

As early as the 1770s more affluence was making its presence known with the development of Highbury Place, followed by Highbury Terrace between 1789 and 1794. Highbury Place retained its own private gates and wealthy residents enjoyed unrestricted views across Highbury Fields - the sole remaining untouched pastoral land in the area. Similarly, in 1806, the first Compton Terrace houses and the Union Chapel were built. St. Paul's Road (formerly known as Hopping Lane) tended to attract the building of smaller houses and shops. Gradually the development of Highbury Corner into a major road junction took place.

The coming of the railway, however, was to alter the character of Highbury Corner. This was a major civil engineering undertaking designed to link the London docks with the northeastern suburbs and the junction with the London and North Western Railway. The first phase of construction between the railway company's headquarters and workshops at Bow and the original Islington wooden station building was completed and opened September 26th, 1850. There was an intermediate station at Hackney, and new stations opened at Kingsland on November 9th, 1850 and Camden Town on December 7th, 1850. In 1853 the railway company was renamed the North London Railway.

The railway was built in a cutting as it traversed the districts of Canonbury and Barnsbury. This was to remove any unsightliness of train traffic from the orderly middle class neighbourhoods. The alignment of the railway intersected the busy junction of Upper Street, Holloway Road and St. Paul's Road. Whatever construction method was used (presumably cut-and-cover), the resulting bridge over the train tracks was a significant undertaking. No image of the original Islington wooden station building or the original 1856 Cock Tavern (No. 21 Wells Row) seems to exist. However, the streetscape of what was Wells Row had changed considerably and would be altered many more times in the future.

The success of the North London Railway, particularly when the new line that branched off at Dalston Junction and terminated at Broad Street in the City of London was opened on November 1st, 1865, meant that the railway company could afford to upgrade its infrastructure. An Act of Parliament in 1861 (known as quadrupling) also encouraged improvements, and the original Islington wooden station building was replaced with a magnificent brick and stone Victorian-Italianate structure that was opened on July 1st, 1872. The NLR Act, 1865 (2 June 1865 (28 Victoria, chapter lxxii)) empowered enlargement and improvement to Highbury station by blocking up Swan Yard (otherwise known as Albert Street) and obtaining land. At the same time, the name of the station was changed from Islington and Highbury – established June 1st, 1864 – to Highbury and Islington.

The hotel-cum-station building, prefaced with a drive-in forecourt gated at both ends by cast iron pillars, consisted of the main structure that housed the railway booking office and usual freight handling facilities, and two wings. The southern wing housed The Cock Tavern – a capacious public house with a grill room on the second floor – and the northern wing being a small block containing shops. The materials used were Suffolk bricks for the face and Portland stone and red terra-cotta for the dressing. Ornamental cupolas surmounted the four towers and there was also a chateausque treatment of dormers, chimney stacks and iron cresting around the roofline. The design was attributed to architect Edwin Henry Horne, who used elements of a 'house style' indicative of other important North London Railway station buildings. Shortly after 1910 a single storey arcade of four shops was built on the open land in front of the station building.

There were changes to Wells Row on its Upper Street frontage as new commercial developments became established. Sebbons Row – or Sebbon Buildings – is probably the remaining original façade in the streetscape between Laycock Street and Highbury Station Road. Behind the Upper Street frontage there was a labyrinth of courts and alleyways containing low-grade buildings for housing and outbuildings used for the dairy industry that continued to operate. Albert Street (later Swan Yard), Albert Square and Hampton Court were indicative of these narrow, cobblestone back streets. Gradually the open land that was Laycock's farm became built over and included the London board school (1885) in Highbury Station Road and the extended London General Omnibus Company's (L.G.O.C.) factory adjacent to Laycock Street (1886).

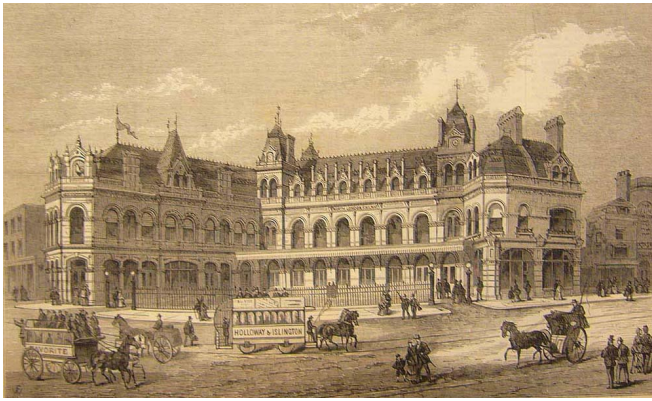
Highbury Station Road was laid out in the late 1870s and followed the alignment of the railway tracks and cutting from Upper Street to Liverpool Road. In 1883, open land between Highbury Station Road, Liverpool Road and Laycock Street that formed part of Laycock's dairy and cow layers (sheds) was procured by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company. The company constructed five blocks of model working class tenements, called Liverpool Buildings, on the site. Adjacent to the flats on the east side was a small terrace of two storey artisans' houses. Further to the east and next to the school playground, small factories and secondary industries took the place of the rundown tenements of Albert Square. In the end block facing west up the road were two small shops, an off licence on the corner and a peas pudding & faggot outlet next door. These buildings were the remnants of those destroyed in the V1 explosion of Tuesday, 27th June 1944.

The western boundary of the community provided a number of convenient businesses for the neighbourhood including the 'local' public house, the Adelaide Arms. A relatively modern pub, it was a Bass-Charrington house and, although no longer operating as a public house, the original tiled toby jug ornamentations remain. Everyday household items were available from Mr. Pettit's oil shop next door. The odour of oilcloth and paraffin being unmistakable as customers entered the gloomy interior. Mr. Pettit, a bald and diminutive figure wearing a long apron, would mysteriously appear from seemingly nowhere. For threepence (3d) you could buy a bundle of kindling wood secured by a few turns of post office string – the hairy kind. Esso 'Blue' or Aladdin 'Pink' paraffin was dispensed from a can that incorporated a funnel into the customer's container. Hardware items such as nuts and bolts were stored in the various nooks and crannies of the shop – places known only to Mr. Pettit. For shoe and boot repairs, and leathercraft of other descriptions, the cobbler next to Pettit's oil shop was a handy outlet for such needs. Barker's newsagency and confectionery made up the end shop at the corner of Offord Road, with the Florence Café alongside.

Across the cobbled lane of Epping Place were two shop units, Bettridge's greengrocery and a builders' merchant. Mr. Bettridge and his mate ran the greengrocery and were well known in the community. Mr. Bettridge, himself, was a short, rotund and bespectacled individual with sparse white hair and always wore a striped butcher's apron and a large leather change purse. His mate, a tall, lanky fellow was unmistakable in his flat cap and inevitable 'dog end' tucked behind his ear. He always handled the vegetables wearing woolen gloves minus the fingers and thumbs.

Laycock Street appeared to be a natural boundary division between the community and its southern border. Largely because of the neighbouring Samuel Lewis Trust housing estate where another high density population was in competition and 'territorial rights' were bound to exist.





*Highbury Corner and NLR Station, 1873.*



*Upper Street from Highbury Corner, 1906.*



*St Paul's Road from Highbury Corner, c1900.*



*Holloway Road from Highbury Corner, c1910.*



*Highbury Corner from St. Paul's Road, c1923.*



*Highbury Corner from Highbury Place, 1952.*





*Laycock Senior Boys School, Highbury Station Road, 1960s.*



*Liverpool Road at the Corner of Offord Road, 1970s.*



*Richard Laycock's Dairy and Cattle Layers (Sheds), c1830.*