

# Norbury Hall history

The Manor of Norbury lay at the northern end of the parish of Croydon either side of the London Road. Its mansion house stood until 1914 at the junction of what today is Kensington Avenue and Norbury Avenue. However the building that was to become the principal mansion of the estate was not built until 1802.

Norbury Hall stood 400 yards to the south west of the old farm site in 30 acres of ornamental gardens. The gardens contained a large lake which was fed by the River Graveny and beyond this there was pasture across which a footpath ran from Norbury Farm to the north east of the house. The Lodge and main gates to the estate were in London Road where the Post Office now stands. The drive ran up to the house through woodland and past the stable yard which a sale document of 1855 described as having "standing room for several carriages, stabling for seven horses, loose boxes, harness and men servants rooms, hay and corn rooms, granary and a hen house". The woods were cleared when Craignish Avenue was built.

The last owner of the estate was a Mr Hobbs who had a private cricket field which he later sold to Barclays Bank and is now owned by the neighbouring private leisure club. Hobbs kept the lake stocked with fish and entertained visitors from London for fishing and shooting weekends.

The Estate was acquired by the Council in 1956 to accommodate the elderly however the grounds were too extensive for the Welfare Department to maintain so they were handed over to the Parks Department and the Mansion was fenced off from the gardens.

The lake no longer contains water, except for occasional periods in wet winters, but the depression of the basin can clearly be seen. One of the most interesting features of the garden was the Gazebo which was a summer house and had a first floor balcony to allow a good view over the garden. Sadly, this was destroyed by arsonists in 2002.

One of the distinctive features of the garden is the large Cedar trees which surround the house and are typical planting of early nineteenth century villa gardens. Norbury Hall provides a peaceful green oasis in an urban areas with year round colour from rhododendrons, roses and in the winter and spring months from the beds of heathers and conifers.