

Semi-detached London – Transcript and Links

This is an audio slide show brought to you by the Exploring Twentieth Century London project.

In the 1930s there was a dramatic change in the lives of Londoners as they out-grew inner city housing, with its small rooms and coal fires, and made a fresh start in the new, modern and rapidly expanding suburbs. 1.6 million people made this journey between the wars, discovering a whole new way of life. Here's how suburbia changed London.

Suburban living meant a revolution in domestic life. The typical semi-detached suburban house had a garden, fitted bathroom and a modern kitchen – all very new to the families that moved into them. Innovative technologies were the mark of these modern homes. The introduction of labour-saving devices, including the vacuum cleaner and the washing machine, both responded to and encouraged the decline in the employment of servants, who could previously be found in many middle-income homes. Family life changed greatly as the domestic routine was altered beyond recognition by the new suburban style of living.

During the 1930s, London's economy avoided much of the effects of the depression. Suburbanites had money in their pocket and credit became much easier to get, making luxuries affordable to many for the first time. Furniture, white goods and even cars could be bought on hire-purchase. New mass-production techniques at the Austin and Morris factories, as well as at the new Ford plant in Dagenham, along

with the introduction of low-powered 'baby' cars, reduced the entry price for owning a vehicle. London's middle classes became car-owners for the first time, gaining much more freedom and mobility, as well as a valued status-symbol.

The suburbs were where the popular culture of the 1930s really thrived. The radio was the most popular form of home entertainment, and in this decade suburbanites were also large consumers of recorded music, particularly from the new and fashionable American big bands. Outside the home, cinema-going became an almost universal activity, and super cinemas were built across suburban London. The introduction of open-air lidos provided another modern and fun way to spend leisure time, and the open spaces of the new suburbs saw cycling take hold as a fashionable pastime.

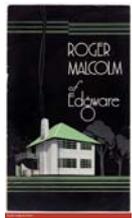
1930s suburbia meant a physical and social transformation of London, changing the everyday experiences of millions of its inhabitants with the completely new lifestyle it brought. But the increased domestic comfort and access to luxuries was perhaps not as important as the change the suburbs made to the way people saw themselves and their place in the world. Suburbia was where the middle classes found a new identity and a modern way of life that is familiar to us today.

This was an Exploring 20th Century London production, curated by Michael John Law, edited by Sophia Deboick, produced by Jason Webber and narrated by Zena Sullivan.

Useful links:

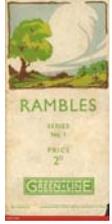
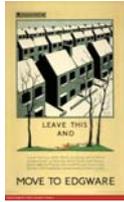
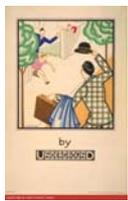
- Electricity in the Home: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.41>
- Home Furnishings, 1900-1950: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.75>
- Ideal Home Exhibition: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.82>
- Eating In 1900-1950: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.34>
- Council Housing: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.9>
- Car Ownership: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.321>
- Women in the Workforce: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.270>

Further information on images:

	Dolls' house in the 'Metro-Land' suburban style	http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.736
	Kemble Street and Drury Lane	http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.1247
	Houses in Knightsbridge	http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.9418
	Brochure for new houses in Edgware, 1935	http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7733
	The Becontree estate	http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.2361

	<p>Catalogue of Bathroom fittings</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7763</p>
	<p>Brochure for Laings Jubilee House, Olympia</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7731</p>
	<p>Electric vacuum cleaner</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7742</p>
	<p>Hotpoint washing machine</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.5262</p>
	<p>Catalogue of gas appliances</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.10517</p>
	<p>Goodchild's Enfield Town Estate brochure, 1935</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7728</p>
	<p>'Housing' magazine advertising houses in Carshalton and Ruislip, 1933</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.2478</p>
	<p>Ostens Servway – the modern service hatch</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.10510</p>

	<p>Model Y Ford '8'</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7576</p>
	<p>Austin Seven</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.4661</p>
	<p>Motor Show, Olympia, 1934</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.3034</p>
	<p>Philips wireless</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.5302</p>
	<p>Billy Holliday singing 'My Baby Just Cares for Me'</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7570</p>
	<p>The film-lover travels Underground - poster</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.3251</p>
	<p>The Ideal Cinema in King's Street, Poplar</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7057</p>
	<p>Parliament Hill Lido</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.6690</p>
	<p>Greet the Sun – poster, 1939:</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.3185</p>

	<p>Rambles Series No 1 – booklet, 1933</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.2510</p>
	<p>Halifax Building Society mortgage leaflet, 1935</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.7767</p>
	<p>Leave This and Move to Edgware - poster</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.3296</p>
	<p>Cookery book for Magnet electric cookers, 1933</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.10508</p>
	<p>Home by Underground – poster</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.1102</p>
	<p>Hairdryer</p>	<p>http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conObject.4701</p>