

Last month I referred to Redland Green valley as a shortcut for the redoubtable Henry Hoke, but down the centuries it has had other claims to fame. At one time this area, Rubea Terra, would have been familiar to the Romans passing along the Via Julia to their station at Abonae (Sea Mills). Before urbanisation Redland Green formed a continuous plain with Durdham Down The land, wooded and set about with thickets and streams in the dells, once formed part of the Mercian Kingdom of Offa who granted it with Westbury on Trym to the See of Worcester. After suffering from the depredations of the Danes during the tumultuous ninth century stability came with the stewardship of the Canons of Westbury College. Another major change was heralded by Henry VIII in 1539 in preparation for his planned dissolution of the monasteries ordered a Valor Ecclesiasticus; a full inventory of all monastic assets. Thus in 1544 King Henry was able to sell his newly acquired manor of Westbury, including Redland, to one of his courtiers Sir Ralph Sadleir, for the grand sum of 1,000 marks. Subsequent changes of ownership saw it pass from country gentlemen to bankers, grocers, merchants and property speculators. Some had grandiose plans, others saw the estate as an investment opportunity, some even went bankrupt, in spite of this parcels of the estate and the much rebuilt Redland Court survived. One such remnant was an estate farm. Whilst Redland Court became Redland High School for Girls. Sadly the Bishop's Palace built on the edge of the Green on land given by the Edwards', was destroyed in the 2nd December 1940 bombing raid. It remained derelict for years until the building of the St John Reed University hall of Residence, itself now replaced by a block of flats.

But what of the Green itself and the farm? Fronting onto Redland Green, access is shown on maps as an unmetalled path across the green, part of which is now a registered village green. Extended and improved over the years, now a private house, the farm house dates from the early 1700's and once had 28 acres of land where horses, sheep and pigs were fattened for sale. I wonder if any their horses were sold at the Horse Bazaar in St Georges Road? Their cows also provided milk for the Biggs dairy. I remember Biggs Dairy at Henbury supplying our milk from the 1950s through to 1973, when we lived in Cranbrook Road. The present allotments and Redland Green School grounds were once the farm's grazing fields, and the farm's sylvan setting a selling point in an 18c sale prospectus is still true today.

The continued availability of this magic green oasis within a mile of the city centre is dependent upon on the community using and taking care of it. To learn more about the Redland Green Community Group email: vassili.papastavrou@googlemail.com loisgoddard@mac.com or for more about the history of Redland Green; Gerry Nichols at nicholsred@hotmail.com

