

## *Bromley Town Centre Conservation Area* *Heritage Walks*

### **No 4 - Lower High Street, White Hart Slip, Queens Garden, Bromley Palace and Park**

#### **LOWER HIGH STREET** (start at Ethelbert Road)

**Metro Bank** occupies the site of Bromley House, a Georgian Mansion set in extensive grounds demolished in the 1930s. The original door case and portico were saved and are attached to the Town Church around the corner in Ethelbert Road.

**The milestone** outside HMV shows Bromley as being 10 miles from London Bridge and 14 miles from Sevenoaks. It is a modern replacement of an 18<sup>th</sup> century stone in the exact position of the original.

**Russell & Bromley occupies Ravensfell House** which was the first of a number of fine villas overlooking the Ravensbourne Valley built after the coming of the railway in 1858. The row of shops, Ravensfell Parade, was built on what had been the extensive front garden of the house in the 1930s.



**Clarks, Gap etc. occupy Aberdeen Buildings.**



This comprises eight shop units built in 1887 by local butcher, Amos Borer, grown rich in the boom years after the coming of the railway in 1858. The architecture is French Empire thought to be a tribute to the Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie living in exile at Camden Place Chislehurst for whom Mr Borer was 'Purveyor of Meat' by *Royal Appointment to the Prince of Wales*.

**Barclays Bank** occupies **Tweed Cottage**, a late Georgian cottage formerly the home of Thomas Dewey later Alderman Dewey, Mayor of Bromley, Baronet and local dignitary. The house marks the southern boundary of the pre-Victorian town, it being open land from here on.

**Burger King** stands on the site of the much missed **Importers Coffee House**, an 18<sup>th</sup> century town house with a fine 1930s mahogany panelled coffee house to the rear. The old house was the home, for a while, of the Marquis of Townshend. Both house and Coffee House were destroyed in 1987 for the present development.

**Marks & Spencer** – the left hand four bays were built for the company in 1904 on the site of Redwood House and is an early example of the up and coming chain store concept. The right hand four bays were added in the 1950s to the same design. The design is Arts & Crafts neo Georgian. Special features are the heavily toothed (dentiled) cornice, rusticated columns (pilasters) and the bow windows with beautiful floral swagged motifs in embossed lead.

**Hotters Shoes and Paperchase** occupy the last remaining Georgian properties now the only surviving evidence of the scale and character of this side of the High Street since the massive demolitions in the 1970s & 80s.

**Top Shop/ JD Sports etc.** occupy the 1964s 'brutalist' building by architect Owen Luder which tragically replaced the beautiful and famous White Hart Coaching Inn.

**BHS up to Mothercare** occupy what was described by a representative of the Royal Fine Art Commission on architecture and design as 'the worst piece of new townscape he has seen in any town in the UK. Many historic buildings were sacrificed including on the site of

Mothercare one dating from 1712 the demolition of which prompted local people in 1984 to campaign for the town centre conservation area which now protects the major part of the old town.

#### **WHITE HART SLIP**

The Slip, now leading to the Glades from Market Square is one of the town's ancient footpaths across the Bishop's Palace lands (Civic Centre). In the centre of what is now the Glades concourse stood the Gates to Queens Garden (Grade II Listed) now relocated to the middle of the Garden.

#### **QUEEN'S GARDEN**

Originally titled **The Queen's Garden**, the site was part of the Palace lands commandeered by townsfolk. Known as White Hart Field it was used for grazing horses from the White Hart Coaching Inn which backed on to the field and later the White Hart Cricket Ground for obvious reasons. The Palace lands were sold to businessman Coles Child in 1842 and in 1900 his son made a gift of a major part of the field to the town for recreation to commemorate the long reign of Queen Victoria and renamed it 'The Queen's Garden'. Special features are the fine Beech and Cedar trees planted in 1900.





## BROMLEY PALACE AND PARK - Civic Centre

*(see also the Bromley Palace Park leaflet copies of which are available from the Civic Centre reception desk.)*

The present Palace building dates from 1776 (photo right taken in 1880). This replaced a huddle of medieval buildings (illustration below dated 1756).

The Palace and what remains of its Park is one the Borough's most important heritage sites. The site was owned by the Bishops of Rochester from before the Norman Conquests up until 1842 when the Palace and its extensive lands were sold to a private business man Coles Child who effectively became Lord of the Manor.

In the early 1930s the surrounding farmland was sold for housing development and the Palace became home to a College later to become Stockwell College. In the 1960s and 70s extensive new building took place enclosing the Old Palace and in 1982 the site was taken over by Bromley Council as the Civic Centre.



The Park is open 7 days a week via the Rochester Avenue entrance during normal working hours including late evenings. The Stockwell Close entrance is open Mon - Sat and the Rafford Way entrance Mon-Fri.

**Two ancient footpaths** along the northern edge and that diagonally through the middle are preserved in the layout. The western side of the field was used to build the new Homoeopathic Hospital destroyed in WWII and Lowndes Avenue, a row of houses facing the hospital demolished in 1988 to build the Glades.

**The ornamental gates** which stood approximately in what is now the centre of the Glades concourse were moved to their present position in 1990 and are now Grade II Listed following an application by Bromley Civic Society and the Friends of the Parks.



**The Darwin raised bed** was planted by the Council and features a wormery, a bog garden and many plants studied by Darwin. His experiment leaving a bare patch for nature to colonize as it pleased is also replicated here.

**The Maze** with its traditional beech hedging was added in 1990 and in the adjacent ornamental bed 'prehistoric monsters' sculpted using recycled shopping trolleys are recent additions.



Produced by Bromley Civic Society and The Friends of Bromley  
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