

An Industrial Heritage Walk around Hersham

Start by turning right outside Costa Coffee and heading in the direction of the Watermans Arms. Before we start the industrial part of the tour, stand outside the Watermans and notice an HRA the green plaque on the outside wall commemorating Sham 69 - a famous punk band from the 1980s.

Carry on up the Molesey Road with the Watermans on your left. Just past the Post Office you will notice a car park which is used for the Village Hall. This was known as Brown's Yard and used to be a car body shop called Compton and Hermon where they added the bodywork to motor cars during the early 1920s.

Continue onwards past the parade of shops on your left, cross Claremont Close and pass the Chinese takeaway. Keep walking and on your left you will come to a brick wall with railings enclosing the site which is now occupied by the offices of Air Products and also many smaller companies. Stop at the first gate you come to and imagine this as a thriving industrial manufacturing site which dominated this part of Hersham. Firstly cars were made here, until the

site was bought in the 1930s by a company that made heavy duty electrical transformers. The electrical business changed hands several times, but most local people will remember it as Hackbridge and Hewittic.

The transformers made by 'Hackbridges' were really massive and had to be collected on enormous low loader lorries for export and transport literally around the world. Some are still in use today and can be seen by the side of the railway into London. The noise of the factory hooter at 7.55, 8.00, 1.25, 1.30 and then at the end of the day is still a powerful memory for many local residents, even though production stopped back in 1972. The extensive factory buildings were demolished in 1978.

The office for the administration of the manufacturing activities which went on here was a converted classical and elegant Victorian mansion house called Hersham Lodge. Hersham Lodge faced out onto the Molesey Road masking some of the factory buildings behind. It survived until 1980, when it was also knocked down to make more space for the modern offices which still occupy the site today.

Carry on walking away from Hersham with the brick wall on your left and you will come to the main entrance to the site.

Air Products who make and distribute industrial gases used to occupy all of the modern offices here, but now have let out space to other companies. You can see these listed on the on the notice 'Hersham Place' noticeboard just inside the entrance. Hersham Place refers to an 18th Century mansion that preceded Hersham Lodge. Hersham used to have several grand houses; the only surviving example from this era is the building now used by the Burhill golf club.

Now cross over the road and stand by the railings just before the Full Moon Chinese restaurant. You will see an industrial area called Riverdene Business Park which has been in the news recently as a possible site for a new supermarket. Currently Sandown repairs and Ian Allan the printers are based there, but historically, from about 1914 it was occupied by the ABC Motors. They made motor cycles and then aero engines during the First World War when production was moved from premises at Brooklands. Then they started making cars, and on the internet you will find some interesting

pictures of old ABC cars (look up swift and bean ABC cars). They certainly look like they were from a different era - but they were attractive looking motors.

After car production ceased, the factory manufactured specialist engineering components. ABC motors was taken over by Vickers Ltd in 1951 and the factory had a really good reputation for precision measurement and were leaders in their field for a time - references to their up to date use of slide rule technology can be found on the internet. The company later became part of the Vickers Group, and made parts for early diesel trains and aeroplanes. However in 1971 production was transferred to Crayford when the Hersham site closed.

Now carry on up the road past the historic houses and cottages on your right to the petrol station. This was built here in about 1965 after the demolition of an attractive old roundhouse church. That was about the road to Esher was widened to create the current dual carriageway. Later on in 1977 the continuation of the road towards Weybridge was built across part of the public recreation ground.

With your back to the petrol station you will see a large evergreen tree on the other side of the roundabout which is next to a small road called Pratts Lane. This is named after Hersham's 19 century, carpenter and undertaker who produced coffins there, and probably anything else he was commissioned to make.[DN need to check this]

Before you head back to Hersham Green take a look at the Barley Mow. This pub has been here since Victorian times and has certainly seen some changes! Old photos show it looking like a quaint country retreat. It's clearly very different now - but they still do a good pint and good food. If you are interested in jazz, call in here on a Wednesday night!

If you haven't stopped at the pub - now head Costa Coffee - perhaps you'll need to sit down after all that and have another cappuccino?!

Hersham Residents Association (the HRA) is a non-political organisation established in 1971 to promote Hersham and its community. Why not join us and get more involved?

Find out more by visiting us at:
www.hershamresidents.info/index.html



HRA Walking Tours

Walk Two: Hersham's Industrial Heritage

Hersham is a great village with some interesting and surprising history which is worth exploring. You might not guess that Hersham used to have some significant industry – and not that long ago. This walking tour guide will show you the sites where some of that industry used to be. You can see for yourself what's there now.

All HRA walking tours start and finish at Costa Coffee - and can be extension walks from the walk around the green and if you have time so can be linked together for a longer walking experience if you like.