**BLUSTONS**

[1 contribution](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1392670#contributions-banner)

**Overview**

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1392670

Date first listed:

02-May-2008

Statutory Address:

BLUSTONS, 213-215, KENTISH TOWN ROAD

**Map**

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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1392670.pdf (opens in a new window)](http://mapservices.HistoricEngland.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/353866/HLE_A4L_Grade%7CHLE_A3L_Grade.pdf)

The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 20-Aug-2020 at 15:44:46.

**Location**

Statutory Address:

BLUSTONS, 213-215, KENTISH TOWN ROAD

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

Greater London Authority

District:

Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference:

TQ 28947 84802

**Reasons for Designation**

Blustons is designated for listing at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* a rare survivor in London of an arcade shop front, a once common format, which is also notable for its size in proportion to the size of the shop floor; \* a 1931 shop front in Vitrolite with three-dimensional lettering and extensive glazing which emulates the architect-designed shops of the period; \* the mixture of Art Deco sunbursts, neo-classical mouldings and Moderne materials evidences the emulation of different West End styles of the 1920s and 1930s, once typical of shops in suburban high streets.

**Details**

798-1/1/10361 KENTISH TOWN ROAD 02-MAY-08 213-215 Blustons

II Shop, 1931, for Samuel and Jane Bluston, with later alterations. Upper storeys have been refurbished and are not of special interest.

SHOP FRONT: The 1931 shop front comprises a black Vitrolite fascia, with a Deco-style stepped up central section framing the word 'BLUSTONS' which is announced in white, three-dimensional, capital letters in a bold, blockish typeface. Flanking this, placed at diagonal angles, are the words 'COATS' and 'GOWNS' and the whole is edged in a timber surround painted red. Three of the fourteen Vitrolite panels have been replaced. Beneath this is a plain lower fascia band above the most dramatic component of the ensemble: an arcade of window display cases that allow shoppers, protected from the elements, to browse a large number of goods on display. The arcade takes up over half of the floor space of the plot - a remarkable proportion that was commonplace in shops in the 1930s. The double-fronted shop has two side display windows and a third central cabinet at the rear of the arcade area backing onto the shop itself; there is a fourth cabinet - an island display window - in the centre of the shop front. The arcade floor is black and white chequered marble and there are traces of where the threshold was once marked 'Blustons'. The display cases are edged in chrome surrounds but there are no glazing bars between the large panes of plate glass. Large expanses of glazing, particularly curved or bent glass, were very fashionable in the 1930s but still quite expensive. The use of separate panes without glazing bars appears to have been an clever and economical way for this sururban shop to replicate the bent glass windows of exclusive West End shops in the 1930s that could better afford such innovations. The display cases next to the walls contain decorative panelling in classical designs with Art Deco style sunburst fanlights and mirrors. The shop front also contains remnants of an earlier façade, namely pilasters and consoles to each side of the fascia. There are further Vitrolite panels facing the lower parts of the pilasters. Stallrisers are simple wood panels.

SHOP INTERIOR: The original counter and shelving have been removed, but the interior retains simple mouldings creating panels along the walls. The original pay-booth, a simple wooden partition, survives as do the original glazed doors bearing gold, blockish lettering on the diagonal reading 'BLUSTONS'. The upper storeys were not inspected, but are known to have been rebuilt in the late C20 and therefore not of special interest.

HISTORY: Jane and Samuel Bluston, Jewish emigres who arrived in Britain from Russia in the early C20, established a drapers shop in Stoke Newington after working in the East End tailoring business. Success led to a total of eight branches opening including Oxford Street, Hoxton Street, Kingsland High Street, Mare Street and this one, in 1931, in Kentish Town; this shop first appears in the Post Office Directory of 1933. The Kentish Town Road shop remains in the proprietorship of the Bluston family and is the only branch still trading, the others having closed in the 1950s and 60s.

Blustons occupies the ground floor of a building which has been completely refurbished in its upper storeys in recent years. The original building dated from the Georgian development of Kentish Town and appears on a map of 1801. This has been greatly altered since, however, and the 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows a larger structure on the site. From the mid-1870s, the ground floor was converted to a shop and occupied by 1910 a George Arnold, pawnbroker. Fragments of the ground floor of this phase of building - namely the pilasters and consoles flanking the 1930s shop front - survive.

The display arcade is a rare survival of a largely inter-war trend for vast display cases and covered areas for browsing, even in shops with a modest floor space. Indeed, the arcade shop front at Blustons takes up over half of the surface area of the shop. The devotion of a large proportion of space to window display rather than shop space is characteristic of commerical practice in the 1930s, but this is an exceptional example. Many of the shops that used arcades or island display cases were department stores or large shops, sometimes with several floors of additional retail space (Joseph Emberton, for example, included an island display case as part of his shop for Lotus & Delta shoes, New Street, Birmingham, in 1928 and this was emulated by Lilley and Skinner, Dolcis and Marks and Spencer in their branches on Oxford Street in the 1930s). Smaller shops might use a slender island display case to lure in customers but the arcading was fairly limited. Yet at Blustons, the arcade is the showpiece of the shop and the largest component of the retail space available. It has special architectural interest for the size of the arcade in relation to the shop, as well as for its rarity as a surviving example of what was once a common type of shop front that has now largely disappeared from the high street. It is one of very few remaining examples in London, all others having been removed due to a need for greater sales rather than display space or concerns about the misuse of arcades after shopping hours.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: Blustons is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* a rare survivor in London of an arcade shop front, a once common format, which is also notable for its size in proportion to the size of the shop floor; \* a 1931 shop front in Vitrolite with three-dimensional lettering and extensive glazing which emulates the architect-designed shops of the period; \* the mixture of Art Deco sunbursts, neo-classical mouldings, and Moderne materials evidences the emulation of different West End styles of the 1920s and 1930s, once typical of shops in suburban high streets.

**Legacy**

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:

504216

Legacy System:

LBS

**Legal**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing