

PENGUIN POOL

LONDON ZOO

- 6 **Regent's Park, London NW1**
Completed in: 1934
Architects: Tecton – Berthold Lubetkin (1901-1990)
-

Perhaps the most instantly engaging and famous of the three London Zoo structures in this guide (see also p. 48 and p. 50). An early project for Berthold Lubetkin and the Tecton Group, it is also a showcase for the potential of reinforced concrete in the hands of inventive experts. The cool, white oval structure, with steps and nesting boxes at the edges, houses a pool crossed by two long, cantilevered ramps that loop and overlap but never touch. This sculptural, magical-looking feat was worked out by Lubetkin in close conjunction with the structural engineers Ove Arup (1895-1988) and Felix Samuely (1902-1959). It was the debut in a series of collaborations between Lubetkin and Arup, mostly in London. These were to include the Highpoint blocks (1935 and 1938, see p. 24), Finsbury Health Centre (1938, see p. 30) and the Spa Green Estate (1949). For Lubetkin, the curving ramps were also a rehearsal for the design of the famous circular staircase landings at Bevin Court (1954), his public housing development in Islington.

The Pool — an avant-garde and theatrical attraction for zoo visitors — was a huge success, with audiences crowding around to view the penguins troop doggedly up and down their 14-metre-long ramps for many years. The experience worked for spectators and aligned with the latest animal welfare thinking of the time, but ultimately turned out less happy for the residents. Among other issues, the concrete of the poolside (originally covered with a gentler rubber surfacing) and the celebrated ramps were not kind to penguin feet. After several cases of an unpleasant infection called bumblefoot, the penguins left Lubetkin's pool in 2004 for an upgrade to Penguin Beach, elsewhere on the premises. As one of London Zoo's diverse collection of listed buildings dating from the 1820s onwards, it has been preserved intact as a quintessential modernist structure, but is currently vacant.



SNOWDON AVIARY

LONDON ZOO

21 Regent's Park, London NW1

Completed in: 1965

Architects: Cedric Price (1934-2003), Frank Newby (1926-2001)
& Lord Snowdon (1930-2017)

London Zoo has a distinguished history of commissioning new buildings. Its diverse estate includes Berthold Lubetkin's Penguin Pool (1934, see p. 20) and Hugh Casson's brutalist Elephant House (1965, see p. 48). All the same, the Snowdon Aviary was a daring departure, representing the coming together of several innovative minds in a moment of 1960s experimentalism in form and technology. The Zoological Society of London approached Antony Armstrong-Jones (Lord Snowdon) to develop an outline design. By this time he was already well known as a versatile photographer, and recently married to Princess Margaret. His choice of architect was Cedric Price, a dandified, provocative figure whose experimental ideas and teaching remain potent today. As plans for the Aviary were developing, Price was also working on the concept of the Fun Palace with theatre director Joan Littlewood. This was to be a modular, endlessly flexible, steel-framed "short-term plaything" given over to the democratic enjoyment of culture by all.

As with many Price projects, the Fun Palace was unrealised but highly influential. The Aviary, on the other hand, did open to the public; it was completed in 1965 after five years of planning, construction and testing with structural engineer Frank Newby. Alongside the Regent's Canal at the northern end of Regent's Park, it has the air of an art installation as much as a functional structure. Using a suspended concrete walkway, visitors share a large uninterrupted space where birds fly, perch and nest. It's a contained environment that retains a clear connection to the outdoors. Or, in the words of a *Pathé* news report on its opening: "a whopping great bird cage for the London Zoo". The Aviary is a 'tensegrity' structure, relying for strength on its external web of tensed steel cables and aluminium netting, stretched over a frame of steel tubes and pyramidal forms. The structure draws on the approaches of Buckminster Fuller, the American architect and theorist well known for his futuristic geodesic domes, with whom Cedric Price had collaborated before. Plans to refurbish the Aviary are being developed by the practice of another friend and admirer of Fuller, Norman Foster.



BARBICAN COMPLEX

30 London EC2
Completed in: 1982
Architects: Chamberlin, Powell and Bon

Probably the most cohesive and best-maintained brutalist development in the country, with residents universally envied by concrete lovers, the Barbican is a huge, gracefully ageing modernist estate that has been decades in the making. Conceived in the mid-1950s and completed in the early 1980s, it still manages to feel like one coherent project, and remains somewhat impenetrable to outsiders. The first residents arrived in 1969, moving into the newly completed, low-rise terrace block, Speed House. In total there are over 2000 homes conforming to 140 carefully specified different plans, embracing flats of various sizes, penthouses, and maisonettes. The most immediately recognisable Barbican forms are perhaps the three immense triangular blocks (Cromwell Tower, Lauderdale Tower and Shakespeare Tower), each over 40 storeys high, with weathered, upward-curving concrete balconies. The complete separation of pedestrians from traffic, the vistas of painstakingly pick-hammered concrete, brown brick and tile, placid lakes and mature greenery, create an aesthetic verging on the utopian.

The Estate was built by the Corporation of the City of London on land devastated by wartime bombing, with the explicit intention of making a sparsely populated central London area residential once again. Chamberlin, Powell and Bon completed the adjacent Golden Lane Estate in 1962 and began planning the Barbican as early as 1955. The envisioned tenants were well-to-do city workers able to pay market rents, rather than those in immediate housing need – very unusual for a post-war public housing development. All homes were constructed to extremely high standards with many specially designed fittings. Today, flats with original internal features, from bespoke joinery and door furniture to Brooke Marine kitchens and Garchey waste disposal systems, are increasingly rare. The Arts Centre was the last phase to be completed, opening in 1982. It gave the Barbican a truly public dimension, providing an art gallery, a library, a concert hall with seating designed by Robin Day, theatres and cinemas. These public areas have clung to a degree of tranquility that is in shorter supply at London's other concrete culture zone, the South Bank.



MONK'S REST

54 Hillside Road, Pinner, Middlesex
Completed in: 1926
Architect: Blunden Shadbolt (1879-1949)

Blunden Shadbolt specialised in creating elaborately ancient-looking buildings from genuinely old recovered material, painstakingly gathered and preserved for the purpose – what we now call architectural salvage. In direct contrast to the clean lines of modernist architecture developing at the time, he constructed a series of Tudor-revival houses in Southern England from authentic, ready-aged ingredients such as moss-covered tiles and heavily-weathered timber. Monk's Rest was first built in 1924 as a display home for London's Ideal Home Exhibition in Olympia, at a time when London's suburbs were expanding and home-ownership was on the rise. The mock-Tudor style was widespread and highly popular in Britain between the Wars, but Shadbolt's unshakeable commitment to a notion of authenticity puts his work in another league. Monk's Rest incorporated wood, tile and brick retrieved from a 15th-century building (Old Friar's House) in Horley, Surrey, and its nostalgic stylings were appreciated by thousands of Ideal Home Exhibition visitors.

When the exhibition closed, the whole structure was dismantled and put up permanently in the Metro-Land suburb of Pinner, North West London. The house is half-timbered, with contrasting patterns of ancient brickwork, leaded windows, and plenty of deliberate unevenness derived from the ancient materials involved. Shadbolt perfected this approach into the 1930s, remaking and installing features like inglenook fireplaces and thatched roofs in groups of houses dotted around the South, especially in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. A related project on a grander scale is Bailiffscourt (1927) in Climping, Sussex. Now a hotel, it was built for Walter Guinness by Amyas Phillips in the style of a medieval manor house, using timber, stone, windows and many other details from the remains of ancient buildings in the area. Ernest Trobridge (1884-1942) was also building with a similar indifference to modernist approaches at this time, although he was less interested in reuse of original materials. His fascinating houses (near Monk's Rest) in Brent, North West London feature battlements, arrow slits, thatched roofs and various other eccentricities.



ST PETER'S SEMINARY

74 Near Cardross, Argyll and Bute
Completed in: 1966
Architects: Gillespie, Kidd & Coia

Gillespie, Kidd & Coia worked as architects for the Roman Catholic church in Scotland from the 1930s, but it was after World War II, with the pressing need to rebuild and develop new towns, that they emerged as prolific designers of modernist Catholic churches. With Andy Macmillan (1928-2014) and Isi Metzstein (1920-2012) defining the practice's approach, the partnership of architect and client continued for three decades and produced daring brutalist buildings like St Bride's (see p. 154), East Kilbride (1963) and Sacred Heart, Cumbernauld (1964).

The Archbishop of Glasgow authorised plans for St Peter's Seminary in 1958, on land in a remote setting north of the village of Cardross on the Firth of Clyde. The self-contained campus was to accommodate a hundred priests in training, including a chapel, lecture theatre, library, refectory and study bedrooms. The complex, a thoughtful contemporary re-working of a traditional religious community, is probably Gillespie, Kidd & Coia's most widely praised work. Sadly, it is far more familiar as a melancholy ruin than a functioning building. Soon after its completion, the Church began to favour a less isolated approach to training priests, and St Peter's closed in 1980 without a clear new purpose. Shortly afterwards, exposed to neglect and vandalism, accelerated decline took hold and, despite passionate efforts, has never been reversed. The interior detail is lost but the building's powerful, looming sculptural forms remain: the main chapel at ground level, with three floors of rooms above, each stepped back in ziggurat form, the vaulted ceilings throughout, and the striking, domed side chapels. The exteriors, mostly bare concrete and brown pebble cladding, share an uncompromising modernist approach with Le Corbusier's Couvent de La Tourette (1961) near Lyon in France, but their ruggedness also acknowledges local building methods. In 2019 the Scottish government announced that, despite its status as a Category A listed building, St Peter's Seminary would be maintained in a state of what it termed "curated decay". It seems that its future as a premature ruin is assured.



KATHRYN FERRY – writer, historian, seaside expert – kathrynferry.co.uk

The Nation's Host: Butlin's and the Story of the British Seaside (2016)

Bungalows (2014)

De La Warr Pavilion / Marina, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex –
Erich Mendelsohn & Serge Chermayeff, 1936

San Remo Towers / Sea Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset –
Hector O'Hamilton, 1935-8

Casino, Blackpool Pleasure Beach / The Sandcastle, Promenade,
Blackpool, Lancashire – Joseph Emberton, 1940

St Peter's Church, Gorleston / Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea,
Great Yarmouth, Norfolk – Eric Gill, 1939

Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre / Belvedere Road, Lambeth,
London SE1 – Robert Matthew & Leslie Martin, 1951

Pagoda beach huts / Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, 1950s

Deal Pier – pier head café / Beach Street, Deal – Sir W. Halcrow &
Partners / Niall McLaughlin Architects, 1957 / 2008

Isle of Man Sea Terminal / Douglas, Isle of Man –
Davidson Marsh, 1965

Judge Business School, University of Cambridge / Trumpington
Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire – John Outram, 1995

Hastings Contemporary (Jerwood Gallery) / Rock-A-Nore Road,
Hastings, East Sussex – Hana Loftus & Tom Grieve, 2012



JENNY FLEMING – Cuozzo Fleming – cuozzo-fleming.com

Must-see project: The Pavilion House / Sydenham Hill, London SE26, 2019

Barbican Estate / London EC2 –
Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, 1982

Golden Lane Estate / Fann Street, London EC1 –
Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, 1962

Ulster Museum (extension) / Botanic Gardens, Belfast –
Francis Pym, 1972

Transport House, Belfast / High Street, Belfast, Northern Ireland – J.J. Brennan, 1959

Elephant and Rhinoceros Pavilion, London Zoo / Regent's Park,
London NW1 – Hugh Casson (Casson, Conder & Ptns), 1965

Penguin Pool, London Zoo / Regent's Park, London NW1 –
Berthold Lubetkin (Tecton), 1934

Highpoint / North Hill, Highgate, London N6 –
Berthold Lubetkin (Tecton), 1935/8

Centre Point / New Oxford Street, London WC1 –
Richard Seifert & Partners – George Marsh, 1966

1 Kemble Street (Space House) / London WC2 –
Richard Seifert & Partners – George Marsh, 1968

Royal College of Physicians / St Andrews Place, London NW1 –
Denys Lasdun, 1964

Renovation of Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward
Gallery / Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, Lambeth,
London SE1 (GLC Architects Department, 1968) – Project
architect: Richard Battye, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, 2018

No.1 Poultry (unbuilt design) / London – L. Mies Van der Rohe,
late 1960s



BEVIS HILLIER – author and journalist

Co-founder of the Thirties Society, forerunner of the 20th Century Society

Art Deco of the 20s and 30s (1968)

Decorative Arts of the Forties and Fifties: Austerity / Binge (1975)

Adelphi Theatre (1930 rebuild) / Strand, London WC2 –
Ernest Schaufelberg, 1930

Strand Palace Hotel / Strand, London WC2 – Deco additions by
Oliver P. Bernard, 1928 (now removed – some saved by the
Victoria & Albert Museum)

Odeon Cinema Redhill / Station Road, Redhill, Surrey –
Andrew Mather, 1938

De La Warr Pavilion / Marina, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex –
Erich Mendelsohn & Serge Chermayeff, 1936

Natural History Museum, East Wing extension / Cromwell Road,
London SW7 – W. Kendall & Rolland Greatrex, E. Bedford
(Ministry of Public Building and Works), 1975

Daily Express Building / Fleet Street, London EC4 –
Ellis and Clarke & Owen Williams, 1932

The Shard / London Bridge Street, London SE1 –
Renzo Piano Building Workshop, 2012

**M16 building / Albert Embankment, Lambeth, London SE1 –
Terry Farrell, 1994**

Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre / Belvedere Road, Lambeth,
London SE1 – Robert Matthew & Leslie Martin, 1951

Hoover Building / Western Avenue, Perivale –
Wallis, Gilbert and Partners, 1933



A House for Essex / Black Boy Lane, Wrabness, Essex –
FAT Architecture & Grayson Perry, 2015

**30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin) / London EC3 –
Foster + Partners, 2004**

Eltham Palace (Deco additions) / Court Yard, London SE9 –
Seely & Paget, 1935

Broadcasting House / Portland Place, London W1 –
George Val Myer & F J Watson Hart, 1932

Lloyd's Building / Lime Street, London EC3 –
Richard Rogers Partnership, 1986

Park Lane Hotel (Sheraton Grand London Park Lane) / Piccadilly,
London W1 – Adie, Button & Partners, 1927

Chestergate House (as in 1970s) / 253 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London SW1 – Sir John Burnet, Tait & Partners, 1962

JONATHAN SERGISON – Sergison Bates architects – sergisonbates.com

Must-see project: Ruthin Craft Centre / Park Road, Ruthin, Denbighshire, Wales, 2009

Economist Plaza / St James's Street, London SW1 –
Alison & Peter Smithson, 1964

Kettle's Yard extension / Castle Street, Cambridge –
Leslie Martin & David Owers, 1970

The Sugden House / Devereux Drive, Watford, Hertfordshire –
Alison & Peter Smithson, 1956

**Red House / Tite Street, Chelsea, London SW3 –
Tony Fretton Architects, 2001**

The Lawns, Student Halls of Residence, University of Hull / Harland
Way, Cottingham, East Yorkshire – Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, 1967



ANNE WARD – writer – ilike.org.uk

Way Out West: A Guide to the Hidden Joys of the West Country (2017)

Nothing To See Here: A Guide to the Hidden Joys of Scotland (2010)

A House for Essex / Black Boy Lane, Wrabness, Essex –
FAT Architecture & Grayson Perry, 2015

Barbican Estate / London EC2 –
Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, 1982

Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre / Belvedere Road, Lambeth,
London SE1 – Robert Matthew & Leslie Martin, 1951

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (Metropolitan Cathedral of
Christ the King) / Mount Pleasant, Liverpool –
Frederick Gibberd, 1967

St Bride's Roman Catholic Church / Whitemoss Ave, East Kilbride,
Glasgow – Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, 1964

Minack Theatre / Porthcurno, Penzance, Cornwall –
Rowena Cade, 1932

Preston Bus Station / Tithebarn Street, Preston, Lancashire –
Keith Ingham & Charles Wilson (BDP), 1969

Newcastle Civic Centre / Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne –
George Kenyon, 1967

Italian Chapel (Orkney POW Chapel) / Lamb Holm, Orkney –
Prisoners of War, 1945

**Midland Hotel / Marine Road West, Morecambe,
Lancashire – Oliver Hill, 1933**

