

A HISTORY OF WANSTEAD POLICE STATION

1829

The Metropolitan Police Authority was founded in and covered an area of a 7 miles radius of Charing Cross.

Wanstead was patrolled by the Metropolitan Horse Patrol.

1840

A sergeant and 3 constables from the police station at Great Ilford policed Wanstead.

1845

A station and section house were occupied in Wanstead Broadway. It was small but had a charge room and a kitchen with stables at the back. There were no cells and so prisoners were taken to Walthamstow police station. Two officers were on duty during the day and 7 at night, while an Inspector from Little Ilford Police Station supervised the station.

Other buildings were occupied on a temporary basis eg a small stable in George Lane.

1860s and 1870s

Working people gathered on Wanstead Flats to protest against the enclosure of Epping Forest. Police were drawn into the growing conflict between landowners and working people, which was solved by the Epping Forest Act of 1878. Prior to this, police had to tear down fences and enclosures which were deemed to be illegal.

1884

The Police Orders of 1884 show the new station address as 1 Tenterden Terrace, Nightingale Lane, Wanstead.

1886

Following the break-up of the Spratt Hall estate 1885-7, the police acquired a site at the corner of Spratt Hall and Chaucer Roads in 1885.

1886 the present police station was built to the Queen Anne style design of John Butler [1828-1900] the Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police from 1881-1895. He also designed the old New Scotland Yard building.

The building cost £2,366 and was opened in September 1886. It consisted of a detached station to the fore of the site with a yard to the rear in which there was another building consisting of stables with accommodation for married couples above them.

The station itself is an imposing, compact, "L" shaped block of three storeys with contemporary rear offshoots including a single storey cell block. The station dominates nearby housing by virtue of its corner position, scale and the rich orange brickwork. These brick walls are contrasted by the natural stone keystones and lintels to the windows facing Chaucer Road and the segmental moulded brick arched window heads, some with keystones. The main character feature of the elevations is achieved by string courses of moulded brickwork and strong modelling of the chimney breast to the north and south walls, each with a tall stack.

The front porch is on the return of the "L" shape and has a painted stone surround with four centred arch, the keystone bearing the date 1886. The roof is hipped, dual pitch with a covering of blue-black natural slate and matching dark clay angles to the ridges and hips. The windows to the main elevations are timber vertical sliding with close set glazing bars. Rainwater goods are of case metal, guttering with design of lion's heads, the downpipes with decorative brackets. The external details of the two storey rear building are similar to the main station building.

1887

Jones's Woodford Directory states: *"A new station has recently been erected near the Local Board Offices. The force consists of 4 inspectors, one sergeant and 16 constables."*

1920

On September 27 there was a cricket match at the Essex County Cricket Ground in Leyton High Road, between the Metropolitan Police at Wanstead and Mr Schofield Haigh's Team, at which JB Hobbs played.

1941

The 90ft x 2.5ft high post and double base 1" railings were released for war scrap, as they were not considered necessary for security.

1960

The external telephone for public use was put out of service.

1975

Wanstead Police Station won the Viscountess Byng of Vimy Trophy for having the best police station garden in London, due to the work of P Bert Richens.

1986

Wanstead Police Station celebrated its centenary. Hundreds of police officers came and mixed with the public and VIPs. There was an exhibition of photos, old uniforms, pocket books, lamps, truncheons, plus other mementos and souvenirs. All the police who attended the celebration said that the friendly atmosphere of the "nick" had stayed the same. [There is a Giles Cartoon of this celebration].

The original lock up cells were still used, while the old married quarters at the back had just made way for the Crime Squad.

2011

Wanstead Police Station has value as a still complete complex including former stables and married constables housing, as well as being the only police station in London which still has the blue light outside it.

Sources

Redbridge i

Behind the Blue Lamp by P Kennison & D Swinden

Waltham Abbey Police Historical Collection by Bryn Elliott

Various pieces of information from Redbridge Local History Library

Various pieces of information from the MPA Historical Collection