

# Former Police Station and Courthouse, including stable and harness room, railings and lamps

## Overview

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1130397

Date first listed:

13-Aug-1998

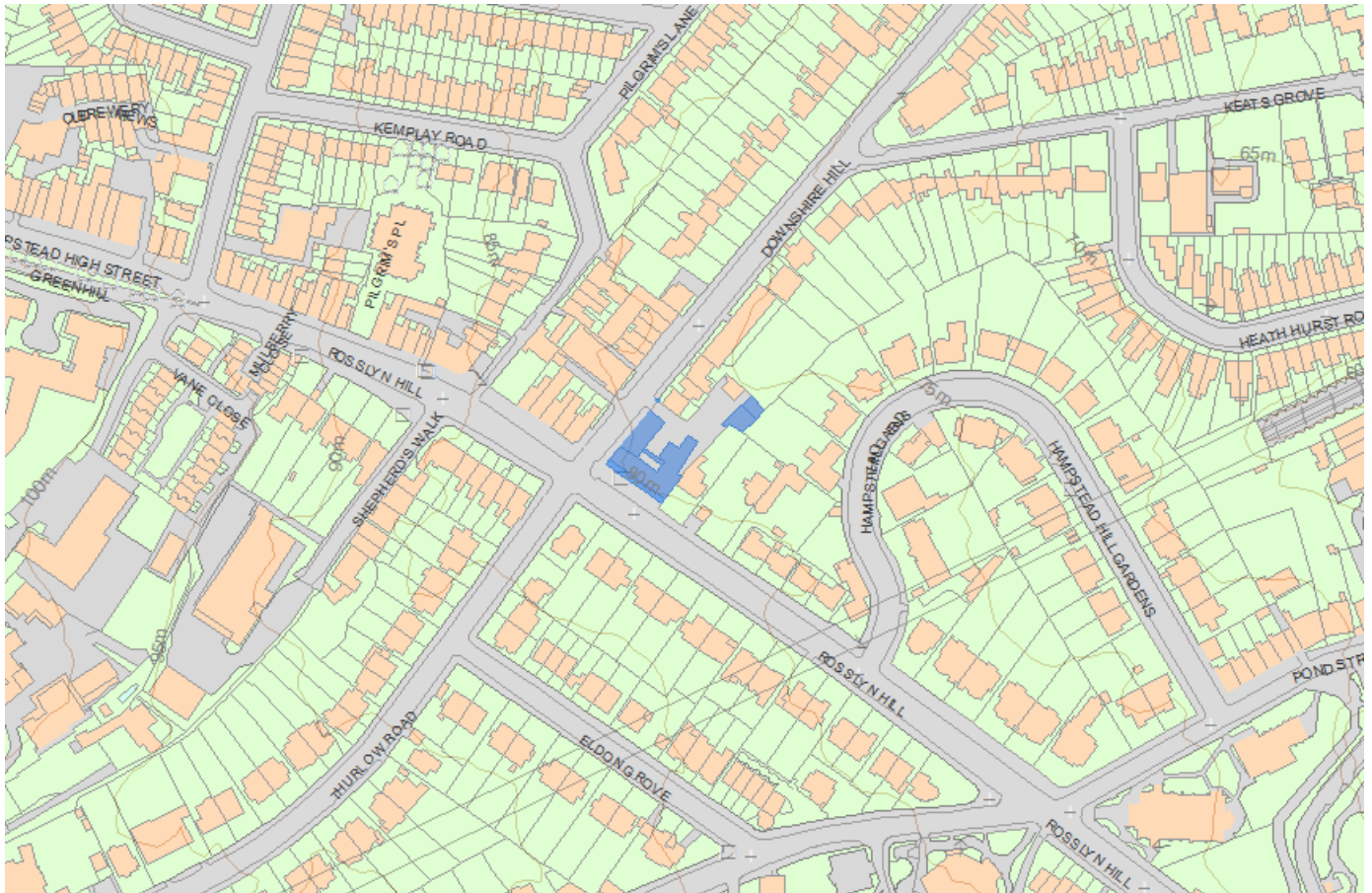
Date of most recent amendment:

14-Feb-2018

Statutory Address:

Rosslyn Hill & Downshire Hill, Hampstead, London, NW3 1PD

## Map



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## Location

Statutory Address:

Rosslyn Hill & Downshire Hill, Hampstead, London, NW3 1PD

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

County:

Greater London Authority

District:

Camden (London Borough)

**Parish:**

Non Civil Parish

**National Grid Reference:**

TQ2686585549

## Summary

Former Police Station and Courthouse, including stable and harness room, railings and lamps, 1913, by John Dixon Butler, surveyor to the Metropolitan Police.

## Reasons for Designation

The former Hampstead Police Station and Courthouse, including stable and harness room, railings and lamps, is listed at Grade II, for the following principal reasons:

**Architectural interest:**

\* A bold and assured composition of considerable civic presence, the strict uniformity of the pedimented principal elevation offset by the picturesque elements of the entranceway and courthouse, built to a high standard in good quality materials; \* Intricately planned to provide separate areas for the different primary functions of the building, with careful consideration of the requirements of the various parts; \* The hierarchy of spaces is expressed in the internal detailing, and the stairs, in particular, reflect the status and character of the different areas; \* The high-status of the courthouse is manifest in the internal joinery and plasterwork, and the courtroom has an extensive scheme of panelling and furniture; \* The police station is plainly detailed internally, but has architectural features, such as the rounded angles of the walls, and its plan form, which reflect its function.

**Historic interest:**

\* An early example of a combined police station and courthouse, and possibly the first to provide facilities for dealing with juvenile suspects; \* An excellent example of the design capabilities of John Dixon Butler, one of the most accomplished Metropolitan Police architects

**Group value:**

\* With the listed K6 telephone box which stands in front of the building, forming a small-scale civic ensemble.

## History

The Hampstead Police Station and Magistrates' Court was designed in 1912 by John Dixon Butler, Architect and Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police, and opened in December the following year. It was an early example of a combined police station and petty sessions court, and was one of the first courts to include facilities for juvenile offenders. It remained in its original use for just short of a century, closing in 2013.

The police station was the third iteration of such in Hampstead following the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829, providing a large, multi-purpose facility. The freehold for the site on the corner of Rosslyn Hill and Downshire Hill was acquired for £6250 in 1909, and two pairs of semi-detached buildings were demolished to create the large plot. There is an incomplete set of plans of the building at the Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre, which specify the accommodation to be provided in the station and court. The former comprised administrative offices, men's and women's cells, detention room, surgeon and matron's room, a parade room for 60 men, four-stall stable loose box and harness room (detached), quarters for a married inspector and constable, and quarters for 30 single men. There was also bicycle parking, an ambulance shelter, and facilities for cleaning and drying uniforms, storage and dining. Within the courthouse, in addition to the courtroom, there was a juvenile offender's examination room –

believed to be the first example of its kind, magistrate's room, clerk and solicitor's rooms, and public waiting rooms.

From the plans it is clear that the functions of the building were physically separated internally, and were accessed from separate external entrances. The Rosslyn Hill range was largely dedicated to use by the police, holding the main police station facilities on the ground floor, the two sets of lodging quarters and dining facilities on the ground and first floors, and ancillary accommodation in the basement. The Downshire Hill range held the courthouse and associated facilities on the ground and first floors; it also had private store rooms in the basement, separate from the police accommodation. There was an external covered stair, enabling prisoners to be moved directly from the charge room to the court. The second floor, also in police use, held the large staff dormitory. The routes of circulation were carefully considered and cleverly laid out, and the success of the scheme is evidenced by the fact that many of the principal functions remained in their original spaces, despite the repeated renovation of the building.

Changes in the operation and organisation of police stations resulted in a number of alterations to the building, the greatest of which is the insertion of internal doorways to unify, and enable passage between, the separate areas of the building. Although the original layout remains discernible, particularly given the existence of Dixon Butler's plans of the basement and ground floor, the alterations have lessened its clarity. As part of the reconfiguration, a stair has been inserted to connect the courtroom lobby and the former flat on the ground floor, and the stair to the first-floor flat has been removed. Other changes to the plan include the reconfiguration of the police station lobby and CID office, the subdivision of wide corridors to form separate passages, the reconfiguration of the large association cell into two, and the insertion of additional cells in the former basement parade room. The external covered walkway, part of the original scheme, has been reconfigured and reclad in modern materials.

John Dixon Butler (1861-1920) was appointed Architect and Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police in 1895, following the retirement of his father, who had held the post since 1881. Dixon Butler was articled to his father, John Butler, and hence had an excellent education in the design and planning of police-related buildings; he also studied at University College London and the Architectural Association, and was elected a fellow of the RIBA in 1906. He began his tenure with the police assisting Richard Norman Shaw with buildings at Scotland Yard and Cannon Row, and the Arts and Crafts influence of the older architect resonates in Dixon Butler's oeuvre. He designed over 200 police stations and courts, of which only 58 are known to have survived; 21 of those are listed.

## Details

Former Police Station and Courthouse, including stable and harness room, railings and lamps, 1913, by John Dixon Butler, surveyor to the Metropolitan Police.

**MATERIALS:** constructed from red brick laid in Flemish bond, with glazed brick to the basement and plinth, with limestone dressings, slate roofs and brick chimneystacks.

**PLAN:** the building is roughly U-shaped and stands on a corner plot, with the principal elevation facing south-west onto Rosslyn Hill, and the return wings facing north-west onto Downshire Hill, and projecting into the rear courtyard. The building abuts 26 Rosslyn Hill on the south-east, and has been linked to it internally.

The building's functions were originally separate from each other internally, though in the period since, openings have been inserted to allow passage across the building. The ground floor of the Rosslyn Hill range was the core functional area of the police station, containing the main offices and charge room, with cells in the rear wing. The basement contains rooms originally for maintenance of uniforms, fuel storage and the police mess and parade rooms (subdivided). There were two sets of living quarters within the building, intended for the married inspector and a married constable; these are at the southern corner of the ground and first floors, each have three main rooms and were originally accessed separately from Downshire Hill. The first floor contains the main dining room and kitchens, which have been extended above the cell wing. A large dormitory, intended to sleep 30 men, is on the second floor, and appears to have been partially subdivided. The Downshire Hill range is largely occupied by the courthouse and related accommodation; the public entrance leads to various waiting rooms and offices on the ground floor, and the courtroom itself is on the first floor. A covered corridor links the charge room directly to the courthouse.

There is a detached block within the rear courtyard which is understood to have originated as a stable and harness room, later converted to offices.

EXTERIOR: the principal elevation faces south-west onto Rosslyn Hill, and is two storeys plus attic and basement. It is symmetrical in its general form, though on the right-hand side a picturesquely grouped set of features offset the otherwise rhythmical elevation; a short flight of steps leads to the double panelled front doors, which stand within a richly moulded architrave with an open pediment supported on elongated console brackets, with a large keystone beneath the inscription 'POLICE'. Above, there is an oculus lined in moulded stone, and to the right, a canted bay window rises from the basement. To the left of the door, the ground and first floors have five closely-spaced windows beneath a large central pediment, with two wider window bays to the far side. Windows, generally, are six-over-six-pane sashes, which, on the ground floor have moulded, eared architraves. There is a wide entablature with a dentil cornice above. The central pediment has three pairs of four-over-four sashes with a keyed oculus above. To either side, projecting from the pitched roof, are dormers with paired sashes in moulded, pedimented architraves. The basement has an open light void running the length of the elevation, with iron railings supported on tapering square piers; those piers to either side of the front door hold iron lanterns.

Elements of the principal elevation are continued on the return: the dentil cornice, stone banding, dormers, and architraves, though the composition itself is less regular, with large areas of blind brickwork. On the left is a single doorway in a moulded architrave with a keystone and over-light, giving access to the two sets of lodgings for married staff; on the first floor are two narrow windows, and paired windows in the attic gable. To the left is the doorway to the courthouse, which forms the centrepiece of the Downshire Hill façade. Double doors stand within a moulded architrave with a cornice above and a label before the pulvinated frieze stating 'COURT'. The doorway has a semi-circular hood-mould with an exaggerated keystone, breaking into nine-light mullioned and transomed window above, with leaded glazing. Left of the main entrance are two single and one tripartite windows in stone surrounds, and to the extreme left, at basement level due to the falling ground level, is the staff entrance to the court: a single panelled door in a moulded architrave with a keystone. The roofline drops above the courthouse, and the pitched roof has a large lantern lighting the first-floor courtroom. To the left of the elevation is the vehicle entrance to the rear yard; gates are supported on piers of glazed bricks with stone bands and caps.

The courtyard-facing elevations are more utilitarian, and are obscured by later-C20 additions, including the rebuilt covered stair between the charge room and court, a brick lean-to, caged walkways, and fire escape stairs. Window openings have gauged brick lintels and are varied in size, with many original sashes remaining. The series of cells in the rear wing has distinctive narrow horizontal windows; above, the first floor has been extended. Various window openings and doorways have been blocked; these are evident in the brickwork.

INTERIOR: the interiors have been modified on a number of occasions over the course of the life of the building, and although the general planning has survived, original interior fixtures and fittings have survived less well, particularly in those parts of the building intended for police use.

There is a legible difference between the interior treatment of the police-occupied parts of the building, and the courthouse. The police station is largely devoid of historic internal fixtures, though is likely to have begun as a relatively utilitarian space, perhaps with the exception of the entrance lobby. Moulded window architraves survive throughout, as do simple internal doorway architraves. Within the areas where suspects were held, that is, the charge room, cells and detention rooms, and matron's and surgeon's room, the angles of the internal walls are rounded. The cells retain heavy metal doors with hatches, possibly dating from the mid-C20. The stair, which rises the height of the building, is a simple iron construction with a modern handrail and is tiled to dado height with white tiles with green borders; these have been painted over. The entrance lobby and CID office have been reconfigured, and the original 'association cell' divided into two single cells.

In the basement, the plan form is largely intact, notwithstanding the late-C20 subdivision of the parade room to create additional cells. The former bicycle store and ambulance shelter, originally accessed from the rear yard, have been incorporated into the general accommodation, and there has been the subdivision of a corridor and the former mess and drying room. These are utilitarian spaces without notable fixtures or decorative finishes.

The two sets of lodgings on the ground and first floor, originally accessed only from Downshire Hill, each had three principal rooms and a scullery and coal store. The short stair to the ground-floor flat has a heavy moulded timber newel, stick balusters and a moulded handrail. The flats do not contain features related to their domestic use, besides an arched niche to one side of a chimneybreast on the ground floor. Their plan forms remain legible, though the stair to the upper flat has been removed, and access routes created into the courthouse and police station. Also on the first floor are the main dining room and kitchens; this area has modern fittings, finishes and subdivisions, and has been extended over the cell wing.

The courthouse received a greater level of internal treatment and detailing, signifying its high status. The public entrance lobby

and waiting rooms feature high-quality moulded plasterwork, joinery, and parquet and terrazzo floor coverings. Dentil cornices and coving survive above suspended ceilings. The stair between the lobby and public waiting room has a moulded handrail and decorative cast iron balusters; a second stair in the same style, providing a private route of circulation for magistrates and staff, rises from a separate entrance further north on Downshire Hill, leading to the back of the courtroom. The public waiting area has fixed benches and is lit by the nine-light mullioned and transomed window. The courtroom itself has timber panelled walls, a deep cornice with dentils, and is open to the roof, where it is lit by a pitched lantern supported on a steel framework. The jury stand, clerk seating and public gallery are also panelled, and the dock is raised on a dais and bounded by cast iron railings.

**SUBSIDIARY FEATURES:** the former stable block and harness room stand at the north-east corner of the rear courtyard, facing north-west. On the ground floor are a series of doors and windows under slightly cambered, gauged-brick lintels; the left-hand side of the elevation is obscured by a late-C20 extension. Above, on the first floor, are two dormers with pairs of sash windows, and a third dormer the left with an inserted sash, possibly replacing an opening to a hayloft. The building had been converted to offices by 1986, and is not believed to contain any features related to its original use.

## Legacy

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

Legacy System number:

477876

Legacy System:

LBS

## Sources

### Books and journals

Tindall, Gillian, *Two Hundred Years of London Justice: the story of the Hampstead and Clerkenwell Magistrates' Courts*, (2001)

'Obituary for John Dixon Butler' in *RIBA Journal*, , Vol. 28, (1920), 21, 78

'Obituary' in *The Builder*, , Vol. 119, (5 November, 1920), 510

### Other

Building plans, 1912, lodged with the Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre, London

## 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

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