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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WANSTEAD PARK

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Name: WANSTEAD PARK

County: Greater London Authority

District: Redbridge (London Borough)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

County: Greater London Authority

District: Waltham Forest (London Borough)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.566673
Longitude: 0.033516479
National Grid Reference: TQ4104087270
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000194
Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

Remains of formal gardens, landscape park and lakes, the form of which dates mainly from the late C17 to early C19, on the site of a C16 deer park. Developed late C19 as a public park and early C20 as a private golf course, with associated sports facilities.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1545 a deer park was enclosed from the royal hunting forest at Epping, and included a hunting lodge built in 1499. The park included the plateau and the scarp that comprise the present (early C20) park and was bounded to the east by the River Roding. By 1549 the lodge was a ruin and it was replaced by a new house, enlarged in the late C16 by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who used it to entertain Queen Elizabeth in 1578.

The 300-acre (125ha) estate was purchased by Sir Josiah Child (1630-99) in 1673-4, who had lived there since 1667. Pepys commented that it was a 'fine seat, but an old-fashioned house' (Jeffery 1997). Sir Josiah started a massive programme of garden works, laying out a garden around the old house, with walled gardens of fruit trees, walnut plantations, and tree planting in the park. The structure of the gardens, the initial large-scale use of water, and the pattern of rides and avenues are likely to date from this period. The centrepiece of the avenues to the west was the approach from Leytonstone, and that to the east was the triple avenue along the Long Walk.

Sir Josiah died in 1704 and work was carried on by his son Richard, later Viscount Castlemain, 1718, and Earl Tylney, 1732. The initial work (1706-13) was a development of his father's work and was designed by George London (d 1714). The work included formal parterres, two large canals, a bowling green, wilderness areas, two mounts, clearings and seats, a large orangery, and a banqueting house. The gardens and old house were illustrated in bird's-eye views by Kip c 1713. Shortly afterwards, dramatic changes were made to the house and gardens in the period 1715-35. The old house was demolished and replaced by a Palladian mansion designed by Colen Campbell. The late C17 formal gardens were removed and replaced by a lawn. The Ornamental Water was made with the associated Fortification (a sham fort with battlements and guns on an island). The result of this work is depicted in John Rocque's Plan of the House Gardens Park & Plantations of Wanstead, 1735. A third phase of work was carried out between 1735 and Lord Tylney's death in 1750 (depicted in Rocque's Survey of London, 1744-6). This included irregular paths through the woodland to the east of the house and a series of ponds on the south side of the house (the Square, Perch, Heronry, Formal and Reservoir Ponds, and the Great Lake).

John, second Earl Tylney (d 1784) inherited the estate in 1750 and was responsible for building the Temple and Boathouse Grotto and for producing a less regular and formal landscape. The estate passed to the nephew of the second Earl in 1784 and then, in 1808, to Catherine Tylney Long who married William Wellesley Pole, a nephew of the Duke of Wellington, in 1812. William took the name of Pole Tylney Long Wellesley, and Catherine became Catherine Tylney Long Wellesley. Extensive alterations were carried out on the landscape in the period 1813-18, mostly under the guidance of Humphry Repton (1752-1818) and with planting by Lewis Kennedy. The work included plantations around the lakes, reshaping the Ornamental Water, a parterre to the west of the house, and draining the Reservoir Pond. In 1818 Lewis Kennedy made a report on the design and planting of an American Garden (recorded by J C Loudon (1822) as 'one of the largest ... in the kingdom'). Following the work, Repton described Wanstead as 'one of the most magnificent places in this country'. Unfortunately the extravagance of Catherine's husband resulted in the loss of her fortune and in 1822 the contents of the house were auctioned to satisfy the creditors. The house was demolished and the materials sold in 1824. Catherine died the following year. The parkland was let for grazing, mature trees were felled, and the gardens were neglected.

In 1882 the Corporation of London purchased part of Wanstead Park and it was opened to the public as part of Epping Forest, which includes Bush Wood. The remaining land was retained by Lord Cowley and much of the land on the edges of the park and estate was sold off to developers in the late C19 and early C20. The land at the centre of the park (including the site of the house and gardens) was sold in 1920 and became the Wanstead Golf Club, in which use it remains. The Corporation of London started a programme of replanting in the 1970s but many trees were lost in the 1987 and 1990 storms. In 1992 the Corporation of London initiated a ten-year management plan of their part of the park.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wanstead Park, c 129ha, is located to the east of Leytonstone, south of Epping Forest and north-west of Ilford, in the London Borough of Redbridge. The public park and the golf course are bounded by Overton Drive to the north-west, Warren Road and Redbridge Lane West to the north-east, the River Roding with the North Circular (A406) to the east, the City of London Cemetery to the south-east, Northumberland Avenue and Woodlands Avenue to the south-west, and Blake Hall Road (A114) to the west. Bush Wood is bounded by Bush Road (A114) to the north, Blake Hall Road and the gardens of the houses on Belgrave Road to the east, Lake House Road to the south-east, Harrow Road (B161) to the south, the east end of Ferndale Road and the gardens of the houses of Montague Road to the south-west, and Bushwood to the north-west. The ground at Wanstead has a slight slope, falling generally from west-north-west to east-south-east, towards the course of the River Roding. The boundaries of the park are marked by a mixture of wooden and metal fences, and open boundaries.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are pedestrian entrances to the public park from Blake Hall Road to the west, from Warren Road to the north-east, and numerous entrances from the south, including four channelled entrances, direct access from the rear gardens of the houses along Woodlands Avenue, and open access (where no barriers exist) along Northumberland Avenue. There are vehicular access points from Warren Road (which leads to the Temple and Keepers' Lodge), from Park Road to the south-west and from Wanstead Park Avenue to the south-east (to the Keepers' Lodge). The Golf Club is approached from Overton Drive, directly into a car parking area on the north side of the former stable and outhouse courtyard, the buildings of which now form the Clubhouse. A track leads southwards from Overton Drive, down the west side of St Mary's churchyard to the sports ground and the Basin. This track and the one from Warren Road to the Temple existed in the C18 but the remaining access points and paths are largely early C20 ones, associated with the public park. A pair of early C18 Portland stone gate piers (listed grade II*; outside the boundary of the site registered here) stand at the entrance to Overton Drive from Blake Hall Road, marking the former main entrance to Wanstead Park from the west. Access to Bush Wood can be gained from the surrounding roads.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The early C18 house was demolished in 1824 and not replaced. The site of the house is marked by a large indentation in the ground within the golf course, which runs from c 100m south-south-east to c 250m south-south-east of Wanstead Golf Club House.

To the south of Overton Drive is the north side of a courtyard of late C18 outbuildings (coach house and stables), now the Wanstead Golf Club House (listed grade II; c 50m east of St Mary's with Christ Church). It consists of two-storey brick buildings around the sides, with round-headed archways through to the courtyard from the north and south. Additional one-storey buildings have been added to most sides and a modern (late C20) extension has been added to the south.

Also on Overton Drive and c 50m to the west of Wanstead Golf Club House is St Mary's with Christ Church (listed grade I), completed in 1790. It was built by Thomas Eamwick in a neo-classical style.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The landscape is divided between the golf course (which itself is in two parts), the public park, and Bush Wood (the last two described under PARK below). The main part of the golf course (c 32ha) lies in the north-west third of the site, and includes the site of the former Wanstead House, gardens and the main C18 entrance from the west. The rest of the course (c 6ha) is divided by Warren Road and lies to the north of Wanstead Park.

Entering the site through the courtyard of Wanstead Golf Club House, a path leads south from the building and then circuits a bowling green (Wanstead Bowls Club) before emerging on to the main part of the golf course, which lies to the south, west and east. Immediately to the west are tennis courts, and a second bowling green with a pavilion, and beyond these to the west is a sports ground, with further tennis courts along the west side and a pavilion to the north (used by Linkside Tennis Club, Wanstead Cricket and Hockey Club and the Lakeside Play Group). Adjoining the tennis courts to the west is the Basin, a large octagonal lake (4.09ha), close to the north boundary of the site. Along the east side of the sports ground is a drive, which leads north onto Overton Drive. To the west of the drive is a car park and to the east the churchyard of St Mary's (c 2ha), with the church at the northern end, surrounded by wrought-iron spear railings (together listed grade II). The churchyard has a collection

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of early C19 and Victorian monuments, including the memorial to Joseph Wilton RA (1803, listed grade II), in Portland stone and in the form of a Greek aedicule.

The Basin, aligned on an east/west axis, was, up until the early C20, part of the main approach from the west. It was formed in the 1720s and replaced two late C17 semicircular basins with a causeway in between. From the 1720s the carriage drive circuted the Basin to the south and north. Radiating out from the Basin were avenues and rides cut through the surrounding plantations. The west/east axis continued to the east, through the centre of the house and beyond through the gardens and into the pleasure grounds and park.

A further area of sports ground lies on the west side of the golf course, adjoining Blake Hall Road and is entered from there. This includes the pitches for the Blake Hall Sports and Leisure Centre with the Redbridge Rugby Football Club.

The remaining ground is laid out as an 18-hole golf course with tree planting between the holes. The site of the house and the earthwork and archaeological remains of the gardens are within the course. The site of the house is apparent as a large indentation in the ground and to the west of this is the site of Repton's quartered 'Union Jack' parterre (1810s, replacing the late C17 and C18 forecourt), still visible as earthworks. To the south of this is an earthwork bank, which runs west in a straight line from the south side of the house site and then skirts the Basin, levelling off at the south-west edge. This marks the south side of the levelled approach from the west. To the east of the house site are the earthwork remains of the gardens, which in the late C17 consisted of parterres on either side of a garden canal (on the same axis as the Basin, c 500m to the west), with an orangery to the north, and a circular bowling green at the east end of the canal, with a pavilion to the north. In the early C18, the canal and formal gardens were removed and replaced by a lawn linked to the house by a terrace. The C17 walled gardens to the south-east of the house were removed in the mid C18 and replaced by open parkland. To the north of the gardens (mostly outside the boundary of the registered site described here, having been developed for housing in the early C20), were formal pleasure grounds, with a Wilderness, walks, clearings and a small amphitheatre. Throughout the gardens to the east of the house vistas along clearings, terraces or avenues linked the features and provided the framework of the layout. The main axes ran west/east, north/south and along the garden boundaries, and these were linked by lesser vistas and avenues which ran diagonally between them.

Within the golf course there are also the remains of medieval ridge and furrow and Roman antiquities were found in the area in the C18 and C19. The detached part of the golf course to the north-east occupies level ground and is largely open, with areas of mostly C20 tree planting.

PARK The public park, known as Wanstead Park (56ha), wraps around the south and east sides of the main part of the golf course. Wanstead Park includes a chain of lakes which extend along the south and east perimeter, the pleasure grounds, the site of the kitchen garden and much of the park. Until the early C19 the park was much more extensive, including further land to the south, south-west and north, and with extensive rides and ornamental planting over the common land and forest to the north, west and south. After being leased as agricultural land from the 1820s, much of this land was developed for housing in the late C19 and early C20, but areas survive such as Wanstead Flats to the south of the houses in the Aldersbrook area, and George Green (both outside the boundary of the registered park described here).

In the centre of Wanstead Park is the Temple (c 1760s, in present form by 1779, listed grade II), a two-storey building with a four-columned pedimented Tuscan stone portico and lower wings to each side. The Temple is placed on a mound which screens the ground floor from view from the west front, which terminates a vista from Heronry Pond up an avenue (reinstated in the 1990s as a double avenue of sweet chestnut). In the late C18 it was used as a poultry house and by the early C19 as a keeper's lodge with a garden and a pheasantry. On the north side of the enclosure on the east side of the Temple is a building, now known and used as the Keepers' Lodge.

To the north of the Temple is The Grove, which is cut through by the Long Walk, on the same west/east axis as the Basin and the centre of the former house and gardens. The Long Walk is a wide, grassy clearing which leads eastwards down to the late C17 Canal (again on the same west/east axis as the Basin, 1km to the west). The Canal is joined to the Ornamental Water on the west side, the two having been merged in the C18, but juts out as a formal canal to the east. The east end of the Canal adjoins the east boundary of the park. To the north and south of the Long Walk are the North and South Mounts (George London,

early C18), visible on Kip and Knyff's view (c 1713). They were later integrated into the less formal mid C18 landscape. They survive as mounds but are now overgrown with trees. The Mounts are marked by yew hedges planted in the 1990s on the lines of the original hedges. The remains of the early C18 Great Amphitheatre lie c 100m north-west of the North Mount and are also marked by a yew hedge.

The Ornamental Water (6.4ha of water and 4ha of island) is an extensive lake set in woodland which runs south-east/north-west for 1km close to the east boundary. The southern end is quite narrow, with a meandering shoreline. This section is divided by the Canal from the northern end which is wider and has three large islands: Rook Island (c 300m north-east of the Temple), with the Fortification island c 30m to the north-east, and Lincoln Island c 30m to the north. At the northernmost point of the Ornamental Water is a pump house which draws water from the River Roding. The River Roding runs c 50-100m to the east of the Ornamental Water (the east boundary of the registered site described here), and is canalised along some sections. On the west shore of the lake, c 70m to the south of the Canal, is the Boathouse Grotto (c 1762, listed grade II), which faces north and acts as a focal point of views across the Ornamental Water. It consisted of a boathouse below and domed chamber above but was severely damaged by a fire in 1884 and now survives only as a shell. The Ornamental Water was made with the associated Fortification (a sham fort with battlements and guns on an island) in the early C18. The fort no longer survives but its island site remains with its bastions. The result of this work is depicted in John Rocque's Plan of the House Gardens Park & Plantations of Wanstead, 1735 and Rocque's Survey of London, 1744-6. In the mid C18 the lake edge was altered to provide a more natural outline, which included merging the Canal into the lake.

Along the south side of the park is a string of lakes, which run from west to east for 1km: Shoulder of Mutton Pond (1.42ha), shaped as its name suggests and with an informal edge; Heronry Pond (3.4ha), a long thin pond lined with concrete and with two large islands; and Perch Pond (2.23ha), a long thin pond with a group of small islands by the Wanstead Park Avenue entrance. Lakes were formed on this site in the early C18 and were altered to approximately their present form in the mid C18. To the west of the Shoulder of Mutton Pond lies Reservoir Wood, on the site of Reservoir Pond, which was formed in the early C18, altered mid C18 and drained by Repton in the early C19. To the west of Reservoir Pond was the early C18 Great Lake (outside the boundary of the registered park here described), which became part of the garden of the C19 Lake House, and was then drained in the early C20 and developed for housing as Blake Hall Crescent, Windsor Road, Richmond Way, Belgrove Road and Lake House Way.

The remaining ground in the park consists of areas of mature woodland (predominantly oak and sycamore - some of the oaks dating from the C17 and C18 - and elm scrub), with large open areas of grassland with scattered trees to the south of the Temple and around the southern ponds, and belts of trees along the southern boundaries. A late C20 cafe stands on the east side of the path between the Heronry Pond and Perch Pond. The C18 design still provides the framework for the footpath system but a network of smaller C20 paths have been laid out in addition.

Bush Wood, c 33ha, lies to the west of the public park, on the far (west) side of Blake Hall Road. It is an oak/hornbeam wood, with a mature canopy, and a number of large C18 sweet chestnuts. The line of the C18 approach from the west is along Bush Road, which cuts through Bush Wood and forms the northern boundary of the site described here. An avenue, known as the Lime Avenue, cuts diagonally across the Wood, south-west to north-east, from Ferndale Road to the south-west across to Blake Hall Road. It was renovated in the late C20 with standard limes and a new copse was planted at the western end. The lime avenue formed the diagonal approach towards the Basin from the south-west, mirroring one from the north-west, now lost due to C20 development.

KITCHEN GARDEN The C17 kitchen gardens were located to the south-east of Wanstead House, immediately north of Heronry Pond. In the mid to late C18 the walled productive gardens were moved to the site of former orchards and vineyards adjacent to the Ornamental Water. No walls or glasshouses survive at either site.

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Description written: January 1999 Amended: March 2000 Register Inspector: CB Edited: May 2000

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.