



THE QUEENS

History of The Queens and Crouch End

The Queens, described by Pevsner as “one of suburban London’s outstanding grand pubs”, was originally built as The Queens Hotel by the architect and developer John Cathles Hill in 1898–1902 with art nouveau stained glass by Cakebread Robey.

John C. Hill was born in Hawkhill, Dundee, on 12 December 1857, the eldest son of Robert Hill and his wife Eliza. His father was tollhouse keeper at Auchterhouse which he combined with working as a cartwright and joiner.

When Hill was seventeen he left home and became a self-employed journeyman carpenter and joiner. After two years he settled in Glasgow where he attended the Mechanics’ Institute. There he learned the principles of architecture and construction. At the age of 21 he moved to London, where a relative, George Cathles Porter, was working as a speculative builder in Hornsey. After quickly establishing himself as a joiner, Hill was able to set up his own joinery business within a year. His business was successful and it was not long before he was exploiting the suburban building boom and building houses. By 1881 he was described as a “builder employing 8 men”. His first offices were established in Archway, London.



John C. Hill

Hill became a prolific developer-architect in North London. Records indicate that he was responsible for building 2,397 houses in or near London. He focussed on suburban communities for the middle classes complete with houses, shops and pubs. In the 1890s he built up a good part of Haringgay, North London.

As a developer, Hill experienced a shortage of bricks. He resolved this problem by acquiring a brickfield at Fletton in 1889. This eventually became the London Brick Company.

Like most builders of the period, Hill financed his operations through mortgages. At the beginning of the twentieth century Hill’s financial position deteriorated and in 1912 he was declared bankrupt with a deficit of over one million pounds.

He died of a heart attack on 5 April 1915 at 20 Ventnor Villas, Hove, whilst on a visit to the resort; a sorry end.

The strangely named Cakebread Robey company who supplied the glass for The Queens pub was founded in 1882 by George H. Cakebread and Arthur E. Robey. It became an important supplier of engraved and stained glass to public houses and hotels in England, such as this pub, the Salisbury in Haringgay, and St Andrew’s church, Chase Side, in Southgate. They were based at Stoke Newington and from around 1914 at Caroba Works, Wood Green, north London. The supply of sanitary fittings was also an important part of their business and is now their principle activity.



Art Nouveau style stained glass at The Queens public house c. 1900



The Queens Hotel, now a pub

The Queens was accompanied by the Queen's Opera House which was opened in 1897 but damaged by bombing during the Second World War and subsequently demolished.

The theatre opened in 1897 as the Queen's Opera House, a reconstruction of the former Crouch End Athenaeum. It later became the Crouch End Hippodrome and subsequently a cinema.

It stood behind Topsfield Parade opposite the hotel. The front was spared from the demolition and still stands in Topsfield Parade.



Crouch End Hippodrome on a c. 1900 postcard

The street is notable for Broadway Parade (east) and Topsfield Parade (west) on either side of the street at the immediate southern end. Whilst Broadway Parade was built by John Cathles Hill, Topsfield Parade was built on the estate of Henry Weston Elder by James Edmondson of Highbury and replaced Topsfield Hall, a Georgian mansion that was sold in 1892. Edmondson later built identical shopping parades in Muswell Hill.

Crouch End

The name Crouch End is derived from Middle English. A 'crouch' meant cross while an 'end' referred to an outlying area. Some think that this refers to the borders of the parish, in other words, the area where the influence of the parish ends. Its name has been recorded as Crouchend (1465), Crowchende (1480), the Crouche Ende (1482) and Crutche Ende (1553). In 1593 it is recorded as "Cruch End".

From the later part of the eighteenth century, Crouch End became home to wealthy London merchants seeking a refuge from the City. However, the area remained rural in character until around 1880. The development of the railway changed the area significantly. By 1887 there were seven railway stations in the area. By the end of the 19th century, Crouch End had become a prosperous middle-class suburb due to an influx of mainly clerical workers who could easily commute to the City. The large old houses were replaced by comfortable middle-class housing, public parks were created and a number of new roads and avenues, such as Elder Avenue and Weston Park, were laid out.



Clock Tower and Topsfield Parade, 1895