



## DID YOU KNOW...

Hunt Property Services reveals eight fascinating historical facts about Repton Park



Hayley Hunt - Director

As the leading estate agent for Repton Park in Woodford Green, and also being long-time residents ourselves, we know that it's so much more than just a luxury gated development, with the grounds and many of its buildings steeped in history.

Here we shine a light on some little-known facts about what was once the Claybury Estate and more latterly the Claybury Hospital.

1. The first documentary reference to Claybury dates back to 1270 when it was a free tenement owned by Barking Abbey. The name Claybury (also known as Clayberry in some earlier records)

is thought to derive from the nature of its soil. However, during the Middle Ages the site was occupied by the de la Clae family, which could also be the source of the name.

2. Notable owners of Claybury include Sir Thomas Whit, founder of St John's College Oxford, Sir Oliver Cromwell, uncle of the Lord Protector, and John Fowke, Lord Mayor of London. The name of Thomas Knyvett also shows up as an owner in documents recording a royal visit from Queen Elizabeth I no less.

3. In 1786, the estate was purchased by James Hatch, originally from Bromley-by-Bow, who'd made his fortune as a malt distiller. By 1791 the old gabled house had been demolished for a new Georgian mansion, complete with stables at the rear, that is still very much in evidence today.

4. Renowned landscape architect Humphrey Repton was hired by Hatch to advise on the

gardens and grounds. A highly proficient watercolour artist, Repton prepared sketches of his designs for Claybury Hall that were presented in a red leather binder. This custom became known as Repton's Red Books, with Claybury one of the few surviving intact.

5. Upon Hatch's death, and without a male heir, the estate passed to his daughter, who upon her death and without issue, passed it to a nephew. By 1884 the estate was in the hands of a distant relative, William John Rous, who after three years decided to sell the 250-acre site to the county of Middlesex for the princely sum of £36,000.

6. The estate was deemed 'a most favourable site for a large asylum' which it duly became in 1893. Designed by George Thomas Hine after winning a competition to find a suitable architect, the subsequent build required the top of a hill to be cut off to facilitate movement, while adhering to an 'echelon plan' that allowed uninterrupted



views of the surrounding countryside, plenty of ventilation and natural light. A strong emphasis was also placed on the creation of a pleasant environment, so hence the finely decorated recreation hall and chapel that is still admired today.

7. For 104 years Claybury Asylum occupied the site, which in its heyday housed 2,500 patients, more than 500 staff, plus a dairy, bakery and kitchens. Such was the push for self-sufficiency there was even a farm until

1966, which was initially stocked with 400 pigs, 80 cows and later 30 sheep which were brought in to mow the lawns rather than for their meat.

8. In 1997 the site was acquired by developer Crest Nicolson and was transformed into the beautiful housing development you see today, which includes luxury apartments in sympathetically restored hospital buildings as well as a variety of new homes. As part of the planning agreement, the site was split in half, with 150 acres returned to the local authority as Claybury Woods, which is now enjoyed by the public and Repton Park residents alike. ■



huntpropertyservices.co.uk  
@huntpropertyservicesltd  
732 Chigwell Road, IG8 8AL  
0208 502 7667