EALING

What is Ealing famous for?

Introduction

April 2025 marks 60 years since the boroughs of Acton, Ealing and Southall were scrapped and a new local government authority of the London Borough of Ealing was created.



The seven towns that make up modern-day Ealing are Acton, Ealing, Greenford, Hanwell, Northolt, Perivale and Southall.

Acton

Acton is probably best known for its industry. In the late nineteenth century, it became well known for the large number of small laundries operating there. The town became known as ‘Soapsuds Island’.

By the 1920s, Acton became heavily industrialised. Companies included Napier’s, which built cars; Wilkinson’s, which made swords, bayonets and razor blades; and Wall’s, which produced ice cream.



The Napier works (built 1915).

Image credit: actonhistory.co.uk

EALING

Ealing Studios has been in operation since 1902. It is the oldest continuously working studio facility for film production in the world.

It produced many films in its heyday post-WWII, including Kind Hearts and Coronets, The Ladykillers and Scott of the Antarctic.

Between 1955 and 1995 the BBC owned and filmed at the studios. Programmes shot here include Doctor Who.



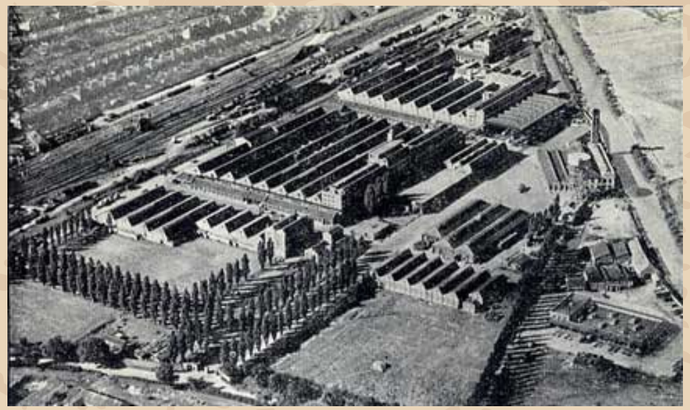
Ealing Studios

Image credit: ealing.com

Since 2000, further films and TV shows have been filmed here including Shaun of the Dead and Downton Abbey.

GREENFORD

Greenford is considered to be the birthplace of the modern organic chemical industry. It was at William Perkin's chemical factory, by the Grand Union Canal, that the world's first synthetic (aniline) dye was discovered in 1856. He named it mauveine. Known as mauve in the fashion world, it became hugely popular among fashionable Victorians.



J. Lyons and Co.

Image credit: kzwp.com

J. Lyons and Co., the tea blender and food manufacturer, opened a factory in Greenford in 1921. It became the town's biggest employer.

HANWELL



Three Bridges seen from the air
Image credit: disused-stations.org.uk

Two of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's greatest engineering feats are located in Hanwell. One is the Wharncliffe Viaduct, completed in 1837, which carries the Great Western Railway over the River Brent. The other is Three Bridges, at which a railway, a canal and a road all meet in a unique structure dating from 1859.

Hanwell also hosted the Central London District School for poor children from central London. Founded in 1856, its most famous pupil was Charlie Chaplin.

NORTHOLT

Northolt became famous for the pony racing which took place in Northolt Park. The one and a half mile racecourse was constructed by Sir William Bass and Viscount Lascelles. It was opened in 1929 by the Earl of Harewood and his wife the Princess Royal.

From 1937 financial problems led to the racecourse's decline and eventual closure.

During World War II, the land was taken over and used as an army depot and prisoner of war camp. Later, housing was built on the site.



Northolt Park Racecourse, 1934
Image credit:
northoltparkracecourse.wordpress.com

PERIVALE

Perivale is home to two very different, yet equally impressive buildings.

The Hoover Building is a Grade II* listed Art Deco building opened in 1933 as the UK headquarters of the Hoover Company.

St Mary's Perivale is a Grade 1 listed 12th or 13th century church built of rag-stone and flint. Its tower is covered in white weatherboarding. Today the church is used for concerts.

Image credit:
Andy Scott





Image credit:
Ethan Doyle White

SOUTHALL



Middlesex County Asylum

Image credit: derelictplaces.co.uk

Southall was the site of the Middlesex County Asylum, which opened in 1831. It became famous for superintendent Dr John Conolly's pioneering work there: for instance, he ended the practice of making inmates wear chains.

The remaining parts of the site are stil in use and known as St Bernard's Hospital.

From the 1950s Southall became home to the largest Punjabi community outside the Indian subcontinent, and has been nicknamed 'Little India'. The signs on the main railway station are bilingual in English and Gurmukhi (one of the written scripts of Punjabi).