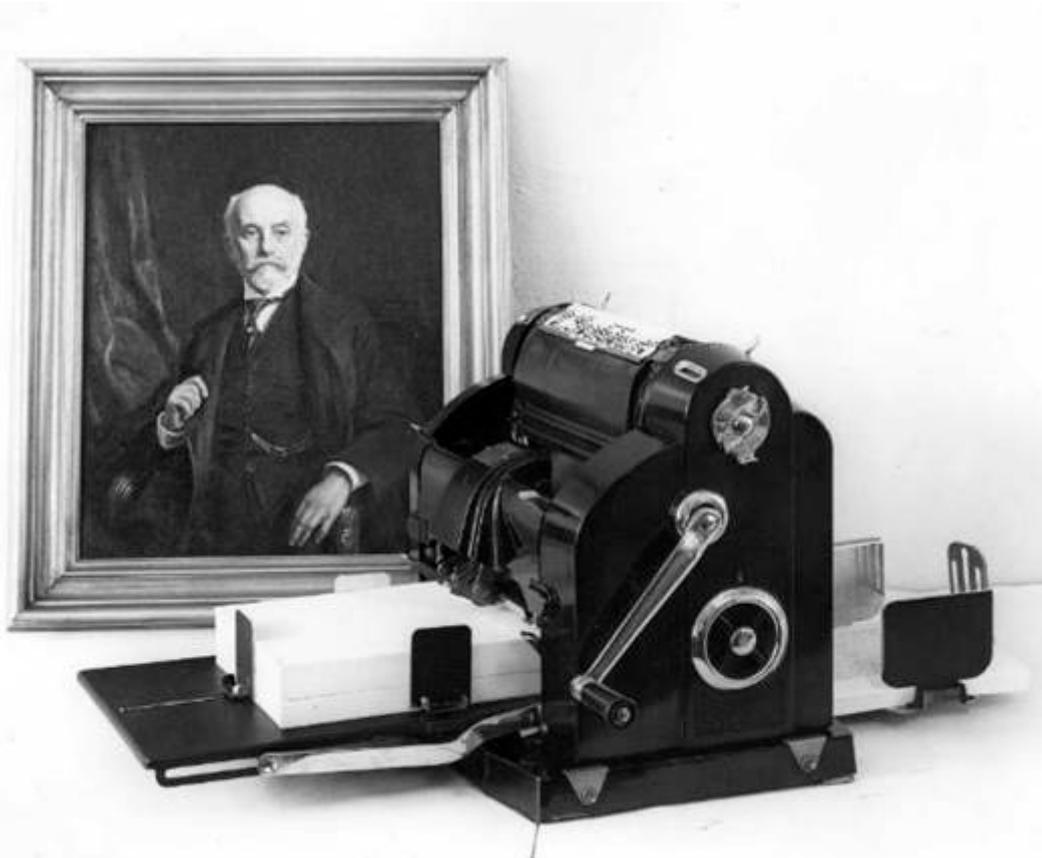


Throwback Thursday: Mural Mania (part 2) - Copy that! Thursday 4 June 2020

Welcome to Throwback Thursday: Mural Mania (part 2) - Copy that! – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

Following on from the post we did [about murals in April](#), today we are going to look at some more 'lost murals'. One set of murals link to Haringey's industrial past and the factory that completely revolutionised office work around the world. The other mural links to a certain football team local to the borough.

The company we are talking about is of course the rotary duplicating machinery manufacturers, [Gestetner](#). Founder David Gestetner (1854-1939) moved his company from their cramped factory in Cross Street, Islington to a large purpose-built building in Broad Lane, Tottenham in 1906. From there he built the business up into a world-leading, multinational company which developed office copying machinery.

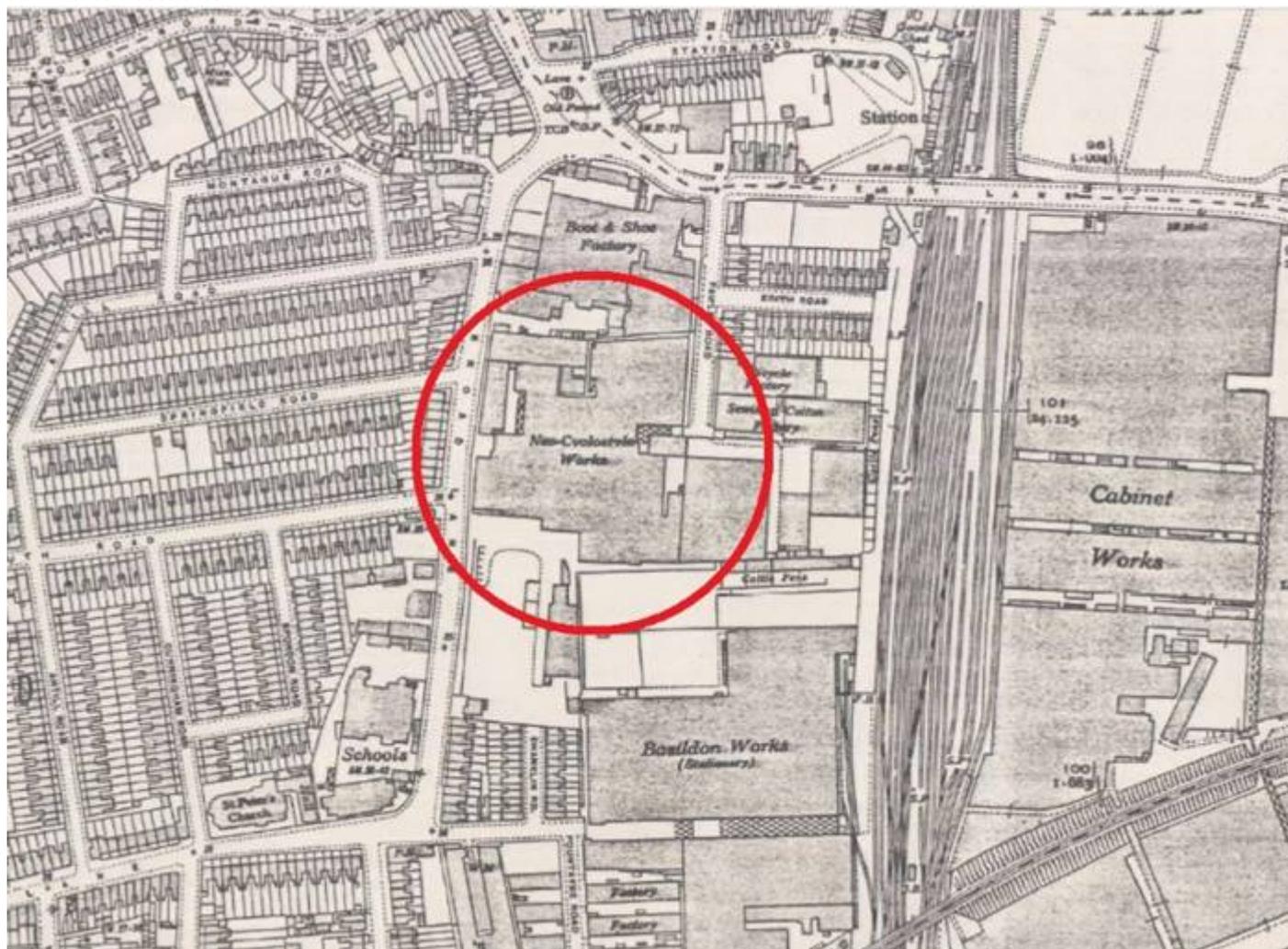


Photograph of a portrait of David Gestetner (known as DG) and one of his cyclostyle copiers.

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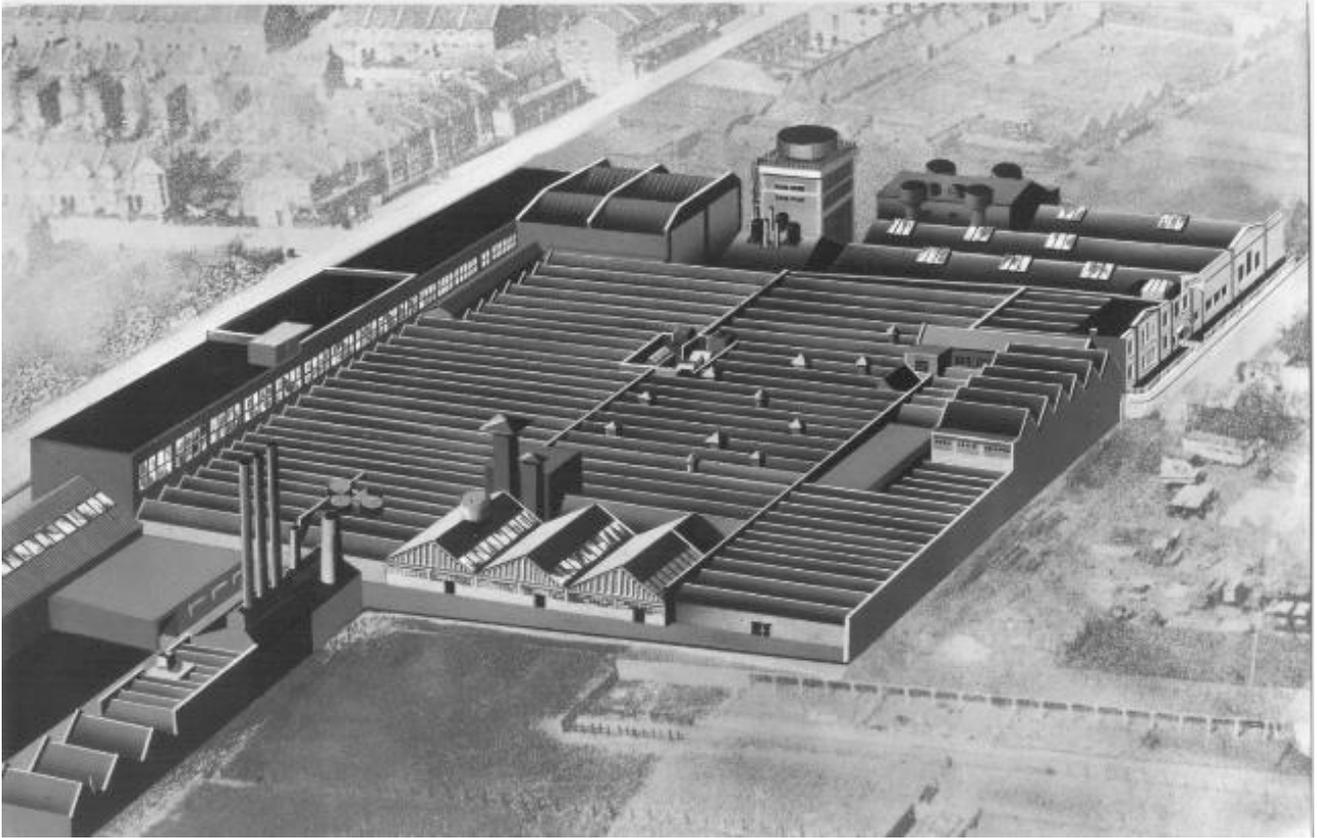
DG was born in Csorna, Hungary in 1854 and, after brief periods in the United States and Vienna, moved to the UK in 1879 where we worked for a stationery company Fairholme & Co before setting up his own company in London. In 1881, DG patented his '[Cyclostyle](#)', and started production of the copier under the name 'The Cyclostyle Company'. By 1900 the Gestetner company was employing a hundred people at the factory in Cross Street, Islington. As the company grew and employed more people the factory moved to Tottenham in 1906 and the factory remained manufacturing there through the 1970s, until

moving operations to Wellingborough in 1985 and continuing into the 1990s. Today, with photocopiers, scanners and photography being so readily available and affordable, it is hard to appreciate just how transformative to business, finance and general working practices Gestetner's copiers were and how their machines changed the world. We are able to chart how important it was through the significant [company collection of archives](#) deposited by Gestetner's alongside a selection of their machines, and photographs and oral histories from local workers.



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

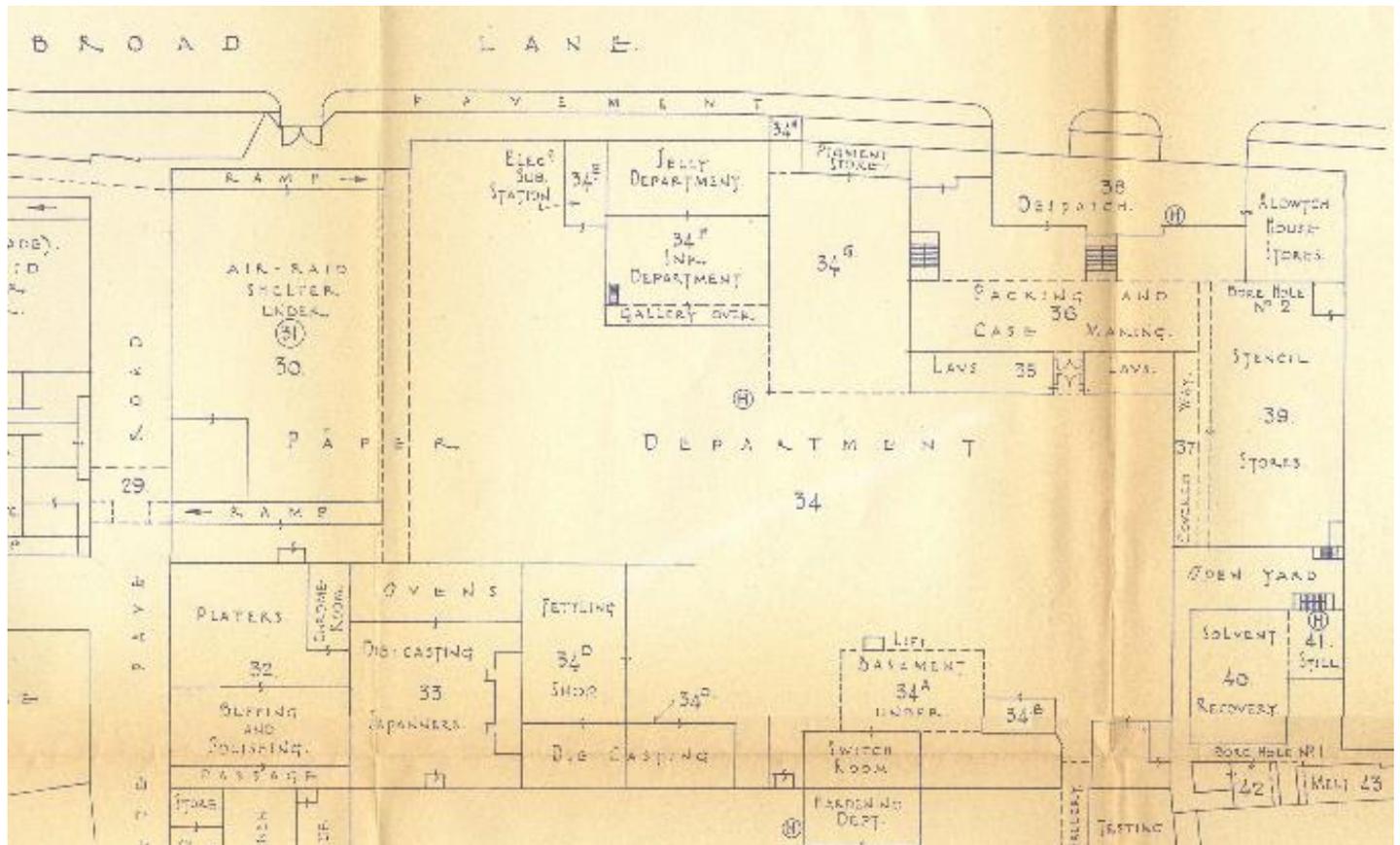
This Ordnance Survey map of Tottenham from 1936 above, shows the factory's site on Broad Lane and Fawley Road (off Ferry Lane). (The map also shows what a prime area for important industry that were world-class names – Basildon Bond stationery and the Cabinet Works of Harris Lebus, alongside Gestetner's). The factory was named the 'Neo-Cyclostyle Works' after DG's first patent. To get a feel of how big the factory was and the breadth of production [watch this amazing film produced in 1927](#). You can see how they produced everything from the metal casings and workings of the machine to the special transfer stencils to use with the machines. You can get a sense too of just how many people - mostly locals - were employed by the company at the time.



An aerial outline of the factory on Broad Lane and Fawley Road, from the 1920s.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The factory would have been an extremely popular place to work; they were known as being fair employers. The film shows the workers on the factory line in their ties and waistcoats (look how young some of the lads are!). See also how many women were working in the factory, mainly on the testing and packing of the products at that point. Considering how a lot of women at the time would otherwise be working from home for very little money (as discussed in our post on Monday this week) this steady work, with benefits such as health care and social outings and clubs, would have made a position at Gestetner's very much sought-after by male and female workers.



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This detail (above) of a plan of the factory ground floor from 1942, was produced when the factory was undergoing some refurbishment. It shows an air-raid shelter which was installed during the Second World War. Like a lot of large factories, Gestetner went over to producing munitions and other items during both the First and Second World Wars, and during these times more women were employed than men.

[This audio recording](#) (no visuals unfortunately) recorded in 1963 gives 'a look around in sound' of the factory with interviews with staff and Jonathan Gestetner – one of the two brothers from the Gestetner family to manage the company. As the narrator notes, the factory was at its height of production and covered a massive 600,000 square feet of land (28 times the size of Trafalgar Square!).



Workers testing the copiers c.1950s.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

So, now to the mystery of the mural! As we have mentioned before in our previous post, murals - because they are often on the fabric of a building - are vulnerable to deterioration from the elements, or can be harmed or destroyed when the building is demolished or refurbished. Local historian, Alan Swain, who puts together this wonderful [website about Tottenham](#), was contacted by a former resident of Markfield and Springfield Roads. Growing up in the 1950s, she recalled as a child seeing murals on the wall of the Gestetner building on Broad Lane, opposite the side railings of Page Green School. She could describe them in great detail, how they were on the pink-painted wall and set back from the pavement. According to her, there was a low brick wall at the front and two or three Egyptian effigies carved out in the stone - elongated figures, with pharaoh headgear, and square-ish chiselled beards, floodlit to look mystical (to her young eyes). Somewhere over their heads was the word 'DUPLICATORS'.

No one she talked to seemed to remember the murals and sculptures. But she had such a vivid memory of them, recalling so much detail, she was certain they existed. This was too much of a challenge to resist for Alan and, with the help of his brother Ray, one of our volunteers at Bruce Castle, and also Archive Assistant Val Crosby, they all set about trying to find evidence of the 'lost murals'.

We will let Alan take up the story:

"It took some time. You may recall my brother Ray spending many hours in the archives trying to find any reference to these murals. After much searching and enquiries with former Gestetner employees we discovered this was a special display to commemorate the 'Festival of Britain' back in 1951. I believe it was

intended to convey the origins of paper-making in Egypt and the progress of this industry over time. We eventually managed to locate some photographs. She was so pleased to see them and prove to her family and friends that this had not been a figment of her imagination.

We later discovered that similar murals were displayed at the Gestetner factory in Holland.”

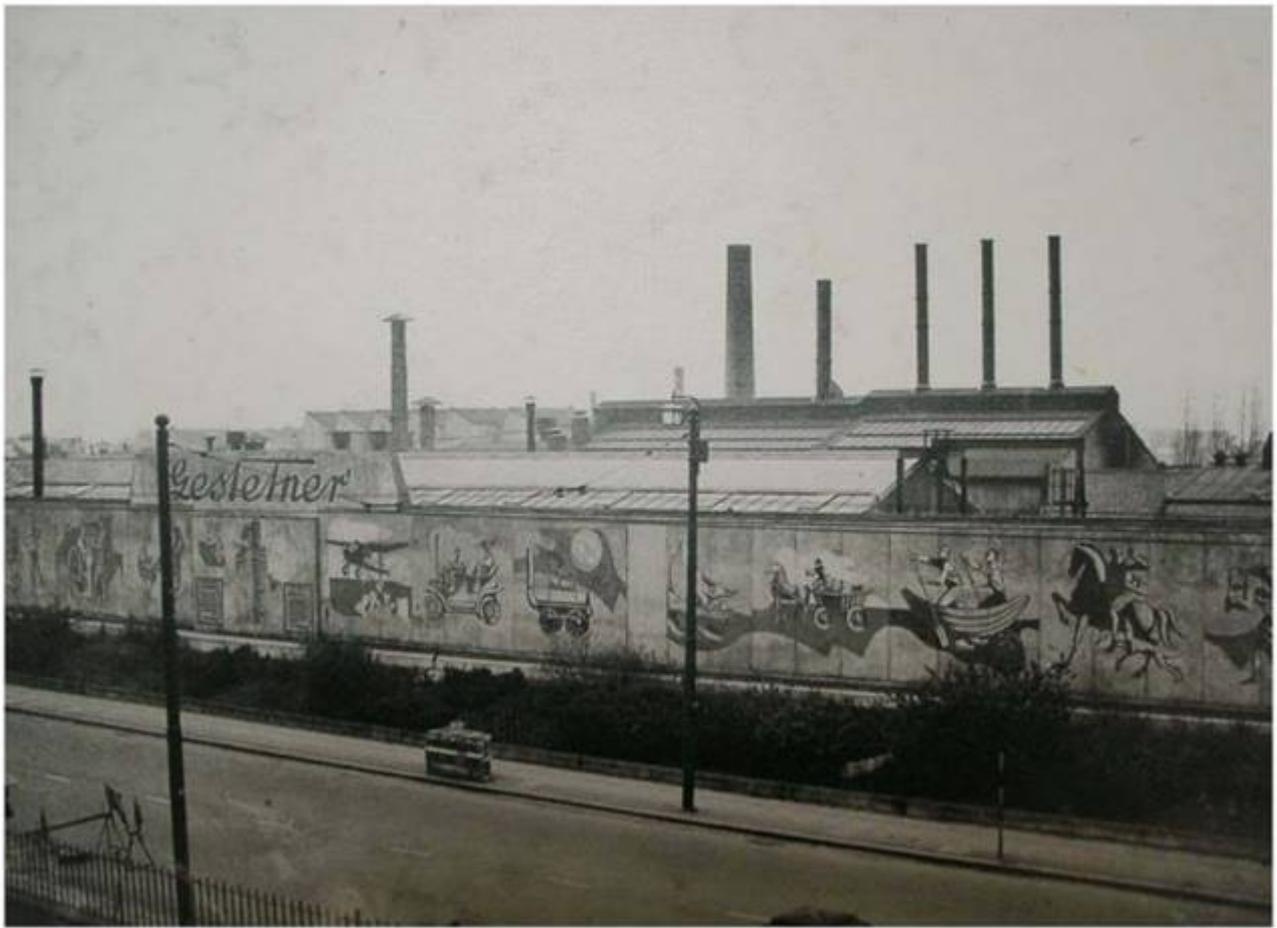
As Alan said, after much searching and delving through records in the archives at Bruce Castle the following images were unearthed, showing the murals along the Broad Lane wall. Does anyone else remember them? Or, even better, have any other images they can share? It would be wonderful to see some close-ups of the imagery or see them in colour. Still, we are very thankful to Ray, Alan and Val for finding these ones.



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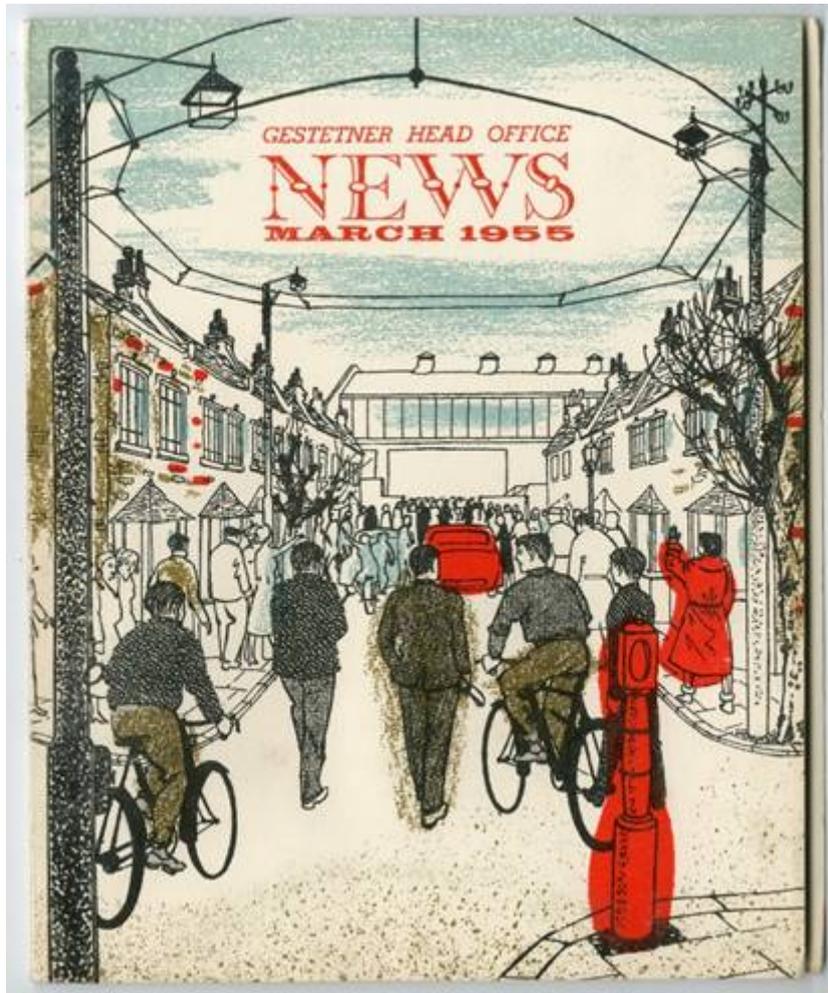
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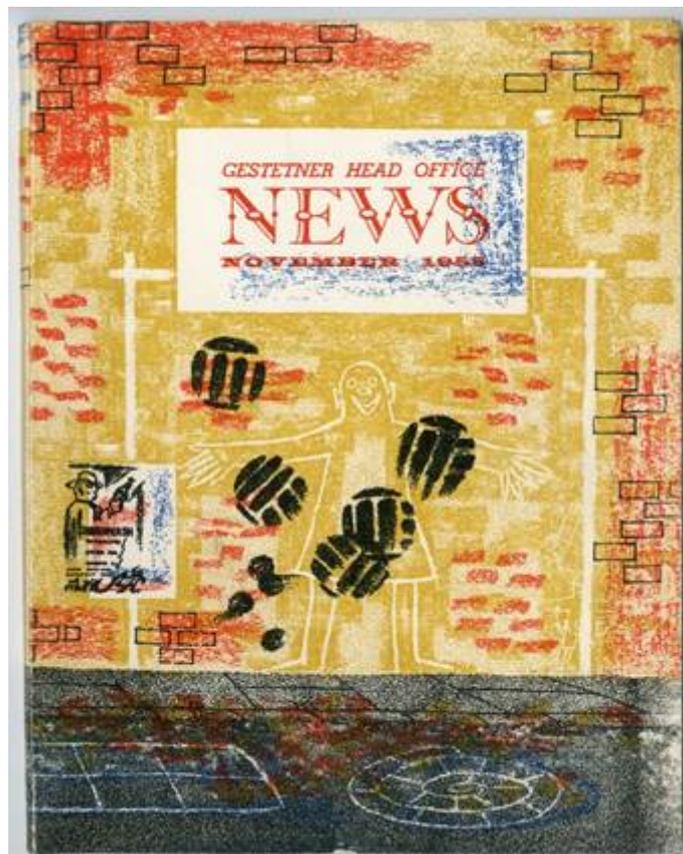
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The Gestetner family seemed to have a deep appreciation, not just for the functionality of things, but for beauty and aesthetics. You may recall Sigmund Gestetner commissioned the architect Lubetkin to design [High Point I and II in Highgate](#) (as referenced in our post two weeks ago). They had also commissioned Lubetkin and Tecton to design one of the factory buildings at Tottenham Hale (which no longer survives sadly). Having such a mural painted along the wall in Broad Lane would have been quite an undertaking and expensive. But Gestetner was a big name, taking pride in the factory and products and happy to promote that in such a bold way.

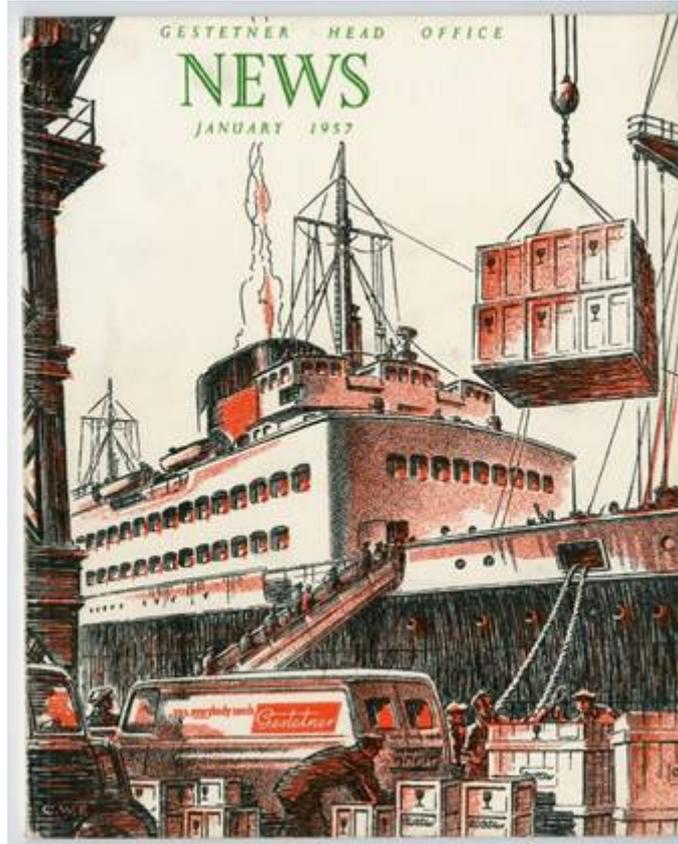
Their appreciation of high-end style and design even went as far as their staff magazines. Below is just a small selection of front covers of their monthly news editions. The full colour magazines went to all staff and we have a very nice collection of them in the archive at Bruce Castle – but if anyone has any more gathering dust in their basement/attic, please do drop us a line. The ones shown below date from 1955-57 and show the great attention to detail and use of colour typical of Gestetner's. It makes us want to see those murals even more.



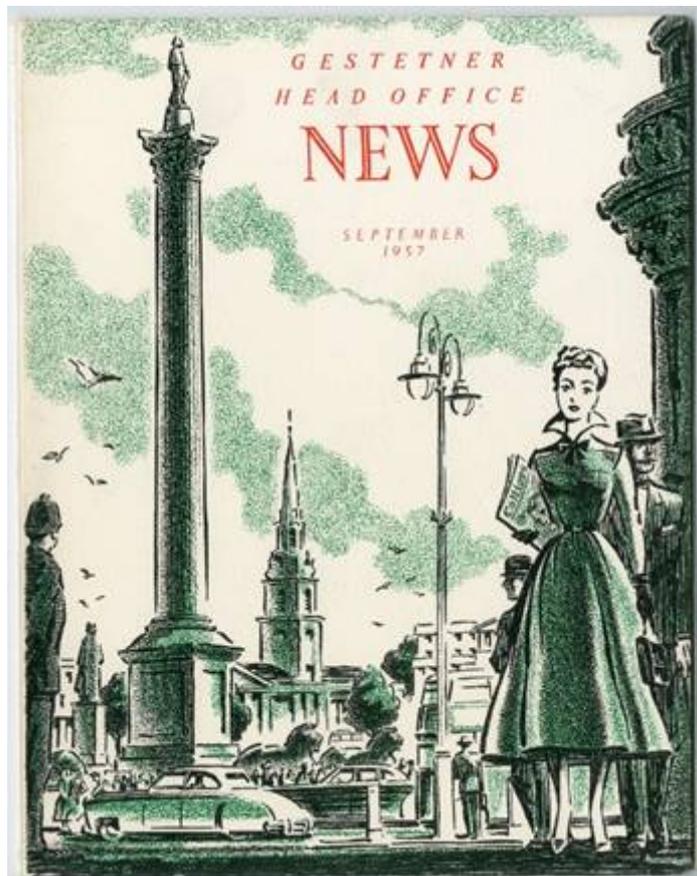
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Spurs' football players from the 1950s, Harry Lowe, Leslie Medley, Harry Tomkin, Fred Sargent, Cyril Trailer, and Albert Hall at the unveiling of the mural.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

As this week is [Volunteers' Week](#), to finish we would just like to highlight all the work that our volunteers and [Friends of Bruce Castle](#) have done over many years, and continue to do for us in the archive and museum at Bruce Castle, such as the late Ray Swain, mentioned above. Quite frankly we would be lost without them! Not only do they help with listing, cataloguing, researching and sorting collections, they also help us engage with the wider community at events and learning and reminiscence activities of all sorts at Bruce Castle - and even right now, at home during lockdown, with contemporary collecting, research and generally supporting us. All bring with them knowledge, experience and skills that are invaluable to running a Local Authority heritage service. So, many thanks to all our past, present and future volunteers! And thank you to Alan Swain too for today's post.

Until tomorrow, take care and keep safe and well
Best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

Julie Melrose
Archivist

Deborah Hedgecock
Curator

Haringey Council, Haringey Archive and Museum Service, Bruce Castle Museum, Lordship Lane, London N17 8NU