

The 1911 census enumerates two families living at Horseshoes (now Smallford) and Ellenbrook. In one household there were two boarders who were employed as a green keeper and golf labourer. In the other household there were a golf professional and a horse driver at a golf club, which the census describes as the Hatfield Road Links.

The dawn of the 20th century was a period of building development along the road from St Albans to Hatfield. The air strip would later be laid on part of the former Harpsfield Hall Farm – Ellenbrook Fields occupies part of this land today. A row of large mainly detached homes began to line the airfield side of St Albans Road West from opposite Ellenbrook Lane as far as the access road to the police station opposite the Galleria. None of these homes remain today.

The occupiers were in well-paid jobs: banking, accountancy and other City-based careers. This was the clientele the developers were anticipating, and on the back of the promise of a large number of similar homes – most of the rest never materialised – persuaded the Great Northern Railway Company to construct a halt at Nast Hyde for residents to make the connection at Hatfield for trains to the City.

A golf club would be a further social benefit to the residents and was likely to be the kind of facility provided by a developer. So, where was this club?

There is a website devoted to former golf courses:

www.golfsmissinglinks.co.uk which identifies it as Nast Hyde Golf Club. I guess the text originally came from a golfing yearbook of 1910. *"...the opening of a new railway station about a mile from Hatfield, on 1st February. The station had been built to serve a fine new residential site, and among other features will be an eighteen hole golf course. In 1914 the Secretary was Colonel Schreiber and the professional, E Gow. An eighteen-hole undulating course on good turf, well drained on gravel soil. Subs for gents were £3.3.0 (£3.15) and for ladies £1.1.0 (£1.05). Visitors' fees were 1/- (5p) at any time."*

Very promising. It seems from the above information that during the period 1910 to 1914 the course was in development; hence the identification of nearby residents as workers on the golf course in the 1911 census. The course, and the houses were part of an attempted sale of land at Great Nast Hyde as early as 1889. The manor house was also a working farm, separate from Little Nast Hyde Farm, and the estate included land on both sides of St Albans Road, including Beech Farm.

Eventually, over a period of a decade, some thirty homes were erected, but it was clear that many more were anticipated. By 1914, as soon as the golf course had opened, the dark clouds of war approached and large numbers of men volunteered or were later conscripted for military service, and were therefore lost to the local community and its trades.

A further attempt to sell 441 acres of Nast Hyde Estate was made in 1925 by Foster & Cranfield London EC, including what had been the formative golf course, now clearly identified as 36 acres between Coopers Green Lane and St Albans Road West, immediately south of a block of woodland with shooting rights, known as Home Covert. The 1925 estate sale brochure gave the option to re-open the former golf course, or to develop. In the words of the brochure: *"eminently suitable for the erection of medium-sized detached houses or bungalows, for which there is a great demand as very little building has been carried out in the district for some years past."* On the bulk of the land available north of St Albans Road, I think it is fair to say not a single additional house was built. The intervention of aeronautical activity at this time – de Havilland Aircraft Company – put paid to that.

Most of the activity went on south of St Albans Road West. Although it took a further five years, two fields were developed as the Selwyn and Poplar estates, only part of the latter having been completed before the onset of the Second World War. Oh, and the part of the 1927-built Barnet Bypass between the Roehyde Interchange and The Comet Hotel is on former Nast Hyde land purchased at the time.

Nine of the homes were constructed on the north side of St Albans Road West, Ellenbrook; on wide plots from the Ellenbrook Lane junction to the later built Harpsfield Shops. Of these number the first four now lay under the University of Hertfordshire de Havilland Campus car park, and another under Mosquito Way roundabout. The last surviving house, called Ellenbrook House when new, and then Ellenbrook Club once the aircraft factory had arrived, was later converted into Hatfield Lodge Hotel. Today, Beale's Hotel is on the site.

The two built on the south side of the road, near Ashbury Close, survive, as do those in Wilkins Green Lane, though the pair of detached homes built on the bend of the original St Albans Road, and the adjacent roadhouse called the Stonehouse, all succumbed to the expansive Galleria car park.

In spite of everything, the land which had just about become a golf course, is still undeveloped. It is within the boundary of Ellenbrook Fields, the country park which has yet to be officially created – look forward to some gravel extraction first, maybe – so there is yet the opportunity for a golf course,

though perhaps not 18 holes. It may even sport the title Nast Hyde Golf Course. Speculation!

Footnote: I have yet to discover any photographs of the now-demolished homes, and I still seek an explanation for the naming of the Selwyn estate – possibly the developer, but who, exactly, was he?