

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ST ANN'S HILL AND THE DINGLE

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ST ANN'S HILL AND THE DINGLE

Name: ST ANN'S HILL AND THE DINGLE

County: Surrey

District: Runnymede (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.399647
Longitude: -0.52920616
National Grid Reference: TQ 02413 67761
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001527
Date first listed: 15-May-2001

Details

Late C18 planting, on the site of a prehistoric hill fort, laid out in the mid C19 with picturesque planting. Opened as a public park in 1928, with early C20 landscaping by Percy Cane.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The eminence now known as St Ann's Hill was used as a fort in the prehistoric period and although this is undated, there have been finds of early Bronze Age through to Roman material, suggesting that the enclosure was used over a long period of time. A license was granted in 1334 by the Bishop of Winchester to perform services in the newly built chapel, dedicated to St Ann, situated on the summit of the hill, then known as Eldebury or Oldbury Hill. In the early medieval period there was a vineyard on the hill, probably on the southern slope to the south of chapel (now the site of a reservoir).

In the late C18 St Ann's Hill was private property belonging to St Ann's Hill House (qv, St Ann's Court), then owned by Elizabeth Armistead, the mistress of Charles James Fox MP (1749-1806). They married in 1795 and were responsible for landscaping works on St Ann's Hill; these included an octagonal summerhouse (dated 1794) in the south-east corner of the site. Mrs Fox's property in 1814 included St Ann's Hill, with plantations in the south-west and south-east corners, and a gravel pit in between them (Plan of Chertsey, 1814). The strip along the north side of the hill included a plantation and Anchor Grove (owned by the Rev J Leigh Bennet), and a piece of coppice and Hanging Grove (owned by Mrs Fox). Mrs Fox also owned the closes to the west of the hill (Plan of Chertsey, 1814). Manning and Bray (1814) described the site in the same year:

near the north end, are three high trees which are seen to great distance all round the Country (a fourth was blown down a few years ago) ... The prospect from this hill is very extensive, and is noted in Sir John Denham's celebrated description of Cooper's Hill, in the adjoining Parish of Egham: "Viewing a neighbouring hill, whose top of late/A Chapel crown'd, till in the common fate/Th'adjoining Abbey fell ...".

The Hill was also described in *Excursions in the County of Surrey* (1821):

the lower parts of [St Ann's Hill] are clothed with wood, but the ridge is almost level after it gets above the enclosures, presenting a delightfully verdant walk ... terminating in two venerable elms ... The prospect here is ... wonderfully extensive ... The Thames

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ST ANN'S HILL AND THE DINGLE

here shows itself to great advantage, making a bold sweep to approach Chertsey Bridge, and intersecting the plain with its various meanders.

After Mrs Fox's death in 1842, the property passed to Lord Holland with St Ann's Hill House. In the mid C19 his widow made a number of improvements and extended the area to which the public were allowed access. A summerhouse was built next to the Keeper's Cottage for refreshments, and The Dingle, the former gravel pit, was landscaped with raised paths, three fishponds, a summerhouse, and a rustic bridge. Further tree and shrub planting and additional paths were added to the hilltop and slopes. The OS 1st edition map (surveyed 1865-70) shows the landscape after the work, with an open clearing on the summit of the hill and planting (mixed deciduous and coniferous) cut through with paths circuiting the hill at various levels. The Keeper's Lodge in the north-east corner of the hill summit is also shown, with the adjacent chapel ruins, and with shrubberies to the north-west and south-west and open ground to the north-east. A summerhouse (the octagonal gazebo) is indicated in the south-east corner of the hill, an icehouse and three ponds in The Dingle, and a summerhouse to the south of the pond in the south-east corner of the site. In 1927 Sir William Berry, the newspaper proprietor, was the owner of St Ann's Hill House, and he gave St Ann's Hill to Chertsey Urban District Council as a public recreation ground. Berry commissioned Percy Cane (1881-1976) to landscape the hilltop and it was officially opened in 1928 by Neville Chamberlain. Cane gave the site a formal architectural treatment, to contrast with the mature trees on the hill. He designed two temples and a terrace balustrade but only the terrace was built and seats were placed at either end instead of the temples. Further seats and paths through the woodland were added at this time. A covered reservoir was constructed on the summit of the hill and the north-east pond in The Dingle was largely backfilled when, in 1927, the West Surrey Water Company obtained the right to dump soil in the ponds (RCHME 1990).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING St Ann's Hill and The Dingle, a total of c 14ha, are located c 1.5km to the north-west of Chertsey, and immediately south-east of the junction of the M25 with the M3. The site is bounded by St Ann's Hill Road to the south, the M3 to the north, the M25 to the north-west, open fields to the south-west, and a track providing vehicular access to the hill to the east. The ground at St Ann's Hill is levelled off at the centre (the site of a C20 reservoir) and then falls steeply on the north, west, and east sides, with a gentler slope to the south. The Dingle on the south slope of the hill is in a hollow. There are extensive views from the higher ground, especially from the terrace on the west side, looking west, and from the north side, looking north. The boundaries are marked by fences.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES St Ann's Hill is approached by a track which leads from St Ann's Hill Road in the south-east corner, up the east side of the site here registered to a small car-parking area on the east side of the hill. This track was part of the old coach road between London and Winchester. A further entrance from St Ann's Hill Road on the south side has a C20 lodge; from here a track leads north up the west side of The Dingle and around the west side of the hill.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS On the west side of the eastern entrance track are the grounds of Southwood (outside the boundary of the site here registered), within which is a one-storey octagonal gazebo with a pyramidal roof (listed grade II). The gazebo is dated 1794 on an ornamental tablet (probably Coade stone) above the entrance and was built as part of the landscaping of St Ann's Hill by Charles James Fox in the mid 1790s. This area was described by Keane (1849) as a 'copse, to the north of the house, [with] a spring of mineral waters, a summer house &c; vases and tablets of poetry are to be seen along the shady walks of that very retired and lovely place'.

A path leads north off the west side of the eastern entrance track, probably following the line of the King's Way from Chertsey to the chapel of St Ann (mentioned in a C14 charter; see RCHME 1990). The path contours up the hill, cutting through the rampart of the hillfort, to a broad path which circuits the hilltop. The fort enclosure (c 4.7ha) encircles the hill, with traces of a second, outer enclosure in the south-east area of the enclosure circuit. The summit of the hill is now occupied by a covered reservoir and has a large grass clearing, with planting around the edge consisting largely of rhododendron shrubberies, with coniferous and some deciduous trees as specimens or in the shrubberies. At the north end of the summit is a group of Sequoias near to the fragmentary ruins of the ancient chapel of St Ann (listed grade II). The ruins consist of stone foundation walls, mainly below the ground, and associated earthworks. Adjacent to the ruins is Reservoir Cottage (formerly Keeper's Cottage, listed grade II together with the remains of St Ann's Chapel), with an adjoining octagonal summerhouse and a tiled mosaic on

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ST ANN'S HILL AND THE DINGLE

one wall. This mosaic was described by Lucy Wheeler, a local historian (MS notes, c 1900) as a 'design in Italian tiles of St Anne with the Virgin-child standing beside her. Above are the arms of Lord Holland with his motto beneath. There are seats for the accommodation of visitors and a rustic table in the midst'. A dome-shaped well known as St Ann's or Nun's Well, stands c 200m to the north-west of the ruins and downslope from it, and on the west side of the summit steps lead down to a terrace, with a wall and viewing platform.

Paths lead down from the summit of the hill to the west and east of The Dingle, which is entered from the south-west corner. The Dingle consists of a grassy clearing, c 150m across and up to 50m deep, with specimen trees in the centre and shrubberies (largely rhododendron) and coniferous and deciduous trees in groups around the edges. There is a pond in the south-east corner, one of the three C19 ponds. The other two ponds and the summerhouse no longer survive (2000).

REFERENCES

- O Manning and W Bray, *The History and Antiquities of Surrey* 3, (1814) *Excursions in the County of Surrey* (1821), pp 199-200
E W Brayley and J Britton, *Topographical History of Surrey* 2, (1841), pp 236-8 W Keane, *Beauties of Surrey* (1849), pp 45-8
C Hall, *Chertsey and its Neighbourhood* (1853), pp 15-17 H Tucker, *The Visitor's Guide and Handbook to St Ann's Hill, Chertsey* (1879)
R Webber, *Percy Cane* (1975), pp 100-01 H J M Stratton, *Chertsey and Addlestone in the Past* (1980), pp 60-1
D McOmish and D Field, *St Ann's Hill and St Ann's Court, Chertsey: 'A Most Romancy Place'*, (RCHME draft report 1990)
Maps Plan of the Manor of Chertsey Beomund, 1814 (Surrey History Centre) Froggett, *Map of Surrey*, c 1825 (in Stratton 1980)
Tithe map for Chertsey parish, 1844 (Surrey History Centre)
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1865-70
Archival items *The Chertsey Scrapbook*, 1827, collected by Robert Wetton (Chertsey Museum) MS description and notes by Lucy Wheeler, a local historian, c 1900 (Surrey History Centre)
Description written: February 2000 Register Inspector: CB Edited: March 2003

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.