



a gas pipeline, thus confirming the early settlement of the area.

- **1972**

Part of the park was converted to a golf course.

- **1974**

The bi-centenary of the Fête Champêtre was celebrated in the park with a revival of John Burgoyne's play 'Maid of the Oaks'

- **1900s**

Guides and Scouts held their camps in the park each year in the Spinney. There are still wooden orienteering posts throughout the park, used by uniformed groups to

develop map reading skills.

- **1987**

A major storm destroyed great swathes of woodland across southern England, including some fifteen thousand trees in Oaks Park. Many replacement saplings were subsequently planted, and fallen trees were left to encourage wildlife.

- **1990s**

The Woodcraft Centre by the car park was established in the late twentieth century, to provide workshop opportunities for people with special needs. Tables and stools were made from fallen trees.

- **1994**

The first of several trees was planted to commemorate the work of foster carers in the borough.

- **2009**

An English Oak was planted by the 19th Earl of Derby when he visited the park during excavations of the original mansion.

- **2023**

Oaks Park Cafe was refurbished and extended. The Queens Jubilee Copse was planted, thanks to the generosity of donors

- **2024**

The Fête Champêtre was celebrated once again on its 250th anniversary, with a costumed presentation of the events of 1774, along with live music believed to have been played at the original event.

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A Brief History of Oaks Park



Friends of Oaks Park

This short guide to the history of Oaks Park has been written to introduce visitors to the rich heritage of the area and the Park in particular. Whether you are a first-time visitor or have been coming to the park for years, we hope you can find something new and interesting to enjoy.

- **3200 BCE**

The first sign of Neolithic humans settling around the area.

- **1230**

John Lambert becomes the first of his line known to occupy land here, in what was then Woodmansterne.

- **1301**

A house, Lambert's Oaks, later known as The Oaks, was built, and a grove of oak trees established.

- **1584**

The last known Lambert of this family, Roger, was living in Woodmansterne.

- **1625**

Horse racing in the area became popular, and races were run to Epsom Downs.

- **1700s**

Lambert's Oaks was let to the 'Hunters' Club' whose members could enjoy the local sporting activities and a local ale house.

- **1750s**

Sir Francis Gosling, founder of a banking dynasty, was in probably the first occupier of a modest, stylish four storey Palladian style villa built here by Robert Taylor.

- **1756**

A military man, politician and playwright Captain John Burgoyne, son-in-law of the eleventh Earl of Derby, bought a lease of The Oaks.

- **1765**

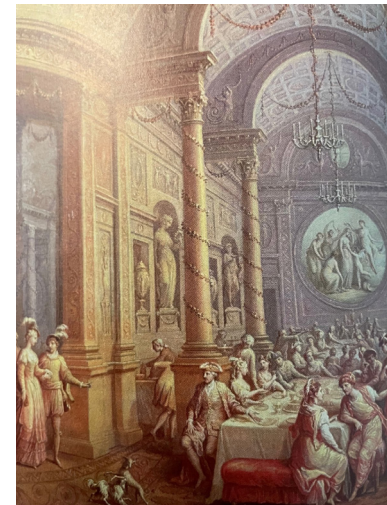
Burgoyne brought in the famous architect Robert Adam to re-design rooms. The house, subsequently known as Oaks Mansion, was taking shape.

- **1774**

A Fête Champêtre or grand garden party was held here, celebrating the wedding of Edward Smith Stanley, heir to the earldom of Derby, and Lady Elizabeth.

- **1775**

Burgoyne set off for America to take the British side in the American Revolutionary War. He led an invasion





from Canada.

- **1777**

Burgoyne became partly responsible for George III losing the American colonies. He was surrounded by American forces at Saratoga and, with no relief in sight, surrendered his entire army of 6,200 men on 17 October. It is said that the trees in the field across Woodmansterne Road were laid out in the pattern of troops at his fateful battle.

- **1778**

The names of the horse races, the 'Oaks' (after the estate) and 'Derby' (the family name) were selected by the toss of a coin at The Oaks, and inaugurated by the Earl of Derby.

- **1779**

Back at The Oaks a ladies cricket match, unusual for time, was organised by the Countess of Derby. This was captured in a delightful painting, now in

the possession of the MCC and hanging at Lords Cricket Ground.

- **1788**

Derby purchased the estate from William Lambert.

- **1780s**

More works were undertaken to extend the mansion.

- **1834**

The Oaks Mansion, greatly enlarged by the 12th Earl, passed out of the hands of the Derby family and to Sir Charles Edward Grey who subsequently served as Governor of Jamaica.

- **1842**

Joseph Smith continued to make changes to the mansion, during the next thirty four years.

- **1876**

Daniel Taylor, a brandy merchant with horse racing interests, became the next owner.

- **1884**

On his death, Taylor's widow sold the mansion to Mr Higgins, a lace merchant.

- **1873**

Formal gardens were laid out and the Grotto was built, now grade two listed. Greenhouses fronting the Grotto were demolished in the mid twentieth century, but the 'E' shape of their outline can still



Edward Smith Stanley, Twelfth Earl of Derby, with His First Wife (Lady Elizabeth Hamilton) and Their Son, portrait painting by [Angelica Kauffmann](#), ca 1776

refuge in the mansion at The Oaks.

- **1939**

The 55th Surrey Battalion of the Home Guard was based in the mansion during the Second World War.

- **1941**

On 4th March, a pilot baled out of a No.74 RAF Squadron Spitfire from Brize Norton, which then crashed into the northern edge of Oaks Park.

- **1950s**

Despite several attempts to find funds to preserve the mansion, or redevelop it for housing, a cafe or an art gallery, it eventually fell into disrepair and following a fire was demolished in 1957. You can still see a chalk outline of the Mansion on the grass behind the artist studios. The original mansion's stables still stand and now contain studios used by a range of artists who take an active part in Carshalton CAOS (an annual art festival).

- **1959**

Oaks Park hosted an International Caravan Rally.

- **1968**

Neolithic flints were found when excavations were being made for

be made out as flowerbeds.

- **1888**

Harry James purchased the mansion, went on to develop a mining business in Chile and then set about cataloguing bird and insect life. He sent South American specimens to the British Museum. He installed gas lighting, new chimneys, a grand staircase, an aviary where the cafe is now, and a bakehouse that still stands today.

- **1926**

Following deaths of Harry James and his widow Lucy, the Surrey Joint Poor Law Commission bought the property for use as a home for women with epilepsy.

- **1933**

The mansion and estate passed to Carshalton Urban District Council.

- **1937**

During the Spanish Civil War, more than 20 Basque children, fleeing the bombing of Guernica, were given

