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When Her Majesty's Stationery Office relocated from London in the late sixties, workers were given the choice between Basingstoke, Swindon, Southampton and Norwich. Naturally they chose the Fine City, and more than 600 workers descended on their newly-built headquarters: Sovereign House in Anglia Square.

Reg Walker, from Tooting, never looked back. He felt at home immediately. Lunchtimes were vibrant and eventful, with the darts club, the horticultural society, the Sovereign Singers, even a bar.

He recalls the idiosyncrasies of the building – ‘they grew bananas in there it was so hot’.

And the employees? When the fire drill officer was asked how many people worked here, he said, ‘Oh, about half of them.’

He is pictured here looking at old plans found on a return visit to Sovereign House in 2013, which has lain derelict since 1996.



OSMITH



Hooker & Herbs

Sir William Jackson Hooker, born in Magdalen Street in 1785, began his explorer's life with the discovery of a new moss, in Rackheath - and ended it as the director of Kew Gardens.

Other herbs associated with Magdalen Street:

The rare medicinal *Turkey Rhubarb*, growing in a schoolteacher's garden in 1766. Usually found in China, exports were strictly controlled by the "Rhubarb Office" in Imperial Russia.

Wall Germander, now rare in the wild, grew in profusion here in 1802. It was used for the treatment of gout and making Bulgarian tea.

Stinking Goosefoot, notorious for its stench of rotting fish, was found in 1840, sprouting from dung heaps at Magdalen Gates. Now extremely rare, an infusion of stinking goosefoot came in handy for treating 'hysteria and other women's ailments'.