



St Benedicts (Tooting) Management Company

History of Tooting Graveney



Tooting Graveney

Tooting Graveney is about 6 miles south-south-west of the centre of London. It was in the Brixton hundred of the historic county of Surrey until it became part of Greater London in the local government re-organisation of 1965. It was originally an area of swampy gravel and clay meadow land with watercourses draining into the River Wandle, which itself flows into the river Thames at Wandsworth. It remained a distinct country village until the mid 19th century. The historic parish of Tooting Graveney was bounded by those of Wandsworth to the north, Streatham to east and Mitcham to the south and west, with some of the latter boundary defined by the River Graveney, before its course was altered.

The name 'Tooting' is thought to originate in Saxon times and derive from 'Toot', meaning to look out, and 'ing', meaning meadow. The look out may have arisen from its location at the crossing (now Tooting Broadway) of two historic routes, between Clapham and Merton Abbey, part of the Roman Stane Street from London Bridge (Londinium) to Chichester (Noviomagus Reginorum), and between Wandsworth and Mitcham (now the A24 and A217 respectively). An alternative theory is that it meant the people of Tota, a Saxon warlord. In olden times, spellings often varied between records, including 'Totinge', 'Totyng', 'Towting', 'Tutin' and 'Tootting'.

'Graveney' derives from the name of the (de) Gravenel family, which had large land holdings in the area in the 12th and 13th centuries following the Norman Conquest. Tooting Graveney was used to distinguish that manor from Tooting Bec, named after the monks of St Mary de Bec to whom the latter manor was given. These manors probably dated from before the Norman Conquest, with the one later called Graveney belonging to Chertsey Abbey and Bec belonging to Streatham. A third manor was probably joined afterwards to one of the other two, which was held by Swain for King Edward then passed to Earl Wallef on Edward's death, who sold it to a Londoner Alnod, who gave it to Westminster Abbey.

St Nicholas Church

Worship in the area is recorded from the 7th century. St Nicholas church is named after the bishop of Mycra in Lycia (now in southern Turkey), who is also the patron saint of Russia. The church was mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 and evolved with a mixture of Romano-British, Saxon and Norman styles with a round tower and a shingled steeple.

When the population grew too large to be accommodated by 1814 consideration was given to extending it, but it was replaced instead by a new church built nearby and consecrated in 1833. The exact location of the original church is not known but it is described in *The Environs of London* (see references below) and was drawn (see image alongside and [art history](#)). The new church was extended several times over the period 1873-1889. Further relief was provided by All Saints Church, consecrated in 1907, which is grade II listed.

The parish of St Nicholas transferred from the diocese of Winchester to the diocese of London in 1846. It transferred again to the Diocese of Rochester in 1877 and is now in the Diocese of Southwark.



The old St Nicholas Church, from The History of Tooting-Graveney



Chronology of Tooting Graveney

Date	Event
666	Charters of the Abbey of Chertsey refer to the area as Getinges.
10 th century	Three manors were held by the Abbey of Chertsey (later Tooting Graveney), by Streatham (later Tooting Bec) and by King Edward, Earl Wallef, Alnod then Westminster Abbey.
1086	The Domesday book refers to three manors in the Brixton hundred (county sub-division) with the name Totinge. The manor of Tooting Graveney, assessed as 6 hides (90-180 modern acres or 36-72 hectares depending on its fertility), was held by Haimo, Sherriff of Surrey, for the Abbot of Chertsey, containing a church (St Nicholas). The manor of Tooting Bec was given by Richard de Tonbridge to the monks of St Mary de Bec. One manor, assessed as 4 hides (60-120 modern acres or 24-48 hectares), was held by Odbert for the Abbot of St Peter's, Westminster. This was joined afterwards to one of the other two manors.
1157-1189	Hamo de Gravanel, descendent of Haimo, gave church land in the manor of Tooting Graveney to the Priory of St Marie Overie, under the protection of the Bishop of Winchester.
1216	King John gave De Gravenell land to his chaplain, Denis, but it was later restored.
1314	The manor of Tooting Graveney was held by the de Lodelowe family.
1394	The manor of Tooting Graveney passed by marriage to the Dymocke family, which held it for around 200 years.
16 th century	Court records refer to the extraction of gravel and loam, the removal of furze (gorse, presumably the source of the name 'Furzedown') and the grazing of cattle on two commons (now Tooting Bec Common and Tooting Graveney Common).
1536-1541	Although not described in the references, presumably King Henry VIII confiscated the manors in the ownership of the church during the dissolution of the monasteries.
1555	Parish registers started in 1555, with originals available from 1603.
1593-1600	Queen Elizabeth I granted the manor of Tooting Graveney to James Harrington then Henry Maynard (later Sir Henry), secretary to Lord Burghley. In about 1600, Queen Elizabeth visited and an avenue of trees was planted on Tooting Common (perhaps near Dr Johnson Avenue).

Date	Event
1688	Protestant dissenters founded the non-conformist congregational church. Daniel Foe, later Defoe (author of <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>), and a leading non-conformist was reputed to be a prime mover and to have lived in Tooting shortly after his marriage in 1684 while hiding during the 'English Revolution'. However, no record of his living in the parish has been found. Rumours that he lived in Hill House are unlikely to be correct, since it was not built until 1784, after Defoe's death in 1731. The congregational church was incorporated into the Presbyterian Church of England in 1881. The site on Tooting High Street now has shops like Superdrug.
1694	The manor of Tooting Graveney was held by Sir Paul Whichcote, who obtained a private Act of Parliament allowing the grant of leases on the manor land.
1700	By now, land ownership was set out more clearly, distinguishing land held of the manor and land owned outright, not as tenants.
1714-1725	The manor of Tooting Graveney was sold several times, to Sir James Bateman, Alderman of London, Abraham Atkins, Percival Lewis of Putney and Morgan Rice.
1744	Court records refer to the sign of The Mitre. There were four inns: The Mitre (on Mitcham Road), The Castle (on Tooting High Street), The Angel, which was demolished in 1889, and The Rising Sun, which burned down in the late 19 th century.
1752	Percival Lewis split the land of Tooting Graveney manor, selling some to Joseph Salvador.
1767	The manor was purchased by Morgan Rice, a distiller, for £770 and then passed down through his family.
1784	Hill House was built on the manor land (see drawing below).
1802-1861	The manor was sold several times.
1833	A new church was built nearby and consecrated in 1833 to replace the old St Nicholas church when the population outgrew it. The new church was extended several times over the period 1873-1889.
1846	The parish of St Nicholas transferred from the diocese of Winchester to the diocese of London in 1846. It transferred again to the diocese of Rochester in 1877 and is now in the diocese of Southwark.
1861	W James Thompson, who lived at Tooting Lodge, bought the manor for amounts variously recorded as about £2,000 and £3,650. It now had 22½ acres of land. He sold the manorial rights to the Metropolitan Board of Works. When he attempted to enclose parts of the common, local land owners took legal action, which was found in their favour in 1869. The common was held in trust by the County Council to preserve it as a common from 1872.
1868	The original Tooting Junction station opened on the Tooting, Merton and Wimbledon Railway, west of the present station site.
1887	St Joseph's Roman Catholic College was opened on the St Benedicts site of the old manor house, Hill House.
1890	The London Tramways horse-drawn tram was extended from Clapham to Tooting then electrified in 1902.
1893	Pressure from nearby land owners prevented erection of a proposed fever hospital.
1894	The replacement Tooting Junction station opened on the Tooting, Merton and Wimbledon Railway, on the present station site, renamed Tooting station in 1938 after the Merton branch closed to passengers in 1929.
1897	The college became Tooting Home for the Aged and Infirm, with Hill House as nurses' accommodation.
1902	The London Tramways tramwas electrified.

Date	Event
1902-06	Tooting Library was opened and extended.
1906	Tooting Bec Lido opened.
1914-23	The home became Tooting Military Hospital during and after World War I.
1926	The London Underground Northern Line extension opened from Clapham Common through Tooting to Morden.
1930	Tooting Market was established.
1930-31	The derelict hospital was renovated and re-opened as St Benedicts Hospital, joining the NHS in 1948.
1931	Granada cinema opened in Tooting.
1936	Broadway Market was established.
c 1937-50	Electric trolleybuses replaced electric trams.
1954	St George's Hospital started to relocate from Hyde Park Corner to Tooting, where the former Grove Fever and Fountain Hospitals were.
1960s	Diesel buses replaced electric trolleybuses.
1981	St Benedicts Hospital closed and Laing Homes bought the site for residential development, reportedly for about £2.2 million.
2005	A crater on Mars was named after Tooting,  mapped (PDF, 474kb) in 2015 by the US Geological Survey.

The [History of St Benedicts](#) covers that specific site in more detail from the 19th century.



Tooting Hall, around 1786, from [The History of Tooting-Graveney](#)



Hill House, around 1784, from The History of Tooting-Graveney



References

- The History of Tooting-Graveney, Surrey – William Edward Morden – 1897 (*from which the drawings on this page are reproduced*)
- The Environs of London: Volume 1, County of Surrey – T Cadell and W Davies – 1792, freely available from [British History](#) with rights reserved

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St Benedicts (Tooting) Management Company

History of St Benedicts



St Joseph's Roman Catholic College

St Joseph's Teaching Brotherhood bought the site containing the original manor house, Hill House, reputedly once the home of Daniel Defoe, although it appears to have been built after he died. There is a persistent rumour that he attended the non-conformist congregational church while hiding in Tooting during the 17th century 'English Revolution'. The Brotherhood built the College, which opened as a Roman Catholic school in 1887. The upkeep proved too expensive and the school moved to Beulah Hill in 1895.

The photograph of St Joseph's College shows the clock tower and portico that was preserved on the St Benedicts Estate.



Tooting Home for the Aged and Infirm

The Wandsworth Board of Guardians bought the site in 1897 to provide extra workhouse accommodation. It cost £40,000 and another £30,000 was spent on alterations to the 3-storey building, which was renamed the Tooting Home for the Aged and Infirm. Hill House became the Nurses' Home.

The ground floor contained the Committee Room and various administrative offices, as well as apartments for the Matron and the Master. There were also two large wards, each containing 42 beds, several smaller wards, some with only seven beds, and a few single rooms used for nursing accommodation. More wards were located on the first floor, where there were also day rooms for patients to spend recreation time. Each of the wards was named after one of the Wandsworth Guardians.

By 1901 the Home housed 605 inmates. In 1903 eight temporary single-storey buildings were erected at the northeast of the site to house a further 102 males and 102 females. These buildings were arranged either side of a central linking corridor, which ran parallel to Church Lane.

As a timing comparison, the London Tramways horse-drawn tram was extended from Clapham to Tooting in 1890 then electrified in 1902.



Photograph © St Joseph's College



Tooting Home for the Aged and Infirm

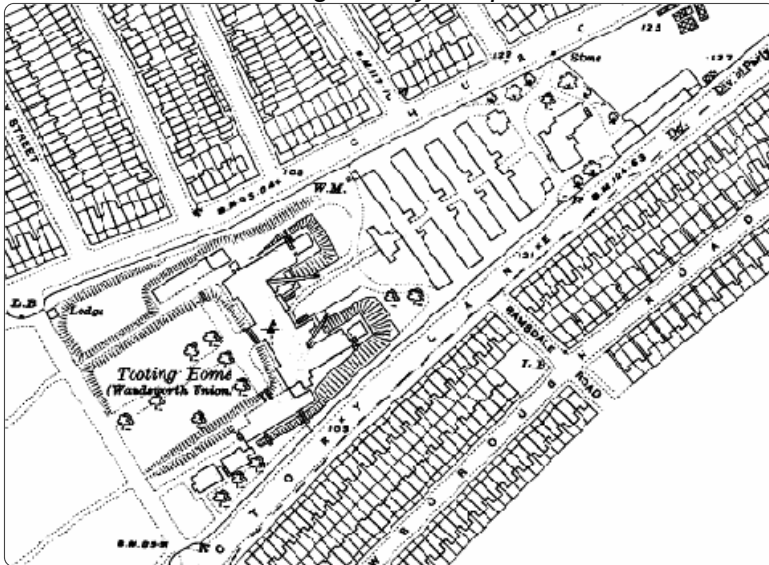
Tooting Military Hospital

The War Office took over the home during World War I and it became the Church Lane Military Hospital. After the war the Ministry of Pensions used it as a neurological hospital for shell-shocked and neurasthenic ex-servicemen until 1923. The buildings then became empty and derelict.

As a timing comparison, the London Underground Northern line extension from Clapham Common through Tooting Broadway to Morden opened in 1926.



Tooting Military Hospital



Site map about 1916

St Benedict's Hospital

The London County Council bought the site in 1930. It spent up to £30,000 to renovate and re-equip it as a hospital for long-stay patients. The hospital reopened in 1931 as St Benedict's Hospital. It admitted three classes of patients: convalescents or those needing rehabilitation; the aged chronic sick; and young adults who were permanently incapable. The rehabilitation patients were transferred to Margate in 1938 and much of the activity of the Hospital was reduced, catering for the two remaining classes of patients.

The hospital joined the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948, when it had 200 patients, coming under the control of the Wandsworth Hospital Management Committee, part of the South West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board. The X-ray Department was improved and a new chapel was built between 1948 and 1950. The hospital had 246 beds in 1950. A further 50 beds were opened for fracture cases from St James' Hospital, Balham (which was then undergoing major rebuilding works, now also closed and redeveloped for housing) and for male patients undergoing rehabilitation in 1951.

As a timing comparison, electric trams were replaced by electric trolleybuses over the approximate period 1937 to 1950 and electric trolleybuses were replaced by diesel-powered buses during the 1960s.

Following reorganisation of the NHS in 1974, the Hospital came under the control of the Wandsworth and East Merton (Teaching) District Health Authority, part of the South West Thames Regional Health Authority. It was latterly used for geriatric care and closed in 1981.



St Benedict's Hospital

St Benedicts Estate

Laing Homes bought the site for housing development in the mid 1980s, reportedly for around £2.2 million. The surviving remnants of the hospital buildings are the entrance gateway with its posts still on Church Lane, and the main hospital block's clock tower, which was positioned at one end of Limetree Walk. The portico positioned at the other end of Limetree Walk was sadly demolished by a falling tree blown down by extreme winds in storm *Henk* in January 2024. The clock tower and portico were locally listed by Wandsworth Council in December 2018.

The first photograph and aerial view replicate as closely as possible the Military Hospital postcard and site map around 1916 above.

The clock tower windows have since been boarded up due to vandalism and it was extensively repaired in 2009 for about £25,000 (comparable to the cost of the site and building work in 1897!) by the Management Company with the aid of a 50% grant from Wandsworth Council, but such grants are no longer available in 2024. It is maintained using traditional materials as far as possible.

The old Hospital entrance now serves as an exit from Hawthorn Crescent, which is not part of the Estate. The metal decorations on the tops of the pillars have been vandalised and the entrance has been cluttered by Council signs, which have been digitally removed from the main image. Any text originally on the pillars has faded from view. The letter box appears original, bearing the letters 'VR' (Victoria Regina), as Queen Victoria died in 1901. Wandsworth Council unveiled a green plaque to commemorate the buildings formerly on the site on Wednesday 9 March 2016.





Same area as site map above 2010 © Google Maps



Clock tower in Limetree Walk 1987 © Kevin Herrmann



Portico on Limetree Walk 2010 © Kevin Herrmann



References

- Lost Hospitals of London - St Benedict's – ezitis.myzen.co.uk/stbenedicts.html
- The Workhouse - Wandsworth and Clapham – www.workhouses.org.uk/Wandsworth/ [Updated May 2012]

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