

ENGLANDS LANE SUB POST OFFICE

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In Bulletin 342, June 2006, on pages 26 and 27, I gave the genealogy of Sidney Allchin who was the sub postmaster in Englands Lane and perforator of postage stamps from about 1881 to after 1901. The 1881 England Census showed Sidney Allchin and his family living at “7 Englands Lane”, while his parents and brother were at “1 Englands Lane”. The 1901 England Census lists Sidney Allchin and his family at 55 Englands Lane. The current address of Allchin & Co., chemists, and the Englands Lane sub post office is 28 Englands Lane.

From various Internet web sites, several photographs and descriptions of locations of premises in Englands Lane indicate that currently premises with even numbers are on the north-western side of the street from 2 on the corner of Antrim Road (St. Mary’s Convent occupies the block between Antrim Road and Haverstock Hill) to 50 (“The Washington” public house) at the western end on the corner of Belsize Park Gardens. On the south-eastern side of Englands Lane, numbers 1 to 7 are between Haverstock Hill and the northern entrance to Chalcot Gardens, and 39 to 55 between the southern entrance of Chalcot Gardens and the corner of Primrose Hill Road.

So, where did the families of Alfred and Sidney live in 1881? It turns out that it was not in the present numbers 1 and 7 respectively! London Directories from 1876 to 1884 show that Englands Lane only extended from Haverstock Hill to the northern end of Chalcot Gardens with no street numbers, while the street, which was to become the section from Primrose Hill Road to the southern end of Chalcot Gardens was called Elizabeth Terrace. During this period, the street numbers on the northern side of Elizabeth Terrace were from 1 (Washington Hotel) to 15, and on the southern side from 1A to 8A. The chemist shop of Alfred Allchin and the “post & Money Order Office and Savings Bank” were at number 1A! At number 7A, the Directories list Henry Edwards, but the 1881 Census shows that “7 Englands Lane” was divided into 3 flats, the occupants of which were the families of Henry Edwards, George White and Sidney Allchin. So “1 Englands Lane” on the 1881 Census was really “1A Elizabeth Terrace” as given in the Directories.

From 1888, the Directories show Englands Lane extending all the way from Haverstock Hill to Belsize Park Gardens/Primrose Hill Road, with the name “Elizabeth Terrace” disappearing. So the sub post office had not relocated – its address just changed form “1A Elizabeth Terrace” to “55 Englands Lane”!

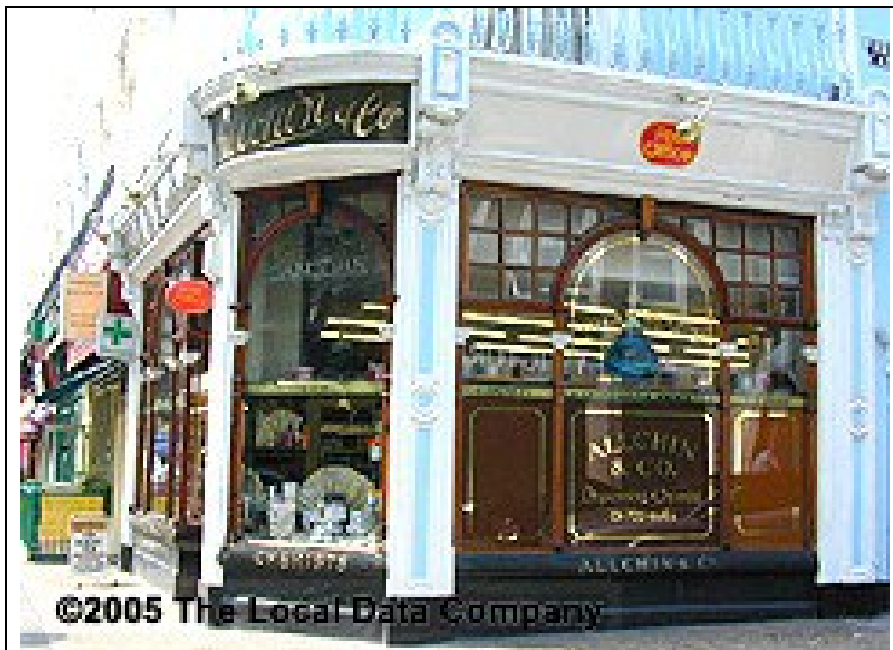


A postcard view of Englands Lane, 1906, looking east.

(The building on the right corner is number 55, the one on the left corner is The Washington; 28 Englands Lane is on the near corner on the left side where the building tops show a break in the centre distance)

However, some time between 1896 and 1909, Allchin & Co., chemists, and the sub post office moved across the street to number 28, on the western corner of Primrose Gardens, where the business still trades under that name, including the post office counter. And, yes, “The Washington” is still at number 50.





A recent photo of 28 Englands Lane looking towards the north-east. The photo shows the Primrose Gardens façade with Post Office signs on the corner and above the large window.

A Google search for information on Alfred Allchin found the following reference in the obituary of Sir William Augustus Tilden (1842 – 1926), a chemist who was famous for inventing synthetic rubber:

“His family apprenticed him, while yet barely 15 years of age, to a pharmaceutical chemist at Barnsbury. He was fortunate in his employer, Mr. Alfred Allchin, who, having acted as an assistant in the Pharmaceutical Society’s laboratory and worked for a short time in Pelouze’s laboratory in Paris, had an outlook beyond the limits of the pharmacy.”

[Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series A, containing papers of a Mathematical & Physical Character, Vol. 117, No. 778 (Feb. 1928), pp. i – xxxi]

Alfred Allchin and his family were living in the Barnsbury (part of Islington) area at the 1851, 1861 and 1871 England Censuses.

[Note by John Mathews – I have tried to contact The Local Data Company for permission to use their photos (above) of 28 Englands Lane from a web site. However, they no longer appear in the on-line British phone book, and a neighbouring business at the address on their web site told me that their premises were empty and that it was not known if they were still in business.]