

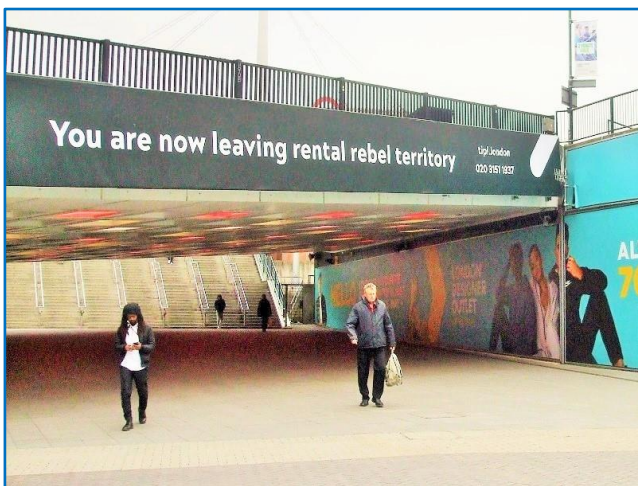
The Bobby Moore Bridge tile murals, Olympic Way, Wembley Park.

1. Location: The Bobby Moore Bridge tile murals are located on the walls of a pedestrian subway, which runs between Wembley Park Station and Olympic Way, and on the retaining walls to the south of the subway. They are on either side of the main pedestrian route to Wembley Stadium, in the London Borough of Brent, in north-west London (postcode HA9 0NP).

2. Origin:

2.1 [Olympic Way](#) was built by Sir Arthur Elvin's Wembley Stadium company in 1947/48, to provide a new main access road to Wembley Stadium for the 1948 London Olympic Games. It was adopted as a public highway by Brent Council in 1983.

2.2 In 1991, after England had been chosen to host the Euro 1996 football tournament, Brent Council put forward plans to pedestrianize Olympic Way. These plans included linking Olympic Way with a new public square outside Wembley Park Station, by way of a wide pedestrian subway under Bridge Road. The picture below shows the subway in May 2019, when all the mural scenes were covered with advertisements (see 4 below).



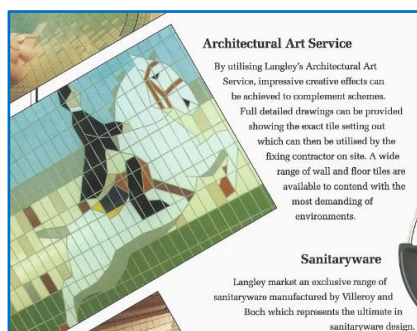
The Bobby Moore Bridge subway. (Photo by Philip Grant)

The costs of this £6million underpass were shared by Brent Council, the Department of Transport, Wembley Stadium Ltd and the Football Trust. In the summer of 1993, a Council committee suggested it be named "The Bobby Moore Bridge", after England's 1966 World Cup-winning football captain, who had recently died of cancer. It was opened with that name by his widow, in September 1993.

2.3 The tile murals were specifically designed for the walls of this subway, to show a range of sporting and entertainment events from the history of the Stadium (which opened in 1923) and Wembley Arena (which opened as the Empire Pool in 1934). The plaque commemorating the opening of the Bobby Moore Bridge was set into the mural scene showing England footballers playing at the "twin towers" Wembley Stadium (see 3.4 below).

2.4 It has recently been discovered that these ceramic tile murals were designed by the Architectural Art Service of the Langley London firm, and that the artist was almost certainly Kathryn Digby. Langley's were importers of high quality ceramic tiles, although the tiles side of its business was sold in 2000. A photograph of one of the Wembley Park mural scenes (see

3.14 below) appeared in the Langley's Architectural Guide brochure in the late 1990's. The tiles used for the murals are a strip tile, made by the German Buchtal company, now part of Agrob-Buchtal GmbH.



Extract from a Langley London brochure. (Picture courtesy of Roger Smith, Director of Langley London Ltd)

3. Description and photographs of the murals:

3.1 The mural along the east wall (on the left-hand side after leaving the station steps) is around 60 metres long (about 30 metres of which is inside the subway), and ranges in height from around 3.3 metres to over 4 metres as you come out into Olympic Way. There is also a further mural scene, at right-angles to the southern end of the wall, by the entrance to No. 1 Olympic Way. The west wall mural (after part was "lost" – see 3.17 below) is about 45 metres long, with a height between 2.3 and 3 metres inside the subway, and going down in stages from 4 metres to nothing over the 15 metre length in Olympic Way.

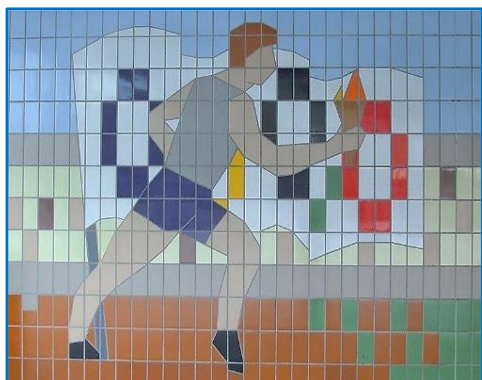
East Wall

3.2 The east wall mural inside the subway has five separate scenes, as shown by this composite photograph.



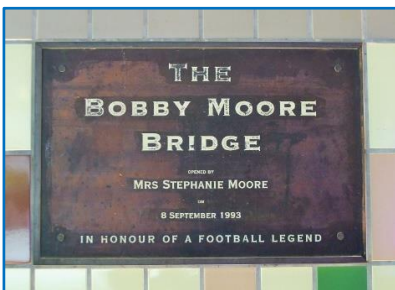
(Photograph by Amanda Rose, for Quintain / Wembley Park, March 2019)

3.3 The first scene on the left, as you reach the bottom of the steps down from the station, shows the Olympic flag, and the torch bearer. The final leg of the 1948 Olympic torch relay from Greece began close by, and a local athlete ran the length of Olympic Way to the Stadium, where he handed it over to John Mark, of Cambridge University, who then lit the Olympic flame.



The Olympic torch mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, 2009)

3.4 The central scene on the subway's east wall shows England footballers, playing at the “twin towers” Stadium, and celebrates Wembley’s football history. The players represented are thought to be two England internationals at the time the mural was designed, probably Brian Robson and John Barnes. The Bobby Moore Bridge plaque, inset into it, also links the mural to England’s 1966 World Cup win at Wembley.



The Footballers mural scene, and close-up of the plaque. (Photos by Philip Grant, November 2019)

3.5 As well as public ice skating at the “Empire Pool” from 1934 onwards, the skater mural scene represents displays by professional skating champions, the Wembley ice pantomimes (starting with “Dick Whittington on Ice” in 1950/51), and later shows such as “Holiday on Ice”, which were an annual feature of Wembley Arena events for over half a century.



The Ice Skater mural scene. (From a pre-2013 picture, photographer unknown)

3.6 The next mural scene is easily identified, through its skilful use of tiles, as the singer Michael Jackson. He appeared many times at the Stadium, including a record-breaking series of concerts in 1988 during his “Bad” tour, when he performed to a capacity sell-out crowd of 72,000 people for each of the seven nights.



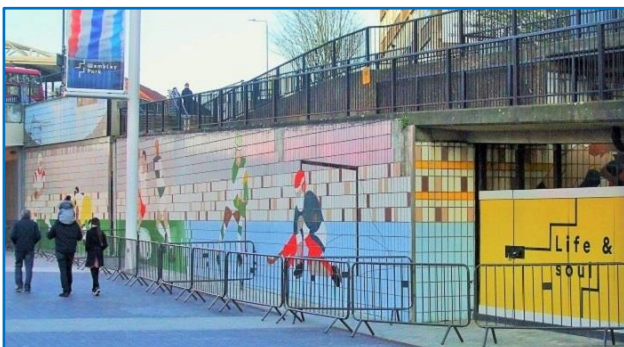
The Michael Jackson mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, 2009)

3.7 The final mural scene on the east wall of the subway (which is the start of Olympic Way) returns to an Olympics theme. Wembley Stadium did not just host the opening and closing ceremonies, and the athletics events, for the 1948 Olympic Games, but several other sports as well. These included the football semi-finals and final, the gold medal match in the hockey competition, and the show jumping.



The Olympic show jumping mural scene. (Photo by Malcolm Barrès-Baker, for Brent Archives, 2007)

3.8 **South-east retaining wall:** There are four mural scenes, celebrating sporting events at Wembley, on the retaining wall, including one at right-angles, which is partly hidden by a pedestrian walkway down to Olympic Way from Bridge Road.



View along the retaining wall murals from Olympic Way. (Photo by Philip Grant, January 2020)



Another view of these murals. (Photo by Mark Price, Brent's Heritage Conservation Officer, February 2020)

3.9 The first scene outside the subway shows American Football players. Although many people think that the sport at Wembley Stadium started with the first NFL game there in 1983, with matches played annually at the new stadium since 2007, its history goes back a further 40 years, to the Second World War, when two U.S. Forces teams played.



The American Football mural scene. (Photo by Mark Price, February 2020)

3.10 The middle scene shows a tackle involving two rugby league players. The Rugby League Challenge Cup Final was first played at the Stadium in 1929. It proved very popular, as a great day out for supporters of this mainly North of England sport. The final was played annually at Wembley (apart from during the Second World War) until the old stadium closed in 2000, and it has been a fixture at the new stadium since 2007.



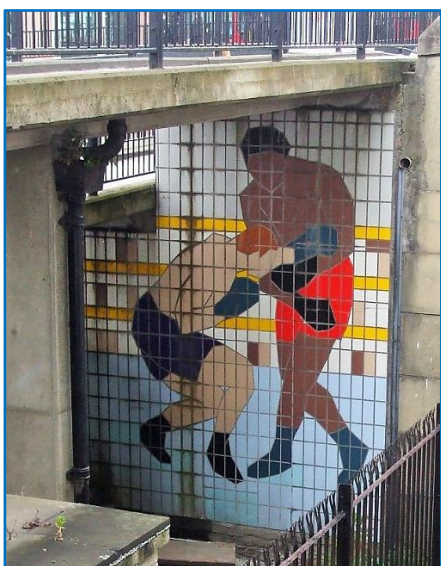
The Rugby League mural scene. (Photo by Malcolm Barrès-Baker, for Brent Archives, 2007)

3.11 The Empire Pool (now Arena) was built in 1934, as a year-round venue, for swimming in the summer and ice hockey and public skating in winter. It got its name because the first event held there was the swimming competition for the 1934 British Empire Games. From the autumn of that year, it was home to two ice hockey teams, the “Wembley Lions” (who played there until 1968 and were national champions 4 times) and the “Wembley Monarchs”.



The Ice Hockey mural scene. (Photo by Mark Price, February 2020)

3.12 The final mural scene on the east side has become cut-off from the rest of the display, by the later installation of a walkway down from Bridge Road to Olympic Way. This neglected part of the murals is only fully visible from the bridge to the entrance of No.1 Olympic Way. It shows a boxing scene, almost certainly commemorating the famous Henry Cooper v. Cassius Clay (Muhammed Ali) contest at Wembley Stadium in June 1963.



The Boxing mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, June 2019)

West Wall

3.13 Unfortunately, I only have colour photographs showing some of the mural scenes from the west wall. “Picture 4” (below) is a poor quality image taken from a 2013 advertising lease, showing the wall, but with only the nearest scenes visible. The colour view of the northern end of this mural came from the internet. The first scene on the right shows a player with a racquet, and could represent tennis, badminton or squash (all have been played at the Arena). The next scene, partly obscured by people walking past, may show an athlete, or possibly an African footballer, in green and yellow, dancing after scoring a goal at the 1966 World Cup competition. They are the only general views I have of the murals on this side of the subway.



“Picture 4” showing the west wall of the subway.



Part of the west wall mural. (From a “Soundscape” web page in 2012)

3.14 Halfway along the west wall of the subway is an equestrian scene, probably showing a “puissance” (high jump) competition. It celebrates the “Horse of the Year Show”, show jumping’s world famous international end-of-season finale, which was held at Wembley Arena every year from 1959 to 2001.



The Horse of the Year Show mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, 2009)

3.15 The next but one mural scene on this wall shows a female singer, accompanied by a pianist playing a grand piano. Only part of the singer was visible when I was able to take a photograph last summer. A number of top female vocalists had many sell-out concerts at the Arena over the decades, including Dusty Springfield, Diana Ross, Alison Moyet and Whitney Houston.



The female singer and pianist mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, August 2019)

3.16 The final mural scene inside the subway on the west wall is another Olympics image. At the opposite end, and on the opposite side, of the subway from the torch bearer at 3.3 above, is an athlete lighting the Olympic flame. A similar flame burned inside Wembley Stadium throughout the 1948 Games, although the coloured female athlete in this mural does not depict John Mark, who actually had the honour then.



The Olympic flame mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, August 2019)

3.17 **South-west retaining wall:** The mural on this wall was originally larger than it is now, and showed scenes of famous popular music performers who had appeared in “stadium concerts” at Wembley, including events such as the “Live Aid” concert in July 1985, to raise money for famine relief in Africa, and the Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert in June 1988.

Much of the mural was removed when new steps, down from the bus stop on Bridge Road to the west side of Olympic Way, were built by Transport for London around 2006, in preparation for the opening of the new Wembley Stadium. Until recently, the picture below was the only image of the south-west retaining wall mural that I had.



(Photo taken from a small picture in a leaflet at Brent Archives, advertising visitor attractions in Wembley, c. 2000)

3.18 The mural scene, in this much better photograph (shared with me by a supporter of the campaign to put the murals back on public display) allows the three main performers to be identified. They are (left to right):

- Mark Knopfler of “Dire Straits”, whose “Brothers in Arms” tour concert packed the Stadium in July 1985, three days before they took part in “Live Aid”;
- Tina Turner, who played Wembley many times during her 1980’s tours (although mainly at the Arena);
- Freddie Mercury of “Queen”, one of the main acts at “Live Aid”, who also filled the Stadium during their “Magic” tour in 1986.



The Pop Music Concerts mural scene, as it was. (Unknown photographer, early 2000’s)

3.19 The only remaining section of this “pop music” mural is the drummer, nearest to the subway. This was “patched up” with smaller tiles along the edges where the wall for the new steps cut into the original mural scene. The drummer may be a generic “rock drummer”, but may also represent Phil Collins. He performed in the “Live Aid” concert at Wembley, and then flew by Concorde to perform at the U.S. end of the concert in Philadelphia as well. He also performed at Wembley Stadium, as part of “Genesis”, in 1987.



The Pop Music Drummer mural scene. (Photo by Philip Grant, 2009)

4. Cover-up of the tile murals since 2013:

4.1 In August 2013, Brent Council officers authorised a 4-year lease of the walls and parapets of the Bobby Moore Bridge, for advertising purposes. They did this under “delegated authority”, based on a report which did not mention the tile murals on the subway walls.

The report claimed that Brent’s Executive had given consent for such an agreement at its November 2012 meeting. However, that decision related only to Olympic Way itself (Brent Council’s ownership of which was disputed by Quintain, the property development company which had bought much of the former Wembley Stadium Ltd land in 2002). The Executive’s resolution, authorising senior officers to draw up an agreement with Quintain over the maintenance of Olympic Way, and sharing advertising and other income generated from it, did not include the Bobby Moore Bridge.

4.2 The lease of the Bobby Moore Bridge from Brent Council to the Quintain subsidiary company, Wembley City Estate Management Ltd, is dated 4 October 2013. It was for a term of four years from 30 August 2013. The lease did not mention the tile murals, although the document did include ten photographs to illustrate the ‘premises’ which were to be leased. The tile murals can be seen in those photographs, and this is one of them.



“Picture 3” from the October 2013 lease document.

4.3 Quintain applied for advertising consent for the Bobby Moore Bridge, on 30 September 2013. Application number 13/2987, which did not mention the tile murals, sought consent to cover the walls of the subway, and the retaining walls on its south side, with vinyl sheet advertisements for five years.

Although the consent had not been granted, Quintain started to display advertisements promoting its newly opened London Designer Outlet shopping centre around the end of October 2013.

4.4 Brent Council’s planning department did not deal with the advertising consent application 13/2987 until August 2017. The Planning Officer’s report, on which the delegated decision to grant consent was made, did not mention the tile murals on the walls which the proposed advertisements would cover. Instead, it concluded:

‘These 4x advertisements would be non-illuminated and variable in design. They would be located on the walls of the underpass underneath Bobby Moore Bridge. Because of this enclosed location they would have little impact on the character of the wider area and by utilising the walls of the underpass would likely benefit the character of the area. The signage would have no impact on amenity.’

4.5 Advertising consent was granted on 25 August 2017, for five years from that date. The consent was given five days before the 2013 advertising lease expired. The advertisements were meant to be removed at the expiry of the lease (as there had been no renewal at that time), but the tile murals continued to be covered with vinyl advertising sheets. The photograph below was taken on 21 September 2017, showing adverts for Quintain's "Tipi" rental flats.



Looking towards the subway from Olympic Way, with adverts on the walls. (Photo by Philip Grant)

4.6 It was not until a meeting of Brent Council's Cabinet on 15 January 2018 that a new lease was considered. The Officer's Report made no mention of the tile murals on the Council-owned walls that the proposed advertising would cover. The Cabinet agreed that 'a new four-year lease for Bobby Moore Bridge dressing/advertising be entered into with Wembley City Estate Management.'

The lease agreement, with Quintain's Wembley Park Ltd subsidiary, was not signed until March 2018, with the four-year term following on from the original lease and ending on 30 August 2021.

4.7 There had been no public consultation over the advertising leases, and no publicity over why the walls of the Bobby Moore Bridge subway were being covered with advertisements. The issue had been noticed by several members of Wembley History Society, and at its Annual General Meeting on 20 April 2018, the following motion was passed unanimously:

'Wembley History Society calls upon Brent Council and Quintain to return the tile murals, on the walls of the Bobby Moore Bridge subway, to permanent public view, as part of the current public realm enhancements for Olympic Way.

The Society's members feel strongly that these murals, depicting scenes from famous sports and entertainment events at Wembley Stadium and Arena, are an important part of the heritage of Wembley Park, and add to its sense of place.

The tile murals should be uncovered and displayed again for both residents and visitors to see and enjoy, not hidden behind advertisements as they have been in recent years.'

Letters containing this motion were sent to Brent Council's Chief Executive, and Quintain's Chief Operating Officer.

4.8 Brent's Chief Executive and Quintain's Head of Masterplanning and Design met with history society representatives on 17 September 2018. It was agreed that Quintain would discuss their ideas for improvements to the subway lighting, and the possible display of some of the murals, at the Society's meeting the following month.

4.9 At the meeting on 19 October 2018, Quintain representatives set out their plans for covering the murals in the subway with LED light boxes, which could also display advertisements. They would be willing to arrange the lighting so that one mural scene in the subway could be displayed for at least some of the time. It was agreed that the footballers / "twin towers" stadium scene, with the plaque, was the most important (see 3.4 above). They were also prepared to uncover some of the mural scenes on the retaining walls outside the subway periodically, when the "Spiritflex" vinyl advertising sheets were being changed over.

Several members of the Society asked that Quintain and their lighting consultant should review their plans, to see whether the lighting in the subway could be improved in a way that allowed all of the tile mural scenes to be put back on public display, as the murals were designed as a whole, to represent the range of Wembley's sports and entertainment heritage, not just football.

4.10 After further discussions between Wembley History Society's Chair and Quintain, [applications](#) were submitted to Brent Council in April 2019. These were for detailed planning consent for the light boxes in the subway, and for consent to display advertisements on them.

There was opposition to the applications from myself and other history society members, and from local residents, and over 300 people signed petitions calling for the tile murals to be put back on public display. Brent's Heritage Conservation Officer had requested that Quintain submit a heritage/significance statement, in support of its applications, but the document supplied was so inadequate that I submitted [my own "alternative" statement](#).

4.11 At their meeting on 16 July 2019, Brent Council's Planning Committee approved both the planning and advertising consent (for ten years) applications. This was despite myself and another objector pointing out to them how the Officer's Report recommending approval went against Brent's own and national planning policies, and did not give proper weight to heritage significance, or the amenity value of the heritage asset which the advertisements would cover-up. The Officers' main concern appeared to be that the tile murals would be protected from damage, rather than that they should be seen. A local blog published a [report and comments](#) on the meeting.

4.12 Soon after planning permission had been given, the work to cover the murals in the subway with LED light boxes began, although this did allow some of the murals to be seen for the first time since 2013.



The east wall of the subway, with work in progress to cover most murals with light boxes. (Photo supplied by a tile murals campaign supporter, late July 2019)

4.13 When the improvement works in the subway were finished, the footballers mural was back on permanent display, carefully “framed” and lit, but the other mural scenes on the walls of the subway were completely hidden by the new lighting, or the metal screening around it.



The east wall of the subway, with the Footballers mural scene flanked by light boxes.



The west wall of the subway, with light boxes displayed. (Photos by Philip Grant, November 2019)

4.14 Quintain and Brent Council did arrange for three of the tile mural scenes on the south-east retaining wall to be put back on public display for just over five weeks in January and February 2020. This was to mark the start of Brent’s year as London Borough of Culture.



The Mayor of Brent, with representatives from the Council, Quintain and Wembley History Society, in front of the Ice Hockey mural at the LBOC2020 “reveal” event. (Photo by Francis Waddington, 18 January 2020)

4.15 In their comments at the “reveal” event, both parties spoke of the importance of the tile murals. Quintain’s representative said:

‘The iconic cultural and sporting events at Wembley are celebrated in these heritage tiles behind us, and we are really proud to work with Brent and with Wembley History Society to make the reveal on a periodic basis of these murals possible.’

Brent’s comment about ‘the heritage tiles at Wembley Park’s Bobby Moore Bridge’ said:

‘The tiles, which show scenes from famous sports and entertainment events at Wembley Stadium and the SSE Arena, Wembley, are part of Brent’s rich heritage.’

4.16 These comments give some hope that they now realise the importance of the Bobby Moore Bridge tile murals, and Quintain have promised to repair some damage to the Ice Hockey mural tiles, which could be seen when the vinyl advertising sheets were removed. For now, however, all of the murals, apart from the Footballers scene, are covered with adverts again.



View along Olympic Way towards the subway, with murals covered in adverts for the “Boxpark” venue.
(Photo by Philip Grant, 2 March 2020)

Philip Grant, Wembley History Society, March 2020.