

circumstances were strained and tradesmen were always duping him. To make the best of a dreary social round, he wove fantasies around life at 'The Laurels'. 'We have a nice little back garden which runs down to the railway,' the opening page of his diary bravely proclaimed:

We were rather afraid of the noise of the trains at first, but the landlord said we should not notice them after a bit, and took £2 off the rent. He was certainly right; and beyond the cracking of the garden wall at the bottom, we have suffered no inconvenience.

Pooter represented City man. Like a hundred thousand of his fellows, he suffered a stifling, taxing working atmosphere requiring punctuality, formal dress, conformity and deference to his betters – all for a pittance, but with the compensation of feeling a cut above the manual workers from whose more vulgar lifestyles the Pooters so carefully distanced themselves. Suburbs like Holloway and Hornsey, or later Penge and Putney, built to cater for Pooters, created scaled-down versions of Paddington or Primrose Hill. The bourgeoisie aped their betters in their pursuit of taste, decorum and anxious gentility.

Pooterish sorts – decent fellows living in the inner, and later the outer, suburbs – were targeted by improving literature, works like *How I Managed My House on £200 a Year* (1864), in which the Victorian clerk and paterfamilias informs his wife that he has found a residence in an expanding suburb 'near Islington':

The house at thirty pounds, which stands in the open space of garden ground, close to the field of forty acres, will be just the thing for us. I should think it would be some years before the now pretty view can be built out. It is only three miles from London, perhaps a little more to the office, but that does not signify. We shall have no neighbours yet, and I have observed very common people do not live in semi-detached houses; they like to congregate near a market, and so