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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CARSHALTON HOUSE (ST PHILOMENA'S SCHOOL)

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Name:	CARSHALTON HOUSE (ST PHILOMENA'S SCHOOL)
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Sutton (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.364863 Longitude: -0.16856615 National Grid Reference: TQ 27596 64458 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000798 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

Remains of C18 pleasure grounds, some of which may be attributed to Charles Bridgeman.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Carshalton House was built in the late C17 for Edward Carlton, a tobacco merchant, a few years before he was declared bankrupt, at which point the property became (for six months) the residence of Dr John Radcliffe. After the death of Radcliffe in 1714, Carshalton House was bought by John Fellowes (Bt 1718) who became a sub-governor of the South Sea Company in 1718. In 1720 Fellowes paid Charles Bridgeman (d 1738) the sum of £138 and in the same year spent over £200 on trees.

Although his estates were confiscated in 1721 when the South Sea Bubble burst, Sir John continued to live in Carshalton House until he died in 1724. Sir John's younger brother, Edward, bought back the Carshalton estate.

Between 1749 and 1752 the estate was leased to Admiral Lord Anson who had circumnavigated the globe and was to become the First Lord of the Admiralty. From 1752 until 1847 the estate was used as a private residence for its numerous owners which included Thomas Walpole between 1761 and 1781. It was leased to the Board of Ordnance as a preparatory school for cadets and later, in 1863, was sold to the Reverend (later Dr) Alfred Barret who moved his existing school from North Cheam to Carshalton. A year after Dr Barret's death in 1887, his son Charles moved to Wandsworth and the estate was put up for sale; it was eventually purchased by the Daughters of the Cross, a Roman Catholic Education Order founded in Liege in 1833. The sisters soon established St Philomena's College, a 'High-class Boarding School', and the elementary school of St Mary's at Carshalton House. The buildings were enlarged, and development of the site has continued up until the present (1997) day with an extension to the gymnasium in the walled garden and a new science block on the site of the kitchen garden.

St Mary's is now a state-run primary school while St Philomena's has places for nearly 1000 girls over the age of eleven, but no longer has facilities for boarders.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Carshalton House lies 250m to the west of the centre of the small town of Carshalton in the London Borough of Sutton. The 11ha site is bounded to the west by Shorts Road, to the south by Carshalton Road, to the south-east by Pound Street, and to the east by West Street. Residential properties line all the roads.

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The London to Sutton railway line runs along the northern boundary, beyond which is St Joseph's school and playing fields built on land that formally belonged to Carshalton House.

The site rises slightly but steadily from north to south and is enclosed by late C17/C18 brick walls; evidence for earlier stone foundations has been recorded during archaeological excavations (Skelton 1995). The high walls (listed grade II) of red brick with red brick or rendered plinths extend a mile in length and have been repaired in places.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is from Pound Street past a lodge (listed grade II). The early C18 double-fold carriage gates (listed grade II) are hung from a pair of gate piers with crowned lions' heads from the Fellowes' coat of arms. The overthrow is a modern replacement. The main entrance is now only unlocked in an emergency; pupils and visitors to the school enter via three entrances in Shorts Road to the west. A gate near the Water Tower (listed grade II) is also kept locked but is opened to allow pedestrian access at specific times.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Carshalton House (listed grade II*) was probably built between 1690 and 1700 (incorporating earlier fabric), with additions and internal remodelling being undertaken during the C18. Extensively extended in the C19 and C20 for the convent and latterly St Philomena's School, the mansion stands on the west side of the site with views from the east front across the dry lake to the Water Tower. The House, constructed from brown brick with profuse red rubbed brick dressings, is of three storeys with a hipped slate roof. It has a central entrance porch with Corinthian columns and pediment. The east front is similar but narrower, with a central doorcase and similar steps and rails (c 1690-1700).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds historically lay to the north, east, and south of the House and were focused on the lake which although now (1997) usually dry, retains its serpentine shape, with grassed banks and a tree-filled island to the south. The lake, created by 1781, replaced an earlier formal canal and extends for c 150m north-east from its head, terminating at the Sham Bridge. This three-arched bridge, made from brick decorated with flint and minerals, enhances the view from the Hermitage to the north-east boundary as well as providing support for the path leading around the northern end of the lake to the Water Tower.

The Hermitage (listed grade II*), a single-storey building constructed from chalk and brick, was built c 1750. Sometimes referred to as the 'Grotto' or, as in the VCH (1912), 'a stone-built garden house', is situated at the south end of the lake near the springhead. Three openings in the centre of the building have Gibbs surrounds and vermiculated pilasters supporting a Portland stone frieze which was added in the C19. These lead to interlinking passages and a round chamber. There are two flint-dressed wings with open niches, added c 1859-83. The whole is covered with a turf-topped earthen mound with a newly (1995) restored wooden lantern over the circular chamber.

The approach to the House from the main entrance curves west before turning northwards for c 200m between the south lawn to the east, the southern boundary wall, and the C18 walled garden to the west. The area between the drive and the southern boundary wall is planted with trees and shrubs with some interesting clumps but few mature trees survive. Winding paths within the boundary planting were first accurately recorded c 1815 (estate map) but are now grassed over. The drive continues up to the east front of the mansion where it divides, one branch continuing to the north, another leading to steps at the top of a terrace to the east, and the third leading to a smaller path which leads down a slope at the head of the lake to the Hermitage. The south lawns slope gently for c 100m towards the dry lake with a large spreading yew tree growing c 40m south of the Hermitage. To the south-east of the Hermitage, along the south-east boundary with Pound Street, the remains of a Wilderness shown on the estate plan of 1815 survive as boundary plantings; a footpath links the main gate with St Mary's primary school.

In front of the House the flight of stone steps leads east from the terrace to the lawn and the C20 raised causeway over the bed of the lake to the Water Tower (listed grade II*). The Water Tower, Water House, or Water Pavilion as it has been variously titled was constructed before 1721, probably by Sir John Fellowes' architect, Henry Joynes. One storey high with a square tower three storeys high, the ground-floor exterior is brown brick with red rubbed brick dressing. The Water Tower backs onto West Street with the rear elevation continuing the line of Fellowes' estate wall. The sale particulars of 1839 describe the Tower as 'containing well constructed Water Works and a large Reservoir lined with lead from which the top of the Mansion and all the offices are copiously supplied with (drinking) water.' The three pumps which lifted the water were powered by a fourteen-foot (c 4.3m) water wheel, the remains of which survive in situ. The Water Tower also contains: on the north side, a plunge bath decorated

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with C18 Delft tiles; on the south side, an orangery; and on the west side a large room, a garden lounge, with an ornamental ceiling and tall arched openings. This west-facing room originally looked onto the canal and later the ornamental lake.

A path leads 80m north from the Water Tower alongside the boundary wall, where it passes above the Sham Bridge and continues west past, to the north, the C20 covered swimming bath and playing fields, once agricultural land but described in 1815 as forming 'a park like appearance from the house' (estate map). Some 40m north of the House this path joins the northern spur of the drive and continues past C20 convent buildings to C20 gates onto Shorts Road.

Originally two walled gardens were situated to the south of the House. The extant one now (1997) has the school's gymnasium set in it but some old fruit trees survive. The walls are of a similar fabric to the boundary walls and an opening in the south wall, which would have led into the second walled garden, now opens onto a drive which provides a vehicular exit from the school onto Shorts Road.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen gardens as recorded in an inventory of c 1713 and on the 1888 sale map lay between the west boundary wall, the stables, and the walled gardens. Little is known about them and they have now been built over, but excavations prior to development in 1994 recovered evidence for hot beds and other horticultural activity (Skelton 1995).

REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Surrey IV, (1912), pp 179-81 Country Life, 105 (4 March 1949), pp 480-3; (27 May 1949), pp 1254-5 B Jones, Follies & Grottoes (1979), p 328 A E Jones, The Story of Carshalton House (1970) B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London 2 South (1983), pp 646-9 M Symes, The English Rococo Garden (1991), pp 57-61 A Skelton, Excavations around the Estate Wall (1995) [privately printed] A Skelton, Guide Notes for the Water Tower Trust (nd) Skelton and Stevens, Carshalton House, Guide Notes (nd)

Maps Estate map, 1815 (Central Library, Sutton) Estate map, 1834 (Central Library, Sutton) Sale map, 1888 (Central Library, Sutton)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1868 2nd edition published 1896

Archival items Inventory, 1713 (Central Library, Sutton)

Description written: August 1997 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: November 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.