

## A Brief History of 'Belmont'

'Belmont' was built by local department store owner J.Arthur Pyne .He bought the plot in 1891 in an aspirational road filling with the idiosyncratic mansions of other prosperous business men..The first part of the house was a modest four square family home, but over the next seven years J.Arthur continually extended and remodelled it before finally moving in with his wife Annie, daughter Chrissie and brother in law J.J. Watts.

The back of the redbrick buildings reveal the hotchpotch of alterations and additions with awkward rooflines, ~~and~~ junctions and strangely duplicated staircases and corridors. The appearance of prosperity was assisted by some careful window dressing, and the 1991 renovations revealed both building and decoration economies; fancy plasterwork and architraves were actually made from cardboard ,and mahogany doors and panelling were dyed pine.The earlier bathroom walls were waterproofed with painted lead sheet rather than tiles.

In 1904 J.Arthur became mayor of Deptford, and it seems likely that the final extension of a ballroom with billiard and drawing room above dates from then.The drawing room was designed in a grand Greek style with a vast (and real) plaster ceiling covered with stencilled gilding. A pair of large cast iron ravens flanked the separate entrance steps to this entertainment wing and the rooms were decorated with stags heads and armour, which it seems probably came from wife Annie's abandoned family home in Leith, Scotland. The belvedere on top of the block appears to support this as there are Watts rather than Pyne initials on the weathervane.

By 1927 J.Arthur and Annie were elderly and moved to apartments on Chelsea Embankment. Once again the house was left for a number of years with a sole occupant ,possibly just a housekeeper, until it was either sold or given to The United Womens' Homes Association . By 1939 the U.W.H.A. had converted Belmont into 4 flats and 8 bedsitting rooms, with the simple addition of sinks and an extra shared bathroom. A toilet was installed in a pantry, and a kitchen boasted organ pipes. Cupboards revealed former doorways behind the shelves and a set of stairs was bricked up and forgotten about. The cellars still retained their wine racks and meat hanging hooks.The housekeepers' room contained drawers of old keys, and gas lighting brackets remained until 1991. The garden was partitioned and four detached houses were built for renting to families, although these were later sold off.

Many of the U.W.H.A. tenants who came early on stayed for the rest of their lives, and some flats have still only had three or four occupants since the war .Older tenants knew a little about the family, but it was chance contact with American relatives of the Pynes in 2000 which has revealed a fascinating wealth of information, photographs and correspondence from Belmont's heyday.



'Belmont' 147 Honor Oak Rd







BELMONT, 147 HONOR OAK ROAD

PAVEMENT

