

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STRAWBERRY HOUSE

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

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Name:	STRAWBERRY HOUSE
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Hounslow (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.488646 Longitude: -0.24624693 National Grid Reference: TQ 21859 78091, TQ 21889 78050 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000840 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

C18 walled garden remodelled c 1924 by Norman Wilkinson the theatre designer, with later planting by Beryl, Countess of Rothes c 1960.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Little is known of the early history of the garden which was first laid out when the C18 house was built. It is suggested (Lennox-Boyd 1990) that, before the Botanic Gardens at Kew were established, Joseph Banks used the nurseries in Chiswick Mall to plant his new-found species. Strawberry House was owned in the 1920s by Howard Wilkinson whose stage designer son, Norman, redesigned the garden c 1924. Norman Wilkinson later owned the house until his death in 1934.

The Countess of Rothes, owner between c 1960 and c 1990, encouraged visitors on 'Yellow Book' days to what had become a renowned plantsman's garden. (The Yellow Book days refer to days when gardens are open to the public as part of the National Gardens Scheme. Details of the participating gardens are published annually in a yellow book.)

In 1997 the garden continues to be privately owned, and Wilkinson's design and many of the Countess of Rothes' plants survive.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Strawberry House overlooks Chiswick Mall and the River Thames to the south and has a separate strip of garden between the Mall and the River Thames.

The rear brick wall screens the garden from Netheravon Road South; Walpole House (qv) shares the western boundary wall, and Morton House the eastern wall. The level grounds of c 0.2ha extend north of the House for c 70m.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Strawberry House is approached from Chiswick Mall through a gate in the C19 guilloche cast-iron railings (listed grade II). The walled garden is approached through Strawberry House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Strawberry House (listed grade II*), an C18 house of two storeys and an attic built of red brick, was refronted c 1730. The front porch has cast-iron columns supporting a wrought-iron balcony while to the rear there is a wooden oriel window to the first floor. Ground-floor french and cellar windows, and the rear door, lead onto the terrace of York stone.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The brick boundary walls to the rear of the House are all that remains of the C18 garden.

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The back door of Strawberry House opens onto the rear courtyard, paved with York stone, with the high walls of the neighbouring properties to the north-east and south-west. Against the south-west wall there is a lead corner cistern dated 1757, and an *Hydrangea petiolaris* climbs the full height of the north-east wall.

From the courtyard six stone steps, c 5m at their widest reducing to c 3m at the top, lead between flanking brick walls and piers to a further paved area with a circular pool and the lawn beyond. The brick piers topped with ball finials frame the view to the end of the garden and the walls provided the wings for the stage used by the Wilkinson family as a small outdoor theatre. This was the introduction to the garden created by Norman Wilkinson c 1924. Wilkinson (1883-1934) was best known for his designs for Harley Granville-Barker's productions of Shakespeare's plays at the Savoy Theatre between 1912 and 1914. He also designed sets for producers Nigel Playfair and C B Cochran (Mizkutowicz 1992). The circular pool beyond the 'stage' has a small bronze sculpture of a Goose Girl and a fountain. To the west, between the brick pier and the west boundary wall, is a tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which today (1997) is nearly the height of neighbouring Walpole House.

The upper paved area divides around a level rectangular lawn which has apsidal ends to the north and south. The clipped yew pyramids planted in the southern corners c 1920 survive, but the corresponding ones to the north have gone. Between the path and the west boundary wall is a mature herbaceous border which was a popular feature when Beryl, Countess of Rothes opened the garden to the public. A corresponding but smaller border runs along the east side of the lawn, between the paved path and the lawn. At the north end of the lawn a brick path leads under a pergola of brick piers topped with timber and lined with camellias and ferns, and into a modern (c 1996) conservatory which replaces an earlier glasshouse mentioned in the 1840 sale particulars and shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1860.

To the east of the garden the paved terrace develops into a formal scheme of paving around three pools, the southern one square with a fountain, the middle one rectangular and known as the bog garden (Lennox-Boyd 1990), and the third, a larger rectangle with elliptical ends with a lead fountain of a boy playing two pipes. To the south of the pools, against the north-east wall of the House, is the site of the Camellia House, present in 1920 but gone by 1985 (CL 1985). The camellias however survive in profusion, screened from the south terrace and the lawn by clipped hedges.

To the north of the pools the trees, shrubs, and plants thrive in the sheltered area provided by the boundary wall to the east, the pergola to the west, and to the north a brick-built garage (c 1950) set in the northern boundary wall.

To the south of Chiswick Mall, enclosed on the north side with a low iron fence with a small gate, is a separate strip of garden. The garden is laid to grass with a single cherry tree near to a shrubbery on the east boundary. The view to the south across the River Thames is to an island known as Chiswick Eyot.

REFERENCES

F A Mercer, *Gardens and Gardening* (1932) 'Mr Wilkinson of Four Oaks', Obituary, *The Times*, 16 February 1934 *Country Life*, 80 (8 February 1936), pp 142-7; 178 (14 November 1985), pp 1536-40 G Plumbtre, *Collins Book of British Gardens* (1985), pp 106-7 W Draper, *Chiswick* (nd) A Lennox-Boyd, *Private Gardens of London* (1990), pp 152-7 T J Mizkutowicz (ed), *Theatrical Designers, An International Biographical Dictionary* (1992), p 257

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1860 2nd edition published 1894

Archival items Sale particulars, May 1840 (private collection) Photographs, c 1935 (private collection)

Description written: September 1997 Amended: October 2001 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.