



**Toddington High Street by Thomas Fisher painted in 1818**  
**How the High Street has changed since then .. Alan Higgs**

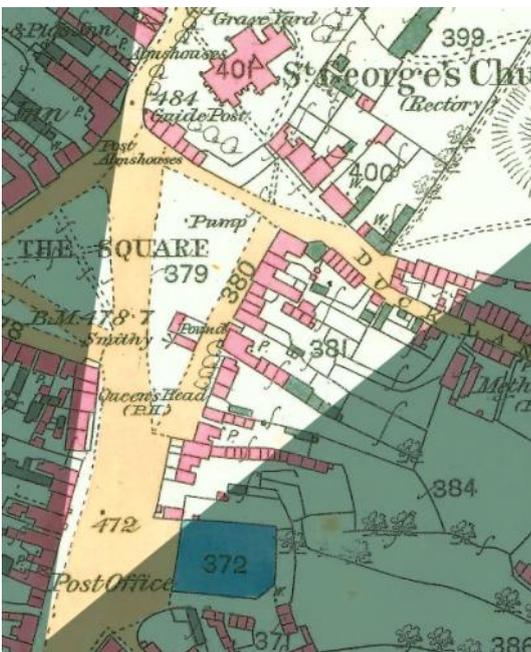
Fisher was born in [Rochester, Kent](#) in or about 1781, the younger of the two sons of Thomas Fisher, printer, book-seller, and alderman of Rochester.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1786 Fisher entered the India House as an extra clerk; in April 1816 he was appointed searcher of records. He retired on a pension in June 1834, after having spent in different offices under the company altogether forty-six years. He died unmarried on 20 July 1836, in his sixty-fifth year, at his lodgings in Church Street, [Stoke Newington](#), and was buried on the 26th in [Bunhill Fields](#). From the time of his coming to London he had resided at Gloucester Terrace, Hoxton, in the parish of Shoreditch.<sup>[1]</sup>

Before he left Rochester Fisher's work as a draughtsman attracted the attention of [Isaac Taylor](#) the engraver. He was also eminent as an antiquary. Fisher was in 1821 elected F.S.A. of Perth, and on 5 May 1836 F.S.A. of London, an honour from which he had been hitherto debarred, as a dissenter.<sup>[2]</sup>

His collections of topographical drawings and prints, portraits and miscellaneous prints, books, and manuscripts, were sold by Evans on 30 May 1837 and two following days.<sup>[3]</sup>

In the summer of 1804 Fisher discovered some legendary paintings on the roof and walls of the chapel belonging to the ancient [Guild of Holy Cross](#) in [Stratford-on-Avon](#).<sup>[40]</sup> Between 1812 and 1816 Fisher published ninety-five plates from his drawings of monumental and other remains in [Bedfordshire](#).<sup>[41]</sup> In 1838 [John Gough Nichols](#) added descriptions to a new edition. Meanwhile, Fisher had printed at the lithographic press of D. J. Redman thirty-seven drawings of 'Monumental Remains and Antiquities in the county of Bedford,' of which fifty copies were issued in 1828.<sup>[4]</sup>



Here we take the 1882 very first Ordnance Survey map and pin point the artists field of view in making this work. He must have been sitting outside the bakers shop looking up the High Street, northwards, towards the church.

Although an 1882 map the building footprints are identical to Fisher 's painting in 1818.



In this first enlargement we see the Queens Head PH sign outside the pub which was in the building commonly known as Country Properties but now a beauty salon.

The first building shown on the left of the painting is Zax Snax which in its day was two properties as this old photo.

The area behind the Forge is better seen as depicted by other artists of the day such as this one by George Shepherd



Across from the pond, Zax, Hayloft and edge of Country Properties



67 Carrier's waggon unloading at Toddington.

The changes here are easily seen as all the buildings and the wall and gate into the church are no longer present also the church roof and castellated top are no longer as the new roof went on top of the present roof after being damaged by a storm on 1976



Above is the Old Town Hall.  
The whole of the RH side is now gone which was previously the Session House and Toll Booth



Above is the Town Kitchens reputed to have had seven ovens and housed and fed up to ten poor families of the village.  
It was pulled down in 1828

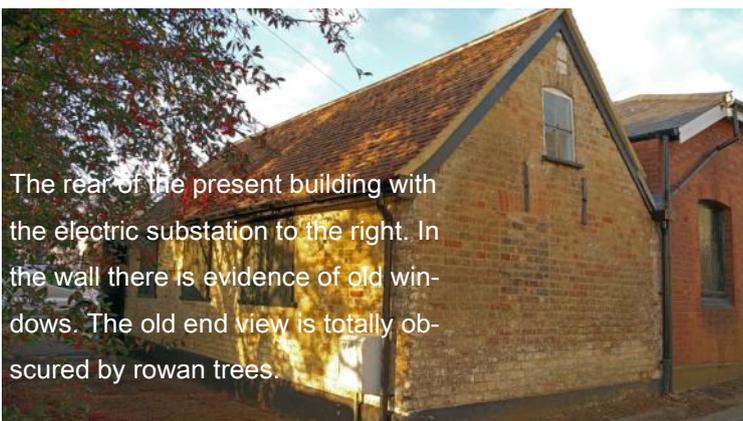


This second enlargement firstly shows the aforementioned Town Kitchens at the rear behind the forge.

The Forge has the same footprint but was a timber framed, two separate buildings with doors at the side. The roof was hipped on both buildings. In the 20th century it was re-built in bricks without such doors plus an electric substation added out of view. In 2014 the front of the nearside building was increased to make it linked as one and is now offices.



The Forge in 1940 's as Petts Garage and to the RH rear the large property which replaced Earls Court Cottages which are depicted on the painting ( see next page )



The rear of the present building with the electric substation to the right. In the wall there is evidence of old windows. The old end view is totally obscured by rowan trees.



1980



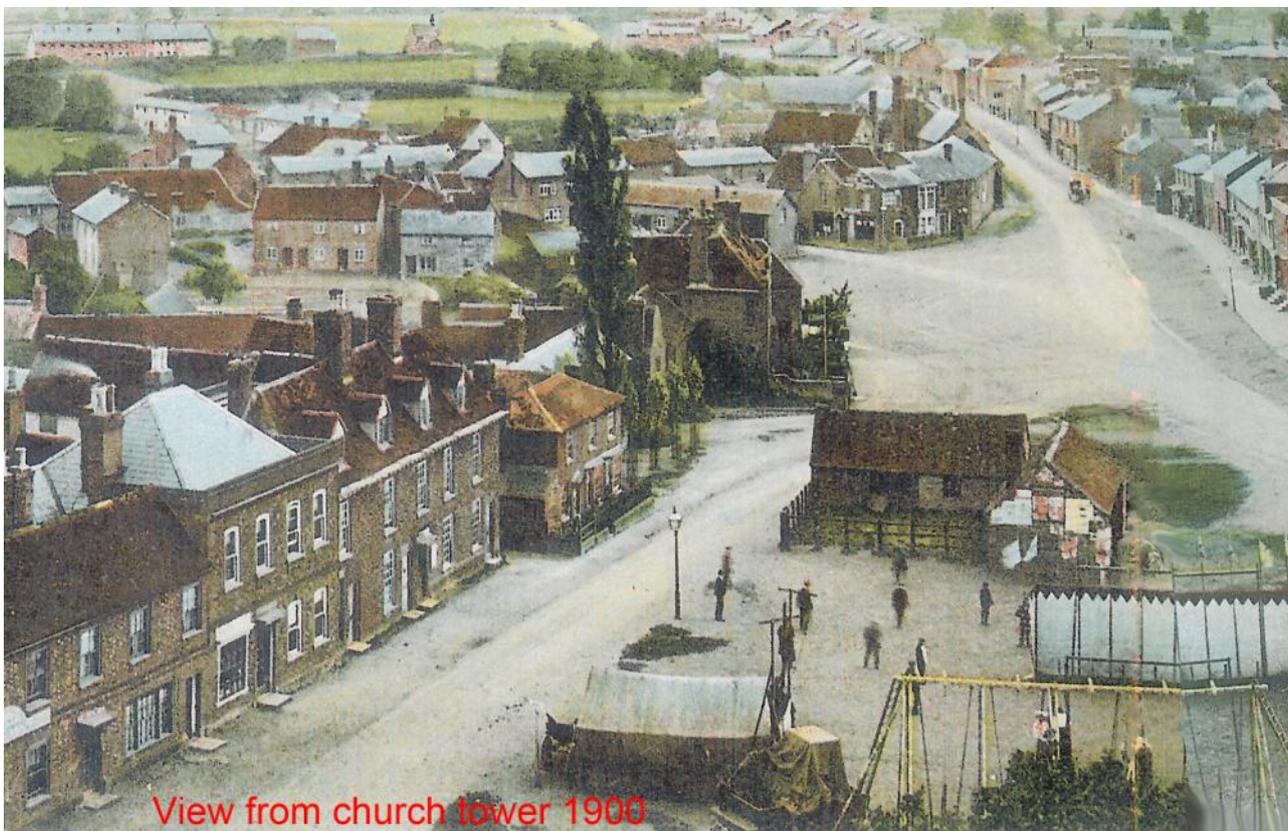
In the next enlargement from the painting, the central block with the four roof dormers has lost the dormers.

To the left of these is the library which has been heavily transformed from the original house as shown below.

The other side of the library was a private house but is now incorporated into the Oddfellows PH



Continuing on looking now at the RH house, no 17, you will see something sticking out. This was a lean to butchers shop to no 17 with has now gone to become a drive-in access. This is better seen in this old aerial photo off the church. It also shows the pound now replaced by the electric sub station and the private house which is now an extension of the Oddfellows PH.



In the next enlargement the trees hide the buildings but you can just see the top of a Flemish facade which is Earls Court, going back through a yard to several cottages joined to the Red House or Wentworth House all now replaced by one large house seen previously behind the photo of the forge with the cyclist riding by.

EARLS COURT





This building and wall has been demolished. These were actually three houses originally and the RH side entered the pond. Also in those days the pond came right out to the road with railings and an entry for carts, which went in to swell and tighten up the wheels in hot dry weather. The scene a little further round was captured by Duncombe in 1871 and all the buildings in this scene have been demolished



Wentworth House or the Red House as it was once called

Thanks to Steve Southin for allowing us to photograph his original Fisher watercolour thus providing us with a sharp original image.