <sup>xxxi</sup>.

The detail shown in the Ordnance Survey maps in the Appendix provide further evidence of this social distinction, in that the houses and the plots they were built on – save for those immediately adjacent to the City Arms – were clearly much larger. In addition, this location was presumably more attractive on the grounds that until shortly before the First World War the residents here

enjoyed uninterrupted views over open fields. More prosaically, residents on the Terrace lived somewhat closer to the city of Coventry, with easier access to the Jetty footpath and Earlsdon Lane, which until Albany Road opened in 1898 offered the main routes to the city.<sup>5</sup>

Returning to our progress along the Terrace, one of the individuals who benefited from this privileged location was James Walker who lived in the penultimate house just beyond the corner with Cromwell Street, now Berkeley Road South. Born in Birmingham, James was a watch case maker who by 1851 was living in the Butts with his Coventry-born wife Hannah and their children. Like so many new residents of Earlsdon, James Walker took the decision to move out of the city and purchased one of the district's prime sites, which at over 3,000 square yards in extent was at least six times bigger than the typical plot on the estate <sup>xxxii</sup>. Here he built a handsome villa called Woodlands, where the family lived for the next 50 years or so.

Clearly, James had already enjoyed a measure of good fortune in the watch business but it seems that he was keen to build on this success. To this end, he was active in acquiring a number of properties, as for example when in 1858 he bought a factory on the Butts previously owned by a watchmaker <sup>xxxiii</sup>. Following this, in 1861 he bought a house on Warwick Street <sup>xxxiv</sup> and followed this up with the purchase of two more houses on Moor Street in 1864 <sup>xxxv</sup>. On one point of detail, some of these properties had been subject to forfeiture and then sold by a building society, which suggests that Joseph was keen to minimise his outlay and any attendant risk by purchasing lots which had already been developed, an indication no doubt of his business acumen.

More charitably, there is no doubting the scale and significance of the contribution which James made in the establishment of Earlsdon. By way of background, it should be remembered that Earlsdon lay outside the district of Coventry and so was not entitled to the provision of any services from the Corporation, leaving the residents themselves responsible for any civic matters. In response, as early as 1854 James joined forces with John Hulme – another watch-making Earlsdon pioneer, living on Clarendon Street – in order to negotiate a contract with the gas company in Coventry to supply gas for street lighting in Earlsdon <sup>xxxvi</sup>. Similarly, in 1874 James joined forces with another Earlsdon grandee on Moor Street by the name of John Yeldham Betts to arrange for the purchase of land and the laying out thereon of a drainage field, sewage disposal being another of the services which the residents of Earlsdon had to organise for themselves <sup>xxxvii</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See the online article about the Earlsdon Jetty at <https://earlsdon.org.uk/history/jetty.html> for more detail.

Rather more edifyingly, in 1882 James also took the lead in setting up the first school for the children of Earlsdon on Cromwell Street (now Berkeley Road South) and also its successor on what is now Earlsdon Avenue North which opened in 1890, with James Walker himself serving as Chairman of the School Board <sup>xxxviii</sup>. With this litany of achievements – amongst others – to his credit, it is perhaps not surprising that local historian Mary Montes <sup>xxxix</sup> was moved to write that, “If there is any man who deserves to be called ‘Mr Earlsdon’ then that man is James Walker.”

In preparation for his retirement, James bequeathed his business to his two watchmaking sons, with Arthur running the silver case making operation from 20 Earlsdon Street, and Edwin specialising in the production of gold cases at the house built for him by his father on the corner opposite Woodlands, which house still stands today at 59 Earlsdon Avenue South <sup>xl</sup>. Although Woodlands itself was sold on James’ death in 1907, Edwin stayed in his house until he died in 1934 <sup>xli</sup>, the Walker family therefore maintaining a presence on the Terrace of some 80 years.

Next door to Woodlands stood an even more imposing house called Earlsdon Villa at the very southern end of the Terrace – uniquely among Earlsdon’s private houses, its name was recorded on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map as shown in the Appendix below. The house was built by Henry Westrap, a Coventry watch manufacturer who in 1851 was living in Hill Street where he employed 6 men and 4 apprentices. After his move to live in Earlsdon, Henry clearly preferred to keep his home and work life separate, with his business address given in the Coventry Directory as 5 Spon Street in 1868 <sup>xlii</sup> and in 1876 as 1 St Thomas Lane <sup>xliii</sup> – interestingly, details of his work arrangements at the latter address were described in some detail in a newspaper article published in 1880 concerning the theft of several watches from his office there by one of his apprentices <sup>xliv</sup>.

Earlsdon Villa being one of Earlsdon’s grandest houses with its extensive landscaped gardens, after Henry’s death in 1889 the property was sold to Thomas Inger Stevens <sup>xlv</sup>, who was described as a fancy ribbon manufacturer in the 1891 Census. The business which Thomas owned had been established on Cox Street by his father, who by inventing a new product called the Stevengraph to make pictures from silk for bookmarks and other products managed to survive the near collapse of the weaving industry after 1860 <sup>xlii</sup>. Clearly, this strategy had been very successful as after Thomas’ father died in 1888, the probate record dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 1889 shows that his estate was valued at some £27,135, which according to the Bank of England’s online inflation calculator equates to approximately £3,000,000 as of late 2024. Having just taken over his father’s business, it is surely no coincidence therefore that it was at this stage that Thomas decided to move from his

previous residence at Grey Friar House in Coventry and set about extending and remodelling his new house and its grounds on Earlsdon Terrace which he subsequently renamed Holly Bank, in its final guise a six bedroom house standing in one and three-quarter acres of land <sup>xlvi</sup>.

Not content simply with improving his own domestic arrangements, Thomas was clearly a man with much wider ambition, as evidenced by his involvement in the creation of the so-called Earlsdon Syndicate together with three other individuals keen to engage in property speculation. In 1897, they purchased some nineteen acres of land from a local auctioneer called James Whittindale, on which they laid out the streets which were to become Styvechale Avenue and Warwick Avenue as well as Osborne Road and Avondale Road <sup>xlvii</sup>. Seemingly not content with this project, in 1904 Thomas went on single-handedly to purchase the Poplars Estate at a cost of £2575. Here he laid out Poplar Road and Newcombe Road West and by January 1908 had succeeded in selling all of this land to local builders <sup>xlvi</sup>.

After his death just four months later on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1908, Thomas' will showed that he was in outright possession of some 58 houses in Earlsdon, in addition to various plots of land which had yet to be built on. The probate records valued his personal estate at over £100,000 – equivalent to over £10,000,000 at the time of writing – all of which confirms that Thomas' speculative endeavours had been extremely lucrative. Although Thomas himself died before he was 50, his widow Frances was still living at Holly Bank according to the 1921 Census, yielding yet another example of a household which chose to remain living on the Terrace for many years.

Returning to look again at the data which is presented in Appendix 1 below, Tables 4 and 5 allow us to form a picture of the origins of the Terrace's heads of household and also of all of the residents on the street, although as before it needs to be reiterated that this street was one of the smallest on the estate and so relatively small changes in absolute terms can give rise to much larger changes in relative terms. Concerning the heads of household to begin with, in common with the great majority of the other streets on the estate the figures in Table 4 make clear that during the very early years nearly all of these individuals were drawn from the local area, but over time the balance shifted such that by the end of our period slightly more than half of the heads had come from further afield to settle in Earlsdon. More specifically, while perhaps unsurprisingly the largest proportion of heads remained Coventrians, for reasons which will be commented upon below a clear majority of heads originating from elsewhere in the country came from either Lancashire or London during the early to middle years of the period in scope here. As for Table 5

looking at all household residents, again as was the experience on other streets the proportion of residents born in Coventry and the immediate surrounding area was initially high in relative terms but just as was the case with the heads of household the number of residents born elsewhere in the country – with Lancashire and London again predominating – tended to rise.

To help make these patterns of change clearer, the table below compares the proportions of residents originating from outside the area during the earlier years with those for the later years:

	Average 1861 -- 1881	Average 1901 -- 1921
Household heads	20%	48%
All residents	17%	35%

#### D. Proportions of Earlsdon Terrace residents born outside Coventry, Birmingham and Warwickshire

As already stated, these figures demonstrate a clear growth in the number of residents moving from other parts of the country, no doubt attracted by the huge growth in employment possibilities available in Coventry particularly in the latter years of this period.

While the trends identified above with respect to the origins of residents point to broad similarities with the situation on the other streets on the estate, the statistics in Tables 6 and 7 concerning the age distribution of those living on Earlsdon Terrace suggest a considerable contrast. Turning firstly to the heads of household as shown in the table below, with the exception of 1871 when four of the six heads had been living on the street at the time of the preceding census, the average age was similar across the estate as a whole during the first half of our period at around the mid-40s:

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
<b>Earlsdon Terrace</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>
Arden Street	40	38	38	39	39	40	46
Moor Street	48	44	42	44	46	45	48
Providence Street	38	47	47	41	42	44	43
Warwick Street	45	45	45	39	49	42	48

#### E. Average age of Heads of Household on a number of streets compared with Earlsdon Terrace

However, what stands out from the beginning of the Edwardian period onwards is that the average age of the household heads living on Earlsdon Terrace increases steadily to 51 in 1901 and again to 54 by 1921, with all the other averages for other streets remaining below 50. By way of

possible factors behind this trend, it has already been shown that the proportion of heads choosing to continue to live here into old age was higher than elsewhere on the street. In addition, it has also already been established that owner occupation was higher on the Terrace than elsewhere and that house and plot sizes tended to be larger, which would in all likelihood make the location less affordable and so less attractive to those embarking upon their careers. Finally, the fact that Mary Johnson continued to live at the City Arms has an impact on the calculation of the average age on Earlsdon Terrace, given that by the time she died here in 1921 she was at least 90 years old, making her surely one of the oldest residents on the estate.

Looking at the age distributions for all residents, the figures in Table 7 again show that the situation on the Terrace was rather different from the rest of Earlsdon. One immediate difference concerns the youngest residents aged 12 and younger, in that typically elsewhere on the estate the largest number of residents fell into this age bracket in all of the census returns between 1861 and 1921, while on Earlsdon Terrace this was the case only for the 1881 Census. To demonstrate this contrast in another way, in 1921 over a quarter of the residents on Arden Street were aged 12 and younger, whereas on the Terrace the proportion of these youngsters was under a tenth.

More globally, if we compare the average ages over time on Earlsdon Terrace with other streets on the estate, the same pattern found in the case of the heads of household is discernible here, namely that the average age on the Terrace from 1901 onwards rises much faster, signifying that this street was as it were the oldest on the estate from the beginning of the Edwardian period as shown here:

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
<b>Earlsdon Terrace</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>
Arden Street	20	19	20	23	23	24	28
Moor Street	29	24	23	26	27	28	31
Providence Street	22	27	23	25	26	29	30
Warwick Street	22	27	23	25	26	29	30

F. Average age of all residents on a number of streets compared with Earlsdon Terrace

The last dataset compiled here is to be found in Table 8, examining the changing patterns in terms of occupations listed in the various census returns. By way of repeating the caveat mentioned before, the number of residents on Earlsdon Terrace remained relatively small throughout the

period under examination, and yet it is still possible to determine trends from the details recorded each decade.

To help us characterise the changes in occupation, we can consider three phases in the occupations data, unsurprisingly reflecting economic changes which took place more widely. Concerning the first such phase from the beginning of the estate until the 1880s, as was the case generally in Earlsdon, apart from a notable dip in their numbers as recorded in 1871 approximately half of the occupations recorded involved various aspects of the watchmaking industry making it the predominant economic activity, with a clear majority of heads of household engaged in this trade. The second most common form of employment was domestic service, the level of which marks the Terrace out from the other streets and is a reflection surely of the distinctive middle-class status of the street discussed above.

Moving to the period between 1891 and the outbreak of the First World War, Earlsdon Terrace experienced aspects of both continuity and change in its pattern of occupations. As regards continuity, the number of residents engaged in watchmaking – as was also the case with domestic service – reached a peak in 1891 with ten out of a total of 31 for whom an occupation was recorded on the Terrace engaged in this profession, after which time the number of watchmakers here declined slowly during the first decade of the Edwardian period, indeed rather more slowly than elsewhere on the rest of the estate where watchmaking was already in much more precipitous decline. Against this pattern of slow decay, there was in contrast a very noticeable increase in the number of Terrace residents engaged in the explosive growth of the cycle industry both in Coventry and Earlsdon itself, accounting for a quarter of the occupations recorded at the beginning of this period. Although the cycle trade fell away as a source of employment from the end of the nineteenth century, other trades which were in the ascendancy started to appear, with small numbers involved in the growing machine tool industry, as well as the construction industry, which itself grew quickly as the city struggled to accommodate its fast-growing population.

In the final post-war years under examination here, the process of transition away from watchmaking was by 1921 nearly complete with only three watchmakers recorded on the Terrace, of whom two had retired and the third was listed as a watch repairer, namely Wilfrid Waddington, the son of Robert Waddington, who following his father's death had returned to live in the family home. As another sign of the times perhaps, there were by now only two residents listed as domestic servants, both living at Holly Bank with Frances Stevens. In contrast to what might be

thought of us as such legacy occupations, it was now education which jointly headed the list of professions on the street with five individuals – two of them grand-daughters of James Walker – engaged in this endeavour. Another significant source of employment was Coventry's next burgeoning industry namely motor manufacture, which employed a further five residents. This involved not only individuals resident on the street travelling to places of work in other districts of the city – of which Earlsdon was by now very much an integrated suburb – but also the manufacture of motorcycles in Cromwell House at 12 Earlsdon Terrace (or at this stage Earlsdon Avenue) by William Williamson<sup>1</sup> between 1911 and 1920, to be followed by Howard Parsons who together with his father Jonathan Parsons on Warwick Street produced motor vehicle bodies at what was later known as the Cromwell Works, as shown on the 1923 map in the Appendix below.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, it has been argued that the Terrace was rather different in nature from the rest of the estate, particularly in the later years of the period under investigation here. In fact, while the rest of Earlsdon experienced a significant phase of expansion from 1891 onwards, the Terrace itself can be characterised as already fully built up by this date experiencing very little subsequent growth in terms of housing from then on – possible only through the sub-division of an existing plot such as that previously owned by James Walker – with even a fall in the total number of residents. In tandem with this, the evidence shows that residents on the Terrace tended to remain at the same address for longer than elsewhere on the estate, from which it followed that the average age of the inhabitants was higher and by extension the number of children was lower. As another corollary of this pattern of continuity, the proportion of residents active in the watch trade remained significant for rather longer on the Terrace than elsewhere.

In terms of factors which might account for these contrasts, it might simply be the case that the Terrace represented a more attractive and possibly exclusive location than was available elsewhere on the estate, as indicated by the relatively high level of owner occupation as well as the larger size of many of the houses and the plot sizes on which they stood, not to mention their distance from the road and the extensive gardens which many properties enjoyed, more noticeably towards the southern end of the Terrace. In addition, until almost the end of the

Edwardian period, residents on the Terrace enjoyed open views towards the city of Coventry, access to which was easier than from the rest of the estate by virtue of relative proximity.

However, against this genteel but possibly somewhat sclerotic picture, the relatively small number of residents living here were nonetheless highly significant in terms of their contribution to the development of Earlsdon in many ways. To set this in context, it is arguable that for the first forty years of its existence the original estate of eight streets remained something of an outlier on the far outskirts of Coventry, which experienced slow growth after the arrival of pioneers such as Benjamin Bird as well as the Reaves family and only established itself as a self-sustaining settlement thanks to the efforts of individuals such as James Walker, who was in the vanguard driving forward many local initiatives of which perhaps the most important was his championing of education here. Looking ahead, towards the end of the Victorian period Earlsdon embarked upon a new phase in its development to become a much more fully integrated suburb of Coventry with a move away from watchmaking as its main economic activity, which dual process Robert Waddington helped drive forward as one of Earlsdon's first councillors and chairman of the Coventry Movement Company. Against this background, and with Coventry entering a period of remarkable population growth, the Edwardian era saw Earlsdon expand rapidly beyond the confines of its original eight streets with new roads and much greater numbers of houses laid out on all four sides of the original estate, a development which Thomas Inger Stevens was instrumental in promoting. Meanwhile, at the northern end of the Terrace Mary Jane (Ma) Cooper presided over the City Arms for the quarter century to the end of our period, in so doing helping to foster the community spirit of the suburb and ensuring the legacy of one of Earlsdon's most enduring institutions, which – albeit in much altered form – is still a significant feature today.

#### **NOTES ON METHODOLOGY**

The principal source of information has been the censuses from 1861 and 1921. These generally provide information on the following: numbers of people in dwellings, household composition, names, relationships, age, occupation, place of birth and employment status. The censuses provide consistent information, enabling the analysis of trends over time. This has been supplemented by information from property deeds, probate records, newspaper entries, directories and maps as well as holdings at the Coventry Archives.

## NOTES CONCERNING STREET NAMING AND HOUSE NUMBERING

In the 1871 Census, the first in which Earlsdon street names appeared, Earlsdon Terrace was used to refer to the houses on the west side of what was then Earlsdon Lane above the City Arms.

From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, as the rest of the lane developed the census returns and other documents tended to assimilate this line of houses within Earlsdon Lane, which in turn by virtue of its length was often divided into Earlsdon Lane South and Earlsdon Lane North. By the time of the First World War, these names had undergone yet another change to become Earlsdon Avenue, which from the early 1920s was divided again to become Earlsdon Avenue South and Earlsdon Avenue North, as they are known today.

Further to the various changes to the name of this street, in common with some other streets in Earlsdon it was decided in 1925 to renumber the houses which stood here as well. Somewhat confusingly, the even numbers used prior to this date were changed to odd numbers and vice versa, added to which the direction of the numbering changed also.

In an attempt to shed some light on this, in the following table starting from the City Arms pub the upper row gives the house numbers used originally on Earlsdon Terrace, while the cells in the row beneath show the corresponding numbers used after 1925 on Earlsdon Avenue South, a proportion of which remain in use today:

<1925	City Arms	2	4	6	8	10	---	12	14	16	---	18	---	---	20	30
>1925	City Arms	79	77	75	73	71	69	67	65	63	61	59	57	55	49	35

G. Comparison of house numbering prior to and after 1925 on Earlsdon Terrace / Avenue South

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## APPENDIX 1 -- TABLES

Table 1: Population of Coventry 1901 to 1921

Table 2: Heads of Household Living in Earlsdon Terrace Also Listed in Preceding Census

Table 3: Total People and Households 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 4: Place of Birth of Heads of Household 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 5: Place of Birth of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 6: Age Distribution of Heads of Households 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 7: Age Distribution of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 8: Occupations Listed in Censuses for Working People 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

Table 1: Population of Coventry 1901 to 1921

	1901	1911	1921	Increase 1901-1911	Increase 1911-1921
Population	69,978	106,349	128,157	52.0%	20.5%

Table 2: Heads of Household Living in Earlsdon Terrace Also Listed in Preceding Census

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Number of Heads	7	6	10	12	12	11	14
Preceding census	N/A	4	2	6	5	3	5
Percentage	N/A	67%	20%	50%	42%	27%	36%

Table 3: Total Residents and Average Household size 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Households	7	6	10	12	12	11	14
People	28	22	54	75	52	46	49
Ave H'hold size	4	3.7	5.4	6.3	4.3	4.2	3.5

Table 4: Place of Birth of Heads of Household 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Coventry	3	3	5	5	4	6	6
Adj Coventry*					1		
Birmingham		1	1	1	1		
Warwickshire**	3	1	1				
Buckinghamshire	1						
Cambridgeshire							1
Cheshire						1	1
Cornwall							1
Devon				2			
Hampshire							1

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Lancashire			1	1	3	1	1
Leicestershire		1					
London			1	2	2	2	1
Northamptonshire					1		1
Nottinghamshire							1
Somerset			1				
Suffolk				1			
Wales						1	
Total	7	6	10	12	12	11	14

\* Adj Coventry refers to parishes then outside, but later absorbed into, Coventry

\*\* Warwickshire refers to the county without Coventry and Birmingham

Table 5: Place of Birth of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Coventry	20	15	38	37	27	30	26
Adj Coventry*		1			2		
Birmingham	1	1	1	3	1		1
Warwickshire**	4	2	1	4	3	2	3
Buckinghamshire	1						
Cambridgeshire							1
Cheshire				1	1	1	1
Cornwall							4
Derbyshire				1			
Devon				2			
Essex						1	
Gloucestershire					1		
Hampshire							1
Lancashire			7	9	5	2	2
Leicestershire	2	2	1	1	1		
Lincolnshire			3				
London				11	7	2	1
Norfolk						1	
Northamptonshire					1		3
Nottinghamshire				3			2
Somerset			1			1	
Staffordshire		1	1	1	1		2
Suffolk				1			
Surrey							1

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Wiltshire			1				
Yorkshire					1	2	
Ireland				1			
Scotland					1	1	1
Wales						2	
Total	28	22	54	75	52	46	49

\* Adj Coventry refers to parishes then outside, but later absorbed into, Coventry

\*\* Warwickshire refers to the county without Coventry and Birmingham

Table 6: Age Distribution of Heads of Households 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
< 21							
21-30			1	3	1		2
31-40	5		5	2	1	1	1
41-50	1	3	1	3	4	4	3
51-60	1	2	2	3	3	3	4
61-70		1	1	1	2	2	1
> 70					1	1	3
Total #Heads	7	6	10	12	12	11	14
Average age	44	38	22	42	29	33	39

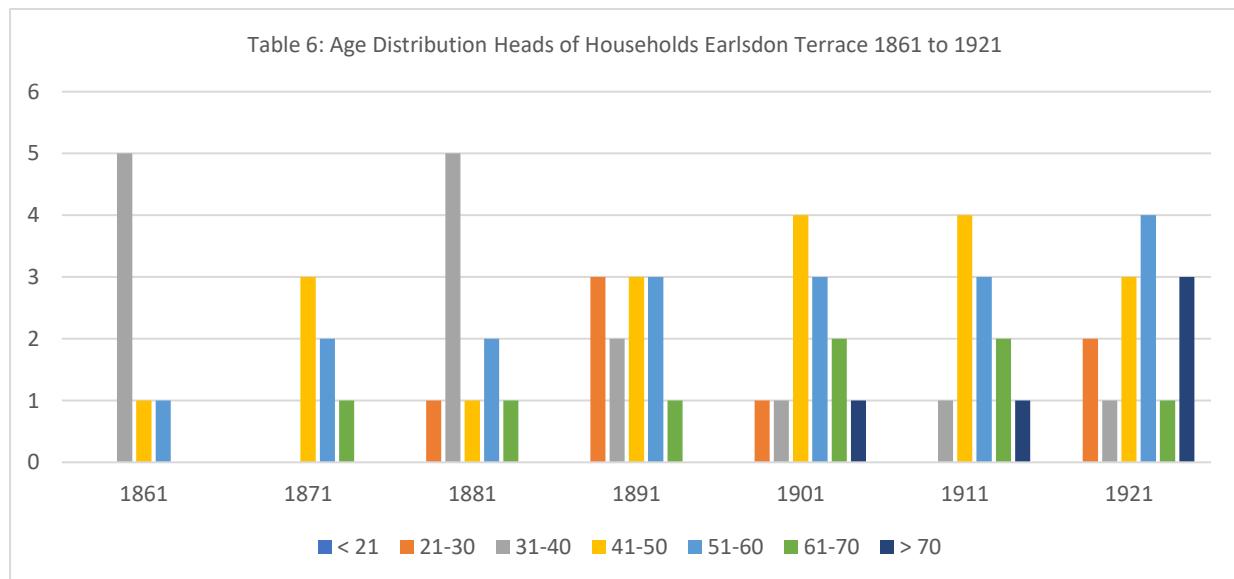


Table 7: Age Distribution of All Residents 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
< 13	6	1	21	16	9	7	4
13-20	6	7	10	23	13	9	2
21-30	3	1	5	17	10	9	15
31-40	10	2	9	6	5	5	6
41-50	1	7	3	6	7	7	9
51-60			4	5	4	5	5
61-70	2	2	2	2	3	3	4
> 70		2			1	1	4
Total #Residents	28	22	54	75	52	45	49
Average age	27	38	22	24	29	33	39

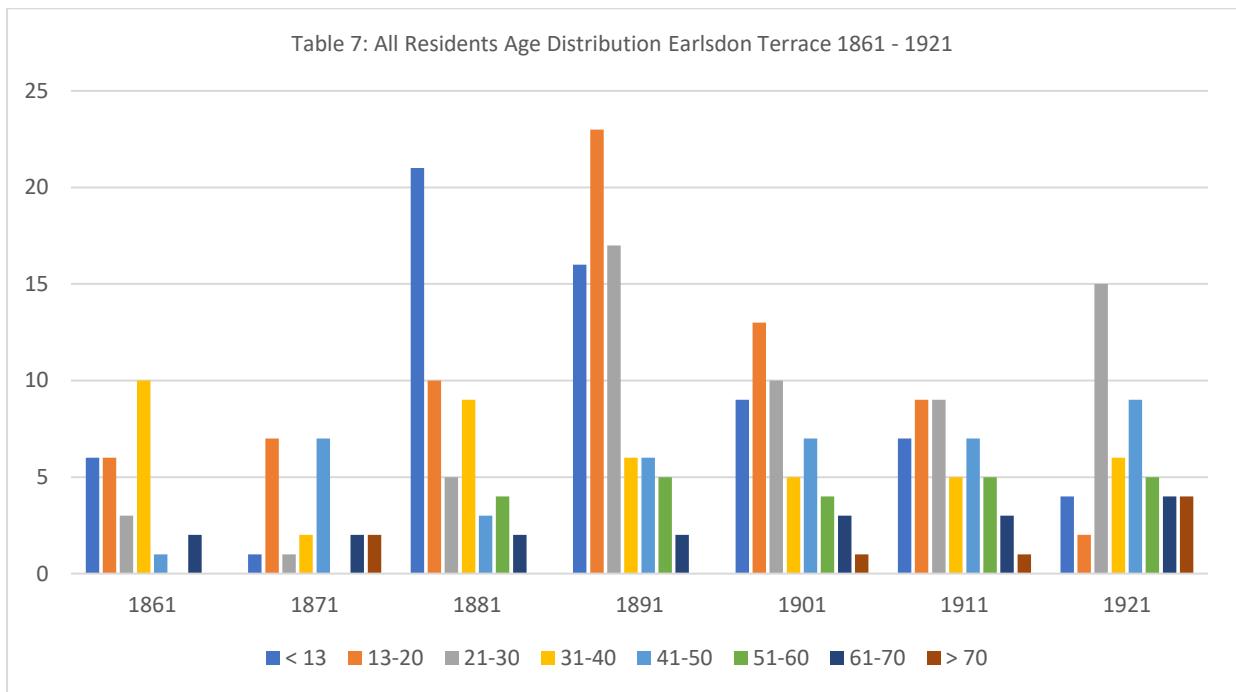


Table 8: Occupations Listed in Censuses for Working People 1861 to 1921 (Earlsdon Terrace)

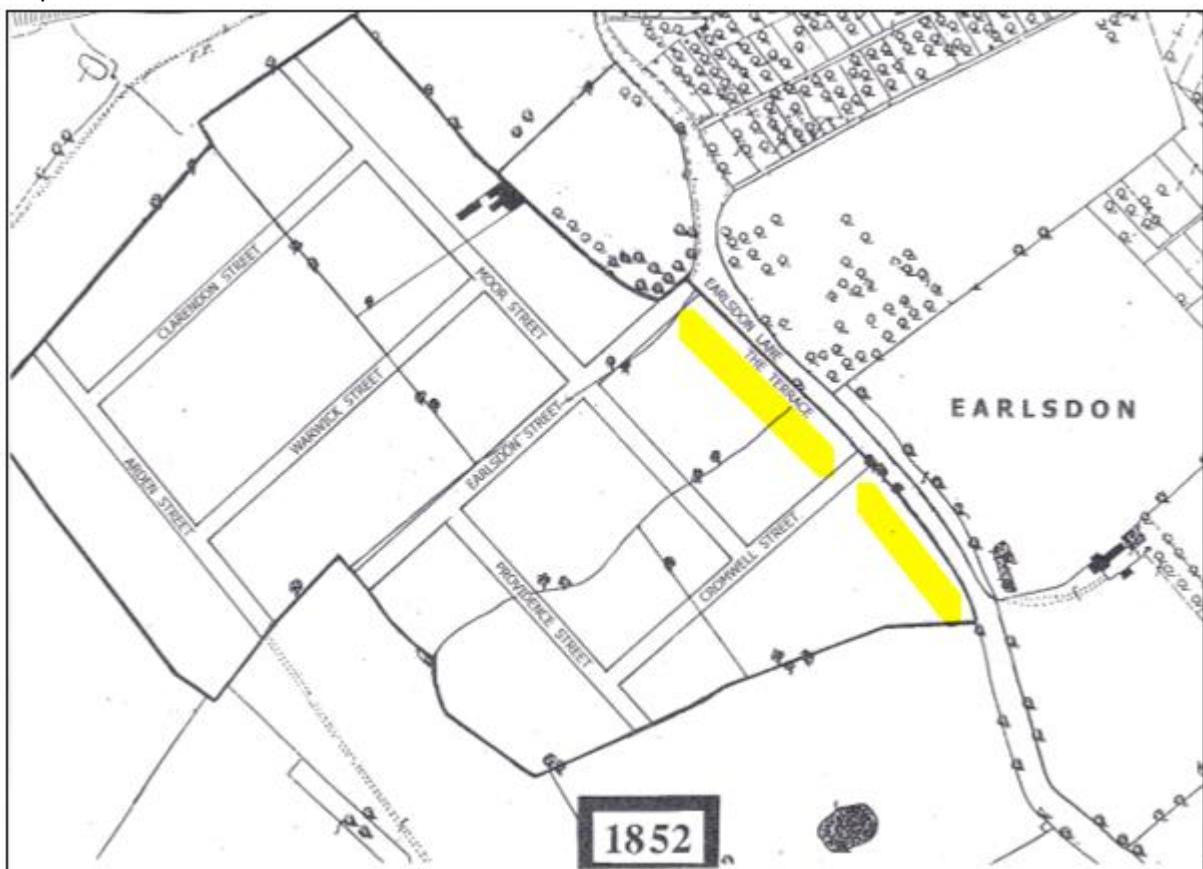
1861	
Watchmaking 5 Domestic service 2 Brushmaker 1 Coal miner 1 Licensed victualler 1	

1871	Domestic service 3 Watchmaking 2 (1 retired) Annuitant 1 Brushmaker (appr) 1 Civil engineer 1 Licensed victualler 1 Trimmer 1
1881	Watchmaking 7 Domestic service/nurse 4 Licensed victualler 1 Railway controller 1
1891	Watchmaking 10 Cycle manufacture 8 Domestic service 7 Clerk 1 Journalist 1 Licensed victualler 1 Pupil teacher 1 Ribbon manufacture 1 Waitress 1
1901	Watchmaking 6 Domestic service 4 Clerical work 4 Ribbon manufacture 2 Barmaid 1 Carpenter 1 Commercial traveller 1 Company accountant 1 Cycle factor 1 Gas & hot water fitter 1 Inn keeper 1 Living on own means 1 Market gardener 1 Milliner 1 School teacher 1

1911	Domestic service 4 Watchmaking 3 Builder/joiner 2 Accountant 1 Assistant elementary school teacher 1 Blacksmith motor company 1 Clerk 1 Cycle finisher 1 Gunmetal turner Ordnance 1 Licensed victualler 1 Machine tool maker 1 Milliner 1
1921	Education 5 Motor manufacture 5 Watchmaking 3 (2 retired) Domestic service 2 Draper/Milliner 2 Barmaid 1 Capstan lathe foreman 1 Clerk 1 Cycle repairer 1 Decorator 1 Licensed victualler 1 Malleable ironfounder 1 Manageress 1 Science student (at Birmingham University) 1 Shop manageress 1

## APPENDIX 2 – MAPS

Map 1: Earlsdon 1852



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group, this map gives the planned layout of the streets for the new Earlsdon estate superimposed upon the original field boundaries with Earlsdon Terrace highlighted

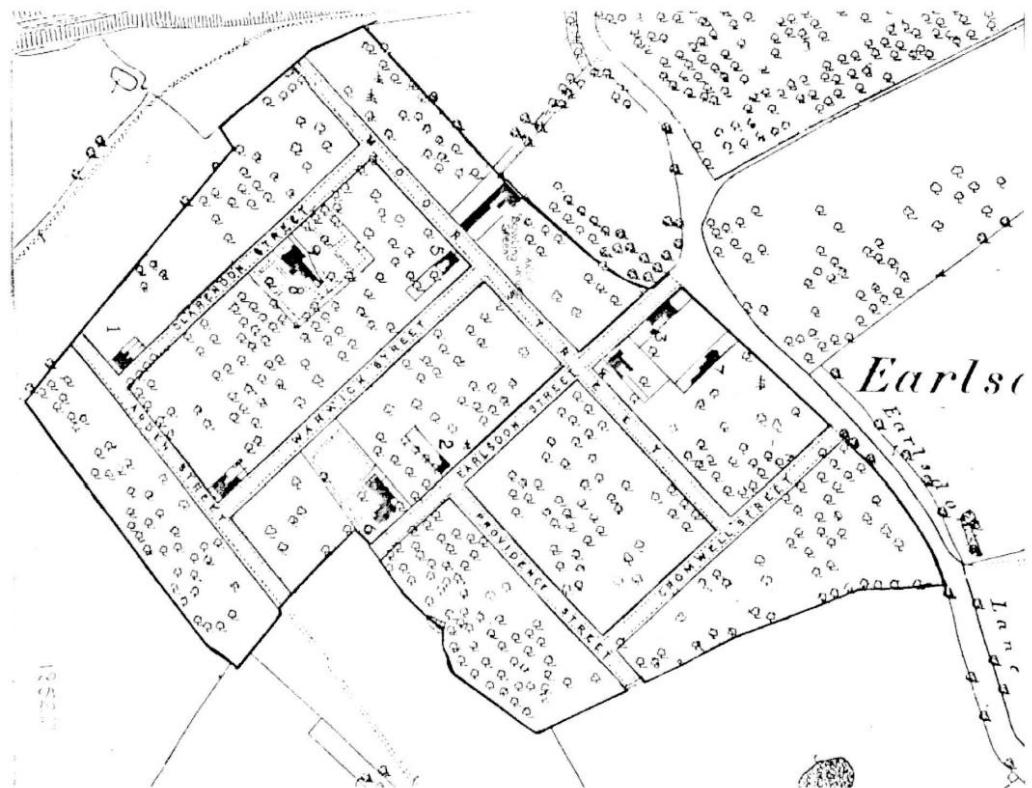
Earlsdon Terrace, Earlsdon 1861 to 1921

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

March 2025



Map 2: Earlsdon 1852/1853



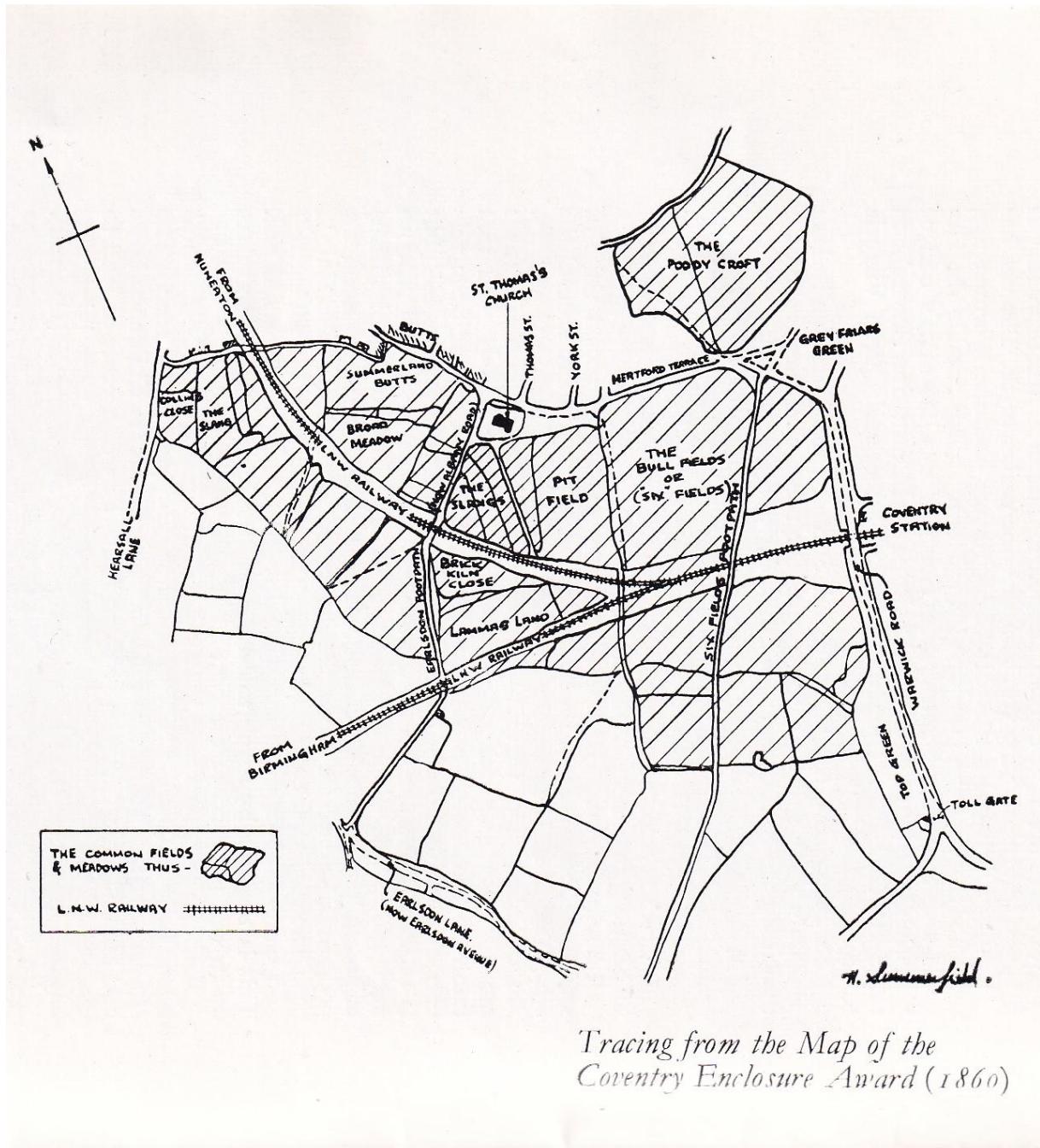
Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 3: Earlsdon 1860



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 4: Copy of an 1860 Enclosure Map between Earlsdon and Coventry

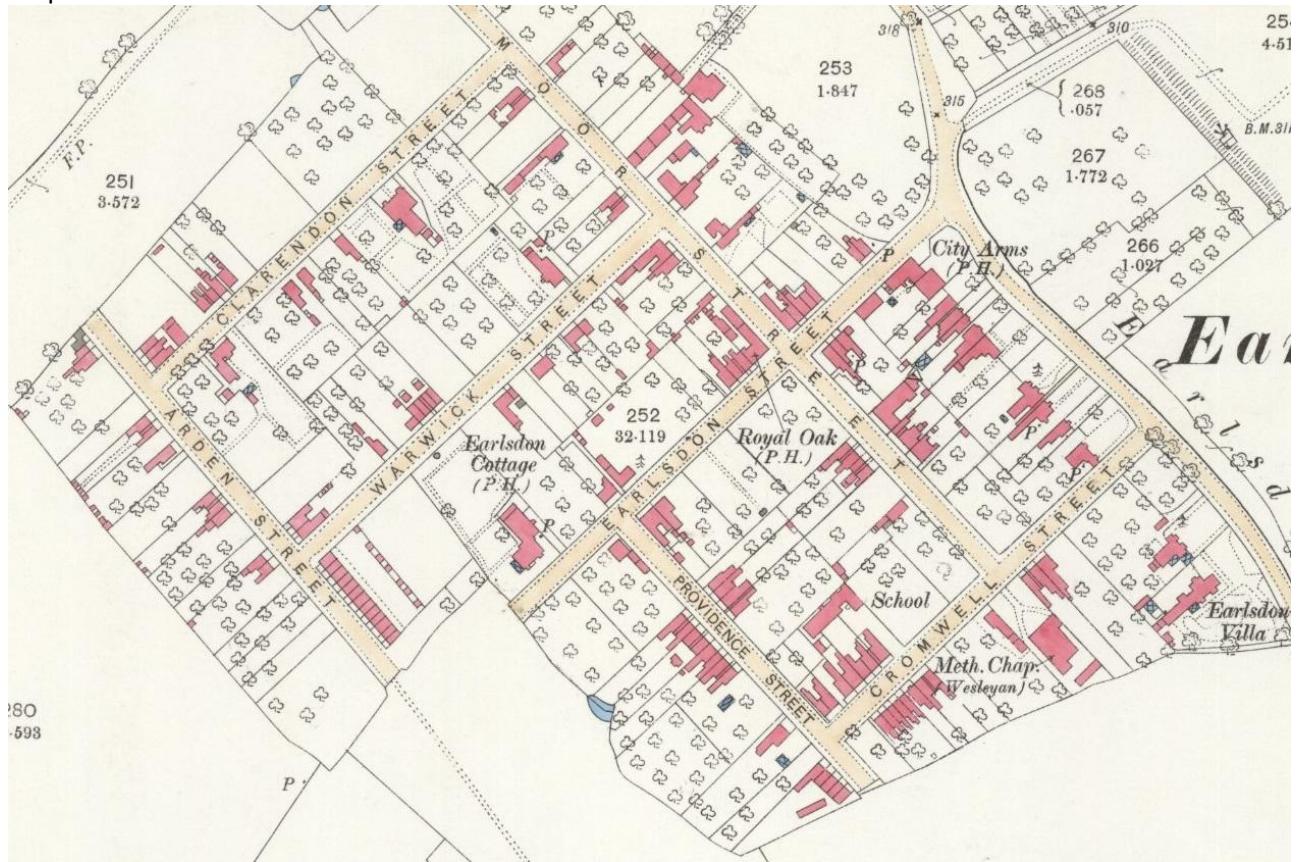


*Tracing from the Map of the  
Coventry Enclosure Award (1860)*

The map indicates the complete lack of housing at the time between Earlsdon Terrace at the bottom of the map and – at the far end of the Earlsdon footpath (or Jetty) – the Butts, where a few buildings such as the St Thomas' Church can be seen. Taken from the following title kindly supplied by David Fry:

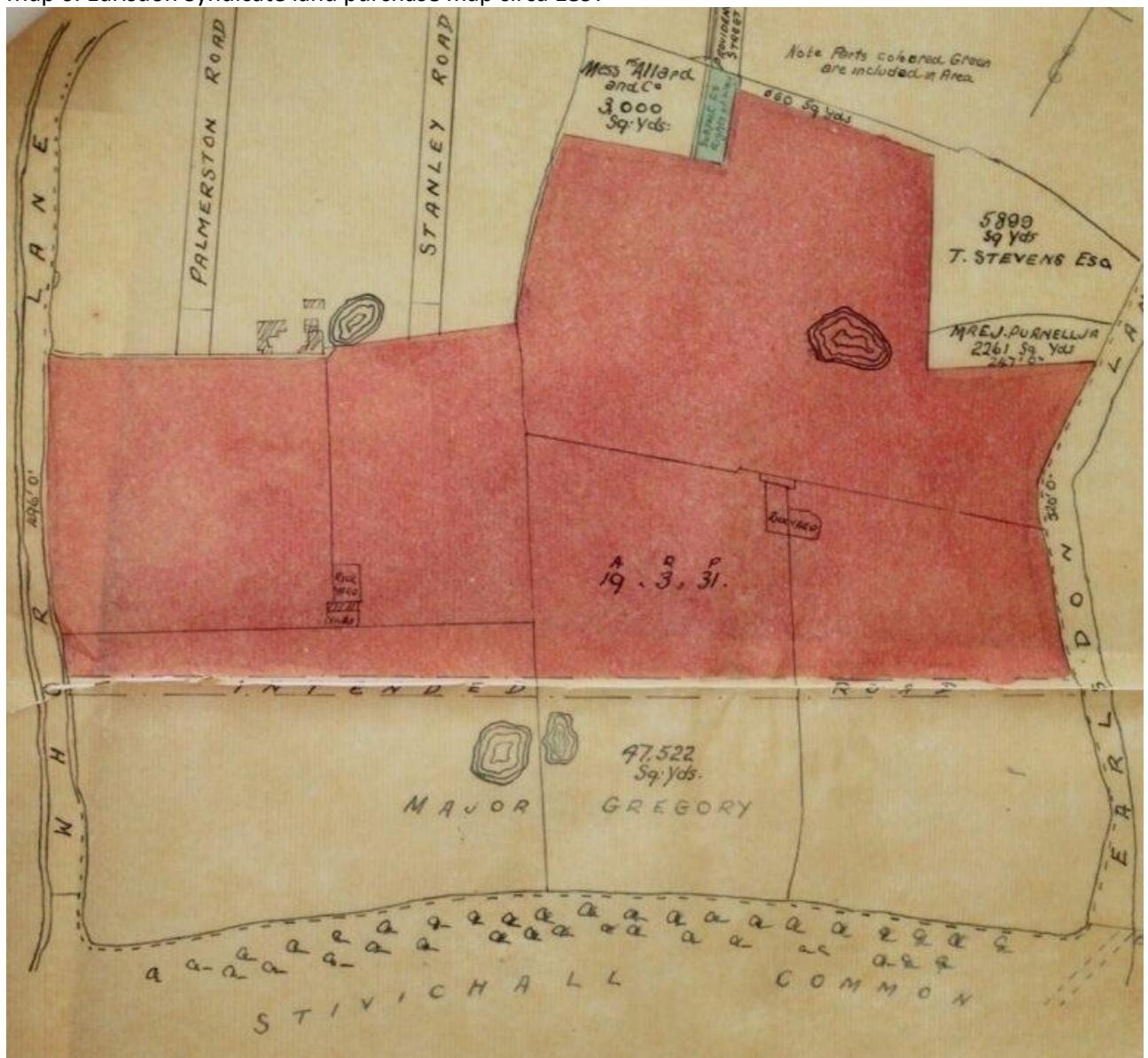
Palmer, Mary (1949) *A Hundred Years Old: The Story of the Parish of St Thomas' from 1848 to 1949*. Gloucester: The British Publishing Company. p. 9.

Map 5: Earlsdon 1889



In the map above provided by Earlsdon Research Group, Earlsdon Terrace appears on the right stretching between the City Arms and Earlsdon Villa

Map 6: Earlsdon Syndicate land purchase map circa 1897



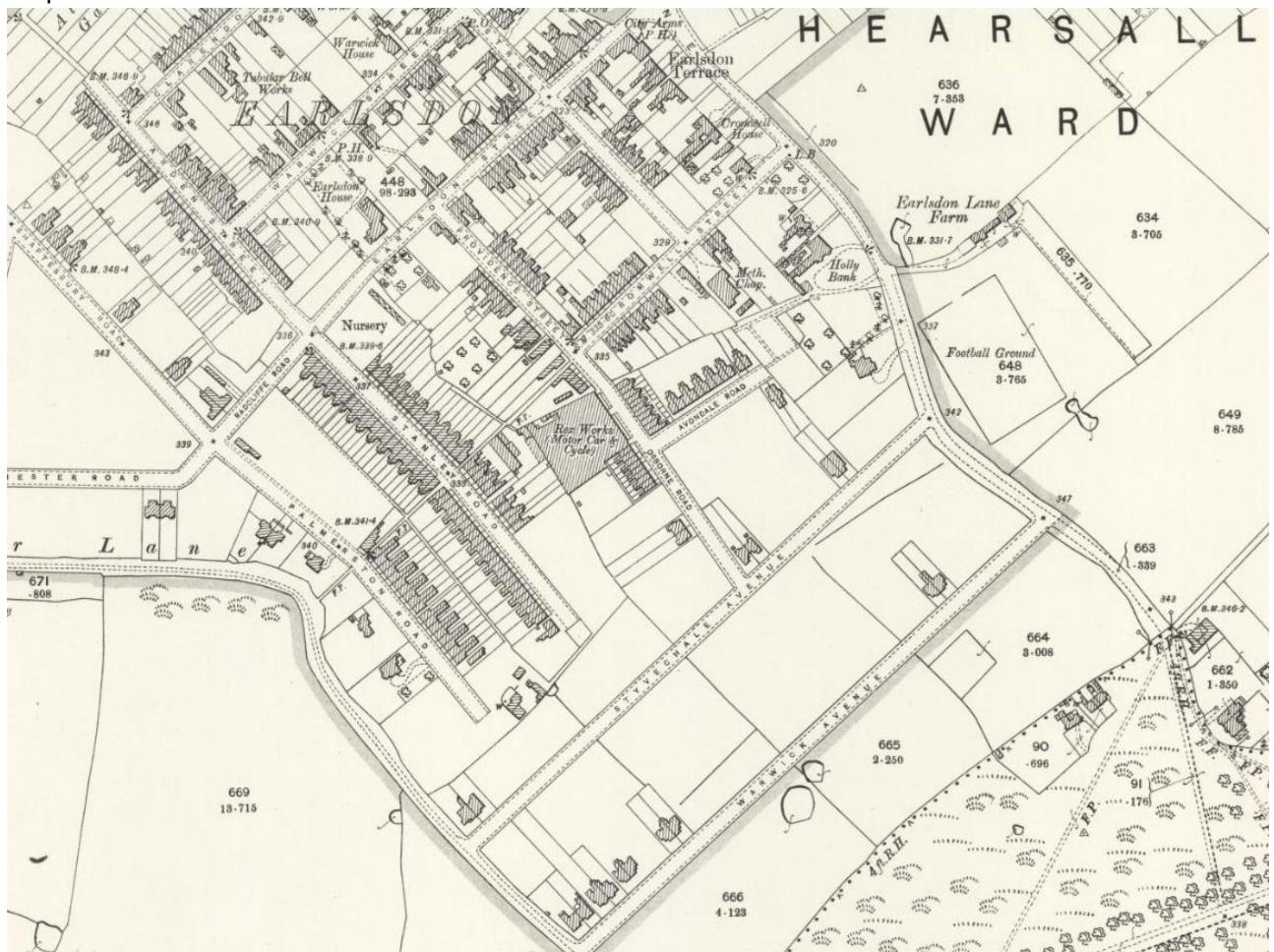
The plan marks out in red the fields where Osborne Road, Avondale Road and Styvechale Avenue would soon be laid out, with what would be Warwick Avenue below them. Notice also the area of 5980 square yards which Thomas Inger Stevens bought for his own use to expand upon the grounds of his house Holly Bank to the north, with the smaller plot below that to become the site on which Boston Lodge would be built. On the left side of the map Whor Lane is marked, which was later renamed more salubriously as Beechwood Avenue. From papers held privately by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 7: Earlsdon Terrace 1904



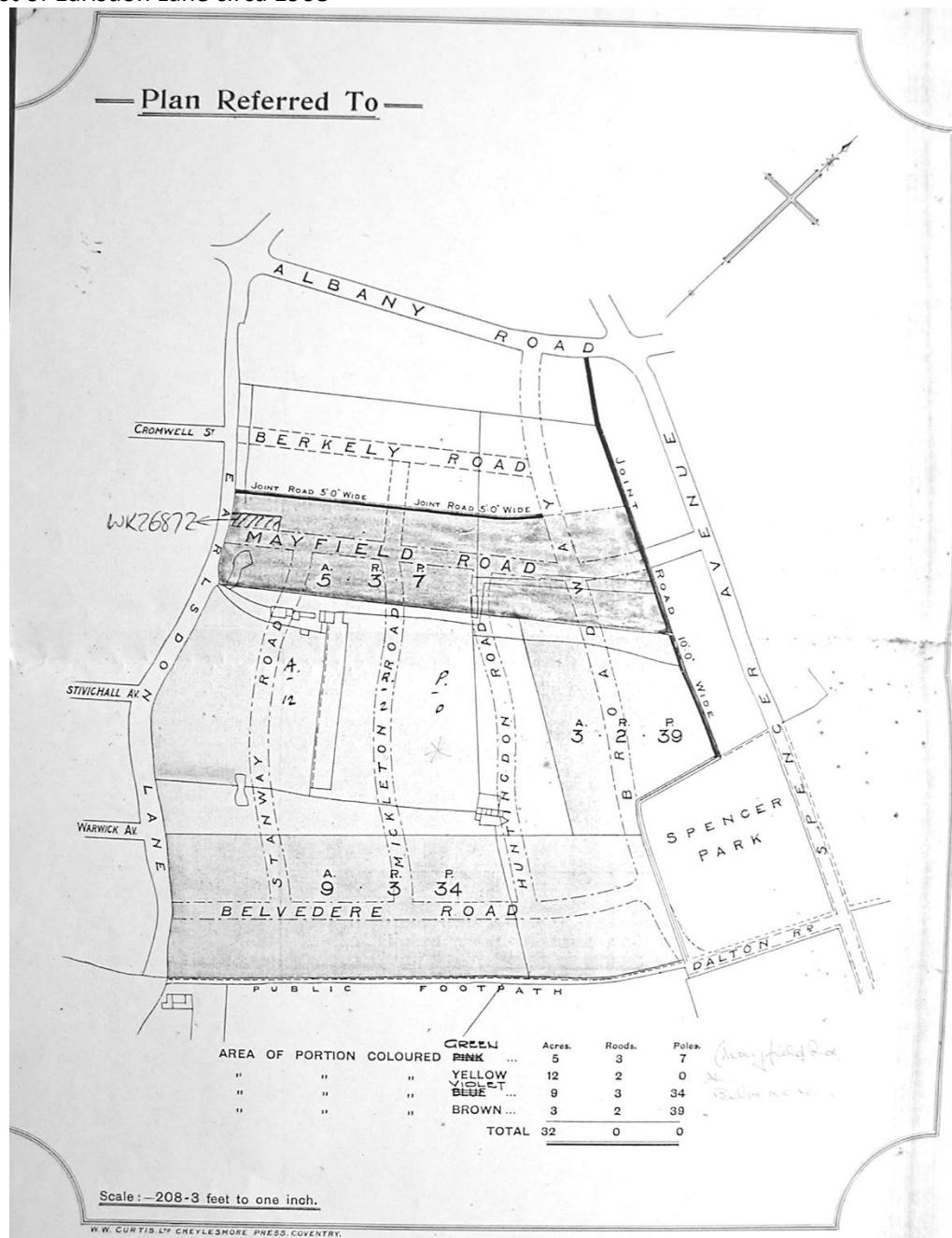
Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 8: Earlsdon 1906



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 9: East of Earlsdon Lane circa 1908



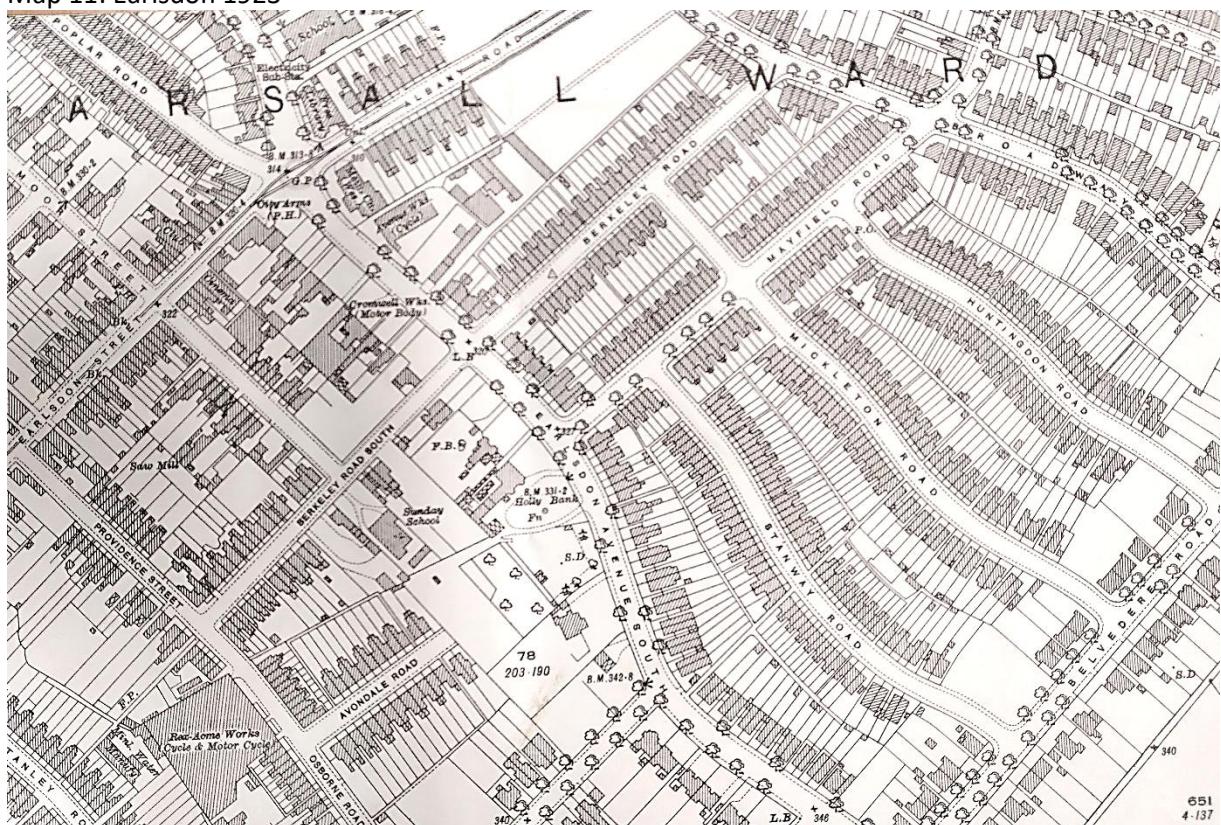
One of a series of preliminary plans dated about 1908 setting out the intentions of the Newcombe Brothers for the farmland to the east of what is still referred to here as Earlsdon Lane. As the previous map of 1906 and the subsequent map of 1913 make clear, the area delineated below was very quickly changed out of recognition thanks to the flurry of housebuilding here -- from the Earlsdon Research Group archive.

Map 10: Earlsdon 1913



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Map 11: Earlsdon 1923



Provided by Earlsdon Research Group

Published by [earlsdonresearchgroup.org](http://earlsdonresearchgroup.org)



## APPENDIX 3 – IMAGES

Image 1



Reproduced with the kind permission of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, this landscape was painted by Herbert John Rylance in the later 1880s, eight years before the opening of Albany Road which would be built across the field to the left. Earlsdon Street can be seen leading off to the right with the houses on Earlsdon Terrace visible straight ahead, with Earlsdon Lane (now Earlsdon Avenue South) beyond that.

The large house towards the middle of the Terrace with the more elaborate, lighter-coloured façade was Cromwell House, built by watch case manufacturer Robert John Pike in the late 1870s, with the smaller house beyond it built at around the same time by Robert Waddington, now 65a Earlsdon Avenue South. The penultimate house was built for Edwin James Walker, now 59 Earlsdon Avenue South, with the furthest house belonging to his father James Walker. Next to this was Holly Bank, obscured by the trees.

At the time he made this painting, Herbert was living with his widowed father at 18 Providence Street, and as he was listed as a watch movement polisher in the 1891 Census he may well have been known to some of the Terrace residents. Indeed, the Museum's accession record for the picture shows that that the picture was donated in 1966 by a W Waddington. Since Winifred Waddington died in 1977, perhaps we can speculate that the picture was therefore a family heirloom which might have hung in the house belonging to her grandfather, Robert Waddington.

Earlsdon Terrace, Earlsdon 1861 to 1921

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

March 2025

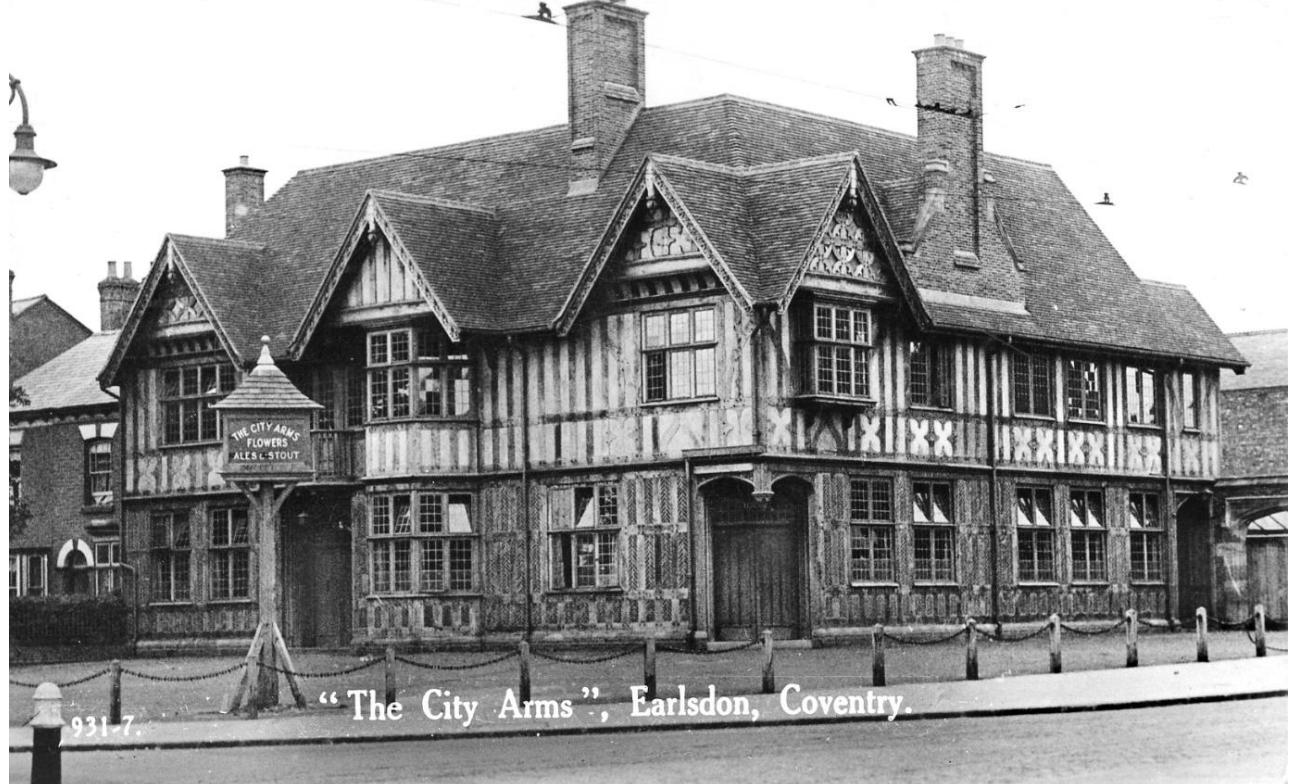


Image 2



Taken around 1900, an Earlsdon Research Group photograph of the City Arms pub fronting on to Earlsdon Terrace, with Earlsdon Street running up the right-hand side of the building and Mary Jane Cooper in the white apron standing by the entrance.

Image 3



Constructed around 1931 under the auspices of the Flowers brewery, the Tudorbethan-style City Arms replaced the public house originally erected by Benjamin Bird. Because it was somewhat larger in size and set further back from Earlsdon Street, house number 79 Earlsdon Avenue South was demolished to accommodate this new building, the house to the left of the pub shown above being number 77, as is still the case today.

Image 4



From the Bill Dunn archive held by the Earlsdon Research Group, this image shows Robert Waddington with presumably his wife Elizabeth and their daughter by the same name in the garden of what was 14 Earlsdon Terrace, now 65a Earlsdon Avenue South. These individuals were listed as residents in the 1911 Census, which is assumed to be the approximate date when the photograph was taken. To the right stands Cromwell House – 12 Earlsdon Terrace, later 67 Earlsdon Avenue South – which can be seen in the painting discussed above, demolished some 70 years later to make way for the Elsie Jones Home.

Image 5



In 1978, a large fire caused considerable damage on Earlsdon Avenue South, which it is thought started in a unit given over to car respays. As the photograph above shows one large property which was affected, namely Cromwell House with its three storeys and the round-headed line above each bay window, immediately recognisable in Image 4 above.

Not long after this, the decision was taken to demolish this once proud structure and to replace it with the current building called Elsie Jones House, as will be seen below.

The photograph was taken by Jeffrey Stevenson on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1978.

Image 6



Following the fire at Cromwell House and its subsequent demolition, it was decided in June 1983 to demolish also the smaller house standing next to it at 71 Earlsdon Avenue South, formerly 10 Earlsdon Terrace. The buildings to the right of this house – the demolition of which was captured on film by Bill Dunn – still stand today, the tall building at the end on the right being the City Arms pub.

Image 7



Elsie Jones House as it appears today on Earlsdon Avenue South, opened in 1984. To the left is the house at 65a Earlsdon Avenue South, which is the house which Robert Waddington built in about 1877.

Image 8



Another photograph taken by Bill Dunn in the early 1980s, this house at 59 Earlsdon Avenue South (originally 18 Earlsdon Terrace) on the corner with what was Cromwell Street (now Berkeley Road South) was built for Edwin James Walker, who took over the gold case making side of the business from his father and neighbour James Walker in the mid-1880s.

Image 9



Luckily, Edwin James Walker's house still stands today at 59 Earlsdon Avenue South unlike many of the original houses on the Terrace now lost to us, as has already been seen above and will be seen again below.

Image 10



From Bill Dunn's collection, this photograph was taken from a house on the Terrace possibly around 1890. In fact, Edwin James Walker was a founder member of the Coventry and Midland Photographic Society, and it would seem eminently plausible that this photograph was taken by him from one of the upstairs windows of his house as shown in the preceding image.

In support of this, the bottom end of Cromwell Street (now Berkeley Road South) appears in the bottom right-hand corner of the photograph, the wall to the right surrounding the garden then belonging to James Walker.

More importantly, this image demonstrates that residents on the Terrace enjoyed views across open fields towards Coventry, at least until the late Edwardian period when these fields too were quickly given over to new housing in order to help accommodate Coventry's burgeoning population.

Image 11



Another early photograph of Earlsdon Terrace from Bill Dunn's collection of photographs, again possibly from around 1890. This shows us the view towards the junction with Earlsdon Street, with the garden walls of the properties on the Terrace on the left and open fields straight ahead and to the right. It is perhaps worth comparing this image with Rylance's painting appearing as Image 1 above, each the converse of the other.

We do not know for certain who took the photograph here but – to indulge in speculation again – as this was taken in the street near the house belonging to local keen photographer Edwin James Walker it would seem more than likely that this is another example of his work.

Image 12



The silver watch case on the left – marked J.W. – was made by James Walker of Earlsdon Terrace and carries a hallmark date of 1863, on the basis of the forum discussion here:

<https://www.watchuseek.com/threads/is-this-a-hallmark-from-james-walker-case-maker-albert-street-coventry.1997002/>

On the right is a gold watch case made by his son Edwin James Walker with a hallmark date of 1885, on the basis of the forum discussion here:

<https://forum.tz-uk.com/showthread.php?502032-Coventry-Co-operative-Watch-Manufacturing-Society-1894-Pocket-Watch>

James Walker made both gold and silver cases and when he stepped back from the watch industry in order to retire he set up Edwin with the side of the business producing gold cases, while the silver side of the business became the responsibility of his other son Arthur James Walker, who was based at 20 Earlsdon Street on the corner with Moor Street, currently the location for Millsy's Café Bar.

Image 13



Built in the early 1850s, Woodlands at 20 Earlsdon Terrace was the home of James Walker until his death in 1907. The house and its large gardens stood on the corner of what is now Earlsdon Avenue South and Berkeley Road South until 1982, when the building was demolished and the flats comprising what is today Woodlands Court were built on what had been its grounds. Luckily, this photograph was taken just before the house before it met its fate, the image saved for us again by Bill Dunn.

The greenhouse on the left of the picture appears in this position on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map of Earlsdon, and so it seems very likely that this was used by James Walker himself. Indeed, an obituary in the Coventry Times noted that “In regard to gardening, Mr Walker made a study of the subject and was often consulted by his friends on horticultural matters.”

The most notable occupant of Woodlands was clearly James Walker himself, but by 1925 another long-term resident by the name of Dr Eric Cecil Keevil Kenderdine had taken up residence at what was then known as 49 Earlsdon Avenue South. He served as a well-known General Practitioner in the area until he retired in 1975, when he announced that he would spend his retirement tending to his garden, the very garden James Walker had been so proud of.

As an aside, the building to the left is part of one of the blocks of flats which replaced the house at Holly Banks, as described in connection with Image 15 and 16 below.

Image 14



Following James Walker's death in April 1907, Woodlands was sold off before the end of the year, when an auction notice in the *Midland Daily Telegraph* made reference to a portion of the grounds "... being immediately available as building sites." It is perhaps no coincidence therefore that the 1911 Census gives the head of a household at Woodlands as a builder by the name of William Vaughan and also records a new house next door called Rosedale built in what had been James Walker's gardens. Indeed, shortly thereafter a second new house adjoining Rosedale was ready for occupation – this further house called Roseneath – the occupant being a very well-known Earlsdon resident called Charles Corelli Johnson, the then headmaster at Earlsdon School just along the lane.

Both of these new additions to the Terrace still exist today – in the photograph above, to the right of one of the Woodlands Court blocks, Rosedale and Roseneath can be seen to the right, now numbered 55 and 57 Earlsdon Avenue South respectively.

Image 15



MAYFIELD RD EARLSDON 13.

As will be immediately apparent, the photograph is not of Earlsdon Terrace at all but nonetheless it is critical to our knowledge because it is probably the only image we have of the house which Thomas Inger Stevens remodelled and renamed Holly Banks, visible on the other side of the road from the far end of Mayfield Street.

This picture dates back to 1913, by which time the views of open fields from Holly Banks were clearly no more.

Image 16



Today, although the fledgling trees shown in the 1913 image above are now mature specimens and the corner shops on either side of the street have disappeared, Mayfield Road looks little changed.

At the far end of the street, the house known as Holly Bank is no more, another property with large grounds which was demolished in the early 1960s to make way for blocks of flats.

Today, the complex of flats still bears the name Holly Bank, while some of the large evergreen trees standing in the grounds today remain as a legacy of the landscaping efforts expended by the former owners Henry Westrap and Thomas Inger Stevens.