

The road – originally a cattle path – bisected Laycock’s Farm, which was an extensive property bounded by the Back Road (Liverpool Road), the established residential and commercial properties along Park Street (Islington Park Street), Upper Street and Highgate Road (Holloway Road), and the market gardens and grounds of the Chapel of Ease (St. Mary Magdalene’s Church). Later, the road became the principal route from Liverpool Road to the dairy and Upper Street.

With the downturn in dairy farming as the land was gradually developed for building lots, by 1908 a number of factories were built on part of Laycock’s yard. More land along Laycock Street was sold and occupied by the London board school (1915) followed by the Islington Borough Council’s blocks of flats called Laycock Mansions (1926). Other light industries followed with such companies as Tidmarsh & Sons and Builders Industries Zinc (BIZ). The aforementioned Samuel Lewis Trust dwellings bounded on the northwest end of the street and all five blocks were constructed by 1910.

Given the proximity of three major housing estates and the Laycock Primary and Junior Mixed School, it wasn’t surprising that Laycock Street was a busy route both for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It became an extension to the children’s’ playground and a lucrative route for the ice cream vendors both on tricycles and in motorised vans.

There was something of a spillover from the community’s actual boundaries as small pockets of other districts blended in, primarily for recreational purposes. Prominent among these were Highbury Fields and Compton Terrace gardens.

Highbury Fields was bought jointly in 1885 by the Islington Vestry (forerunner to the Metropolitan Borough Council) and the Metropolitan Water Board for £60,000 and consists of 27-1/2 acres of original common land. An offshoot of Highbury Corner, it is bounded by the 39 houses in the Georgian terrace of Highbury Place (1773) and the sweep of Highbury Crescent with its Italianate villas. Highbury Fields’ recreational facilities evolved to include seven tennis courts, a floodlit football (soccer) area, children’s swings and snack bar, wading pool and an open air Lido (1921 - 1979), which has been replaced by the Highbury Pool and Fitness Centre.

Adjacent to Upper Street and Laycock Street junction is Compton Terrace, which was started in 1806 and consisted of the first Union Chapel, a two-storeyed building with a central pediment, and two houses. By 1817, only four houses existed, but the last leases were granted in 1831 when the terrace was completed. The Union Chapel was extended in 1861 and rebuilt in 1876-77 to the plans of architect James Cubitt.

Spacious and well laid out gardens are located opposite the terrace and fully complement the Georgian façade as well as being a buffer between the houses and the busy main road. The winding gravel path and numerous wooden benches provide a means of enjoying a relaxing stroll and occasional rest.



*Laycock Street with View to Liverpool Road, 1956.*



*Laycock Street with View to Upper Street, 1956.*



*Laycock Street outside Laycock J.M. School, 1970.*



*Laycock Mansions, Laycock Street, 1975.*



*Laycock J.M. School, Laycock Street, 1960s.*



*Tidmarsh & Sons Factory, Laycock Street, 1970s.*





*Highbury Fields with View to Highbury Corner, c1875.*



*Highbury Place and Highbury Fields, 1930.*



*Highbury Fields with View to Highbury Crescent.*



*Highbury Fields Paddling Pool, 1960s.*



*Highbury Fields Lido with View to Calabria Road, 1930.*



*Compton Terrace and Gardens, c1910.*



*Compton Terrace and the Union Chapel.*

