

## Context

9 North Avenue is situated in Stoke Park, in the Stoke area of Coventry. It is also known as 'Elm Bank'.

## Visits

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017

## Assessment – Discussion

9 North Avenue is situated in Stoke Park. Stoke Park is an area unique in Coventry, laid out as a housing estate in 1865 with sandstone walls on the southern, eastern and northern side along with three gated entrances leading on to Binley Road and Brays Lane. The roads inside the estate were laid out in an unusual curvilinear pattern with the land divided into a series of large plots.



*9 North Avenue, July 2017*

The building of 9 North Avenue was built in the 1870's, shortly after the estate of Stoke Park was created. It was named Elm Bank because of a large number of elm trees. It is a good example of Victorian suburban architecture, and the building includes unusual murals.

In 1884 it was inhabited by Edward Ralphs, a ribbon manufacture, and in 1889 H. Williamson of Stoke School Board lived there. In 1905 the property was lived in and owned by Siegfried Bettmann (1863-1951), who was one of the co-founders of the Triumph Cycle Company in Coventry.

German-born Bettmann first came to England in the early 1880s, working in London for several

years. Here he met fellow German Mauritz Schulte and they subsequently became interested in the cycle industry. In 1889 they both established the Triumph Cycle Company in Coventry - the home of the British cycle trade. Here they soon began marketing their own 'Triumph' safety cycles of high quality. As the business began to grow, new extensive works were built at Priory Street in 1894, and the following year, Bettmann married Annie Meyrick. Together they made a home in Stoke Park. It



*Unveiling of blue plaque by The Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Hammon, September 2015*



*Part of the North Avenue mural*

was also around this time that Bettmann became a British Citizen. In 1902, Bettmann and Schulte decided to begin the manufacture of motorcycles to add to their already successful line in cycles.

Bettmann became evermore involved in local politics and in 1913; he became Mayor of Coventry - the first non-British subject ever to do so. The outbreak of War the following year meant Bettmann was ostracised, was forced to step down as mayor, and was stripped of directorships and honours.

Siegfried Bettmann lived at 9 North Avenue from 1905 until he died in 1951 (except for a brief period during World War Two). Ramsey McDonald, Prime Minister 1921-31 twice visited Siegfried at Elm Bank on one occasion in May 1925.



*Blue plaque, 9 North Avenue, September 2015*

In 1952 the building was bought by Coventry Education Committee and used as a teachers club and resources centre until that facility moved in 1974 to former Cheylesmore Council School in Mile Lane, which is now called Elm Bank instead. In 1975 alterations were made by Education Committee

The building has more recently become home to Coventry City Council teams including the Learning and Behaviour Support Service, the Education Psychology Service and the Integrated Primary Mental Health Service.

In 2015 a blue plaque was erected by the Coventry Society that marks this property as the home of Siegfried Bettmann.

## Assessment – Criteria

Assessing the heritage asset against the Local List criteria; the heritage asset is valued locally for the following:

**Historic:** 9 North Avenue has a strong historic interest associated with Siegfried Bettmann, the founder of the Triumph companies and Lord Mayor of Coventry, who lived in the house from 1905 to 1951. German-born Bettmann is important as the first non-British subject to be Lord Mayor and also as a philanthropist.

**Artistic.** 9 North Avenue is a relatively complete example of a Victorian suburban villa with associated outbuildings and one of the earliest houses on the Stoke Park estate. One ground floor room on the east side is unusually lavish and is decorated with a series of classical murals painted on canvas panels.

**Community.** This house is an important and integral part of Stoke Park, and as home to the founder of the Triumph companies, important as a part of Coventry's motoring manufacturing history.

**Age.** The house was built in the 1870s.

**Rarity.** While there are a number of suburban Victorian villas of this type in Coventry, 9 North Avenue is relatively unaltered, with unusually high quality decoration and was home to the founder of one of the city's motor manufacturers. It therefore is a rare survival of a home of a noted industrialist and civic leader of the city.

**Integrity.** Many of the original details survive internally and externally along with ancillary buildings.

**Group value.** As part of the Victorian residences built as Stoke Park, this has a group value with these, and as part of the history of Stoke.

**Coventry's identity.** This house is a very important part of the city's industrial heritage, with its close links to the motoring industry and being the home of an important civic leader.

## Conclusion

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for local listing are fulfilled. It is recommended that 9 North Avenue, Stoke Park is locally listed.

## Reasons for recommendation decision

9 North Avenue is recommended for local listing for the following principal reasons:

- Historic interest: for its association with the German-born Siegfried Bettmann, founder of the Triumph companies, Lord Mayor of Coventry and philanthropist who lived in the house from 1905 to 1951.
- Being a relatively unaltered example of a Victorian gentlemen's residence.
- Community interest: for its importance to the identity of Stoke and the industrial history of Coventry

This report dated: 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017

<http://www.coventry.gov.uk/localist>

[heritage@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@coventry.gov.uk)

