Discovering Exeter 4/Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania
by Hazel Harvey

Note of series
Discovering Exeter:
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Foreword

Up the hill from most of Exeter’s other suburbs, Pennsylvania has a character especially its own, derived both from its topography and its history. This booklet, the fourth in the series ‘Discovering Exeter’, follows the usual pattern of an historical introduction, followed by a walking guide to enable the reader to appreciate as much of the suburb as possible.

Large numbers of new settlements in the Americas were named from towns and cities in ‘the Old Country’ – Exeter, New Hampshire, is a good example – so it is interesting to find a reverse example where a community was named after the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, USA, by a Quaker admirer of William Penn’s experiment across the Appalachians.

As at Exwick, steep slopes have put constraints on new development in the area but, undaunted, builders have over the years found ways of fitting houses into the topography. The reason for the steep slopes is geological, with grey shale (shillet) and sandstone of the Culm Measures forming the hills rather than the softer red sandstone and marl of the lower parts of Exeter. As residents of Bonhay Road know, these slopes can become unstable during a wet winter season. And gardeners are aware that the heavy soils are not so kindly as the rich red loam of the rest of Exeter.

The inspiration and much of the success of this series of booklets came from Harold Trump, Chairman of the Society from 1975 to 1982 and subsequently the mainspring of the Publications Sub-Committee. It is with much regret that we record his sudden death in July 1984.

D J C Laming
Chairman Exeter Civic Society
The name Pennsylvania originally applied only to the terrace of six white houses on the hillside, which are clearly visible from most parts of Exeter. They were commissioned in 1818 by a Quaker banker who chose to honour William Penn by naming them after his American colony, which was founded on principles of justice and religious toleration. Perhaps it is appropriate that whereas the earlier booklets in this series have each dealt with an Exeter parish, 'Pennsylvania' is not a parish but a residential area. Its boundaries are primarily of interest to estate agents, who like to refer to ever wider areas below Union Road as 'Lower Pennsylvania', and the new estates to the north as 'Higher Pennsylvania' and even 'Sylvania'. Further development past Stoke Woods may yet bring us an Exeter 'Transylvania'.

Even nearly sixty years later, '5 Pennsylvania, Exeter' was sufficient address to reach Mrs. Halloran's school for young ladies at the terrace, although 'Pennsylvania' had begun to be used for the whole desirable district by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the hill itself, which provided such salubrious air, such unrivalled vistas, and such inspiration to the composers of the estate agents' advertisements, existed long before it received this name.

An Iron Age camp stood on the summit above Stoke Woods, before there was any settlement on the city's spur. A network of ancient paths converged on Higher Hoopern Farm and led down the Taddiforde Valley to the Exe. Another ancient route ran along the line of present-day Rosebarn Lane, Mount Pleasant and Polsloe Road. It was crossed by the old route to Tiverton over Stoke Hill. Wheeled traffic was almost unknown in Devon until 1750. Men on foot or riding ponies and leading pack-animals chose the high, dry ways.

Geoffrey of Monmouth reports, albeit unreliably, that when Vespasian besieged the city 'in 49 A.D. its Celtic name was Kaerpenhuelgott, meaning 'town on the hill under the high wood'. Pennsylvania Road lies on the route that Roman messengers took from the legiornary fortress guarding the river-crossing to the signal-station and look-out 600 feet above sea-level. In the 19th century a Roman signet-ring of iron was found under the road, and also the upper third of an amphora.
In Anglo-Saxon times, the manor of Duryard extended as near to the city as the banks of the Longbrook. The kings would ride out to hunt there whenever they visited Exeter. King Athelstan made a gift of the manor to the city in the 10th century. It was so full of wolves that Edgar the Peaceful offered to accept 300 wolves’ heads in lieu of the city’s tribute. At the time of Domesday, the citizens cultivated 960 acres of Duryard, and the woods provided valuable building timber over the centuries. (For example, in 1657 one hundred trees were felled in Duryard Wood to rail in the Cathedral yard. The elegant result can be seen in a vignette in Rook’s 1744 map of the city.)

West of present-day Pennsylvania Road was the ‘Hopemeland’. ‘Hopern’ meant ‘house for making barrel-hoops’. St. Sidwell’s Fee, containing well-watered pastureland and withy beds, stretched over the triangular flank of the hillside between modern Pennsylvania Road and Rosebarn Lane. The latter was called ‘the highway leading towards Stoodle’ in 1312, and later Mary-bone lane, Mary Bow Lane or Mary Port Lane. From the earliest written records, its junction with the present Pennsylvania Road has been called Marypole Head. The older forms are Marpole, Marypole, Marepoll, Marlpool etc., and the first element probably goes back next to the Blessed Virgin but to the Old English for boundary, now familiar to us as ‘march’ as in ‘the Welsh marches’. The name would then refer to a boundary pool, unless it marks the limit of Poll’s land, now Polsloe.

North of Marypole Head lay Rollestone Barton, the ‘Rolisdon’ granted by Henry I to St. Nicholas’ Priory. It was called ‘Rokesdon near Hopemeland’ when St. John’s Hospital Foundation purchased the estate in the second half of the 13th century with money given by Bishop Branscombe. Also spelt ‘Rookysdon’ and ‘Ruxton’, it may have meant ‘Rooks’ Down’. The ‘k’ changed to ‘t’ probably from confusion with Rollostone in nearby Lipton Pyne. South of Rollestone and east of Rosebarn Lane the ‘demesne of the prioresse of Polslo’ extended as far as the old Roman road through Whipton, over steep hillsides dropping to the stream still called after the nuns (Mincing, Minchin, cognate with German Mönchin). Polsloe Priory, dedicated to St. Katherine, was founded before 1190/60 (when the nuns were granted permission to have their own cemetery). It was the only house for Benedictine nuns in the diocese of Exeter. In January 1320 Bishop Stapeldon wrote to them after a visit. He had to remind the nuns to speak softly, preferably in Latin, although they need not worry too much about the grammar. They were to assemble promptly for services and meals, not leave the priory more than once a year, and not have so many visitors. The priory contained 13 nuns when it was suppressed in 1538 and became a manor-house and then a farmouse. [19 on map].

The ex-priory and other farmhouses remained the only buildings in our area until the end of the 18th century, except that the exit from the city was built up with houses as far as the Longbrook, and already qualified as a street, before the 13th century. One of the earliest surviving references is in an agreement made in 1260/1 between Richard de Toriton, smith, and Rosamunda his wife, with Walter le Cotiler, about a rent of 1d. arising from a tenement near ‘Langebroke strete’.

After fording the brook, one would be in Hill’s Court, where many generations of the Hill family lived ‘in great splendour in a spacious mansion’. Sir John Hill was born here, chief bailiff of Exeter for many years, and Lord Chief Justice of the King’s Bench in 1400. The mansion stood on the rise at the top of the present Mowbray Avenue. Behind it, Howell Road, also called Pound Lane or New Road, had houses along its southern side by 1600.

Over the centuries, whenever infection struck, the victims were nursed, and sometimes buried, outside the city. In 1665 the Corporation prepared for the Great Plague. They acquired a house and barn at the top of what is now Devonshire Place, facing Withybed Lane, which was thereafter often called Pester Lane or Pesterhouse Lane. On 14th November 1665 a ‘public collecon’ was made to provide ‘8 bedssteads, 8 bolster, flock, 2 prs of middling Blanckquills, 3 prs ordinary.’ However, Exeter was spared that outbreak of the plague, the pheasantry was not needed and was rented out under the name of Marlpool Cottage until destroyed by bombing in 1942. [26 on map].
By 1682, about 28 acres at the top of the former Polsloe demesne had been leased to an Exeter butcher called John Rowe, and he built a barn. From the early 18th century the lane leading to it was therefore known as Rowe’s Barn Lane. In 1730 the Tuckers’ Guild bought the estate as an investment, three-quarters of the price having been bequeathed with the stipulation, among others, that the income should be expended ‘in providing coats, hats, shirts, stockings and shoes for 14 poor freemen of the company . . . ’. The estate failed to bring in as much as had been hoped, and the Tuckers had to cut down on the quality of the cloth and the number of coats distributed.

Between 1700 and 1703 the Exeter City Council sold off the Duryard Estate to private citizens, but it and the adjacent hills remained farming land until the turn of the 19th century, when large country residences were being built, many by the non-conformist banking families of Exeter.

In 1794 Stoke House was already the seat of Joseph Sanders, co-founder of the Exeter Bank in 1769. In a superb position on a hill-crest, a possibly 16th-century farmhouse was extended and embellished, to remain the home of the Sanders dynasty for four generations. [18 on map]. It was frequented by friends and relations who were writers, artists and musicians, part of the lively crowd who helped to make late 18th-century Exeter into the ‘Athens of the West’. Joseph’s son, Edward Lloyd Sanders, married the pretty Isabella Andrew (1775-1851), related to the Powderham Courtenays; their son Edward Andrew Sanders (1813-1905) married Marianne (1828-1925), daughter of the Rev. James Ford and niece of Richard Ford, and sister-in-law to the author of Tom Brown’s School Days. Her daughter, also long-lived, Isabella Jane Sanders (1850-1936), remained a spinster and inherited the house. As a girl she would have walked across fields to her grandfather and great-uncle near Heavitree Church.

A carriage-sweep from Stoke Hill led to the wide two-storey front of Stoke Hill House with its two splayed bays. A Georgian wing faced south. Stable-yards, camellia-houses and walled gardens reached back as far as Rosebarn Lane. The surrounding lanes, like sunken ha-has, left the view clear across to Exmouth.

Around 1780 a new ‘modern and genteel’ Hill’s Court House was built nearer the present line of Longbrook Street (and stood there until 1900.) Various cottages and houses were built opposite and adjacent, forming a select little hamlet at Hill’s Court which was regarded as being a quarter of a mile outside the city.

The Cavalry Barracks were built in 1792, when Napoleon was expected to invade. Howell-lane was renamed Barrack Road; in living memory the Regiment would march down it on Sundays
for church-parade at the Cathedral, and the public would flock
to promenade on the parade-ground to the music of the band.
[29 on map].
In 1814 the road was cut through to Marypole Head, presumably
replacing a farm-track, and in 1815 Waterloo Cottage was built
on it by John Cooke (1765-1840), a wealthy Exeter saddler and a
loyal Tory. Captain of the Javelin Men, a uniformed ceremonial
troupe which attended the Assizes in March and July. His passion
for reflected glory made him travel to London to see Nelson
lying in state, to Torbay to see Napoleon on the Bellerophon, and
to London again to set eyes on Wellington. He was affectionately
regarded as a local ‘character’ for such pranks as scrawling slogans
at night on the walls of the city’s principal buildings, and
constantly posting up placards.

Barracks 1792

John Cooke

Historical Introduction

His new house had its back to the hill and its front windows
overlooking the city to Haldon and the estuary. It had a thatched
roof, two parlours, four bedrooms, a verandah with trellis
supports, and a tablet over the door reading ‘Waterloo Cottage
in memory of Europe’s victory Sunday 18th June 1815’. [12 on
map].
On 1st October 1817 the Cookes were subjected to a Grand
Skimmington Riding (cf. The Mayor of Casterbridge, chapter 39).
A procession formed in front of the Black Horse in Longbrook
Street: 8 men bearing poles, on which were placards affixed, of
various inscriptions, appropriate mottoes, etc. – a head painted
and affixed on a pole, with a motto over, “Where are my honours
now” surmounted with a huge pair of gilded horns . . . Ahab
and Jezebel on donkeys, belabouring each other, 24 asses
respectably mounted . . . 4 cocksmen on donkeys bearing flags,
6 boys with handbells, a Full Band of Music . . . parading through
the principal streets of the city and St. Thomas for nearly three
hours, repaired at 5 in the evening (followed by thousands) to
Waterloo Cottage, where the gallant Captain and his Wife,
seated in their parlour with a few select friends, over a bottle of
wine, boldly awaited their approach; after a delicate serenade, a
few exhibitions of fun, and some polite salutations, which were
graciously returned from within, the motley group returned
down the hill, to the spot where they first assembled.
After this, the Cookes rented the Cottage out to the ironfounder,
Mr Coldridge, and moved back to Longbrook Street, where they
owned ‘two neat small houses and gardens, with Apple Trees,
north of Howell Road’.

Pennsylvania

Also in 1817, James Pearce, wine and brandy merchant, went
bankrupt and had to relinquish a 10-acre field of rich pasturage.
‘In this field is a most beautiful and extensive view, and a more
desirable situation for building in the vicinity of Exeter is not to
be found’. In 1818 Joseph Sparkes took over the lease of this
field, called Whitley or Craddock, and commissioned a row of
houses, including one for himself. The architect was John Brown
of Exeter (who had just designed Baring Crescent); he now
designed Exeter’s first completely stuccoed terrace. Joseph Hyde
Rowe of Paris Street began building about 1821, and completed
six houses in all (although the print by his brother George shows
eight, without verandahs, said to be ‘drawn from nature’). [14
on map].
The row could have been named Bank Buildings, or even Craddock, but it was called Pennsylvania, or Pennsylvania Buildings, later Pennsylvania Terrace and now Pennsylvania Park. In 1818 Sparkes & Co. had taken over control of Exeter’s General Bank, of which all the partners were members of the Society of Friends. Joseph Sparkes settled on the name Pennsylvania at a time when his bank was issuing £1 bank notes (between 1819 and 1822) decorated with a vignette showing William Penn under the elm at Shakumaxon, making a treaty of friendship with the Indians. This transaction afforded a proof to the world of the singular honour and uprightness of those members of the Society (Thomas Clarkson 1806). Prints of Benjamin West’s painting were proudly displayed in Quaker homes, sometimes together with a print of a crowded slave-ship, on walls otherwise kept free of frivolous decoration. The treaty with the Indians, never ratified by an oath and never broken, symbolised fair dealing, a very suitable motif for a bank-note. The name Pennsylvania for the houses would likewise suggest solid worth, and also the quietness and good order associated with Quakerism.

Nos. 1 and 2 were put up for auction in July 1824, and euphemistically described as 'a few minutes' walk from the New London Inn, seated on the ascent of an easy hill, and commanding the richest scenery in the county, having the city (with a grand view of the Cathedral) in the near ground, the Sidmouth and Exmouth hills, the whole estuary of the Exe, and some miles of ocean, on the south-east; the romantic brows of Haldon and Dartmoor on the south and west, at the distance of several miles, and is in the immediate vicinity of some of the richest pasture, and has the purest air in the county of Devon.

William Penn on Joseph Sparkes' banknote; illustrated in John Ryton's 'Banks and Banknotes of Exeter 1769-1905'

The houses have been erected about two years and a half, substantially and gradually, of the very best materials, on the plans and under the inspection of an eminent architect ...

Thomas Sharp in Exeter Phoenix (1946) says: 'The brief but exquisite terrace of Pennsylvania Park, which sits on the tree-hung slopes of the North-western part of the city, is one of the most beautiful things in Exeter — and in England'. Perhaps his hyperbole was due to relief that this at least had survived the war.

The spacious promenade and carriageway in front of the houses was approached by a carriage-sweep from the Lower Lodge (now Beech Avenue) or through iron gates opened by the gate-keeper at the Higher Lodge (now demolished, along with the gates.)

Besley's 1831 directory tells us that 'Pester-road has been widened for a walk or a drive, and a carriage way is now made through this circuit to Heavitree'. In 1835 the name was changed from Pester Lane to the 'more attractive appellation' of Union Road. The new name applied all the way (see the print of the 'View from Union Road near Clifton Place'), so 'Union' may describe this new road-link between Pennsylvania and Heavitree, and not, as has been suggested, commemorate the union of parishes for poor law purposes in 1834. By 1836 Pennsylvania Buildings were also served by a new private carriage-road, rather steep for the horses, running from 'the higher parts of St Sidwell's'. This is now Sylvan Road.

In 1830 the St. Germans area level with Victoria Terrace was called 'Hoopern-place — a most delightful spot for air and scenery. There are three houses, with the grounds around fancifully laid out, which present a novel appearance. At the upper end of these stands the beautiful villa of Wm. Kendall Esq., built and laid out under his own directions; and when this is known, it is unnecessary to add that the exterior prospects, together with the interior decorations, display all "the charms of an accomplished taste." This was Elliott Cottage, now Spreytonway, a stuco villa with a Gothic porch. The other two were Ibsley Cottage, now Montefiore (stucco, with an ornate iron porch, a tower, and dormers protruding from a — now shortened — spire) and Swiss Cottage, since demolished.

Other citizens had also removed their families to new white villas on the hillside to escape contagion. In 1832 the great cholera epidemic claimed many lives in the city. The Board of Health had to find more burial space for those dying in St Sidwell's parish. Joseph Sparkes offered the higher corner of his field on Mary-Pole Head near the Tiverton turnpike-gate, but only on condition that the bodies should be carried along St. Sidwell Street, through the turnpike-gate, and up the Back-lane to the spot. The Board preferred a lower field, 150 ft. by 60 ft., belonging to St. John's, just west of Rosebarn Lane and 60 ft. north of Union Road, with no stipulation against carrying the infectious corpses up Longbrook Street. Thirteen were buried that summer, and thirty-three in the autumn of 1834, including three in midnight funerals. The name Charinghay on the Sylvan Road flats, built in the grounds of a Victorian house of that name, commemorates the cholera burials.

A newspaper advertisement appeared on 3rd March 1842: 'To be sold in fee, or leased for 500 years, several very desirable Building Spots in front of Field Cottage, and adjoining Victoria Terrace, the most healthy situation in the neighbourhood of Exeter'. (Cholera was coming round again.) Two substantial 'cottages' were built at right angles to the road, now Nos. 100 and 102 Pennsylvania Road.

Argyll and Belvidere Roads were laid out on the Duryard Estate in the 1850s by Coppoleste Cross Esquire, in the belief that 'so healthy and delightful is the situation that an immense revenue may be raised by indulging the wealthy merchants of its neighbouring city with sites for the erection of villas in a district which has long claimed to be pre-eminent for the respectability of its inhabitants'. Provision was made for a church to be sited in the centre of this respectable development. These villas were never built; after Coppoleste's death, tax problems led to the estate being sold off quickly and split into small-holdings and orchards.
In 1848 the London and South Western Railway Co. was planning a line from Yeovil to a proposed central station. York Road and Blackall Road did not yet exist but were planned as approach roads to the new station. In 1857 the engineers cut through the lands of Polsloe Priory, tunnelled under the ridge of Mount Pleasant ('pick and shovel, horse and cart') and slashed through the peaceful hamlet of Hill's Court, demolishing at least one property there and displacing the turn-off to Hoopern. Train services began on 19th July 1863, one to and from Yeovil each day, and two to and from Waterloo. With the run-down of this line compared with the Paddington line over the last twenty years, we are nearly back to this level of service today.

The substantial houses of Prospect Park were built in the 1880s and named after Prospect Farm on the Old Tiverton Road. The novelist George Gissing moved into No. 24 in 1891, soon joined by his bride and eventually a baby son. Earlier this century businessmen came home for lunch from the city centre by train to St. James's Halt.

In 1872 a field to the north of Union Road was purchased to erect a 'Benevolent Asylum for decayed licensed victuallers'. For the stone-laying ceremony on 8th August flags floated from almost every hotel and public house in the city. A procession from the Guildhall included the Lord Mayor of London. Three hundred lunched in a marquee (although only 200 had been catered for). [25 on map].

From the end of the nineteenth century, terraces of sizeable houses, always with attics for servants, were built on the lower slopes of the hill. Pennsylvania became an exclusive suburb.

Mrs K R Pollard, remembering a city childhood in People Talking, vol. 9, said, 'I do remember my parents saying, "You are never ever to go down Longbrook Street". It was like walking into Buckingham Palace ... Pennsylvania was a snob area ... If you was a child there, you'd be chased off, otherwise you had to raise your hat to them as you walked through, specially West Avenue. Past the bottom of Longbrook Street, going up Pennsylvania was taboo'.

Howell Road children found the same about Mowbray Avenue – they weren't allowed to go round the corner there except on a specific errand.

In the 1890s, E A Sanders sub-let the fields by Rosebarn Lane, called Higher Guilding, to a dairyman. Rowe’s Barn became the destination for summer Sunday walks. There were two swings, and a penny would buy a glass of milk and a scone with a dab of jam and cream. Earlier this century, factory girls would walk up Rosebarn Lane at 6 o'clock on May Morning to wash their faces in the dew, dance round 'ring-a-roses', and eat their sandwiches with a glass of milk warm from the cow. [17 on map].

Between World Wars I and II the fields above Union Road began to be built over with semi-detached houses. The hedgerows full of elm-boles can still be traced, especially clearly above the gardens of Higher King's Avenue.

In 1925-27 the City Council constructed a by-pass through the Streatham Estate, from Union Road to Cowley Bridge Road, to provide work for the unemployed. The hill-crest beside the cricket field was cut through with pick and shovel. Little trucks running on rails tipped the earth into the Hoopern Valley and were pulled back by a carthorse. The new road was opened and named by the Prince of Wales, and became an evening.
promenade for lovers. Motorists boycotted it at first, as they wanted to drive through the city centre. Now the University finds it useful for side-of-the-road parking, and when an orchestral concert in the Great Hall coincides with a play at the Northcott, a tail-back of cars with twinkling red lights builds up all along the valley and up the hill.

The Blitz of 1942 led to some loss of life and damage to property in the area. Some of the bombed-out citizens were rehoused on the airy green 'Nine Paths' Field on Stoke Hill. Exeter had built no council houses between 1933 and 1946. This development won a gold medal in 1952 from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and is considered an example of the best in Local Authority building of low density and low elevation. There are plenty of grassy areas, and motor roads are kept separate from pedestrian ways.

In the last twenty years, both sides of Rosebarn Lane have been developed for housing, while the Duryard Valley and Mincinglake have been saved for recreation.

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Walkabout

The walk starts at Eastgate, where Longbrook Street drops down between the Prudential Building and Debenham's. Pennsylvania Park can be seen straight ahead on the horizon. We set out in the footsteps of William Mills, headmaster of Exeter Grammar School 1836-51. 'He was very simple and active in his habits. Summer and winter he got up and walked from the Master's House at Eastgate to the turnpike on Marypole Head every day before 7 o'clock school'.

For much of our route we shall be beating the old parish boundary between St. David's and St. Sidwell's, which ran down the middle of Longbrook Street; as the description of 1436, transcribed by Hooker a century later, puts it - 'And so fro that beginnyng & midle of the same waye Downe into a little water called Langbrooke . . . .

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The Theatre Royal 1889-1963

Pennsylvania from the top of Longbrook Street
The New North Road curves away to the left. It was built by the Exeter Turnpike Trust to replace the old turnpike road over Stoke Hill, and opened on 28th August, 1834.

The Theatre Royal stood for nearly eighty years on the site of the Prudential Building. Built in 1886 to replace a city theatre which had been destroyed by fire, it was itself consumed by fire on 9th September 1887 with the loss of 186 or more lives. The flames could be seen from Topsham, and the repercussions were nationwide, giving rise to a poem by William McGonagall and a tightening-up of safety regulations. The theatre was rebuilt in 1889 and brought happy bustling crowds to this corner at night. Christmas pantomimes were particularly well supported, and coach-loads of theatre-goers travelled in from surrounding areas. [2 on map].

The Horse and Groom public house on the opposite pavement was a haven for performers during the intervals. It was demolished in April 1966, but rebuilt on the same site to a modern red-brick, octagonal design set back behind shrubs. It was briefly known as The Dunkirk, before reverting to its former name.

The theatre was demolished in July 1963 after audiences had dwindled to single figures, even for visiting ballet companies. Its loss is still regretted by those who find the Northcott comparatively inaccessible, lacking the atmosphere of a large Victorian theatre with gallery and circles, and having less spacious backstage accommodation.

The garage on the right stands on the site of Exeter’s first petrol-pump. The terrace of small shops bears the inscription ‘Speculation Place 1858 – Grant & Son Builders’. This was a Sidwell Street firm.

The wide exit-road from the multi-storey car park, with bare grassed corner-sites, breaks the street-line as if with bomb-sites, although in fact these draughty waste areas were achieved by the demolition of several terraces of houses in the 1980s. From King William Street to the first few houses in Pennsylvania Road, the surviving human-scale buildings are protected by being in an Inner City Conservation Area.

The façade of No. 23 Longbrook Street was preserved when the premises were re-built for offices in 1971. It was an early 19th-century red-brick building with patent stone bands and cornice parapet. It has round-headed ground-floor windows in arched recesses, cast-iron window-box rails on the first floor, and a three-centred arch for a carriage-entry on the right (now a motor-car entry). Its neighbour to the left is modern, but has been made to harmonise in colour of brick and in general proportions.

To its right stands the Black Horse Inn. A coaching-house stood here from the early 18th century. Spurrier Flashman held the licence from 1780 to 1787, after going bankrupt as a farmer in 1778. The Inn was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1788. Paul Collings or another member of the Collings family held the licence during most of the 19th century.

The fire also reduced several neighbouring houses to ruins. The corner property was rebuilt in the 1970s, utilising a surviving portion of the outer cob wall on the corner itself. The revenue from this house and a field behind it went to support the St. John’s Hospital School until the latter closed down in the 1920s. In the middle of the 19th century Alexander Wedderburn, inspector of mail-coaches, lodged in this house, and for a time in houses opposite which have now disappeared.

Hampton Place survives, rather oddly painted – a compact terrace from about 1810. The round-headed doorways have pretty fanlights. As at No. 23, the façade is brick, crossed with patent stone bands and cornice parapet, and the ground-floor windows are round-headed and set in arched recesses. Nos. 52 and 54 still have elegant glazing-bars.

Opposite, the narrow turning into Howell Road is a reminder that Longbrook Street itself would not have been much wider than that until this century. ‘Howell-lane’, a turnpike road, was a busy thoroughfare when it was the only road leading to the north-western fields which held the Gaol, the Bridewell and the Cavalry Barracks.
Longbrook Terrace was built in the field which belonged to St. John’s Hospital. This field had become ‘a deposit for the filth of the city’ when it was improved by being converted into a nursery garden at the beginning of the 19th century. ‘Castle Cottages’ were built about 1839—a terrace of ten three-storey houses, with ground-floor bay windows linked by one straight tiled roof on wooden supports which also forms the ten porches. No. XI is later, and has fox-heads and shell-patterns decorating its round-headed windows. Next to it stands the former Zoar Chapel, built in 1841 for Strict Particular Baptists who practised total immersion. There is no record of them after the late 1870s. By 1883 the building was a meeting house for Plymouth Brethren. A century later the Isea Christians in the nearby corner premises echo their attempt to return to the simplicity of the early Church.

In 1899 the works next to the Zoar Chapel saw a race to manufacture the first Exeter motor-car. A car had been exhibited in a circus at Pinhoe in 1897, and another had been driven to the New London Inn in 1898. William Shepherd and his son managed to design and build their own model at their ‘Albion’ engineering works by September 1899, narrowly beating their rival, a watchmaker.

Back in Longbrook Street, the other corner shop is also about 200 years old. The rest of the block is mid-19th-century dark red brick with yellow brick decoration, keystone heads to the windows, slate roof with bracketed eaves and stone balls, the original ornamental doorways all the way along, and Greek motifs on the two shop fronts.

We are approaching the lowest point of Longbrook Street, where until 1843 it ended at a wooden bridge over the eponymous brook, which then spilled out into a pond more than three feet deep, overhung by willows. The Zoar Baptists may have chosen their site to be able to practise their total immersion here.

Upon the right-hand slope, well above the dampness, a terrace of ‘gentle Dwelling-houses’ grew from about 1815 onwards, and was named Park Place. The row lay above the ancient ‘Maudlyn Ground’, a hedged field belonging to the Magdalen charity, but from 1847 part of this was leased to provide the long front gardens, which would be even more charming if the car-parking areas on some of them could be restored to shrubs and flowers. [3 on map].

In 1881 Mr E H Shorto, then classical tutor at Hele’s School, occupied 7 Park Place, and his wife ran a preparatory school here. Mr Shorto ‘was very particular about tidiness of the person, he himself always wearing the formal dress of tail coat, high collar and red handkerchief’.

George Gissing put this terrace undisguised into his novel Born in Exile, published in 1892: ‘In a by-way which declines from the main thoroughfare of Exeter, and bears the name of Longbrook Street, is a row of small houses placed above long strips of sloping garden. They are old and plain, with no architectural features calling for mention, unless it be the latticed porch which gives the doors an awkward quaintness . . . The little terrace may be regarded as urban or rural, according to the tastes and occasions of those who dwell there. In one direction, a walk of five minutes will conduct to the middle of the High Street, and in the other it takes scarcely longer to reach the open country. On the upper floor of one of these cottages, Godwin Peak had made his abode . . .’
In contrast, the red-brick hall beyond Park Place has many architectural features calling for mention. It runs east-west from the pavement, but it is not a church; it is a workshop built in 1881-2 for the Ecclesiastical and Architectural Sculptor and Carver, Harry Hems, and enlarged in 1884. An inscription on the front, commemorating William the Conqueror’s crossing of the Longbrook in 1069, is typical of Hems’s enthusiasm for local history, and his desire to share it with one and all. [4 on map].

Harry Hems was born in Islington, apprenticed to the Sheffield cutlery trade, but escaped to study drawing and sculpture. He worked as a journeyman carver in London, then ‘in nearly every other part of England, also in Ireland and Scotland’. He went to France and Italy, and walked home from Florence, crossing the Alps on foot in mid-winter. He came to Exeter in 1866, with only half a crown in his pocket, to do the carved and sculptural work for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. He found a lucky horseshoe as he walked up from the station, fixed it over his doorway, and announced that one day it would be fixed ‘in front of one of the best buildings in Exeter’. At first the sign of Ye Luckie Horseshoe was in Paris Street, but now it is set here, in the middle of a tablet, standing on a detached pillar of polished Aberdeen granite, below a statue of Art personified. Teak casements with stained glass, decorative brickwork and hung tiles fill in the tall frontal arches of a building which is nearly all red: warm-coloured bricks, dressings in red Dumfries stone, and high-pitched roofs of strawberry-tinted tiles, surmounted with a red ridge. The architect of this monument to a self-made man was R Medley Fulford, who subsequently went to Australia, where he took Holy Orders. The style was known as ‘domesticated’ or modified Queen Anne Flemish. The chimney-stacks are prominent features; two arch together to form a bell-turret. The apprentices and ‘employees’ had to come running when the bell rang, and woe betide any who did not share Hems’s extraordinary vitality and capacity for work.

From this workshop, said to be the most extensive of its kind in England, carved stonework for churches and town halls was sent out by rail all over Britain, including nearly a hundred statues for the High Altar screen at St. Alban’s Abbey, the colossal equestrian statue of William of Orange in Belfast, and copies of Hems’s own ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’. His personal motto ‘I excel’ is expressed cryptically on the front and on the north wall of the building. He is said to have employed one person just to paste in his press-cuttings, of which twenty fat volumes survive. He was a church warden for St. Sidwell’s, a local councillor, the ‘working man’s representative’ on local charity committees, and provided splendid Christmas dinners for the aged poor. Harry Hems lived in the end house of Park Place, with its weathercock and fairy-tale window-turret on the corner. After his death in 1916, his family built the adjacent, less flamboyant ‘Hemley’ (architects Ellis, Son and Bowden). A piece of the mediaeval wood-carving which Hems collected in the course of his church restoration work is inserted over the front porch. ‘Hemley’ is now a reading room for the Church of Christ Scientist, which was built in its front garden in 1938. The massive stone wall along the side of the garden could be the original boundary between Park Place and the brook. Before Hems’s development there was a pretty terraced park here belonging to Alderman Clifford JP.

Opposite, four houses were built before 1830 on the ‘London’ nursery gardens north of the brook, and named Eldon Place.
After the 1832 cholera epidemic, all open streams and sewers were ordered to be covered in. In fact, the sparkling Longbrook was not culverted until 1843. This raised the level of the road at the dip, but large puddles still form after rain to remind us of Longbrook Lake.

In 1854 more of the nursery-ground was auctioned for building sites. The rest continued to produce fruit trees, camellias and other exotica. In the late 1860s 'Eldon Street' was laid out, and Eldon Villa and Park Villa were erected side by side in 1868. (By 1905 the roadway had broken through to Howell Road via the small garden between them.)

Eldon House, No. 49 Longbrook Street, was erected at the same time as Eldon Villa, and was recently saved from demolition by the turning (now called Oldpark) being made one-way instead of being widened. Eldon House stands on the site of a short-lived public house, the Prince of Wales, licensed from 1863, its name inspired by the Prince’s marriage in that year.

In 1876 the sewer collapsed under Hem’s field and flooded the houses opposite, washing one tenement almost completely away. The culvert fell in again in 1883.

Nos. 71 to 93 Longbrook Street were built before 1906 on the site of the last Hill’s Court House, and were called ‘1-12 Hill’s Court’ until the numbering of Longbrook Street was regularised in 1933. One of these houses was furnished by St. David’s Church for the reception of a family of Vietnamese Boat People after their terrible experiences escaping from their homeland.

York Road was laid out in 1855, near the line of an existing fieldpath, to link York Street, which already ran as far as Well Lane, with Hill’s Court. Five pairs of imposing semi-detached houses were built in 1872, with Corinthian columns on porches and windows, even in the attics. Miss Bessie Crabb opened a private school, catering mainly for farmers’ daughters as weekly boarders. Until 1894 it was in Branscombe House, and then expanded into three of the taller houses and became known as St. Hilda’s. In World War II some of the York Road houses served as billets for soldiers, and as a store for small-arms ammunition, which exploded in the bombing of May 1942 with a noise like machine-gun fire. St. Hilda’s and the neighbouring pairs of houses were destroyed, but the school’s annexe in the garden survived and still provides a small swimming-pool and a dining-room for the nearby schools. No. 14 stands mutilated without its twin. No. 15 has become a mosque, the Islamic Centre for the South West. [5 on map].

In 1898 a new building estate was developed on the two fields facing York Road, which had until then held only one cottage and a slaughter-house. Leighton Terrace and the fancy curve of Queen’s Crescent were laid out, and terraces of three-storey houses with Dutch gables were built. The triangular plot cut off by the Crescent was set aside for one superior house, until in October 1899 the owners of all the adjacent properties, built or planned, clubbed together to purchase it, lay it out with trees and shrubs, and surround it with iron railings. The railings went to the war effort in World War II, and some unexploded bombs made craters. The gardens finished the war holding cisterns of water for fire-fighting.
Just before the railway bridge, the Council’s 1984 development of seventeen supervised flats for the elderly stands in place of a picturesque group of Victorian houses: The Birches, set sideways to the road, with two attached houses behind. There were beautiful illacs, and a gazebo looking out over the railway line. The architect, Mr P. D. Rowlands, has managed to echo the positioning of the former houses, and to rival their decorative value with modern equivalents: a triangular oriel window onto the pavement, asymmetrical roofs, blue brick courses in the red walls and in the interesting gate-posts, and balcony railings painted red and blue. The old ivy-hung cob wall between the garden and the street has been retained and painted brick-red.

Opposite, the white corner cottage, Brookfield, forms a charming picture against the three-storied, square Hill’s Court Lodge, recently painted sunset-pink by the City Council.

By 1872 a private road had been laid out along the north bank of the railway, and in 1876 it was named Blackall Road. The imposing block of four houses, Fieldmont, was up by 1876, and its neighbouring houses by 1897.

In 1877 the Council was already seeking to widen the entrance to this road from Hill’s Court. This was the beginning of a war of attrition against Prospect Cottage, the white corner cottage with little Greek-style porches, which was then about eighty years old. It lost its garden bit by bit, and a century later its whole northern wing was demolished. The roadway is now so wide that cars cut the corner, or dive behind small children crossing with the ‘lollipop’ lady. Since the city centre was closed to traffic and the top of York Road widened, these houses built in quiet fields suffer a stream of North Devon lorries carrying such essential loads as North Devon milk bottles coming to be washed in Exeter, and the North Devon milk to fill them, before they are driven back to – yes – North Devon.

The school at the bottom of Pennsylvania Road will doubtless always be referred to as Bishop Blackall, although it has now been forced into a union with the equally historic Hele’s under the pseudonym St. Peter’s. Offspring Blackall’s intention in 1709 was that Exeter girls should have the option of a ‘middle school’, educating them beyond the elementary level but not to grammar school heights. He also believed that middle-class parents would pay for such a school. When the ‘Maynard’s Girls’ Grammar’ was called ‘The High Class School for Girls’, this splendid new edifice was known as ‘The Middle Class School for Girls’. Later it was called the Episcopal Modern School, and from 1934 Bishop Blackall. In the 1972 re-organisation it lost its sixth form, and in 1983 its identity. [7 on map].

The school’s architect, James Jerman, produced an imposing design to accommodate 300 pupils. The contractor was Gibson, and one of the sixty workmen who sat down to dinner at the Turk’s Head on 6th October 1888 to celebrate the laying of the foundation-stone was young Marwood Sleeman from North Devon, who was to establish his own firm in 1897 (in Longbrook Terrace from 1913).

Under a high-pitched grey slate roof with rounded dormers and a pointed cupola (which was not replaced after a fire destroyed the roof in 1979), the red-brick façade is dominated by red-brick Ionic pilasters and a main entrance in creamy stone. The official opening was the day before term started in September 1889.
New wings were added in 1907, 1912 and 1937, matching the brick and the flamboyant stone-work and the distinctive diamond pattern in the window frames.

In World War I the new domestic-science rooms became hospital kitchens, as the walking-wounded from the trenches, some gassed and blinded, stumbled along from Queen Street station in their sky-blue uniforms with red ties, to be nursed here. In World War II the school helped the bombed-out Maynard girls by giving them the use of the building in the afternoons.

The school has always had to use a number of annexes at various distances. The fact that the dining-room was in York Road gave rise to an unusual sight for passing traffic. Three hundred or so girls would line the pavement outside the school in silence, and at a blast from the teacher’s whistle would surge across in one mass, to the slogan ‘Live for your dinner’.

Nos. 8 and 10 Pennsylvania Road, with white stucco façades, date from 1820-30, and are now a nursing-home. No. 8 has restrained Greek details: architraves to the windows and a round-headed doorway with incised reveals and fanlight. The garden was shaven away by the railway cutting. No. 10 is more aggressively Classical Revival in style. It has Tuscan pilasters reaching up to a wide pediment, and a porch supported by columns with pseudo-Corinthian capitals. It is rumoured to have been built by prisoners, for the prison governor. But it is possible that it was designed for himself by John Powning, the Exeter architect and builder, who trained Charles Fowler, architect of London’s Covent Garden and Exeter’s Lower and Higher Markets.

Penn House was built very early in the 19th century as a block of four, pierced by a central carriage-entry with an elliptical arch.

Next to Bishop Blackall School stood a substantial Victorian house, Norwood. By 1887 Mr Shorto had become Headmaster of Hele’s and had moved here from Park Place. His wife’s prep school became the long-lasting Norwood School. After the school closed down, the building was demolished in 1976 to dislodge squatters.

Above it, the secluded ‘Rose Cottage’, home of Sir Freeman Barton in the 1820s, stands sideways to the road; next comes the corner shop, formerly a branch of Hammett’s Dairy and Pork Butchers of Sidwell Street.

Hillsborough Avenue was developed in 1889-92 on the grounds of ‘Hillside’ (built 1870 – now ‘St. Just’) which stretched as far as the railway cutting on one side, and to the field-path which preceded Powderham Crescent on the north. West Avenue was formerly the main approach to the Cricket Field.

On the other side of this part of Pennsylvania Road lay the Cistern Field, the damp meadow holding the cistern which supplied water to the city until the 1830s. Powderham Crescent was laid out in building-lots and declared a public thoroughfare in 1880, and Nos. 6 to 11 were occupied by 1881. Further houses were erected with leases stipulating uniform development, dwarf garden walls with piers and iron railings, and each resident was to pay towards the upkeep of gates at the Lion’s Holt end of the Crescent.

The terraces on Pennsylvania Road – ‘Hillsborough’ and ‘Bloomfield’ – had already been built by 1876. Opposite, the hay-field between West Avenue and Hoopern Lane was divided into building sites in 1885, and Montpelier Terrace (= Nos. 19 to 39) was up before 1890.

Hoopern Lane, still rural in 1984, was the main road along the side of the cricket field to Streatham Farm, until the Prince of Wales Road was cut through in the 1920s. The hedged triangle at the junction is a pleasure-ground for the five white stucco Regency villas facing south in a shallow crescent above sloping front gardens (called Pennsylvania Crescent from 1905 onwards). Building began in 1823, while Pennsylvania Park was still being developed, but already the fashion for terraces was passing, and the demand was for detached villas. However, these do resemble Pennsylvania Park in having basements, verandahs, and side entrances, so that the rooms have the best of the front view.
Although comparable in proportions to the houses in Baring Crescent, these are in a tighter grouping and have kept more of their original rural charm. [8 on map].

The central house, ‘Crescent House’, has an imposing pediment surmounted by an acroterion and supported by a length of key-patterning (echoed by the iron gates and railing by Garton & King 1953). There are three sets of windows flanked by four pilasters, and a round attic window encircled by a garland. The pairs of houses to left and right have wide-aved hipped roofs, two sets of windows, elaborate iron-trellis verandahs with canopies, and quoins pilasters with the garland decoration. The porches have fluted Tuscan supports or peaked canopies. The end house to the west, 'Sungum Villa', later 'Copeland Villa', has a two-storey bow at the side and a porch house to the garland, has special treatment of the porch. It is recessed between two extra pilasters. The coach-houses and stables belonging to these properties have become a builder's yard and a car-repair works.

In the 1870s 'Edgerton Park Estate' was written across this whole area, the empty fields of West Avenue, the houses of Pennsylvania Crescent, and the whole block between Devonshire Place and Union Road. When the estate was auctioned in 1921, it comprised Edgerton House (with carriage-sweep, large vineyard and tomato house), Kilmore, Melrose (with its own stabling and manure-pit), four bay-windowed residences, the East Lodge, an orchard, market gardens and 'all the prettily-timbered and shrubbed Freehold Pleasure Ground known as Edgerton Park'. The East Lodge has ornate plasterwork over the windows, one panel depicting oak-leaves growing out of a man's head. The four bay-windowed houses had been built before 1876 by F J Commins, later designer of St Sidwell's Methodist Church. His great-niece once said that having been 'forced' to live in one of his houses, she had no great respect for him as an architect. In 1930 the University College bought them, together with Kilmore and Melrose, for a hall of residence, officially dubbed Exeter Hall, but so persistently called Kilmore that this name is now painted on the official sign-board.

By 1898 Mrs Fanny Halloran had moved her ladies' school from Pennsylvania Park to Edgerton House. It remained a school until 1968, then in 1970 bare boards and bunk beds gave way to the fitted carpets and lined curtains of a luxury hotel. Its decorative brickwork has been painted over, and its garden has become one big motor-car sweep, giving a Golditz effect softened by trees.

In 1876 the road-lobby persuaded the corporation to purchase Nos. 1 and 2 Victoria Terrace 'to effect an important improvement in the Union Road'. The new purchaser would be required to take down part of No. 1 to make room for passing waggons and waggonettes. In spite of the mutilation of the end house, this corner remains a bottle-neck.

Victoria Terrace is a stucco terrace from the early 19th century. Nos. 86 - 92 have added bay windows, butNos. 94 - 98 are listed as fairly unspoilt buildings. They have wide eaves with brackets, pilasters which were originally decorated with incised lines and wreaths as at Pennsylvania Crescent, round-headed ground-floor windows, and round-headed doorways with moulded archivolt and fanlights. No. 96 still has the original rails for sliding shutters. No. 98 has been restored by retired Squadron-Leader John Stansell, who was born in Park Place and raised in Hoopern House, and now hopes to settle just midway between the two. No. 98 had suffered half a century of neglect. Electricity had never been laid on. Gas mantles hung from broken ceilings; pigeons had nested in the chimneys, and broken through into the attics and one of the bedrooms. The house has now been re-roofed and restored to its earlier splendour. The lofty side porch indicates what may have been removed from No. 1. [9 on map].

The next two 'cottages' are also listed buildings. No. 100, 'Victoria Villa' in the 1840s, now 'The White House', is stucco, with quoins, and an attic window in a little pediment at eaves level on each face. It has sash windows with architrave surrounds, and a slate roof.

No. 102, 'Fern Cottage', is also stucco, with rusticated quoins, Doric porch and splayed bays. The occupier in 1866 advertised 'Examinations for the Army, Navy, Woolwich, Civil Service etc. Mr F W Bonter (25 years Instructor and Examiner in the Royal Navy) continues to prepare a few young gentlemen for the above, or to educate them generally ...'

Pennsylvania Close was built in 1938-9. The small older house on the corner is the lodge for Maryfield House, and the shrubbery opposite it borders the driveway for the big house. Maryfield House was advertised in 1828 as 'recently and substantially built, in a lawn of 2 acres ... a good kitchen, back ditto, with pumps of excellent hard and soft water ... butler's pantry, underground cellar ... back staircase, nine good bedrooms and good attics for servants. From the 1830s to the end of the century it housed the Western Academy 'for the education of young men of the independent denomination for the ministry'. But it was called 'Pennsylvania House' in 1855 when the Rev Charles Worthy ran a 'classical school, at which Pupils are educated for the Universities, the learned Professions, the Naval and Military Colleges, and the Public Schools of Eton and Harrow etc.'
During the First World War, it was the constituency residence of the MP for Exeter, Henry Duke (1855-1939), who was educated locally, attending neither public school nor university. He became a journalist on the Western Morning News, worked in the press gallery of the House of Commons, rode for the Bar, took silk, became MP for Plymouth 1900 – 1906, and MP for Exeter in 1911 by one vote on a recount. He laid out the grounds of Maryfield House, and built a large and lovely conservatory. The house had a fine staircase and a marble entrance hall. In 1925 he became Lord Merrivale, and was famous as a judge specialising in divorce cases.

In the Second World War the house was divided into three units. Bishop Blackall School rented the old servants' wing; from the end of August 1940 their numbers were swollen by evacuees from Dartford and Beckenham. The cellars became air raid shelters. The house was destroyed in the 1942 bombing. The present Maryfield House was erected in 1952, when building materials and square footage were still rationed – no marble halls. [10 on map].

The large university hall of residence, Lopes, began as a Victorian country house. Called Highlands, it was occupied by J Sanders in 1870, was acquired by the University College in 1929, greatly enlarged in 1930 and 1933, served as a rest-centre in 1942 for bombed-out people, and in 1967 had modern annexe built in place of the allotment gardens in its grounds. It is separated from the houses of Hoopern Avenue by a line of tall holm oaks.

Other mature trees along the roadside, and handsome limestone walling, have prevented road-widening and preserved the rural character of this stretch of road.

Higher King's Avenue and Lower King's Avenue were laid out as cul-de-sacs between the wars as far as the hedges of Henry King's Nurseries on Union Road, and houses were built on the higher side of each of them. Monty Python filmed the official opening of a Euro-pillar box and other suburban scenes here in 1975.

Mr F M Sleeman, nonagenarian head of the building firm which he saw grow to a West Country empire, built Nos. 126 – 136 Pennsylvania Road, including connecting houses for himself and his family.

The next stretch of roadway is labelled 'Burel's Folly' on a map of 1755 showing city property. John Burel was a mayor of Exeter around 1700; was his folly to try to farm a piece of thoroughfare? Mornex was built in 1908 – a huge barn-like house. Rokeybon, on the left, is the Waterloo Cottage of 1815. It was renamed 'Hillsden' in the 1880s, and 'Rokeybon' early this century when it was occupied by Madame Adele Schneider, teacher of dancing and callisthenics.
Portland Villa, now Portland Lodge, was built by William Sandford, an Exeter upholsterer, on land leased from Joseph Sparkes in 1824. It is probable that it stands on the foundations of an earlier farmhouse. The rear walls are surprisingly thick, the floor levels are odder than the gradient would explain, and the site seems to have been established before Pennsylvania Park was laid out round it. It was advertised for rent furnished in autumn 1825 ‘commanding one of the finest land and sea views imaginable and completely sheltered. The whole of the furniture has been laid in new within the last year, and is of the best description’. It had been made into a very pretty Regency villa with a canopied trellis porch along the garden face. The north-south body of the original farm-house had been given low pavilion-like wings so that a large drawing-room, a dining-parlour and a breakfast-parlour all faced the sun and the beautiful outlook. In 1933 extra bedrooms with iron balconies were added on top of the wings, resulting in a T-shaped building under a low-pitched roof with wide eaves. [13 on map].

Above Rokeby is the drive-way to Hoopern House, now the University’s Institute of Population Studies. It was built before 1831 for E P Lyon, who died before he could enjoy it. It is an imposing mansion with a lofty Greek entrance porch, pediments incised over the windows, and a pleasure-ground falling away in front. It became the residence of the solicitor Mark Kenaway, who was the leader of Exeter’s Liberals for many years, and very active in local public life. When he died in 1877, the sale notice listed ‘Stable with three stalls, another with three loose boxes . . . coach-house for three carriages . . . the large yard is well supplied with hard and soft water, and there are a brew-house, piggeries and other convenient accessories’. The ground-floor apartments are 12½ feet high. In 1963 when the Duryard halls of residence were being constructed, the university stored the furniture and bedding for them in these huge rooms. A young lecturer, who had been given the choice of sharing an office on the campus or lording it in solitary splendour here, was able to save rent by sleeping unremarked under the ceiling where there was just room on top of a mountain of mattresses.

On the right is the narrow entrance to ‘Pennsylvania’ itself. The terrace was designed to give the appearance of separate houses connected by one-storey Ionic porches, but in fact the break only went half-way back, although far enough to cast a sharp shadow between each. No. 3 filled in the gap with extra rooms before 1838, and No. 1 in about 1927. The low-pitched slate roofs have very wide eaves which nearly bridge the gaps between the houses. The base of the balconies lines up with the tops of the porches to make another strong horizontal line. The iron verandahs, of plainer trellis-work than those at Pennsylvania Crescent, have slender coupled supports. The French windows were glazed with ‘best polished British Plate Glass’. Nos. 1 and 6 still have their shutters, and all have their area railings.
Walkabout

The opulent dwellings with the idealistic name soon became homes for the fashionable rich. An auction of the furnishings of No. 2 in 1853 indicates the life-style of the Rev Mr Jackson, incumbent of the modish Bedford Chapel. There was nearly 50 dozen of rare old port, Schiraz and other wines. Many of the articles originally came from the Palace of Fontainebleau, including ormolu and marble chimney ornaments and an elaborately worked, carved and gilt pier table in Louis XIV style. There was a purple and gold basin of the late Queen Charlotte, a pair of ice pails, an inlaid oak marquetry table showing Alfred burning the cakes. When we reach the inventory for the library, we can clearly visualise the Rev Mr Jackson preparing his sermons. He had 'a mahogany whatnot; phrenological casts of Thistlemud the conspirator, Queen Charlotte and others; a most convenient mahogany reading and writing chair, on castors; a mahogany reading couch... A large oil painting of Job and his Friends hung in the master bedroom, and The Triumph of Bacchus, after the manner of Poussin, in the Reverend's dressing-room.

In about 1890 Henry Willey, head of the Water Lane Foundry, bought Nos. 3 and 4 and added the Victorian Gothic portico in Portland stone with solid teak door and oak-panelled hallway. He also fitted out a marble-lined billiard hall, heated by a huge boiler 150 feet away in the kitchens.

The Drew family lived in No. 5 at the beginning of this century. The bannister-rail was studded with wooden acorns after Charity and the other children slid down three flights without stopping.

Walkabout

No. 5 Pennsylvania

Moor View Cottage

William Sandford, who built Portland Villa, also built Pennsylvania Cottage in 1824 above the Pennsylvania Park stables and mews. Now called Moor View Lodge, it has kept its thatched roof, unlike Waterloo Cottage. It has Gothic windows including the dormers, Gothic shutters, some Gothic glazing-bars and an oriel overlooking the road. The original verandah has been altered.

On the opposite side of the road, the object hanging out of an upstairs window is the powerful telescope of a distinguished local astronomer.
The field below Higher Hoopern Lane, 'Higher Jockey', was offered for development in 1921, and is now again threatened with housing, as are the fields north of the lane – 'Great Fountain' and 'Little Fountain'.

Cumbre was the home of Sir Arthur Reed, MP for Exeter 1931-45, built for his father W H Reed. Both were great benefactors of the university. Bishop Curzon occupied Cumbre 1939-44. Frank Sleeboom remembers him standing in the road one day, a dignified hitch-hiker, more used to raising his hands in blessing. 'I am due to take a service at the Cathedral, and my chauffeur has not turned up'.

The University acquired Cumbre in 1961 for post-graduate lodgings, but has put it on the market again in 1984. The pavilion houses a crèche for students' babies.

We have reached Marypole Head, the former city limit, and the junction of the parish boundaries. A stone inscribed 'St Sidwell's Manor Bounds' is in the hedgebank, under hazels, level with the reservoir lodge. The toll-house for the turnpike stood just opposite until 1912. The St Sidwell parish boundary turned a sharp angle at Marypole Head and ran down Rosebarn Lane. The field at the junction, about 400 feet above sea level, was sold for building in 1934, and the new residents enjoyed unspoilcd views for nearly forty years.

If Marypole Head did mean 'boundary pool', it is appropriate that one of the city's reservoirs is situated here. It was built in 1873 to serve the houses above Dane's Castle, and the 1½ million gallons to fill it were pumped from there. The Council took over from the Exeter Water Company in 1878, so the monogram on

the lodge gable was appropriate for only five years. In 1902 a half-million-gallon intermediate reservoir was added at Pennsylvania Park. This and Marypole Head were thereafter filled by direct pumping from the filter beds at Pynes. In 1963 the Pennsylvania Park reservoir was replaced by one at Belvidere containing 5½ million gallons. This will be supplemented in 1985 by a further half-million-gallon reservoir on Stoke Hill.

Continuing along Pennsylvania Road, we come to a bend, and lodge gate-posts. Here, earlier this century, for 1d, Sunday strollers could have a glass of lemonade and admission to the breath-taking vistas from Belvidere and Argyll Roads. A property developer wished to build on the steep fields in the 1980s, but was prevented by a campaign to save the Duryard Valley for a park and nature reserve, to form part of a green belt around the city. The fields and hedges still harbour the rich variety of plant and animal life which has been wiped out elsewhere by intensive chemical farming. Seventeen species of butterfly, including the marbled white, have been observed in the Duryard Valley; also many birds, including sparrowhawk, kestrel, green woodpecker and goldcrest. The mammals include badgers, foxes, rabbits and the roe-deer which probably originally gave Duryard its name; and the 300 or more plants include sneezewort, glaucous sedge, swine cress, creeping soft grass, pineapple weed, fleabane, skullcap, oxford ragwort, sweet vernal grass, pignut, twayblade, corky fruited water dropwort, the common dog violet, orchids, scabious and ragged robin. The hedge along Belvidere Road is estimated to be 600 to 700 years old. Interesting trees include Turkey oaks, red and pink hawthorns and barberry bushes.
Pennsylvania Road climbs yet higher, to the famous view at Prospect Gate. Picnic tables and parking space for about thirteen cars were put here by the Council in 1983, but it was already prized a hundred years before. To return to Gissing's *Born in Exile*, Sidwell Waricombe decides that they shall drive 'by the Stoke Canon Road, so as to let Mr Peak have the famous view from the gate . . . . A gate, interrupting a high bank with which the road was bordered, gave admission to the head of a great cultivated slope, which fell to the river Exe . . . three well-marked valleys — those of the Creedy, the Exe and the Culm . . . . Westward, a bolder swell pointed to the skirts of Dartmoor . . . . Exeter was wholly hidden behind the hill on which the observers stood, and the line of the railway leading thither could only be descried by special search.'

Half a century before that, Besley's directory for 1831 describes the view from the field on the other side of the road: 'A panoramic view, extending for many miles over some of the richest country in the kingdom: to the north-east as far as Lord Wellington's monument on Brendon Hill in Somersetshire; to the east, beyond Honiton, to the south and west, the sea from Portland almost to the entrance to Torbay, with the intervening country, esteemed the garden of Devonshire, and to the north-west and north, the rocks and hills of Haytor and Dartmoor, the vale of Crediton, and the mountainous tract which divides the county of Devon into two parts.'

Woolmer's Guide had also gone into raptures about this view in 1811. This vantage-point had been found by the Roman army long before that. While the legionary fortress was being built c. 45–50 AD on the spur by the river, to control the crossing, a supplementary fortlet here (due north of the fortress) acted as a look-out post and signal station. No clear evidence of military occupation was found in excavation in 1956–7, but the soldiers would have been living in tents inside the ditches and ramparts. It was possibly used again in the late 3rd–4th centuries by a civic militia watching the estuary, as is suggested by the discovery of a coin of Carausius.

From 1895 to 1929, the Exeter Golf Club had its nine-hole course here, 'of no great merit in itself, but the club was always renowned for the cheerful friendliness of its members.' It was well-drained, unlike the present course by the river, and members enjoyed playing the nine holes, stopping for tea in the Panorama Café, and then playing the nine again. The entrance was at the corner of the first field, now used by Hilltop Riding School. The café continued serving walkers after the golfers had moved away.
We pass Godwin Peak again, walking out to the Warricombes' house: 'He found that the road descended into a deep hollow, whence between high banks, covered with gorse and bracken and many a summer flower, it led again up a hill thickly planted with firs; at the lowest point was a bridge over a streamlet, offering on either hand a view of soft green meadows. Aspect of exquisite retirement: happy who lived here in security from the struggle of life!'

'An errand-boy came along, whistling townwards, a big basket over his head.'

Sidwell shows Godwin the view from her garden. 'A few years ago, none of those ugly little houses stood in the mid-distance. A few years hence, I fear, there will be much more to complain of.'

A steep climb towards the city brings us past the Middle School to where Stoke House stood on a superb site with panoramic views. One side of its entrance gate remains, at the approach to Lyncombe Close, and its Monterey pines and cedars of Lebanon suggested names for two of the roads.

We turn down Mincinglake Road, then right down Marypole Road to Bridespring Road (names all based on the history of the area), passing a variety of modern dwellings scattered on this airy spur of the hill.

Via Philip Road and across Prince Charles Road, we pass the out-of-town supermarket. It is well-placed in an area otherwise virtually without shops, and it takes the pressure off the centre commercial parks. It is a shame that the chance was not taken to stock it from the adjacent railway, especially as the duplication of roads to provide a juggernaut entrance meant concreting over several long-established and well-loved allotments. The whole

supermarket site is on the corner of the artificial railway plateau adjoining the London line embankment. The store itself lies on the site of the turn-table for the Exmouth Junction shunting-yards. From the lorry-park one can look down on Polsloe Priory to see the ancient natural contours, with the Mincing stream running from the valley-park along the edge of the priory site towards Polsloe Bridge. The path between Leo’s and the Priory which runs between houses to Pinhoe Road is an ancient right of way between the Priory and Heavitree Church.

The priory consisted of a square of cloisters enclosed by buildings. The church formed the north side, standing higher than the rest. The Mincing stream ran past the eastern range. What we see today is the western range, which contained the guest-house, the priores’s chamber, and possibly the priest’s room. It is of plum-coloured Heavitree stone, rebuild about 1300 but re-using the original 12th-century back wall, and possibly some of the timbering. The entrance doorway with its old oak door has a two-centred arch with an original oak beam above. The first floor would originally have been reached by outside stairs. The sloping line of their roof can be seen on the middle buttress. The Guest Hall has a remarkable oak screen at the southern end, possibly unique in this country, with three (originally four) two-centred arches without capitals.

The priores’s room at the northern end is screened off by a wall made of oak posts, laths and cob. The fireplace is 13th-century, and there are two stone corbels — one a man’s head, one a woman’s, in head-dresses of about 1300; these originally supported ceiling beams. In the corner is the mediaeval garderobe, or toilet, set in a turret. The gate dividing the nuns from the outside world, the ‘foreyne porte’, can still be seen in the neglected cob-wall round the grounds.
The Priory's deer-park, which stretched as far as Mount Pleasant, gave way in 1899 to the Exeter Brick and Tile Company founded by A and H Bradbeer. These brothers later bought the Priory, thinking it a decayed farmhouse, but when it was recognised for what it was, they presented it to the the city in 1934. The 17th-century linenfold paneling was removed to the Guildhall muniments room. The Priory was used as a council store, until it was recently carefully restored, and in June 1982 it became a local Community Centre. [19 on map].

Keen gardeners can walk back along the track through the allotments. Those who may be following this rather taxing 'walk' in a car will return along Prince Charles Road, which was planned before the war but built (by prisoners) after the war, and named after the present Prince of Wales, born on 14th November 1948. His mother and aunt have nearby roads called after them. On 21st October 1949, the day that Princesshaw was named, Princess Elizabeth also visited Stoke Hill Estate and laid the foundation stone for a block of fourteen self-contained flats for elderly bombed-out people. An Exeter woman told her sister in Toronto, and she initiated such a successful campaign for the Lord Mayor of London's National Air Raid Distress Fund, that it was able to present half the total cost of the finished block. Birmingham, Liverpool, Southampton and Swansea also named their equivalent buildings 'Toronto'. On 1st November 1952 the High Commissioner for Canada declared the house open. It consists of two long wings with sun-verandahs which provide covered access to a central common-room. The builders were Woodman & Son, an Exeter firm acknowledged by Frank Sleeman to be even longer-established than his own.

Mount Pleasant Halt stood next to the tunnel entrance. After a coal-train had smashed the wooden platform in 1939, it was decided that the halt was not used enough to justify rebuilding, and tussocky grass has reclaimed the slopes. [23 on map].

The roundabout lies on the old boundary between city and county, and between the parishes of St Sidwell and Heavitree. A stone with the parish names on it can be seen in the small island north of the roundabout, pre-dating not only St James' Church on the opposite corner, but also the older St James' of 1836 and 1878 in St James' Road, which was destroyed by bombing and re-located here to serve the new estate. The foundation stone of the new church was laid on the evening of 31st May 1955 by Bishop Mortimer, watched by a crowd overflowing onto the sloping grass verges of the opposite side of the road. There was an unaccustomed stillness, due to a train strike. The new church was designed by Gordon Jackson and built by Soper & Ayers. Scallop-shell decoration, the balconied open arches in the tower and the little pagoda-roof on stilts give a flavour of Compostella. The War Damage Commission paid £42,000 of the cost, and the parish raised the remaining £12,000. At the consecration on Saturday, 27th October 1956, Bishop Mortimer anointed the font, altar, and three 'consecration-crosses' in the walls made from stone salvaged from the blitzed church. [22 on map].

The adjoining church hall was opened on 20th June 1968. The architects were Salisbury and Chandler, but wishing to involve young people they invited senior pupils of Exeter School to design an exterior sculptured wall. The one they used is by David Scott, and is said to be based on the letters which spell St James.

The houses and flats look out over the railway Carriage and Wagon Shops, established in 1861. Nearly 2000 men worked here on repairs; shunting on twelve 'roads' went on for 22 hours a day, stopping only between 2 and 4 a.m. The red-brick building with high arched doorways was the stable for the shunting-horses who pulled the engines into the loco sheds and out on to the turn-table. [20 on map].

Most of the buildings were rebuilt in reinforced concrete in about 1926, when the SR concrete depot shared the site. For the past 17 years the coal distribution centre has had trains dropping their load into an underground pit, for conveyor belts to carry it to high-level hoppers to fill lorries.
describes two large 'moorstones' of Devon granite standing here, nearly six foot tall and about three foot wide. They may have been the remnants of a megalithic grave. He goes on to say, 'There is a tradition which is firmly believed by old women etc., and by them transmitted to their descendants, that a giant of immense bulk and strength was buried in this spot'. The cross-roads was called 'Scarlet's Cross' in the 16th and 17th centuries, and Hooker's map shows a stone Latin cross on a double base, a little east of the 'Countie Stone.' John Scarlet owned land here from 1380.

The turnpike gate stood across the bottom of Stoke Hill; the tollhouse stood on the point of land, now an island, between Stoke Hill and Roseburn Lane. The road was dis-turnpiked in 1834 when the New North Road provided a flatter route to Tiverton, but the toll-house was still standing in 1884 when the Exeter Turnpike Trust expired. The surviving small gateway marks the lower limit of the Sanders' grounds. The pond for strayed beasts of St Sidwell's Manor also stood at the road junction, until the road-wideners took it in 1870. A green triangle round the boundary stone still remained public property, with a couple of seats and four large trees, planted about 1880 by Mr Carne-Wilkinson and his four grandchildren, until the roads shaved it nearly all away.

Rougemont Cottage, listed as a 'two-storey double-fronted roughcast cottage with two-storey semi-circular bows and a Tuscan porch', has stood at the fork since at least 1827. The road-sign 'Old Tiverton Road' this side of Union Road shows how comparatively recent the latter is. The other white house is nearly as old, and received its exotic name when occupied in 1894 by the former Archdeacon of Zanzibar.

Walkabout

We return along Union Road. Culverlands was one of the earliest houses in the area, and has gradually lost its many acres to Victorian housing, a bowling green, bungalows and - most recently - Culverland Close. Marlows Villa has shutters and a small flat Greek porch. Formerly it adjoined Frankfort Nurseries, belonging to Frankfort Villa, until Speccott Villas were built in the 1890s with their stained glass and wooden Corinthian capitals.

Opposite, Mitchell House is a block of thirteen flats built by the Devon Community Housing Society on the last portion of King's nursery gardens. On 28th July 1978 Bishop Wilfred Westall laid the foundation stone, a tablet of Portland stone retrieved from a blitzed building in Exeter. The architects were Radford Cruse Aggett, and the builders were Woodman & Son. The block was called after Professor G Duncan Mitchell, co-founder of the DCHS and his wife, Dr Margaret Mitchell JP, who declared the house open on 15th November 1979.

Next to it, the Victorian Gothic almshouses of the Licensed Victuallers stand edge-on to the road in a terraced garden. Their foundation stone was laid in 1872 by Mayoress Louisa Harding, Architect A H Wills of Topsham Road and builder J Slade of Bonhay Road erected a block of four cottages in red brick faced with Bath stone. Other blocks were planned but never built.

The design of the next row of houses to the south of the road was controlled by the vendors of Speccott Long Field in 1889, who stipulated that the front of houses built on it should face south along a curving line drawn parallel with Union Road. They or their heirs had to approve the design of any houses erected. In fact, most of the designs turned out to be symmetrical on both faces, and the 'front doors' are on the Union Road side.
The next block was developed in the 1890s without the same restrictions. The rows of red-brick slate-roofed terrace houses in Victoria Street, with the Victoria Inn and the shops on the corners, were built in the late 1860s. Nos. 1 to 6 Devonshire Place were advertised in 1826 as ‘new-built substantial brick dwelling-houses’. Their architect is not known. They have three storeys, arched doorways with fanlights, and iron window-grilles. Two mosaic artists of international reputation living at No. 4 have decorated their outside wall with examples of their work.

On the west side of Pennsylvania Road, above Pennsylvania Crescent, was the St Germans Estate. The villas scattered on its slopes were approached by paths radiating from the lodge entrance in St Germans Road. These paths were slashed through by Prince of Wales Road in 1925-27. Dreary stone walls border the new pavements.

Hope Hall

Barracks, 1867

The triangle which was cut off from the base of the estate still holds the lodge; and now also Glenhayes, with its fine oak floors and staircases of Austrian and Italian oak; and Tienen, built in the garden of Glenhayes in the 1970s.

In January 1872 Hartwell House was ‘a newly-erected family residence standing in two acres of pleasure and garden grounds. Gas laid on’. It was leased for a college hostel in 1915. In 1926 it was greatly extended and re-named Hope Hall. In the 1940s the college acquired the adjacent properties (which included the Victorian house, Homefield, renamed Lazenby – red-brick with a tower) and joined up their gardens into spacious lawns, now shaded by mature redwoods, Wellingtonias and Monterey and Austrian pines. [27 on map].

The road leads on to the University campus on the Streatham Estate, which belonged to the Thornton West family, who were millionaires, retired from East India trading. The cricket field, Thornton Hill and West Avenue were laid out on part of the Streatham Estate by their agent, John Bowden. The family gave the cricket field to the Devon County Club in 1902, to revert to the heirs if ever cricket should no longer be played there. The County Club ran it for sixty years. Dr W G Grace played here in a two-day event in 1902. For years, cricket shared the field with a bowling-green, two croquet courts, and tennis. The croquet hoops had to be taken up before cricket matches. Once a year a big croquet tournament took over the whole field. Spectators sat on a narrow bench round the edge, backed by the superb panoramic views. In 1964, Exeter Cricket Club, the main users of the field, were invited to take it over at a peppercorn rent. In 1978 the field nearly reverted to the trustees, and might have been developed for housing, but was saved by a corner being sold to a private squash club and bar, and in 1982 the Isca Hockey Club began to share the field. [28 on map].

John Bowden designed many of the houses erected here between 1907 and 1914 (including one for himself at the top of West Avenue) in Old English style like those by C F A Voysey. Look for Bowden’s logo, a diamond shape in brick, on the gables or front walls. We go down Thornton Hill, which follows the line of a path which ran along a line of elms bordering two fields, down to the Taddiford Brook and up to Lower Hoopern Farm (now Streatham Farm), which was fitted up for a dairy and tea-house around 1820, serving teas, junket and Devonshire cream. Thornton Hill’s only public building was Harvey’s Physical Training School and Gymnasium (against the wall of the Barracks), where the Major provided Swedish Drill for several nearby schools.

Turret by prison, to be demolished soon
The Cavalry Barracks were hurriedly erected in 1792 under the threat of French invasion. An unknown architect designed the red-brick Riding School, stables and officers' quarters around a large oblong parade-ground. These are now listed buildings, as is the imposing 1867 block with clock-tower. [29 on map].

The New North Road of 1834 had to be re-aligned in the 1850s to make room for the railway between the prison and Northernhay. After the new S-bend we come to a rectangular stone building with stucco classical front, a pediment containing a small sphinx and a Latin motto meaning 'Purity and Strength.' It was built before 1838 as Coldridge's iron-foundry, smithery, showroom and yard. In the later 19th century it was the Rockfield Hat Factory.

The Old Fire Station, a listed building, stands behind a high brick wall with gate piers which originally held lamps. The building just antedates the road and is set obliquely to it. The new road cut through, leaving most of its exercise yard on the other side (formerly a bowling-green). The Station is a three-storey plaster-fronted building with arched openings, pilasters above, a central niche and pediment. The ground floor contained the large old stone-paved Engine House; stairs and a trap-door hoist led to two large workshops, from which a trap-door led to the roof and the wooden platform used for drying the hose. [30 on map].

If we climb the slope to Northernhay Gardens and look back on Pennsylvania, we see that the 'high wood' of 2000 years ago is now a sea of roof-tops, but towering above them are the huge cedars, chestnuts, deodars and exotic pines which show that this is no ordinary suburb.

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I intend to deposit a list of sources and footnotes in the West Country Studies Library.

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Hazel Harvey