

Trobridge Walk No. 3 – the “castle” blocks of flats:

This walk includes some steep hills, and starts with a short bus journey. Turn left out of Kingsbury Library, and along the footpath to the Valley Drive bus stop. Catch the 183 bus (towards Golders Green) to the Church Lane bus stop. From the bus, turn left, then right into Buck Lane. Alternatively, a 15 minute walk along Kingsbury Road from the library will bring you to the same place.

Buck Lane rises to the top of Wakeman’s Hill, Brent’s highest point. In Tudor times it was known as Stonepits Lane, as the gravel deposits at the top of the hill were quarried to spread as “stone” on the otherwise very muddy local roads. The climb up the hill begins immediately!

You will pass High Meadow Crescent, built in 1924/25 as Kingsbury’s first Council housing estate. Note how the traditional housing of the time differed from Trobridge’s thatched timber homes of the same period. Continue up the lane, and on the opposite side was a large field, bought by the Kingsbury Cross Co-Partnership in 1929. Trobridge was involved in setting up this group, to develop mainly lower-cost housing for ordinary families to rent or buy.

Oak Tree Dell was their first development, begun in 1930. Look across, and at first sight they appear to be ordinary “mock-Tudor semis”, but then you notice some Trobridge details, such as rough cut timber and leaded light windows in the design of these maisonettes.

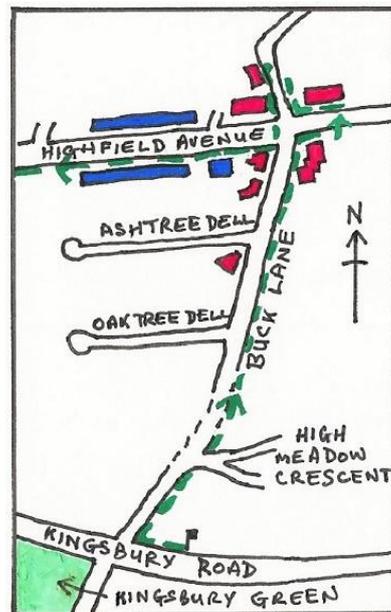
As you continue up the hill, Nos. 102 & 104 include some typical Trobridge brickwork, but this walk is mainly looking at his “castles”, and “The Triangle” (c.1933) is the first of these that you come to. At the back of this block of seven flats you see white walls with battlements and crosses. Then, at the corner of Ashtree Dell, the “castle” brickwork includes a turret, which hides a sheltered seat for the roof garden of an upstairs flat.



< Stonegate Court.

Ashtree Dell, begun in 1931, is another street of Trobridge-designed maisonettes. Continue up the hill, and after more of these you see Stonegate Court (c.1935-36), with its castle gateway and battlemented balconies. This has four large flats, plus two small ones at the top, which on the original plans were described as “maid’s bed-sitting rooms”.

On your right, as you continue up to the junction, you see Rochester Court (c.1936-37), with stone set into its walls, and steps to the upper flats like those inside the walls of a castle. Turn right into Wakeman’s Hill Avenue, walk to the end of the building, and look across to Whitecastle Mansions (c.1935), with its mix of architectural styles. Carefully cross the road and walk back to the junction, taking a closer look at the two white “castle” towers that guard the entrance to this block of nine flats.



Turn right into the northern section of Buck Lane, viewing the side of Whitecastle Mansions, then carefully cross the road to stand in front of Upminster House. This was one of Trobridge's first blocks of flats, built around 1930, and includes brick details which add turrets to a plain white building (including dustbin stores on either side of the front gate!).

Walk back to the crossroads, and on the side of the next building is a remarkable Tudor-style chimney, at Tudor Gates (c.1934-35). The black hatch in it, with steps beneath, was one of Trobridge's practical ideas, so that the coalman could empty his sacks straight into a coal cupboard beside the living room fireplace.

The chimney on the east wall of Tudor Gates >



Cross the top of Highfield Avenue at the island, and you are standing in front of the iconic Trobridge "castle", Highfort Court (c.1935-36). Here battlements, with the crosses that reflect his Christian beliefs, hide dustbin stores and chimneys. Through the archway to the upper two flats, further steps lead to roof gardens with battlement walls, complete with deck chair stores!



< The entrance to Highfort Court.

Turn right to begin walking down Highfield Avenue, looking up at the side of Highfort Court, and across to the front of Tudor Gates. These are the last of the "castles" on this walk, but there are still more interesting Trobridge designs to see as you continue down the street.

On your left you soon come to Shirley Court (c.1937), with arches combining six chimneys over the stairs to the upper flats. Further on, the 22 white rendered maisonettes of Highfield Gardens (c.1932-33) are fairly subdued, but have distinctive Trobridge chimneys, and reinforced concrete steps to the upper homes. Across the road, the 30 flats of Mountaire Court (c.1936-38) have more of his typical timber and brick details, but also had his first use of pre-cast concrete floor panels.

Continue down the hill until you reach Roe Green, where you can either cross the road (with care!) and walk back to Kingsbury across the park, or turn left to the junction with Kingsbury Road. There, you can cross more safely at the lights to the corner of Roe Green Park. On the opposite corner you will see "Hayland", the thatched home where Ernest Trobridge lived from 1921 until his death in 1942, and its 1928 extension, comprising "Midcot" and "The Den". After this final Trobridge treat, walk back alongside the park to the library.

"Hayland", at the corner of Kingsbury Road and Slough Lane >

