

Suburb pillar boxes

Whilst taking our daily walks during Lockdown 1 we realised that the Suburb boasted a variety of post boxes and decided to add interest to our walks by looking out for them. Pillar boxes were first introduced in the Channel Islands in 1852 and then extended to the mainland in 1853. Since these Victorian beginnings, boxes have usually carried the insignia, or cipher, of the monarch reigning at the time of placement.

There are about 30 boxes in the Suburb and they span the reigns of all the monarchs since the Suburb was founded in 1907, with the exception of King Edward VIII who only reigned in 1936 and was never crowned.

There are five post boxes from King Edward VII's reign with his crown and cipher. Three are in the 'artisan quarter', one is at the junction of Asmunds Hill and Erskine Hill and another is on Hampstead Way at the junction with Temple Fortune Hill: this is the most interesting box as it has a slot on the top for an oval notice. The third one is, strictly speaking, outside the Suburb on Finchley Road near Waitrose. The fourth is at the junction of Corringham Road and Rotherwick Road. The fifth is on Ingram Avenue and it is something of a puzzle as according to an early map this area was fields in 1910! Perhaps it was moved from elsewhere at a later date?

Most Suburb post boxes were erected during the reign of King George V (1910-1936). These boxes have a crown and plain GR cipher without a 'V' (Pic. 2).

We only found two pillar boxes from the reign of King George VI (1936-1952). The one at the junction of Northway and Thornton Way is the only box not situated outside a post office where there is a late collection: 3.30pm on a week day and 10.30am on a Saturday (Pic. 3). The other King George

VI box is behind Lyttelton Road at the junction of Widecombe Way and Vivian Way.

There are only two boxes within the Suburb from the nearly 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II's reign. The great advantage of these is that their aperture is larger so that A4-sized letters can easily be posted. One is at the junction of Hampstead Way and Meadway and was installed some years ago to replace one damaged in a vehicle accident (Pic. 4). The other one on Holne Chase near the junction with Kingsley Way is probably a similar replacement.

These two boxes have 'Royal Mail' embossed on them while all the earlier boxes have 'Post Office'. This change occurred in the early 1990s ahead of the split between the Royal Mail Group and the Post Office. In addition, the post boxes outside the Post Offices in Market Place and Temple Fortune are both large, oval, dual-aperture Queen Elizabeth II boxes.

All the boxes within the Suburb are cylindrical pillar boxes and have fluted caps – a 'pie crust' indentation around them – a design feature to facilitate rainwater run-off.

The names of the various manufacturers are embossed around the black base but are often difficult to read and only the two Queen Elizabeth II boxes include the dates of casting.

As communication becomes increasingly electronic these typically British red beacons remain iconic.

JANE AND MARTIN BAILEY

References –

- The Letter Box Study Group:* www.lbsg.org
- 'Find Your Nearest Postbox':* www.postboxes.dracos.co.uk
- Old Ordnance Survey Maps: Kenwood & Golders Hill 1894 & 1915; London Sheet 18; The Godfrey Edition.*

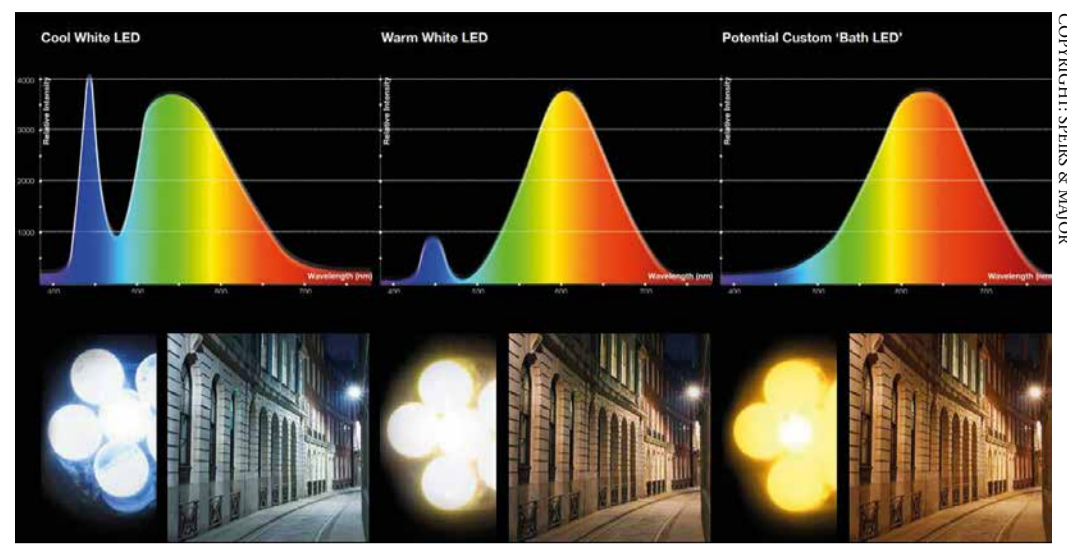
When we were on lockdown and the days were getting longer, residents may not have noticed in the Spring (March 2020) that Barnet replaced the old high-pressure sodium street lights with 4000K white LEDs.

Introducing 'green technology' that will reduce our carbon footprint and save energy as well as money is a good thing; however, these particular lights are 'blue-rich' and a cause of great concern to conservationists and scientists.

There is a broad spectrum of white light available that ranges from 'Extra-Warm White' to 'Cool White'. These particular lights (4000K) are 'Cool White' and contain short-wave blue: this causes glare and also reflects back up from hard surfaces, causing even more light pollution than the lights they replaced. More alarmingly, a significant and ever-growing body of research is showing that lighting in excess of 3000K is detrimental to the environment and health.

The rapid spread of outdoor electric lighting over the past century has caused unprecedented disruption to natural light-cycles. Light at night disrupts the circadian rhythm of the natural world. It affects inter alia the

Is the new LED Suburb street lighting safe?



migration, reproduction and foraging habits of birds, bats and owls; destroys millions of nocturnal insects every night, affecting pollination and thereby fruit, flower and crop production; and disturbs the photosynthesis and seasonal phenology of plants and trees, affecting their health. The whole delicate balance of the ecosystem on which we depend is affected. Turning night into day is not a good thing.

The new bright white LED lights that are appearing in streets and public places all over

the world have a strong blue component in their output. As the colour temperature (range of radiation coming from the light) decreases it becomes less blue-white and warmer. The colour temperature is measured in degrees Kelvin (K). 3000K or less is called 'Warm White' light, and 4000K and above 'Cool White'. 3000K to 4000K is often called 'Bright White'.

Lighting of 2700K (used in Britain in many conservation areas), remains within the spectrum of white light but is warmer and brings wavelengths

down to safer levels. Brightness, and therefore vision, are not affected. In fact, as there is less glare and reflection than with 4000K, lighting of 2700K is safer as it allows for better night vision.

Barnet will already have made substantial financial savings and vision will have been improved by changing from high-pressure sodium lights to LEDs. Residents may like to consider whether it is appropriate for the Council to introduce these lights to our streets without consultation.

ISABELLE FICKER



Pic 1: King Edward VII Post Box



Pic 2: King George V Post Box



Pic 3: King George VI Post Box



Pic 4: Queen Elizabeth II Post Box

PHOTOS: JANE & MARTIN BAILEY

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