

Wander About Wednesday: Britain's most architecturally diverse street?

Wednesday 20 May 2020

Wander About Wednesday: Britain's most architecturally diverse street? - sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

As we take this opportunity to explore different parts of our borough virtually, we can also relax, de-stress and enjoy the art and photographs we are sharing. It is important to remember this at all times, of course, but good to be reminded particularly this week during [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), where the theme is #Kindness and Mind.

In today's post and our positive message to you, we are highlighting a particular road in Highgate for you to explore. Strolling virtually up [North Hill](#) N6 (click on the link to see the online map), you can look at the extraordinary variety of architecture that can be found in just this one road. As the [Highgate Society](#) has said – it is quite possibly Britain's most varied street architecturally.

You can explore North Hill by simply opening the attached PDF document above.

The leaflet was created by the Highgate Society and can be found on [the council website](#).

Here's an introduction and a taster to this guided walk leaflet (below):

Is this Britain's most varied street?

Residents in North Hill, Highgate have long been intrigued at the variety of domestic architecture on their street. It would seem that almost every style of British architecture is represented.

North Hill contains a mix of flats, houses and dwellings that are in private, social and charitable ownership. Such is the variety of architecture in North Hill that residents issued a challenge to any other street in London - or indeed in the whole of Britain - that can compare with it. It is believed that twelve different monarchs were on the English throne over the period of time when its dwellings were built. Can any other street exceed that number?



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

To attract more visitors to Highgate, and to help with the regeneration of its economy, residents submitted a bid under Haringey Council's "Making The Difference" programme, to promote North Hill as a destination for visitors interested in Britain's architecture. The project involved the creation of the fold-out guide and an interpretation board.

The guide has photographs of 35 of North Hill's dwellings, sorted in the order in which they were built. Visitors can use the guide to see how styles have evolved over the past 450 years since the first were built. The reverse highlights the most interesting features of each building. This side of the guide is great for when you walk the street as it is organised in walk order.

The project also included the design and installation of an interpretation board which is located outside ["The Bull"](#) pub on North Hill.



THE BACK OF THE BULL INN,
NORTH HILL, HIGHGATE.

W. West.
c 1900

The artist W. West wrote a letter to accompany this watercolour of the Bull Inn. He indicates that his small painting (above) was selected for G. Potter, a collector of topographical drawings who lived in Highgate.

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

Whilst you open the guided walk leaflet (the PDF above) and start your armchair tour, you can also take in some of the art and photographs from our collections below.



Probably one of the most highly-acclaimed pair of buildings in North Hill are those by the internationally-renowned architect [Bertold Lubetkin](#) - [Highpoint I](#) and [Highpoint II](#) apartment buildings (Grade 1 listed), the latter with their [distinctive classical caryatids](#). The buildings were designed by Lubetkin's architectural practice Tecton for the Gestetner family in the 1930s, and are celebrated as the best examples of early [International style architecture](#) in London.

Highgate's Highpoint I was a seminal work when it opened in 1935, with praise from Le Corbusier. Sigmund Gestetner, the Head of [Gestetner's duplicating equipment firm](#) in Tottenham, wanted to provide new social housing for his workers. On commissioning Lubetkin, he gave him free rein to design a building which illustrated architectural and social progress. Lubetkin's concept of the apartment block for new social housing, although used on mainland Europe, was new in Britain. Highpoint I signalled the beginning of Modernist housing in Britain. Here are some other [examples of Lubetkin's work](#). Within the archive collections at Bruce Castle, we have a set of plans for Highpoint by Lubetkin.

One of the oldest photographic views we have of North Hill is this one (below), showing the west side of the road, c.1880.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)
This view too (below) also dates from about the same time, c.1880, and shows the Red Lion pub and its neighbours.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)
The artist W. West drew or painted a number of views of the Highgate area, including one of The Bull (as seen above) or this scene of Old Cottages, in 1904 and produced as a postcard.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)
It will be nice to think of a time when we can visit pubs and other places again. In the meantime here is our last picture of an old pub (below). Obviously there are a few pubs that we have already seen in North Hill from our collections and this one also shows another old view – this time of the [Wrestler's Pub](#). Its address is in North Road but it is right on the corner by North Hill – and the pub has been on that spot since 1547!



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)
This view (below) from the 1970s of Prospect Terrace in North Hill has not changed much either. Grade II listed, you can see the entry for this terrace on the Historic England register [here](#).



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

So, we hope you enjoy your virtual walk and will learn something new – although new buildings have been added gradually over time, some things have not changed in that road for a few centuries!

Take care, stay well and healthy
Best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

Deborah Hedgecock
Curator

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