

Putney Society Buildings Walks No.4 - Roehampton Lane.

A selection of interesting ancient and modern buildings.

Most walks in this series concentrate on modern buildings, but in Roehampton these stand alongside lots of interesting older survivals. SW15, but not as you know it.



This mainly downhill walk starts from the 85, 170 & 430 bus stop in Roehampton Village and finishes where you can pick up the 430 or 337 back to Putney High Street. To make a circuit return up leafy Putney Park Lane.

Do look and admire from outside but please note that private homes are just that and even 'public' buildings may have restrictions on entry.

Start at the bottom of Medfield Street.

The 1882 drinking fountain at the junction with Roehampton Lane has seen better days but the Society is campaigning for renovation.

Lloyds's Local opposite is the former Montague Arms pub, a timber framed 17th century house before it became a pub in the 1860's. The two white buildings to the left are probably almost as old.

Turn right down Roehampton Lane towards the traffic lights.

Part of the weatherboarded Kings Arms (on your right) may be the oldest secular building in SW15, dating from before the Civil War.

Cross Roehampton Lane at the lights into Danebury Avenue.

Allbrook House (1961) was the last of the slab blocks on the Alton Estate. This and the vaulted roofed Library tucked underneath will be sacrificed if Wandsworth's regeneration plans go ahead.

Beyond Allbrook House turn right then left into Harbridge Avenue.

Harbridge Avenue is the former drive to Maryfield Convert. The avenue of lime trees was planted by the LCC to mark this.

At the end turn right up the hill (Tangley Grove) then take the path uphill behind Hurstbourne House. Harbridge Avenue, these towers and the slab blocks ahead form part of the world renowned Alton West Estate, laid out from 1954-61 by the LCC across the parks of the surrounding (and surviving) 18C country houses in part originally landscaped by Capability Brown.

At the top turn left, following the boundary fence and admiring the once much more open view across Downshire Fields to your left

On your right look for the figures of Lynn Chadwick's 1960 sculpture 'The Watchers' peering over but sadly obscured by the double fence. Behind them is Downshire House (1775), Grade II*, flanked on either side by Hawkins Brown's student housing, a Stirling Prize nominee in 2018.

Pass under the 'piloti' of Binley House, one of the line of five slabs designed in 1959 by the LCC architects under Leslie Martin in homage to Le Corbusier's *Unite d' Habitation* in Marseille and now listed Grade II*.

Ahead and right on to Clarence Lane.

Directly ahead is Roehampton House one of only five Grade I buildings in the Borough, three of which are in Roehampton. The central block of 1712 by Thomas Archer is flanked by wings added by Edwin Lutyens in 1912 for banker A Morgan Grenfell. The house was converted to a hospital in WW1.

Turn right down Roehampton Lane, spotting the little octagonal gatehouse to Grove House on your left. This one's original. The twin lodges to Roehampton House opposite are a fine copy built by the LCC when the 'lane' was widened in the 1960's.



The slab blocks before the trees grew



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Grove House (not visible) and its former grounds behind the high walls on the left hand side of the Lane are home to Roehampton University. Just visible peeking over the wall is the Romanesque style 19C mausoleum.

Facing this is the modern Queen Mary's Hospital, financed by selling Roehampton House. The famous burns unit and artificial limb factory were replaced by flats by Berkeley Homes but one famous patient is commemorated in the name of Bader Way

On the eastern side of the Lane down from here blocks of flats of differing dates reveal the sites of the individual big houses that once lined the road.

Next on the left is the Convent of the Sacred Heart, mostly 19c except for the chapel rebuilt after WWII bombing.

Sacred Heart School on the other side is an interesting contrast between late 19C and early 21C approaches to school design.

Beyond the convent, look through the University's Digby Stuart main gate to spot the main library (2017) by Fielden Clegg Bradley straight ahead and MJP's matching student halls to the left, both in brick, beyond the more obviously modern but actually older grey clad Lee House student halls.

The University site gives way to the flat roofed 1936 modernist Fairacres, grade II, by Minoprio & Spence, laid out on a crescent with all flats facing west over the adjacent golf course. What you can see is effectively the back.

After Fairacres turn right between the elaborate pineapple topped gateposts which are all that remains of 19C Ellenborough House. The drive now leads past Roehampton Close (glimpsed on your right) which replaced it in 1934. Note the Crittall windows and the then fashionable green glazed pantiles, echoed in the green details on the three modern houses at the end of Stonechat Mews (2015).

A public right of way continues through a gate at the far right corner of the garage court taking you through to the Dover House Estate. At the end of the path turn left down Huntingfield Road

You are now in the 1,200 home Dover House estate, 1920-29, one of several cottage estate built by the LCC on the Garden City principles first seen at Letchworth. All this land had been the grounds of just two houses. Putney Park still survives within the estate. The larger Dover House was demolished.

At the mini roundabout turn left down Dover House Road

The shopping parade at the bottom of the road was an integral part of the estate and still provides for all daily necessities.

Buses 337 or 430 back to Putney run from the stop across the busy Upper Richmond Road. Or continue past the shops to find the bottom of the ancient Putney Park Lane.

You have passed through three conservation areas and past 14 listed buildings. Did you spot them all?

2 bollards at the start; the drinking fountain; 3 Medfield Street; Kings Head; 245-255 Danebury Avenue; The Watchers; Downshire House (II*); Binley House and it's 4 siblings (II*); Roehampton House (grade I); Grove House lodge, gates & Mausoleum; Old Lodge and chapel of Sacred Heart; Fairacres.

Roehampton Close and the Ellenborough gates are on the local list.

