

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF CRAWLEY

Crawley's history can be traced as far back as the Stone (Neolithic) Age, from flint tools and burial mounds and later a Bronze Age sword found in the area. Iron-Age forts were established to extract ore in the areas now covered by Broadfield, Bewbush and Southgate and an Iron Age camp was once on the site of Goffs Park.

These were expanded by the Romans who arrived at the start of the first century. Evidence of over 100 furnaces has been found in the area now covered by Broadfield.

Crawley's name is derived from the Anglo Saxon *craue leah* - a 'crow infested clearing'. The spelling changed during the Middle Ages - *Crauleia* (c1203), *Crawele* (c1250) and *Croule* (1279) - with the more familiar spelling *Crawley* appearing around 1316.

The town itself is a mixture of three parishes, including Ifield and part of Worth, both of which are mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086. Crawley's oldest building, Worth Church originates from Saxon times. The first mention of Crawley comes from 1203, when a licence to hold a weekly market was granted. These markets would have centred around the church, but later moved to the High Street when markets in churches were banned.

Crawley underwent a period of growth in Medieval times, when many timber framed buildings appeared along the High Street.

Crawley continued to grow steadily over the next 400 years, helped by the continuing success of the iron industry. The Prince Regent's enthusiasm for Brighton made Crawley an ideal place to rest on the journey from London, and the town rapidly developed to cope with the demand. The George Inn (dating from c1450) became one of the best known coaching inns in the country.

The arrival of the railway in the 1840s may have killed off the coaching trade, but it also made Crawley more accessible, and brought a surge in the population, including Mark Lemon, one of Crawley's better known commuters. In fact around this time the 'New Town' was developed - not the one we know today, but a small development to the West of Crawley Station.

Crawley continued to prosper during Victorian times, and did not suffer too badly in either World War.

The sale of many former estates made land available for more building, and around 900 new houses were built between the wars.

Gatwick Racecourse opened in 1891 and proved popular - the Grand National was even hosted there during the Great War. An airfield was opened nearby in the 1930s, and soon after, the circular 'Beehive' terminal building was built - a radical design at the time. Gatwick Aerodrome was requisitioned by the R.A.F. during WW2, then returned to commercial use until it was closed in 1956 to be redeveloped as an alternative to Heathrow. Gatwick Airport was opened by H.M.The Queen in June 1958.

In 1946, the New Towns Act was passed, and Crawley was one of eight towns selected to provide work and home away from the overcrowded capital. The new town would offer employment, decent housing, a green environment and an end to daily commuting. Crawley New Town was based around three communities: Three Bridges, Crawley and Ifield, and was chosen for its excellent transport links, and availability of undeveloped farmland.

The town has grown from 9,000 people in 1946 to more than 100,000 today.