

Transcript of Podcast 050: London (North-West of the River)

{Intro.

Roobens

London. I love this city. I still remember the first time I went there back in 1998. Great place. Nice people. Lot of beers. Lot of girls with miniskirts. Yeh, what can I say? Not much. I like this city, basically. Expensive, but I like it.

}

{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a fortnightly series looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Brit with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'whys behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

Well, Happy Christmas, I guess. It's not a festival I celebrate particularly much; I think I may have coined the word afestive, after the pattern of asexual, aromantic, and agender. I kind of see Christmas in the same manner as I do Diwali and Eid - I'm really glad they exist and I love that other people celebrate them, and I wish them all the respect and joy that they want, they're just ... not my onions, you know?

I was fully expecting to be spending Christmas alone for the first time in several years, and had plans to spend the day just like any other random Sunday, as that's what the day feels like to me, a random Sunday, but with less open. I'd thought I'd spend the day writing, maybe this podcast, maybe my fantasy adventure novel, maybe a couple of blog posts. I'd be on Twitter or Discord but I'm fully aware that most of my friends are virtual and have families of their own so while I don't celebrate this occasion, they do and therefore I'd be kind of left to my own devices.

Except that this isn't what's happening; unexpectedly I have a visitor. Laura's back, albeit only temporarily. She was originally planning to come up for New Year but she changed her outward ticket and is now arriving so late on Christmas Eve that it's after the last train back to the suburb I live in (because everything winds down for Christmas on that evening). I hope it's not going to rain. Anyway, it means I'll have been tidying up and cleaning for most of the hours before she arrives. Not that we're planning to do anything special, and she's accepting of the fact I don't have a tree, but it'll be nice to have her here.

I hope she doesn't give me Covid. I've booked in for a booster jab next Wednesday, which was the earliest I could manage because of admin. This month I've realised that the N in NHS is, well, it's a lie, basically. The UK has a National Health Service but it's devolved to regional government. This means that Scotland has a whole different system to England, and the two don't talk to each other very much. I had my two original jabs in England, but now I've moved to Scotland I didn't exist on the Scottish systems, despite having registered with a Scottish doctor. So I couldn't book the booster. And it would have been impractical to go to England just to go to a walk-in centre in Carlisle or somewhere. I did eventually resolve the issue yesterday with a phone call; I'd have resolved it sooner than yesterday but, as I say, it involved my having to make a phone call. And I don't do that sort of thing.

What else do I need to say? It's been quite a quiet month, so quiet in fact I've even caught up on listening to all the backlog of podcast episodes that had built up. You'd have thought that would have meant being up to date with my own. You'd have thought wrong. In my defence, London is bigger than I'd planned it to be. Which is why, rather than being one one episode, it's now become three. This episode looks at those boroughs North-

West of the Thames, using an arbitrary line down the middle and finishing this episode at Haringey, for no reason other than I couldn't think of a good segue from there into Islington. In addition, I've noticed this part of London seems to be known by very few people on my friends list, hence the lack of contribs.

By the way, it's been suggested that a future pod episode I should do is a kind of Q&A all about me, my travels, my orientations, etc, so if you've got a question that you've always wanted to ask me, or something you're not sure about that I've ever talked about, then drop me a line and I'll do my best to include it in that pod episode.

Anyway let's start this pod in the far west of London.

{section-dividing musical ident}

The first borough entirely North of the river on the west side is Hounslow. I once walked there from central London on my way to the airport, because I was bored. Got as far as Osterley tube station before getting the underground the rest of the way. You might be unsurprised to know the A4 Great West Road isn't the healthiest of roads to walk along. This was back in 1995 and was in the lead-up to one of those very few incidents that I still haven't spoken with my therapist about. Good times.

Apart from that I've never been to Hounslow borough. I keep putting it on my list to visit but it's always 'just that bit far' whenever I visit London, so I've still not managed it yet. So anything I say in the next couple of minutes is based on research and not first hand experience.

Since most of my last episode (and, to be honest, much of this one) seems to focus on parks, country houses, and museums, you may be pleased to know for consistency that Hounslow has a selection of each of these. The obligatory House and Gardens, well there are two. One is Syon House, in Brentford. Built in the mid 1500s, and refurbished and parts rebuilt many times over since, it's a bit of a mix of styles. Once a royal palace (and where Catherine Howard was imprisoned before her execution), it ended up in the hands of the Duchy of Northumberland. And still is. Though you can go round and marvel at the opulence, and wonder about the electricity bill. No doubt tho this is balanced by any royalties from being used in many a film that requires a country house (Emma, The Madness of King George) because heaven forbid that highly-paid English Ac-tors be required to go film in Derbyshire.

Syon Park is the large expanse that surrounds it, and holds the sites of both the abbey that stood here before the palace was built, and, further back in time, evidence of a Roman-era village. It's also believed to be where Pocahontas lived when she was, shall we say, relocated, to England.

The other is in Chiswick, which in my head is a suburb more famous for its beer, but that's probably just me. Chiswick House was built in the early 1700s and looks a bit like it wouldn't be out of place in Italy or Greece; it's mostly white, symmetrical, with a dome, columns out front, a grand portico, and balustraded staircases. And that's just the outside. Inside it's no less 'European' in its fixtures and fittings; indeed the designer and owner, the 3rd Earl of Burlington, seems to have actively taken his inspiration from places he visited on his Grand Tour. A bit like how backpackers buy souvenirs from their travels to fill their homes, except that they're generally not as affluent as an Earl.

The Gardens of the House were designed by Architect, Landscape Designer, and generally un-regarded portrait painter William Kent. To give you some idea of his ideas an influence, he's generally regarded as being the founding father of the entire 'English Landscape Garden' style, so beloved of Middle England. At the time this was seen as a rebellious affront to the standard, French, style of country house gardens which tended to be more formal and structured; in contrast the English Landscape Garden was seen as replicating the countryside, making the gardens feel more 'natural' and 'casual'. Although obviously a very 'specific' view of nature. Lakes, bridges, fake ruins and representations of ancient temples were in; actual wild countryside was not. It's amazing how often this sort of thing happens, he lied. Anyway, it looks kinda pretty, if fake countryside is your thing.

If it isn't, Hounslow has a couple of quirky and quite odd museums. For example, in Brentford, there is the London Museum of Water & Steam. This started out life as a waterworks and pumping station in the 1830s, but rather than being built to pump water out of a tunnel like at Southwark, this was built to pump water out of the river to channel into filter beds and then reservoirs, to supply drinking water to the growing population of London. I'll talk more about filter beds and their operation later.

Today however the site is a museum talking about the history of London's water supply, complete with apparently the world's largest collection of stationary steam pumping engines. I don't know how much competition there is for that accolade, to be honest. The thing about museums like these is that they provide information about important subjects that people don't really know about, yet which have an impact on their everyday life. It's not even really stuff you learn at school, and this would be more interesting than learning the names of Henry VIII's wives (two of which survived and outlived him, don't believe the rhyme!).

Just down the road is the Music Museum. It .. does what it says on the sign; it is a museum about the history of music. It started in the early 1960s with 6 pianos, and has kind of grown since then, now housing all manner of instruments from across the ages. There's also a display (interactive, natch) of self-playing instruments, which, because I hang around with people who play D&D, makes me again wonder about whether a suitably-skilled artificer and sorcerer could tour the D&D realms as a rock band 'playing' such self-playing instruments. Obviously either late 70s electro/prog-rock, or mid-90s dance.

The museum also keeps a collection of ways in which music has been recorded, both in exhibit form and in archives where there are over 20,000 rolls of music in a dedicated library. There's also a workshop, to keep the knowledge of instruments ongoing, and, of course, a concert hall so you can hear everything in a proper setting.

One final thing to say about Hounslow. I may have mentioned in my last episode that London's first airport was in Croydon. Subsequent research has brought up this is not entirely true. On what is now Hounslow Heath, an expanse of land between Hounslow and Feltham, was very briefly the Hounslow Heath Aerodrome. Set up as an airbase at the start of World War One, it was converted to a civilian airport in 1919, although it only operated for a further 11 months until March 1920, when Croydon Airport took over all operations.

Although flights weren't particularly exciting by modern standards - mostly domestic to places like Leeds and Cardiff, with international departures to Paris and Amsterdam (although not the first international flight, the routing from here to Paris was the world's first international scheduled passenger flight route), Hounslow Heath is notable for being the departure point for the first ever flight to Australia. The Australian government offered a prize of 10,000 Australian Pounds for the first person (specifically, the first Australian, but no-one had ever done this before) to fly from the UK back to Australia; six crews took up the challenge, but only two succeeded, and one of those taking 206 days. The winners (the Macpherson Smith brothers) took a month in total, with a total flying time of 135 hours. By the way, the prize money in today's value would be around A\$810,000, or £440,000.

Hounslow Heath is also important in the history of geography; it was here that the first precise triangulations were done to calculate the exact values of latitude and longitude in the 1780s, in conjunction with the Greenwich and Paris Observatories. This also paved the way to the creation of the Ordnance Survey and the mapping of Great Britain to specific and accurate detail. And why there are trig points at the top of many hills. And other places that really don't deserve them, like on a dyke in Cambridgeshire.

{section-dividing musical ident}

According to slightly dubious statistics (in their own admission) by the London Data Store website (a creation of the Greater London Authority, so they'd know these things better than most), in 2007 the borough of Hillingdon was the fourth most popular London Borough for tourists to overnight in, for both domestic and international tourists, behind Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Camden. If you take a cursory glance at a map you might wonder why this is; Hillingdon is a roughly rectangular-shaped area, tall but not so wide, on the very western edge of London. While the second largest, it's the least densely populated of all the Boroughs, is in Zones 5 and 6 of the London Transport network, and the towns it contains aren't generally noteworthy.

A closer look at a map explains both its density and its popularity. We have what is known in the trade as a statistical outlier; in this case that outlier being the world's third largest airport by passenger traffic. London Heathrow airport, while not the only airport inside London's boundaries is, obviously, by far the largest. It was originally a farm, and then a small airfield mainly used for model aircraft and testing new planes, but replaced Croydon Airport as London's main access to the world soon after the end of World War Two.

Obviously then, lots of people pass through Hillingdon. But I'd imagine they're almost all literally using it as a

stopover to head off somewhere more 'touristy'. So, is there anything in Hillingdon itself that might persuade them to stay longer, rather than just a flying visit? (Oh lord, please shoot me now if that's going to be the level of my punnage.)

Oddly, one of the biggest attractions, although one I was unaware of until I did some specific research into Hillingdon, is the Battle of Britain Bunker, just outside Uxbridge, on the site of what was RAF Uxbridge airbase. Although Biggin Hill over in Bromley (and about as far away from Uxbridge as you can get in London) was one of the main operational airfields in the Battle of Britain, RAF Uxbridge was the Operations and Command Centre for Fighter Command (known internally as the No.11 Group) - it had been the overall HQ of Fighter Command but this was moved to a specific admin building at RAF Bentley Priory in Harrow in 1936. Specifically, a top-secret bunker 60 feet (18 metres) underneath the airbase, self-sufficient as much as possible and built to withstand pretty much anything that could be thrown at it. It was from here that the Battle was plotted (and won), and it later served as the operational nerve-centre for the air units involved in the D-Day Landings, so was a pretty fundamental and important part of the UK's war effort.

These days its only secrecy is not being well known enough to find, because it's in Hillingdon I guess and no-one ever thinks to look there. A bit like finding a lost key down the back of the sofa. But, it's now a museum that tells the story of the UK's air defence system in the first half of the 20th century, and of course the Battle of Britain in particular, and the role the bunker had in it. It's all very interactive, with authentic models and displays, recordings of people that worked here and took part in the Battle of Britain, and even hands-on experiences where you see and feel what it was like to be there at the time. The whole thing is also available in virtual format in case you're unable to physically go underground, which is something I wish was more standard across museums and attractions.

Just as at Biggin Hill, there are replica planes - on the entrance to the Bunker are fibreglass replicas of a Spitfire and a Hurricane (the latter painted in the colours of the Polish Air Force). Not far from the Bunker is RAF Northolt, the first RAF base in the UK, built in 1915 and predating the RAF itself by three years; it's still a fully-functional base so you won't be allowed in, but it too has a fibreglass replica Spitfire, though it's slightly inside beyond the main gate so a little tricky to see from the road. What is accessible, at the corner of the RAF base by a major roundabout, is a large war memorial dedicated to the Polish Air Force. The reason for the Polish theme in the area is because during World War Two, the exiled Polish Air Force had made RAF Northolt their home base, and they were instrumental in the war effort.

For something more peaceful and down-to-earth, Hillingdon also offers a lot of nature. While the borough in general is quite rural in feel (the Chiltern Hills AONB is only a few km to the northwest), on its western edge is the Colne Valley Regional Park. Indeed it pretty much delineates the border between London and the Home Counties, stretching as it does from Staines in the south to Rickmansworth in the North, a distance of just under 27km or 17 miles and covering an area of 110km². According to its website, it contains 19 nature reserves, 5 country parks, and 200km of waterways. A significant chunk of these waterways are lakes and reservoirs, many formed from previous heavy industry (gravel extraction - think of it as a sort of open-cast mining site, now flooded). In addition, the Grand Union Canal, the original main line from London to Birmingham, passes right through the centre of it, providing a great way to casually saunter up or down the valley.

Obviously it's a great place to birdwatch, to go for walks in the woodlands, and if you're into watersports (not those sorts of watersports, Full Swap Radio!), it's a good place to go kayaking, canoeing, or even angling, although wild swimming is forbidden.

There's also history here. At the south end, near Heathrow Airport and (keeping up with the World War Two theme), a memorial to Sir Barnes Wallace, because the 'bouncing bomb' was developed around here, there's an old barn - Harmondsworth Barn - that dates from the 1420s. I mean, it's just a barn, and it was in use to store cereal crops until the 1970s so it had a long and productive life, but it's only ever been restored/repared rather than rebuilt, so it looks pretty much the same now as it did when it went up. This makes it one of the best and most complete examples of mediaeval agricultural design in the country - oak and elm timber framed. It's also pretty big; 58m long, 11m wide, and around 12m high at its highest point; at just under 5,000 m³, it's one of the fifteen largest barns ever constructed in the country, and the largest one still surviving. It's also believed that George Gilbert Scott, a Victorian-era architect who specialised in churches (which at the time was a good line of work; he built or altered 800 of them, after all) used Harmondsworth Barn as inspiration for

his original plans for ChristChurch cathedral, in Christchurch, New Zealand, before the Bishop nixed the idea and told him to build it in stone instead, before dropping him completely from the project anyway.

As a final comment on Hillingdon; any UK football fans listening? When they say 'it's being checked by VAR at Stockley Park', ever wonder where Stockley Park is? Well it's a business park just north of Heathrow. You have Hillingdon to thank for when your team wins by a dodgy offside decision.

{section-dividing musical ident}

Heading northwest from Hillingdon we reach Harrow, famous mostly in the UK for having "the other Public School" that isn't Eton. Interestingly, as an aside, the school I went to in Merseyside, a very middle-class independent school, has a sibling school in Moor Park, just outside London to the northwest of Harrow Borough. It's obviously that sort of area.

Currently Harrow's most famous resident is Laura Lundahl, who in twenty years time will be one of the leading voices in world immigration policy and be the author of several books. Though granted she's unlikely to still be resident by the time she gets her own Wikipedia page.

According to government statistics, Harrow is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country; it's also one of those rare authorities where there is a white minority (although still possibly the largest grouping). A shade under 40% of people in the borough are of Indian or Sri Lankan origin, and it's therefore not a surprise to note that according to figures from 2018, an estimated 25% of people practice Hinduism, compared with a national average of less than a fifteenth of that. Indeed data from the 2011 census reveals 40 different religions are represented in Harrow Borough, and just under 90% of residents stating they had a religion - the third highest authority in London.

One of those religions represented is Zoroastrianism. This is one of the oldest faiths still with adherents, which is all the more impressive given a core tenet of their belief structure is that you have to be born into it; you can't 'convert' to Zoroastrianism. How old the religion actually is is open to a great deal of scholarly debate, but the supposed founder, Zoroaster, is believed to have lived 'somewhere between 2500 and 4000 years ago'. Even the origin is disputed, with most suggesting a region around eastern Iran, Afghanistan, and the southern ex-Soviet states of Central Asia. His tomb is allegedly in Balkh, in Afghanistan, and was on my hit list to go see until I broke a bone in my foot in Uzbekistan and could barely walk. As another aside, Zoroaster is also known as Zarathustra, a name made famous by being used by Nietzsche in his book 'Also sprach Zarathustra', which later became a piece of music by Richard Strauss that's used every time TV wants a soundtrack to a scene in space, and they don't want to use The Blue Danube.

Anyway. At Rayner's Lane there is the Zoroastrian Centre, an art-deco building that looks a bit like one of those enclosed upright fans, heaters, or aircon units often found on the floors of office buildings. It has all the hallmarks of an old cinema. Because it was. These days it's home to the interestingly-named Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, which does sound more like a finance company than a religious organisation, but they look after the interests (social, cultural, and religious) of Zoroastrians in the UK and across Europe. They bought the building in 2000 and, after much liaising with both Harrow Council and English Heritage, refurbished and opened it in June 2005. (It's a Grade II* listed building). Looking on the Historic England website it does still look like an old-style cinema inside, with brass-framed stairwells, two levels of tiered seats in an arc, and a stage with curtains. I've no idea if you can go inside; their own website's currently not working.

One of the towns in Harrow Borough is Stanmore, the end of the Jubilee Line and memorable to me only from a rather odd mid-80s song by the comedian Alexei Sayle that had the line "is bruvver moved to Stanmore". Staying with the religious theme tho, Stanmore is notable for the unassuming Stanmore and Canons Park Synagogue, who refer to themselves as having the largest Orthodox Jewish congregation in Western Europe, with over 1500 families registered. As an aside, they also believe they're the only synagogue in the world to offer slushies to the kids after the services. I mean, what do Catholics get? A dry wafer, if they're lucky.

Canons Park is also home to the local football club, Barnet FC. You'd have thought they'd have played in Barnet Borough, but, TL;DR, the council wouldn't let them so they moved across the border, into a ground originally cited for Wealdstone FC. Wealdstone is a part of Harrow Borough just north of Harrow, but the team don't play there any more. No, they now play in Ruislip. In Hillingdon Borough. What's in a name, eh?

I mentioned in my last episode about the UK's first road traffic accident, and the rivalry between Harrow and Croydon. While it seems Croydon had the first pedestrian death and the first driver death, Harrow can lay claim to the first multiple fatality in a road accident. In February 1899, two people died when the car they were in crashed. They were travelling down Grove Hill, between Harrow School and what is now the centre of Harrow when the rear wheel collapsed and both occupants were thrown onto the road. One died at the scene, the other a couple of days later. There's a plaque that marks the event, at the top of Grove Hill at its junction with Peterborough Road. There's a lot of hills in Harrow (even part of the town is called Harrow-On-The-Hill), and the highest point in London North of the River, the third highest in London as a whole, is Stanmore Hill in Harrow, at 152m.

Harrow's obligatory World War Two connection comes in the form of Bentley Priory Museum, formerly an RAF administration centre, as mentioned earlier, the HQ of the Fighter Command unit during the Battle of Britain. It was here that the plans both to defend the UK, and later to attack Germany, were formulated; these plans were then passed on to places like RAF Uxbridge for action. Like the museum in Uxbridge, this concentrates on the Battle of Britain, but concentrates more on the stories of the people involved, from Air Chief Marshall Sir Hugh Dowding, through the air crew, and to the people whose job it was to process and act on radar information and intelligence.

RAF Bentley Priory itself had previously been a Georgian manor house on the grounds of a long-gone Augustinian priory. Much of the rest of the manor house is now luxury housing, but the old grounds (55 hectares) are a nature reserve, including woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and a lake.

Another old house, tho this one is Victorian, is Grim's Dyke. This was latterly the home of W S Gilbert, he of Gilbert & Sullivan operatic fame – indeed it's where he died, of a heart attack whilst giving a swimming lesson to two teenagers in one of the lakes on the grounds.

The design of the house harks back to the Elizabethan era, with a frontage of leaded windows and mock wood panelling. It's name comes from a nearby ancient earthwork and ditch that may be the remnant of a defence fortification built by the native Britons against the Roman invasion.

Since the early 1960s the house has been often used as a film set, and has been seen in things from *The Saint* to *Little Britain*. You can still visit the house in a sense; it's now a Best Western Plus hotel. You can even get married there. Much cheaper than Nonsuch Mansion.

Speaking of film-sets ... the borough just to the south of Harrow is Ealing.

{section-dividing musical ident}

Ealing is of course famous for Ealing Studios, one of the most famous British movie studio companies. Films have been made here from the early 30s (and indeed Wikipedia tells me it is the oldest continuously working studio facility for film production in the world), but many argue its heyday was in the early 1950s. During this period they were well known for Ealing Comedies, a series of whimsical but quite dark comedy movies that were definitely very 'British' in outlook, sometimes pitting a small community against bureaucracy and big government, at other times being almost farce-like when characters' plans start to unravel through circumstance. Examples of the former include *Passport to Pimlico* and *Whisky Galore* (the full tale of which I mention on my Podcast episode 22 about the Outer Hebrides), while examples of the latter include *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*.

Ealing Studios still exist – for a long time they were owned by the BBC but they are back to producing films independently now, including *Shaun Of The Dead* and the more recent *St Trinians* films. Obviously this means it's somewhere you can just turn up to and have a look around, but it's an interesting thing to have on your doorstep I think. You can use it as an office space though, rather oddly, and it shares a site with a film & media college so it'd be a great place to learn the trade. Otherwise just stand outside and take pictures and think about the history.

More creativity can be found a stones-throw from Ealing Broadway tube station. Now a nightclub called "The Red Room", and set behind an estate agents, a blue plaque marks its previous existence when it called "the

Ealing Club" or "The Ealing Jazz Club". It's notable as being in general *the* venue for jazz and blues music in the early 60s, much as the Cavern Club in Liverpool served that early beat music at roughly the same time. And while the Cavern Club saw the early days of The Beatles, it was at the Ealing Club where their contemporary rivals the Rolling Stones not just played their first gig, but in fact a couple of years earlier met up for the very first time. Many other 60s bands and singers had their early ventures here too, including Eric Clapton.

According to recent reviews on Google Maps, the current incarnation isn't a particularly welcoming or safe venue, and while that may well be partly sour grapes, your mileage may vary in either direction. I'm not a clubber. Like, really. I wasn't a clubber even when I was younger. Obviously.

For somewhere in Ealing that is easily visitable and accessible, let's head to the south of the borough, to the suburb of Southall. The railway station here shares something with that in Wallsend, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the north-east, that's pretty unusual for England (although obligatory in Wales and Scotland) - the signage is bilingual. While Wallsend has, for touristic reasons, translations in Latin, Southall is much more practical - its signs are in English and Punjabi, because ... well ...

According to ward-level stats, approximately three-quarters of the population of Southall as a whole are ethnically Asian, specifically North Indian. It's interesting to compare and contrast with parts of Brent and Harrow, actually; so we heard earlier Harrow has a large Hindu population (as does Brent, actually). Ealing's Indians are predominantly Sikh, and while proportionately more Sikhs live in Hounslow, Hillingdon, and the mysterious Redbridge, Sikhism is the largest religion in Southall specifically, with approximately a third of all Southall residents being Sikh.

It may come as no surprise therefore to learn that Southall is home to the largest Sikh temple/organisation outside of India. This is the Gurdwara (pron. Gur-Dwa- raa) Sri Guru Singh Sabha, the current home of which was inaugurated in 2003. The main hall of the Gurdwara can hold around 3,000 people for seated worship, with over a thousand more able to be accommodated in the balconies or the overflow rooms. In addition, they have calculated around 15,000 people enter either this building or the nearby older Hall every week, tho this includes visitors as well as worshippers. The rooms are huge, with high ceilings and lain with colourful rugs.

One of the aspects of Indian culture is the provision of free food for travellers, and it became one of the fundamentals of the Sikh religion from the very start. The langar (or kitchen) in the Gurdwara here keeps up with that tradition, offering (vegetarian, natch) dishes to all who wander in - they estimate they dole out around 20,000 meals a week, such is the footfall and community spirit of the local area.

Heading further east, spiritually as well as geographically, in the SE of the borough lies something more unexpected. A foreign government's embassy. Most embassies are, as you'd expect, somewhere in Central London, in large grandiose Georgian or modern purpose-built buildings. However, the embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ... does not look how you imagine it would. I don't know if you're expecting some kind of traditional Korean-designed building lined with symbolic ornamentation and lined images of Kim Il-Sung. If so, you'd still be wrong. It's a 7-bedroom semi-detached house on the A406 North Circular Road. The houses close by are mostly divided into rental flats and cost around £1,500 per month for a 1-bed or 2-bed, or £3,400 for the whole of a 5-bed house a few doors down, but the North Koreans bought theirs, for £1.3mil about 20 years ago.

Going back, between Southall and Ealing Town is Hanwell. One of the nicer spots here is the walk along the Grand Union Canal (from Hillingdon, obviously). Just outside Hanwell itself the canal rises (or falls, it does very much depend on which direction you're going in - it's higher in the west, on the Hillingdon side) around 16m, doing so through a series of between six and eight locks, depending on how wide you define the series as. They were built in 1794 under the overseeing of William Jessop who was famous for building a lot of canals in that period, and have been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the word Ancient here doing a lot of heavy lifting. At the top end was a windmill made famous in a painting by William Turner, and a bridge where a canal, a railway, and a road all cross at the same time. Obviously on different levels. I always wondered if one existed, and it's still the only one I know of, although there's a couple of points in the Birmingham area that come very close. To the south of the canal is an open expanse called the Warren Farm Nature Reserve, a rewilded 61-acre urban meadow where one can spot all manner of birds and rare animals like skylarks, slow-worms, and the interestingly named yarrow-pug, which I had to look up, I'll admit. It's apparently a species of

moth.

This is also where the Grand Union canal meets the River Brent, which is convenient, as Brent is the next borough directly to the north-east. So let's SUP up the river (or not; like anyone would let me do that!) and head across the border.

{section-dividing musical ident}

Brent continues the diversity present across this part of London. The Migration Observatory website states that the Borough of Brent has the highest number (171,472) as well as the population share (55%) of non-UK born residents out of all London boroughs, and 5.7% of all London foreign-born residents. This includes the largest Brazilian community in the country, as well as having the largest proportion of any authority in England of people with Irish origin, who make up 4% of Brent's population. The Irish community is particularly noticeable in the south-east of the borough, around the suburb of Kilburn. The ONS stats from the 2011 census suggest 11% of all London's Hindus live in Brent (15% of Brent's population), while those practising Islam account for nearly a quarter of all Brent residents. Neasden is believed to have been home to the first music radio station in the UK catering specifically to a Black audience - Dread Broadcasting Corporation - which played reggae, African music, and soul in the early 80s. Obviously it was a pirate radio station and only lasted four years; back in those days it was very hard to get a legal radio licence. Pirate radio as a whole would be a good subject for a podcast, although perhaps not this one.

It's therefore perhaps not surprising then that Brent's major religious site - if you ignore Wembley Stadium - is the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu temple, between Neasden and Harlesden (though it's commonly known as the Neasden Temple). It's believed to be the first purpose-built Hindu temple in the UK, and was built in 1995 next to the previous temple which now serves as a cafe and shop selling traditional Indian sweets.

In terms of size it's ... pretty impressive. The main building, the mandir, is 60 by 22 metres in area, and stretches up to 21 metres tall. There's over 500 different designs within it, and it's made up of over 26,000 individual stone pieces. Obviously it's built to a traditional Hindu design, so it contains a lot of ornamentation, representations of historical figures from Hindu mythology, especially those carved into the just under 200 white internal columns. White is a very thematic colour, and much of the building is made from carved limestone and marble. The open-plan prayer room can hold around 3,000 people.

It's not just a temple though. Inside is a small museum that looks at the history of Hinduism, and takes a quick overview at explaining what Hinduism is and what Hindus believe and stand for - catering specifically for the tourists who are coming to take a look rather than worshippers who already know the deal. There is a charge to visit the museum but it's only a couple of quid and you'd be a heathen not to, to be honest.

It's also possible to observe and even take part in a couple of small Hindu ceremonies, although I didn't get this chance on my visit as they're time-specific. One is the Arti Ceremony, an offering where candles are waved in front of images while prayers are sung; the other is Abhishek, where water is poured over an image of a deity while sacred verses are chanted.

On site is another building, the Haveli, which is mainly used as a community centre. Unlike the mandir which is made from stone, the Haveli is made of wood (specifically, Burmese teak and English Oak). It's not plain wood either, each strut, each balustrade, is carved uniquely with representations of animals, flowers, and patterned shapes, all in exquisite detail. It's really interesting to compare and contrast the two buildings.

The whole complex is set in a huge area of gardens from where it's possible to see the temple as a great vista. And the gardens aren't just a lawned area; rather they are a weird mix of the English Country Garden (as seen elsewhere around London, in the Country Houses) and Hindu patterns and symbolism, where lotuses meet roses, and fountains meet walkways shaped like celestial bodies.

It's a far cry from a building on the very very edge of Brent, near to the tripoint with the City of Westminster and the borough of Camden at Kilburn High Road railway station. On Cambridge Avenue is what used to be a 'tin tabernacle', an example of a church made out of corrugated iron. They were commonly built as towns and cities expanded rapidly during industrialisation, since they were easy to transport and quick to put up. Not many survive now, and anyway due to their pre-fabricated nature they were more-or-less designed to be

temporary. One of the most famous in the UK is the one on Lamb Holm, in Orkney, that was built by Italian Prisoners of War, that I mentioned in my podcast episode about Orkney, pod 44. This church in Kilburn is still standing though; it looks a little like it's made of that rippled cardboard that you often get with big boxes. It looks like a church though, with a sloping roof leading to a small tower at the centre front. It seems to be currently being used as the headquarters of a local Sea Cadet troupe. As an aside, the building next door to it is also interesting – it was built in the early 1930s and served as an animal hospital/clinic type place, called "The Animals War Memorial Dispensary RSPCA", the words still being present in huge letters on the front. Between the words 'war' and 'memorial' is a large bronze plaque which serves as a memorial to animals killed in the first world war.

Brent's contribution to World War Two lies in the form of the Post Office Research Centre and the Paddock War Rooms. I'd love to be able to tell you that these sites formed a really interesting museum, but ... they don't. They were sold off for housing in the late 90s after being pretty much abandoned for 20 years, so although the buildings still exist, they're now private. Still, you could take some pictures and revel in the history.

It's quite an interesting history though. It was here where the first transatlantic radio-telephone call was made, well, the eastern end anyway. This was a call in January 1927 between Sir Evelyn Murray, secretary of the General Post Office in the UK, and Walter S Gifford, the president of the Bell Telecommunications company, in New York. Even that call wasn't direct; it was routed via the huge radio transmitter station at Rugby. Heaven knows what the lag would have been like, or the cost per minute had it been a private call. It was also where the first programmable electronic computer was built, during World War Two. This was the Colossus, which was shipped to Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire to be used to codebreak German communications, and that's a subject for a whole separate pod. Colossus later gave birth (not literally, merely conceptually) to ERNIE, the Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment. This is a literal random number generator and is used, albeit much improved these days, for the Premium Bonds. These blur the line between investment and gambling, in the sense that they're government bonds that hold value (so you don't lose anything), but they kind of earn interest based on ERNIE picking your 'numbers', as it were, that are associated with each bond. I thought they'd largely gone out of fashion, having being much-beloved by people from my grandmother's era, yet research suggests almost a third of the UK public still hold some. I wonder how many of these are grandparental gifts to grandchildren that have been forgotten about.

Underneath the Post Office Research Centre site, and also owned by the housing association that bought the buildings, lie the remains of Paddock. This was an alternative underground bunker to be used by the government in World War Two, presumably in case other sites proved dangerous or inaccessible. In the event it was only ever used a handful of times. But I guess it was good provision that it were there. It's in quite a state of dereliction now, with rusted equipment in situ and quite a lot of damp – it'll probably never be renovated to be honest. You used to be able to go down there on rare special organised tours but I don't imagine you can now.

From underground to, no I've said that already, let's say 'the great outdoors', and we head north to Brent Reservoir. This is also commonly known as Welsh Harp Reservoir after an old and well-known pub that was demolished in the early 1970s. It's a Site of Special Scientific Interest, primarily because the lake is a known breeding ground for a large diversity of, sometimes quite rare-for-the-UK, water birds, such as the white-rumped sandpiper, which is normally found in North America.

The reservoir is 45 hectares in size (though in the 19th century it was as much as 3½ times larger than this), and the whole SSSI covers an area of just under 70. It's a really lovely place to walk around and get closer to nature; on the north side you have the Welsh Harp Open Space while on the south you have Neasden Rec. It's also a popular place for watersports (again, not those kinds), including canoeing, kayaking, and lots of other things I have no experience or desire for. One other sporting thing to say about the site is it is believed to have been the site of the world's first ever formally-organised bicycle race, in June 1868.

Well, since we're here, we might as well sail across the border, into Barnet.

{section-dividing musical ident}

In writing this podcast episode, I learned that the Brent Cross Shopping Centre wasn't in Brent, but in Barnet. This reinforces my belief in the arbitrary nature of borders and also names. I'll concede it's not very far from

the border with Brent (it's very close to the Welsh Harp reservoir), but then Bratislava's not very far from Vienna, so, you know.

I'm mentioning Brent Cross Shopping Centre, not because I think it's a place that you ought to go – it's a shopping centre, no more no less – but because it's regarded as the very first American-style out-of-town dedicated shopping mall in the country. Obviously these days it's seen in less regard as places like Merry Hill in the West Midlands, Meadowhall in Sheffield, MetroCentre in Gateshead (which used to have a roller-coaster inside it), and, closer to London, places like Bluewater and Lakeside over to the east of the metro. But back in 1976, such a concept was seen as revolutionary. Your mileage may vary on whether this was a good thing with hindsight, especially since I don't drive, but while places like this have been argued to have killed off local town centres maybe it's controversial to say this but in some cases the town centre wasn't terribly appealing anyway and needed a bit of a reappraisal (Dudley, I'm looking directly at you here), and also arguably the shops and clientele are different anyway. There's no room in central Sheffield for an IKEA, and I wouldn't go to Meadowhall for beer or a kilo of beef mince.

Retro moment: I've been to Brent Cross once, about, what, twenty years ago, and I remember having one of the best chocolate & peanut butter milkshake I've ever had. It was served in a pewter pint mug, that had been pre-chilled, so the combo of the texture and the temperature just, well, worked somehow. And I've been trying to recreate the effect ever since. Though without the frozen pewter mug. Because I don't have one. Maybe that's where I've been going wrong all this time.

Anyway.

With just under 400,000 people, Barnet is the most populous London Borough. In fact, it's the 13th largest borough in England (though a long way behind league leaders Birmingham with 1.14 million), and the 2nd largest that isn't a city nor an ex-county-council-now-unitary-authority (eg Cornwall). The largest non-city borough is Kirklees, which probably no-one outside Yorkshire has ever even heard of. I'm not aware of Barnet ever applying for city status, unlike, say, Croydon, though it may well have more success at it if it did. About 16% of this population is Jewish – the highest proportion of Jews in any UK authority, and Barnet contains 35% of all London's Jews. This is fairly much centred on Golders Green and Hendon, in the south of the borough.

It comes as no surprise to learn one of the most notable sites in the area therefore is a Jewish Cemetery. This is on Hoop Lane, and opened in 1896. It's quite an unusual cemetery in a sense as it's pretty much split in two halves down the middle. On one side is the area where those who follow Reform Judaism, while on the other side are the graves of the Sephardi community, many of whom were originally from Spain and Portugal. Both sides are run by their respective communities and they come together to discuss issues four times a year – in effect they are two different cemeteries.

Their joint website gives the original size of the cemetery as the very old-fashioned measurement of 15 acres and 38 poles. As you are all no doubt aware, there are obviously 160 square poles to an acre, and 40 to a rood. A square pole is also known as a square rod or a square perch, though the word square is often dropped even though it's an area measurement. Which is awkward as perch/pole/rod is also a linear measurement. There are three feet to a yard, and 5½ yards to a perch. Or pole. Or rod. Or lug, apparently.

Seriously, what the feck is wrong with this country.

Anyway, this makes the cemetery about 6.2 hectares. Or 6 rugby pitches. You can visit it and have a wander around, even if you're not Jewish, but be aware it's closed on the Sabbath, which makes sense, also at Christmas, which ... less so, and on many Jewish festivals. You're not allowed food, drink, or glass, and you have to wash your hands, for spiritual not sanitary reasons. Other than that, it's a cemetery, it's full of graves, and it's very peaceful.

Directly opposite, different but similar, and entirely secular, is Golders Green Crematorium. This was one of the earliest crematoria in the country, opening in 1902 (so slightly later than its neighbours), and is now by far the biggest, with around 2,000 taking place a year. It's the last resting place for the remains of many notable people, including 70s musician Marc Bolan, Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs, and writer Bram Stoker. The walls of the building are lined with memorial tablets of the people cremated here, and there's places to sit down

and rest and take in the calming atmosphere. The grounds cover an area of 5 hectares and feature lawned areas and a couple of ponds.

Another green space, but one promoting life rather than commemorating death, is even further south on the border with Camden. This is Golders Hill Park, the northern side of Hampstead Heath. It's a landscaped park, and it's got a flower garden, a water garden, a small zoo, and a butterfly house. You can, if you so wish, spend money adopting one of the animals in the zoo for a year. However, in the northwest of the borough is somewhere a little more animal-focused.

Belmont Farm, near Mill Hill Broadway, is one of those urban animal farms (not a metaphor) where urbanites have the opportunity to see farm animals and get the sense of what farm life is like in a safe and controlled environment, without having to trek out into the wilderness and experience a complete culture clash. They claim to have 30 different animal varieties, mainly the usual like cows and goats, but they also have a fallow deer. Called Bambi, obviously. I've never seen that movie. Probably never will. Related, the farm also aims to show children where their food comes from. One imagines any conversation that starts "and this is a lamb" probably won't end well ...

You can ride on a tractor though, or could if it weren't for Covid restrictions, so that's something.

As you might expect by now, Barnet has a museum that mentions World War Two. This is in the form of the RAF Museum at Colindale, which is related to the large one at RAF Cosford in Staffordshire. The London base though looks at the entire history of the Royal Air Force, what it does today, and tries to imagine what its future would be like.

It's a very hands-on museum. You can, for instance, sit in the cockpit of a Supermarine Spitfire, although only if you're small enough. As someone who is 1m90 tall, I can only imagine I would not have been one of the pilots in the Battle of Britain. Well, that, and my severely bad eyesight, dyspraxia, fear of heights, and inability to swim. Alternatively there's a flight simulator that recreates the flight controls of something a bit more modern - a eurofighter. I was always particularly poor at flight simulators, well, any kind of simulator really, I had one on my old computer that simulated a steam train that I was particularly bad at. I think it just involves holding too much information in my head at any one time, especially related to timings, which is ... not an ADHD trait. "Oh, I'd forgotten I needed to close the flaps 23 seconds ago. I hope that doesn't ... aaaagh'.

There are also a lot of displays, from World War One era planes to much more modern aircraft, and there's all manner of interactive exhibits to show you how they all worked.

Further back in history, Barnet Museum has an exhibition on (amongst other things) the Battle of Barnet in 1471. I seem to recall doing a podcast on the Wars of the Roses, Episode 30. The battle was one of the most decisive in the entire conflict, pretty much ending that phase and leading to relative peace for the next 12 or so years. It was the battle where Edward IV of the Yorkists defeated the Lancastrian forces under the Earl of Warwick (the so-called 'Kingmaker') and, following a battle at Tewksbury in Gloucestershire that merely confirmed his supremacy, caused his rival to the throne (the future Henry VII) to flee to France.

The site of the battle isn't known for certain, however one of the most commonly assumed is a point on the very northern edge of the borough, at Hadley Green. On the spot where the Earl of Warwick was believed to have been killed, there is a large obelisk to commemorate his death and the battle in general. It's not a terribly interesting obelisk - it's about 5½ metres tall, and quite ugly stone. It was erected in 1740, so some 400 years after the battle, and has already been moved once, so ... I mean, it's in the right town, at least!

{section-dividing musical ident}

"Lives made much easier" says the blue plaque. And sometimes it's the smallest of concepts that makes the biggest difference.

The 27 June 1967 is one that will live long in history. Australian listeners may note this is the birthday of 1990s rugby union player Phil Kearns, but he wasn't born in Enfield so that's not the reason. Rather, it marks the first public use of the modern ATM - 'Automated Teller Machine', or 'cashpoint' as we know them in the UK. That first transaction took place outside the branch of Barclays in Enfield, North London, and the site was

apparently chosen (according to Barclays themselves) due to a combination of location & logistics – it being near London, having a decent amount of pavement in front, and there being enough space behind the wall to hide a safe. They also suggested to the Londonish website that Enfield specifically was chosen because it had a "model cross-section community" – in other words, it was 'average suburbia'. Though not as average as the 'most normal place in Britain', which we found out on my last pod was Sutton, on the opposite side of London.

The idea of it was said to have come from the principle of chocolate vending machines, and allegedly came to its creator (John Shepherd-Barron, who worked in a printers) while he was in the bath. A literal classic 'Eureka' moment, tho my mind would have stayed on chocolate tbh. It operated by using a paper voucher dusted with Carbon-14 (a mildly-radioactive substance mainly known in the archaeological 'carbon dating' process), and the maximum withdrawal was £10, or just over £150 in today's money.

The first pundit was TV sitcom actor Reg Varney, who I'm guessing most of my listeners won't really know. Just be aware at the time, while not the biggest name around, he'd have certainly been a well-known face. I guess a current equivalent would be someone like Hugh Dennis or Greg Davies.

The ATM in question is no longer there; although the building is still a Barclays, the cashpoints have been moved around the corner, apparently to ensure pedestrian flow remains smooth on the road-side pavement. I did of course them on my visit, withdrawing £10 of course, which I probably then spent on beer.

One wonders if the "model cross-section community" Barclays believed Enfield contained also includes ghosts. Well, maybe not. But ... imagine an ordinary British semi-detached townhouse in the identikit suburban streets of eastern Enfield. The sign on the house says 'Jesus House'. It seems the current occupants have their own way of handling issues from unwanted visitors Especially those who have been dead for a number of years.

This house was briefly famous for being the scene of a notable paranormal event in the late 1970s, the so-called 'Enfield Poltergeist'. A woman with four children were living there when all of a sudden strange things started to happen; beds shaking, weird knocking, etc, but this soon developed into things being thrown around the room including, at one point, one of the daughters (as captured on a camera set up by a paranormal investigator). In addition, this same child started speaking in a gruff old male voice called Bill.

The story captivated the nation for a while, but soon the 'hauntings' stopped and nothing further notable happened. The general feeling since has been 'attention-seeking children'. But who knows?

The story was later made into a 2015 TV miniseries and was used as the inspiration for the 2016 film 'The Conjuring 2'.

Interestingly, that's not the first suggestion of the supernatural in Enfield either. As far back as 1621, Elizabeth Sawyer, from Winchmore Hill in what is now the southern part of the borough, was hanged for witchcraft in one of the more famous witch-trials of the time, well, famous enough to have had a play written about it that still survives. It's of course not as famous as the Pendle Witch Trials from a couple of years earlier, but it shows how popular witchcraft was alleged to be across the country. Spoiler: it really wasn't, just people going 'I don't like you, I'm going to tell the authorities you're a witch'. She's allegedly supposed to have killed a neighbour who assaulted one of Elizabeth's pigs; the pig was allegedly eating the neighbour's soap. I have no idea if pigs eat soap but I know if I do a search for that, I'll get lost in a rabbit warren of 'animals eating strange things' and this pod will never get written.

In the same era, in nearby Palmer's Green, there were tales of creepy rituals in the woodlands and sightings of demonic creatures, black dogs, the sighting of one is allegedly supposed to have caused the death of a cart driver called Gibby Haynes at a bridge over the Pymmes Brook which ever since was known as 'Deadman's Bridge'. Enfield seems to be quite a place for otherworldly experiences.

From otherworld to fantasy world, and nearby Edmonton has a stone sculpture of a bell, outside Fore Street Library. This was created by Angela Godfrey, and commemorates a comic poem from the 1780s written by William Cowper (quite against type – he was most noted for religious poems and hymns). The poem was called "The Diverting History of John Gilpin Shewing how he went Farther than he intended, and came safe Home again", because in those days telling the whole tale in the title seemed to be the thing to do. The ballad itself is a retelling of an older story about John Gilpin, a draper from London, who was travelling north to

Edmonton with his family for some kind of celebration, when he ended up on a runaway horse and is taken by it, alone and quite unwillingly, several miles out of his way. But obviously he came back safe and sound. As the title says. As an aside, the poem was republished almost a hundred years later in the USA, illustrated by children's artist Randolph Caldecott, and one of the illustrations in the tale was used as one side of the Caldecott medal, awarded annually to the illustrator of "most distinguished American picture book for children". So there's a little bit of Enfield in American Children's Literature culture.

Enfield's obligatory Country House is Forty Hall Estate, near the most northerly point of Greater London. Compared to the Country Houses in some of the other boroughs, it's nothing special, built to the specifications of a rich merchant in the early 1600s, possibly Sir Nicholas Raynton (haberdasher and one-time Lord Mayor of London) by an unnamed artisan, and is very ... straight edge. It looks a bit like the sort of building you'd find on a model railway set - red brick, rectangular white window frames with repeated identical smaller rectangular panes of glass (12, in a 3x4 pattern) inside them, and a slate roof. It's now a museum, dedicated to life in the 1600s and to Raynton himself in particular.

Another aside is there's a pretty row of Georgian terraced housing called The Crescent, yes, similar to the one in Bath, to be found on Hertford Road just north of Edmonton Green. I wouldn't say it was worth the trouble but if you're passing, then take a photo.

The eastern edge of the borough is defined by the River Lea and a series of reservoirs that stretch quite a way south, but I'll talk about them when I come to Hackney and Waltham Forest in my next episode. But for now, let's stay on the west side as we head south, back towards central London, and enter Haringey.

{section-dividing musical ident}

Haringey was the first London Borough I visited on my own. Back in 1993, just after my 18th birthday, I wandered down to London to visit a penpal. Her name was Jennie Smith, and I feel comfortable mentioning her name in full because it's not like it'd be easy to find someone online who's name was Jennie Smith. Anyway, she lived somewhere near Hornsey station and I remember both going to Wood Green Shopping Centre, and to one of those small travelling fairs that are commonplace in small parklands during the English summers. Strangely we did not go to Alexandra Palace, despite it being 'just over there', although granted I was only down there for three days. I had to shoot back up to Liverpool to meet with another penpal, the dust from which has yet to settle properly and that's something else I really need to speak to my therapist about.

As it happens, though for completely unrelated reasons, I've pretty much never set foot in the borough since, apart from a brief wander along the River Lea near Tottenham Hale station. A place that's forever in my mind because again, it was mentioned in a song, "Saturday Night Beneath The Plastic Palm Trees, dancing to the rhythms of the Guns Of Navarone. Found my maker near Tottenham Hale station; undiscovered heaven in the Seven Sisters Road." A quick glance on the map reveals there are nearer stations to Seven Sisters Road than Tottenham Hale, but then the Leyton Buzzards came from 4 miles on the other side of the Lea, from Leyton, clue's in the name folks, in the borough of Waltham Forest.

I may be waffling. There's a reason for this. Haringey is one of those boroughs, like Wandsworth in the south, where information was a bit thin on the ground, and the general consensus on Twitter was that it wasn't a place to linger long. However, Char, a travel and beauty blogger who lives there, disagrees.

{Char}

I am here to talk about Haringey, North London, which is an area where I've lived my entire life. I'm going to give you a few things you can do in Haringey, North London.

So Haringey is situated, I'd say, on the cusp of Zone 2, Zone 3, and it's ... what can I say, a melting-pot of culture. And I know that's a very cliched word, but there's so much to see and do here. We've got Green Lanes, where, you know, if you want a kebab at 4am, it's the place to be. There's so many restaurants open and they're just as good as the next. I really like one called Selale, which is great for a special occasion. And again nothing beats seeing an older lady making bread fresh from scratch in the morning as you stroll past.

What else can I tell you about Haringey. I think we've got some of the best views in London - move over

Primrose Hill! You'd probably want to take a trip up to Ally Pally which, again ... Alexandra Palace station is not near Alexandra Palace. You'd need to jump on the W3, or my hack is to get off at Wood Green station and get the W3 up. Get off, you know, and just go for a walk and just take in the views. Why not make a day of it, you can go ice skating, there's even, I think, there's a lake there - I haven't been in years but there's a lake there as well so you can get on a pedalo, and just take in the views. In the summer there's a food market festival at Ally Pally, and it's such a good place to go for a gig, it's such an iconic building.

And then there's also places in Haringey that I would call the bougier, I'm not going to say the word 'nice' because I feel that's incorrect, I feel that every area has beauty, but maybe more the posh parts. Crouch End. Muswell Hill. Lovely. There's so many independent restaurants, places to go for brunch, just for a nice Sunday stroll. You've got the King's Head Pub, there's Beam for brunch, which is one of my faves. I'd say get there early otherwise there's a queue outside.

And then after that, why not just take a walk. There's so many green spaces in Haringey that you're never too short for, you know, getting a bit of greenery in the city, especially as this place is so polluted. Furthermore, why not head down to Tottenham {giggles} which I know some people have views on, whether it's from the football team or just the area, but there's so much to see and it's in the process of changing. I think gentrification is slowly coming to Tottenham, but at the end of the day it's still got the people which make the area. There's an iconic chicken shop called 'Chick King' on White Hart Lane, which I actually feel ... I dunno, maybe I'm a bit of a traitor but I've never been, but I've heard it's amazing.

So, I guess North London, Haringey, is a unique place, full of culture, lots to do, and I would even say it's got some of the best transport links, we've got the London Overground, we've got National Rail, we've got the Tube, whereas some of our counterparts in South London just have trams.

So there you go, Haringey is better connected than Lewisham and Croydon.

My research into Haringey also brought up another food reference: Tottenham Cake. This is a type of sponge cake covered in very sweet, and apparently always pink, icing, first officially made at the very end of the Victorian era by local Quakers. The pinkness is what gives it a distinctive appearance and originally was made with local mulberries that grew in the grounds of the Quaker meeting house. I'll confess I've never eaten it, don't even think I've ever eaten a mulberry. I wouldn't even be able to tell you what a mulberry looked like, and it wasn't until I did this podcast that I knew that a mulberry was red. But it sounds intriguing.

There's a couple of small museums in the borough. One is at Bruce Castle, a manor house from the early 1500s which now serves as a community meeting place and centre for local history. The other, in the far east of the borough, is an industrial site called Markfield Beam Engine Museum. It's a rare surviving example of a working Victorian steam-powered beam engine, previously used here at what used to be Tottenham Sewage Works.

Other than that, Haringey is one of the many boroughs that borders on the Lea Valley, but that's an area to be discussed in detail next time.

{standard section separation jingle}

Well that's about all for this pod. Join me next time when I complete my discussion about the Boroughs of London by heading north-east, including street art, music history, and the one borough that I never remember exists. Until then, save me a roast potato, and if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro theme tune, same as intro, just a different bit of it}

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}