

SWANBANK TO GOLDEN LION



Fulham Old Town was the site of the original riverside settlement. It was a convenient place for a river crossing and the first written reference to a ferry at Fulham occurs in a document of 1210. The ferry was superseded by a toll bridge in 1729, confirming the importance of the site as this was the first bridge to be built upstream between London Bridge and Kingston.

By the early nineteenth century the small town of Fulham was established in a mainly rural hinterland of market gardens and nursery ground. Houses, shops, schools and small industries clustered around the High Street and parish church. The main roads leading to Hammersmith in the north and London in the east converged at Fulham Old Town. In winter these roads could be muddy and at times almost impassable.

From the 1850s the area began to be developed, stimulated by the extension of the Metropolitan District Railway to Putney in 1880. However at the same time Walham Green was growing in size and importance, and this led eventually to the decline of Fulham Old Town as the centre of the community. The opening of Putney Bridge in 1886, to the west of the old bridge, cut off the southern end of the ancient High Street, which during the twentieth century diminished into little more than an approach road to the bridge as traffic flow increased.

Fulham Pottery, one of the earliest industries in Fulham and the first commercially successful manufacturer of stoneware in the country, was established to the east of the High Street in the early 1670s. It continued in business on that site for three hundred years. North of the pottery a women's prison opened in 1856 on the site of a former school. After its closure in 1888 the area was developed with streets of houses and shops.