

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

6 4 r 2 e b y r l l ✓

6 1 . 16 = r = 8 . 2 ✓ r 6

6 . 4 r ✓ r ✓ e ✓

2 b y 16 ✓ r ✓ e

r 2 6 . 1 2 r 6 ✓

2 6 1 6 r 6 ✓

6 / r - r - r - r - r -

6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r

6 . 4 r 1 2 r 6 ✓

6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r

6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r

6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r 6 r //

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background, including the number '4504'.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

Alexandra Palace

Earlier this year we went to see Alexandra Palace in North London. My only knowledge of it was that it was a former television transmitting station and, with that being the only fact in my mind, I had never stopped to wonder why it was called a palace. Alexandra Palace was opened in 1873, originally called "The Palace of the People", as a north London version of the Crystal Palace in south London. It was to be a place of entertainment, recreation and education for the general public - that distinctive and special Victorian mix of enjoyment and betterment for the masses. It was later nicknamed Ally Pally and I think it is safe to assume that this friendly version was a token of its acceptance and favour with the public for whom it was built.

We travelled to Highgate, which is a hill of 136 metres, with expansive distant views over the whole of London, glimpsed at first only from the top deck of our bus ride to Muswell Hill. A short walk away from the shops brought us to Alexandra Park and we were glad to get away from the traffic and into the quiet and shady greenery. We soon came upon the building itself, a huge brick-built edifice on the top of the escarpment. Although it is now semi-derelect, its façades on three sides are still quite impressive and imposing, and is still in partial use. I think this is what one might call faded grandeur, and this building is obviously waiting to be brought back to life, as it was originally intended - "available for the free use and recreation of the public forever". In the meantime, it does still host events and there are plans to refurbish various areas within it as funds permit.

However, on our visit I found the view from the hill somewhat more interesting. After all, one can take only so many photos of bricks, carvings and colonnades. Leaning on the railings with our back to the building, we took in the 180 degree view over London, firstly down the green slopes, over the trees and on to the endless suburbs dotted with trees, and into the distance. The escarpment faces south east, so straight ahead of us we knew must be Greenwich and we could just make out the faint distinctive shape of the Millennium Dome. To our left was Stratford where we recognised some of the structures of the Olympic Park. To our right was a very faint and purple-tinged row of tall buildings, the most recognisable being the needle-shaped Shard building next to London Bridge Railway Station. It was very gratifying to know that all the noise, cars, trains, fumes and crowds were a long way off, leaving us to enjoy the fresh air, pleasant breezes and sunshine from our privileged vantage point from our palace on the hill.

At the north east end is the BBC transmitter mast, first used in 1935 and still in use today. The blue plaque on the wall states "The world's first regular high definition television service was inaugurated here by the BBC 2 November 1936". I was interested to see the substantial lightning conductor, a wide band of green copper running down the brickwork below the mast, and saw there was a break in it at eye level, with an extra piece of copper bolted over the crack. Obviously the electricity from any storms would be delighted to be so well looked after and enabled to continue its urgent journey earthwards. We wandered around to the far end, which was the original frontage when it was first opened.

Alexandra Palace

Behind the building is a large boating pond with an island in the middle. I rather liked the paddle boats on offer, in the shape of giant white swans, green and red dragons and, most unsettlingly, floating cars. A few of these were being sedately paddled around the pond, and being totally ignored by the ducks and pigeons, whose only interest was those people who had settled down on the benches to consume their snacks and who might just be untidy and careless enough to drop a few pieces within safe pecking distance. It is not a good idea to drop a single crumb unless you have finished eating. Further along is a children's playground, much more interesting to the youngsters than any amount of historical grandeur and ornamentation.

We walked round to the back of the Palace and located the former railway station, which is now a community centre. There is no railway now, but we decided to follow its former route and see how much of it was still visible. We left the park, crossed the A504 main road and followed the route of the track through what is now a long narrow strip of woodland called Parkland Walk North with a bare earth path where the tracks used to run. We found various posts, wire, metalwork and concrete structures, decaying relics of its former use. Towards

the end we passed a house alongside, whose retaining garden wall was made up entirely of railway sleepers. I could imagine that the householders at that time were delighted when the timber became available for them to acquire, in order to construct such a durable and handsome boundary between their house and the new woodland walk. The route stops abruptly at Muswell Hill and the rest of the old route is built over.

Another short walk brought us to Highgate Wood which is full of large ancient trees, but as this was at the beginning of April they were all bare and we had to just imagine what it might be like in full leaf. I am always glad to find a woodland of old and mature trees, as that means that all the wildlife is also well established, and so we looked forward to a return visit later in the year. In the centre we found a pink marble drinking fountain that miraculously still produced a trickle of water when we pressed the button. We finally ended up at Highgate Station, also derelict, but here we took the long and steep escalator down to Highgate tube station and made our way to London Bridge, from where we took the train to our part of north Kent which had been just a misty purple speck in the panoramic view we had enjoyed from Alexandra Palace. (1069 words)