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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CANONS PARK

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Name:	CANONS PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Harrow (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.614334 Longitude: -0.29518101 National Grid Reference: TQ1813691988 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001394 Date first listed: 24-Jul-1998

Details

The remaining part of an early C18 landscape park laid out for James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos by Alexander Blackwell, later modified by Humphry Repton, with a kitchen garden redesigned in 1938 as the George V Memorial Garden and formal gardens of c 1910 by the architect Charles E Mallows.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The land which became Canons Park belonged, until the Dissolution, to the Priory of St Batholomew the Great, West Smithfield, the name referring to the gift of land made to the Priory in 1330. In 1543 there was a manor house leased by Hugh Losse, who accumulated much monastic property, and who in 1604 sold the manor of Stanmore the Less to Sir Thomas Lake, Secretary of State to James I.

In 1709 the land was purchased by James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos. His palace was built between 1713 and c 1720 by James Gibbs (1682-1754) and was completed under John Price (d 1736). Robert Benson was also consulted. The estate church, the church of Saint Lawrence, was rebuilt for the Duke of Chandos in 1715 by John James (c 1672-1746). During the same period the grounds were laid out by Alexander Blackwell. In 1747, after the death of the Duke of Chandos, the estate was sold. The house was demolished by 1753 and the materials were auctioned.

The new owner of the estate, William Hallett, built a villa known as Canons House, using some of the materials from the Duke of Chandos' house. The estate remained in Hallett's family until 1786/7. Hallett's villa was subsequently bought by Major Dennis O'Kelly, whose nephew sold it to Sir Thomas Plumer, then Solicitor-General and afterwards Master of the Rolls. Plumer had some alterations carried out to the park by Humphry Repton (1752-1818), although the exact nature of Repton's contribution to the design of the park is unknown. There exists a view of Canons Park by Repton, dated 1805 (CL 1916).

In the C19 the estate passed through various different ownerships. In c 1905 Canons House was acquired by Sir Arthur Phillip Du Cros, the founder and president of the Dunlop Rubber Company, who commissioned the architect Charles E Mallows to carry out extensive alterations to the house and to design formal gardens around it. By 1905 Du Cros had sold off land to the north and south of the estate, mainly for residential development. In 1926, further land to the east of the park was sold for

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residential development, followed by the land to the west in 1928. In the early C20 the railway line to Stanmore was built, running along the present western boundary of the park.

Since 1929 the house with its formal gardens has been owned by what is now the North London Collegiate School. The parkland to the south is owned by Harrow Borough Council, who after the Second World War developed it as a public park with recreation grounds and allotment gardens. The church of Saint Lawrence and the churchyard are owned by the Church of England.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Canons Park lies in the former county of Middlesex, between Edgware to the east and Stanmore to the west, on the east side of the former Stanmore railway line (now Jubilee Line).

The registered site comprises c 50ha of formal gardens and parkland surrounded by housing and other suburban development. The avenues running west from the park towards Marsh Lane, across the railway line, and running east along Canons Drive to Edgware High Street, have been retained.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach to the North London Collegiate School is from Edgware High Street, via an entrance drive known as Canons Drive. The entrance is flanked by two gate piers and the drive, planted with Wellingtonia, runs westwards curving around an oval pond known as The Basin. The drive formed part of the early C18 park layout and used to be (OS 1863) a double avenue planted with Wellingtonia and oak.

There are three other entrances to the public park: one to the south at Whitchurch Lane, one to the south-west at Donnefield Avenue (both mid to late C20), and one to the west at Marsh Lane, giving access to the remains of the C18 western avenue known as Canons Park, planted with oak. In the early C20 this avenue was adopted as the main approach to the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The North London Collegiate School, formerly Canons House (listed grade II), stands at the northern end of the park, forming the main focus of the landscape. The present three-storey building has an irregular elevation, with a smooth rusticated ground storey and Corinthian pilaster decoration. The building still retains the core of the mid C18 Canons House, which was built with some of the materials of the former house demolished in c 1750. The mid C18 villa was substantially rebuilt in the C19, and was recast in stone by Charles E Mallows (1864-1915) in c 1910 for the new owner, Sir Arthur Phillip Du Cros.

To the north of the principal school building, new school buildings were added in 1939-40 by Sir Albert Richardson, who also designed the drawing school of 1957. The music school of 1971 and the Headmistress' house of 1977, at the end of Canons Drive, are both by John O' Neilly, a pupil of Richardson. Part of this late C20 development is the swimming pool in the far north-west corner of the park.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The formal gardens lie within the grounds of the North London Collegiate School, on the south and east sides of the main building. They were designed by Charles E Mallows in c 1910. Mallows' garden to the north of the school was covered by additional school buildings in the mid to late C20.

The south-east front of the main building opens onto a rectangular balustraded garden (walls, terrace, and balustrades listed grade II), of symmetrical design and laid with crazy paving. In the middle is a square pond which at present (1998) is filled in and grassed. Central steps lead to the tennis court, laid out in the late C20 and partly covering Mallows' garden in this area. Beyond the tennis court, on an axis with the central steps, stands a circular temple (listed grade II as part of the balustraded garden) of c 1910 by Mallows, which serves to lead the eye towards the former south avenue. The balustraded garden continues around the north-east side of the school. Parallel and below this is a herbaceous border beyond which lie the playing fields. Looking north along the length of this level is a semicircular stone screen designed to hold a seat to look down the length of the herbaceous border.

The irregular-shaped pond situated on the north-west side of the main school building dates from the early C18 layout of the gardens. On the west side of this pond stands a small summerhouse of the late C20, replacing an earlier garden building.

PARK The southern part of the registered parkland which includes allotment gardens and playing fields has a mid to late C20 functional path layout. Along the eastern park boundary is a woodland walk running through The Spinney, which dates back to Alexander Blackwell's early C18 layout of the park. The remains of the southern parkland such as the raised banks formerly flanking both sides of the avenue running towards the Church of Saint Lawrence, and along the woodland walk through the

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Spinney, are still visible. The avenue survived into the mid C20 but of the medieval church of Saint Lawrence (listed grade I), situated in the south-east corner of the park, only the west tower remains. The church was rebuilt by John in 1715 and dedicated in 1720, to become the Duke of Chandos' private estate chapel. In 1735-6 a mausoleum was erected to the north of the church to house a monument to the Duke of Chandos and his two wives.

The parkland on the north-east side of the school is in use as sports grounds, with two tennis courts adjacent to the school buildings. A lime avenue planted in the mid to late C20 runs eastwards from the main school building in the direction of The Lake, formerly known as Seven Acres Pond.

After the Duke of Chandos' house was demolished in c 1750, several external architectural features were removed from the park including a lead sculpture of George I, possibly standing in The Lake, which went to Leicester Square (now demolished); and a stone sculpture of George II which went to Golden Square (listed grade II).

KITCHEN GARDEN Some 70m south of the school, situated in the public park area, is a rectangular walled area. The brick walls (listed grade II) are the remains of the early C18 kitchen garden which formed part of James Brydges' layout for the garden at Canons Park. There are three entrance gates to this walled garden, namely on the north, west, and south sides. Since the early to mid C20 the kitchen garden has been called the George V Memorial Garden, with a formal layout of 1938 featuring a central square pond surrounded by a raised terrace with steps, formal flower beds, and a pavilion on the east side of the garden.

Some 65m north of the kitchen garden, surrounded by trees, some dating from the C19, stands an early C19 temple (listed grade II) with supporting walls and a raised paved area on the front. South of the kitchen garden lies an unusual rectangular area dating back to Alexander Blackwell's early C18 design for the park which shows a grove planted with hawthorn.

REFERENCES

Country Life, 40 (28 October 1916), pp 518-26 Building News, (6 October 1911) B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London 3 North-West (1991), pp 295-8

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1863-4 2nd edition published 1920

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1863-4 2nd edition surveyed 1891, published 1896 3rd edition published 1914 1947 edition

Illustrations H Repton, View of Canons Park, 1805 (reproduced in CL 1916)

Archival items Sale particulars, 1887 [copy on EH file]

Description written: May 1998 Amended: August 1998 Register Inspector: FD 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.