

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE ROOKERY

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	THE ROOKERY
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Lambeth (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.421414 Longitude: -0.11836754 National Grid Reference: TQ 30929 70835 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000829 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

An early C20 public garden of c 1ha, purchased by public subscription and developed in the grounds of an early C18 spa house.
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Well House (or Streatham Wells as it is referred to on John Rocque's map of 1746) was built in the early C18 to house visitors to the spa which developed around the mineral springs discovered at Streatham in 1659. The adjacent house, The Rookery, was rebuilt and enlarged to accommodate the numerous visitors; it was demolished in 1912.

In 1911 the 3 acre (1.25ha) site was threatened with redevelopment and was purchased for £3,075, raised by public subscription. The Rookery was presented to London County Council in 1912; it was then added to Streatham Common and opened as a public park in July 1913.

In 1923 the London County Council published a description of The Rookery which included an Old English Garden, a wild garden, a white garden, and two 'majestic' cedars on the lawns.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Rookery, which is fenced in, lies to the south of Streatham Common and to the north-west of Norwood Grove (qv); the boundary to the west lies adjacent to Covington Way from which the gardens are screened by a belt of trees and shrubs. The ground falls away to the south-east where there is a grassed area, shown as an orchard on the OS 1st edition map of 1864; a number of old fruit trees still survive. To the north-east is a yard now used for storage.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to the site is from Streatham Common North, through high wooden gates. A second entrance is provided from the north-east and there are small gates leading from Norwood Grove and Covington Way.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The grounds slope from the north-west to the south-east, and from the principal entrance the visitor can walk along tarmac paths laid between lawns planted with shrubs and specimen trees, with views to the south-east over the gardens to Norwood Grove.

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A C19 terrace runs from north-east to south-west with seats along the length and a wooden shelter, dedicated to Mr Covington, the chairman of the acquisition committee, at the south-west end.

A flight of stone steps descends down a second grassed terrace where, to the west, one mature cedar of Lebanon survives. Additional steps give access to a lower terrace which is decorated with a pergola. The paved path of the third terrace continues to the south-west and then north, where it joins the upper terrace near the shelter, and to the east where it leads to the water garden and a rockery planted with varied rhododendrons, heather, and spring bulbs. To the south-east, the former kitchen garden of The Rookery has paved geometric paths, a sundial, and a central pool with formal beds around it as well as the site of the 1659 mineral well.

Steps lead through the southern wall of the old kitchen garden to the white garden, where, as the name suggests, only white flowers are grown. This was described in *London Parks and Open Spaces* published by London County Council in 1924 as a unique feature in London parks; it is still (1997) a popular place for people to sit quietly.

REFERENCES

J J Sexby, *The Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London* (1898), pp 230-1 Sir W Besant, *London South of the Thames* (1912), pp 264-5 S Sunderland, *Old London Spas* (1915), pp 127-30 LCC, *London Parks and Open Spaces* (1924), pp 80-2 The Streatham Society, *Pictures From The Past* (1983), pp 14-15 M Brace, *London Parks and Gardens* (1986), pp 98-9
Maps J Rocque, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark*, published 1746
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1864 2nd edition published 1893 3rd edition published 1913
Description written: April 1997 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: July 2001

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.