

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MANOR HOUSE GARDENS

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

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| Name: | MANOR HOUSE GARDENS |
| County: | Greater London Authority |
| District: | Lewisham (London Borough) |
| Parish: | Non Civil Parish |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 51.455817 Longitude: 0.0054541787 National Grid Reference: TQ 39433 74889 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000821 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987 |

Details

A late C18 private garden, since 1902 a public park.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Since the C15 the owners of the site now (1998) known as the Manor House Gardens have been well documented (Birchenough 1971). The lease of 1736 describes the site as having a house with a courtyard, coach house, and privy, with pleasure grounds as well as a kitchen garden and an orchard. By 1749 William Coleman, a wealthy merchant specialising in the West Indian Trade, had taken possession of the site. He left the property to his nephew Thomas Lucus, a director of the South Sea Company, who is thought to have rebuilt the mansion c 1771-2. It is probable that Lucus also made alterations to the garden. From 1796 the Manor House and grounds were owned by the Baring family and the description of the property at this time includes pleasure grounds, lawn, shrubbery, and a sheet of water. Between c 1884 and 1899 the house was used as a military academy. In 1901 the owner, Sir Francis Thornhill Baring (later Lord Northbrook), sold the property to London County Council who in the following year opened the grounds to the public. The site remains (1998) in use as a public park.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Manor House Gardens are situated in south-east London in the township of Lee, c 1km south-east of Lewisham, c 700m north of Hither Green, and c 2km south of Greenwich Park (qv). The c 3ha site is bounded to the north by Old Road; to the east by the backs of houses on Aislibie and Brightfield Roads; and to the south by the backs of houses on Taunton Road (made on a former paddock of Manor House). To the west the site is bounded by Manor Lane, and to the north-west by the garden walls (listed grade II) of the former kitchen garden, now part of the grounds of neighbouring Pentland House. The site falls from north to south, the southern end being crossed by the River Quaggy flowing from east to west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the gardens is via a modern gateway situated on Old Road to the north, c 2m to the east of the entrance to the mansion. This entrance is shown on the OS 1st edition map of 1875 leading to buildings, probably the stables and coach house; these had been removed by 1916 (OS).

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There are additional pedestrian entrances around the site; from Brightfield Road to the east, Taunton Road to the south, and three in Manor Lane to the west, most of which are shown on the OS 3rd edition map of 1916.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Manor House (listed grade II*) was built c 1771-2 for Thomas Lucas and was probably designed by Richard Jupp (d 1799; Cherry and Pevsner 1983). Built of yellow stock brick with low pitched slate roofs, Manor House is an elegant five by three-bay structure on a rusticated stone basement and with a stone entablature. The north front has a taller, projecting three-bay centre and a four-column, one-storey porch, now glazed. The south (garden) front is of similar style and proportions but with a full-height bow in the centre. Used since the early C20 as a public library, the Manor House is separated from the gardens by late C20 iron railings. The main entrance is from Old Road and leads through modern wrought-iron gates hung from C18 rusticated square stone piers (listed grade II) into the forecourt, which is enclosed within low walls of multicoloured bricks (listed grade II) with a second gateway to the west.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The c 3m wide tarmac path from the main entrance to the gardens leads south along the boundary fence to the east of the Manor House. A central grass bed c 50m long and a bed for plants c 10m long decorate this area and retain the design first shown on the OS 3rd edition map (1916). After c 75m the path divides, becoming a winding perimeter path following, with a few minor additions, the path system recorded in 1875 (OS). A branch to the west passes the south front of the mansion. The mansion is separated from the garden by iron railings and in summer trees and shrubs screen much of it from the garden. A seating area paved with concrete slabs has been made to the south of the railings. The main path continues south, with a range of C19 single-storey buildings to the east; these are now used for storage, shelter, and public toilets. A brick wall of uncertain date separates the houses in Aislibie Road from the garden. To the west, below the south front of the mansion, is a mid C20 hard tennis court and a large expanse of lawn. The lawn, which was featured in the 1796 sale particulars, is now (1998) enclosed within mesh fencing; it is bordered with mature and semi-mature trees and slopes gently for c 100m down to the lake.

The oval lake, c 100m from north-east to south-west, is thought to have been made by Thomas Lucas from a piece of boggy ground (Birchenough 1971). At the western end, screened by a crescent of shrubs and trees, was a small boathouse (first recorded on the OS map of 1894), removed late C20. The small island to the east of the site of the boathouse was not recorded until 1916 (OS).

After c 90m the perimeter path divides again; to the west it enters the lawn via a small iron gate and follows the north-west bank of the lake to the west side of the gardens. The main path continues south around the east end of the lake, passing the pedestrian entrance from Brightfield Road to the east. After c 50m it divides again, the path to the west following the south bank of the lake and the main path continuing south, crossing the River Quaggy by way of a small footbridge ornamented with domed topped piers and iron railings acting as a parapet.

South of the river a small triangle of ground of c 0.5ha is all that survives of the paddock recorded in 1875, the remainder having been developed by 1894. The path continues south across the triangle to the Taunton Road entrance. The land to the east is made over to hard tennis courts and a children's play area. A major part of the grassed area to the west of the path is taken up with another hard tennis court. A footpath runs west from the main path, following along the brick boundary wall between the gardens and the houses in Taunton Road. Small trees decorate the grass between the path and the river. After c 100m the path crosses a bridge over the river which is bordered by small trees and shrubs and contained within ornamental iron railings. The path then joins up with the western perimeter path (emitting from the entrance in Manor Lane) and a branch from the southern lakeside path. After c 30m it once again divides, the branch to the east linking up with the lakeside paths. The main path continues north along the western boundary, the southern part of which is enclosed by iron railings, the northern part by the brick wall separating the garden from the houses in Manor Lane. Some 70m south-west of the Manor House the path follows the boundary of what was the kitchen garden, incorporated into the grounds of Pentland House at the beginning of the C20. It then turns to the east, past the south front of the mansion, and joins up with the entrance path.

REFERENCES

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E Cecil, *London Parks and Gardens* (1907), p 182 LCC, *London Parks and Open Spaces* (1924), pp 51-2 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2 South* (1983), p 426 E and J Birchenough, *The Manor House, Lee and its Associations* (1971)

Maps J Rocque, *Twenty Miles around London*, 1745 Tithe map, 1839 (Lewisham Local Studies Centre)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1875 3rd edition published 1916 1934 edition OS 60" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1896

Description written: October 1998 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.