

The Number 607: The Road to Nowhere

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (November 2022)



Uxbridge Road, London, Ludovic-Rodolphe Pissarro, 1908

Oh once along the Road to Nowhere
That used to be the Uxbridge Road
You'd board and pay the tuppenny bus fare
And go where milk and honey flowed.

For this was then a demi-Eden
Where gentlefolk would take their ease.
With Adam in an English season

You'd walk content beneath the trees.

And everyone was someone's neighbour:

You knew the other's name to chat.

When Mrs Jones went into labour

You'd go around and feed her cat.

You shared a common English language;

And history, too, to make you proud.

For lunch you'd pack yourself a sandwich

And never play your records loud.

You'd listen to the radio;

You'd tune the dial to hear the news.

You'd dream of buying a bungalow,

Or save to get some natty shoes.

And when in love you'd whisper shyly,

And as a child play hide and seek.

When grown-ups talked you'd listen quietly:

You'd wait your turn for when to speak.

Your world possessed a settled order

Where all belonged and had a place,

And being deprived or someone's boarder

Was never thought to bring disgrace.

You had a shared identity

Which bound you in a common cause.

Secure from foreign tyranny,

Your rulers ruled through ancient laws.

And you were England, born and bred,

Aware of all the debt you owed.

For many souls you knew had bled

To live in you on Uxbridge Road.

But that was then and this is now,

And all such halcyon days are passed.

There is though this, if you'll allow:
For traffic jams it's unsurpassed.



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Paul Freeman is an art dealer in London. The poem is from *The Bus Poems: A Tale of the Devil*, currently in preparation. His book, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and available [here](#).

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