

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ST ANN'S COURT

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ST ANN'S COURT

Name: ST ANN'S COURT

County: Surrey

District: Runnymede (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.394950
Longitude: -0.52467080
National Grid Reference: TQ 02739 67245
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000518
Date first listed: 01-Jul-1990

Details

Late C18 cottage orne grounds, modified in 1938 by Christopher Tunnard with an early Modern Movement design.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1728 the St Ann's Hill property was sold to a Mary Trevor by the Barton family. The property remained the property of the Trevor family until 1769, when it was passed to the use of Lord Charles Spencer. In 1778 Lady Trevor and Lord Spencer surrendered it to the use of the Duke of Marlborough, who sold it to Elizabeth Armistead, the mistress of Charles James Fox MP (1749-1806), the third son of Henry Fox, later Lord Holland. Fox married Elizabeth Armistead in secret in 1795 and they lived at St Ann's Hill House. Fox died in 1806 but Mrs Fox continued to reside at St Ann's Hill House until her death in 1842, rebuilding the house in 1825. In addition to improvements to the house and gardens, Mrs Fox also extended the landscape, taking in a small farm to the west of house, described by Brayley and Britton (1841) as an 'attached farm on which are some neatly thatched buildings' (now known as Aldbury and outside the boundary of the site here registered). In 1814 the property owned by Mrs Fox included the house, with pleasure grounds to the south and south-east, and the farm with meadows to the west and south-west of the house, with three fields beyond to the west (Plan of Chertsey, 1814). The property was described in the early C19 as being a 'very interesting and beautiful place, both on account of the extensive prospect obtained from the house and the taste for picturesque beauty and rare plants displayed by Mrs Fox in laying out of the grounds' (quoted by Wheeler, c 1900). An early C19 view (Jacques 1983) shows a cottage orne with trellis-work and a verandah on the south front, which matches Keane's description of a 'plain and irregular building with trellis work in front' (Keane 1849).

The property passed to Lord Holland in 1842, and after his death his widow enlarged the house and landscaped St Ann's Hill and The Dingle (qv) as an extension to the pleasure grounds. The gardens were described by Lucy Wheeler (MS notes) in c 1900 as 'delightfully situated ... embowered in trees resting on the side of a hill ... Some fine trees are grouped round the house, and remarkably beautiful ones stand on the lawn, while a profusion of shrubs are distributed throughout with taste and judgement'. In the 1910s the property was owned by Sir Albert Rollit and by 1927 it had passed to the newspaper proprietor, Sir William Berry. On the recommendation of the landscape architect, Christopher Tunnard (1910-79), the property was purchased by Gerald Schlesinger, a stockbroker, in the 1930s. The C18 house was demolished and Schlesinger commissioned Raymond

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McGrath to build a new house (1936-7) on the same site, known as St Ann's Court. Tunnard worked as consultant on the house and designed the landscape (1937-8). He retained and restored the late C18 and C19 lawns, trees and shrubs, the kitchen gardens, garden buildings, walls, and the C18 outbuildings, and to this framework added a swimming pool on the lawn and a series of courtyard gardens and a roof garden around and within the new house, which used the footings of the C19 house and courtyards. Tunnard himself lived at St Ann's Court between 1937 and 1938.

The house and gardens have continued in private ownership but the land is now (2000) divided. There have been few alterations to the landscape since the 1930s.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING St Ann's Court, c 4ha, is located c 1.5km to the north-west of Chertsey, and c 0.75km south-east of the junction of the M25 with the M3. The site is bounded by St Ann's Hill Road to the north, Ruxbury Road to the south, a property known as Aldbury to the north-west, and fields to the west and east. The ground at St Ann's Court slopes from north to south. There are views from the higher ground, especially the lawn in front of the house, to the south and west. The boundary of the site is marked by a mixture of walls (along the north) and fences (along the west, south, and east).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The approach to St Ann's Court is directly off St Ann's Hill Road and leads through gates into a forecourt on the north-east side of the house. The forecourt has a turning circle around a circular feature in the centre of the forecourt, and is bounded by the house to the south, a wall to the south-west, and shrubberies and hedges to the north-west and east. There is a further entrance to the coach house from St Ann's Hill Road, immediately to the west of the main entrance.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING St Ann's Court (listed grade II*) is situated at the north end of the site and was built in 1937 by Raymond McGrath, an exponent of the Modern Movement style of architecture. Designed on a circular plan (inspired by the large cedars of Lebanon in the garden), it is a three-storey cylindrical structure constructed from reinforced concrete, cast in situ, with segments omitted on various levels to provide terraces and balconies. The building was restored in 1999.

To the north-west of the house are the C18 outbuildings, including the coach house. The early C19 house was demolished in 1937.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A spiral staircase leads down from a bow-shaped paved roof terrace with conical plant containers, to the south-west corner of the house. A large magnolia and a wisteria grow on the south front of the house, preserved in the 1930s from their position on the south front of the early C19 house.

On the west and north-west sides of the house are two courtyard gardens. An inner courtyard lies between the L-shaped coach house to the north and west, the house to the south-east, and garden walls to the north-east and south-west. This garden is on three levels and is mostly lawn with small trees, areas of shrubs, and small areas of paving. A gate in the south-west wall leads through to the outer courtyard, described by Tunnard as the Architectural Garden or Garden Courtyard: a wedge-shaped courtyard bounded by the inner courtyard wall to the north, a partly glass-walled garden room to the north-east and east, a pierced wall to the south (the open windows and door of which frame views to the south), and a curving wall to the west, pierced by an open doorway beyond which the design continues to form the focal point of another framed view. The garden is on two levels with the higher level on the north side laid out as grass with groups of half-hardy plants, including cordylines planted by Tunnard in the 1930s. The lower level is paved and has two pools. The narrower, east side of the courtyard has a rectangular canal with a semicircular west end and is bounded by the garden room to the north and east. The wider, west side has a circular pool surrounded by a circle of paving and beds to either side. A Willi Soukop fountain positioned in the pool as part of the original 1930s scheme is no longer present (2000). The paving continues from the pool through the west wall, ending in a semicircular series of steps. A path connecting the courtyards and the gardens to the south runs between the two pools. The walls of the courtyard are white on the inner side but have been left as Georgian brick on the outside of the west wall, to blend in with the late C18 landscape.

To the south of the house and courtyards is a large area of lawn, bounded by pleasure grounds to the south, west, and east. The main features of the lawn are a large cedar of Lebanon at the south side of the lawn. On the east side of the lawn is a raised, quarter-circle paved platform incorporating a swimming pool and formal flower garden, which was designed by Tunnard to

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follow the curve of a large clump of *Rhododendron ponticum*, which survives on the east side. On the west side of the lawn, backed by trees and shrubs, is the Temple of Friendship (listed grade II), now roofless following storm damage in 1987. Built in the 1790s, the temple is a rectangular stone building, faced with Roman cement. The entrance is flanked by pairs of stone Ionic columns and the interior has an apsidal end with three semicircular niches (formerly set with three busts by Nollekens, one of which was of Fox and inscribed as 'given to Mrs Armistead by Earl Fitzwilliam', dated 5 May 1796).

Two of the large cedars which bounded the lawn were lost in the late C20 and the lozenge-shaped beds of China roses bordered by ivy described in the 1820s (Chertsey Scrap Book) no longer survive, but otherwise the gardens to the south of the house and courtyard are in their C19 form, the swimming pool being the only change to this part of the gardens.

To the west and east of the lawn are belts of trees along the boundaries of the pleasure grounds, with a C19 monument and grave to a dog called Lucan on the west side of the pleasure grounds, against the park fencing. To the south of the lawn is a rectangular area of pleasure grounds, planted like the boundary belts with mature yew, oak, sweet chestnut, redwoods, Scots pine, and an understorey of laurel, rhododendron, and holly. In the C19 there were formal paths through this area connecting the lawns to the north, the area of kitchen garden to the east, and a further area of pleasure ground at the southern end of the site. Keane (1849) referred to 'a fine shady walk, bounded on one side by the pleasure grounds, and on the other by a row of Oak trees ... the walks bounded by large clumps and banks of *Rhododendrons* and *Azaleas*, with hollies interspersed'.

The southern portion of the pleasure grounds is dense woodland. In the C19 it was more open, with grassy clearings, two summerhouses, a series of paths, and a Tea House and Grotto as the central focal point. The Tea House and Grotto (listed grade II*), standing 250m to the south-south-west of the house, were restored by Tunnard in the 1930s but the building became a ruin again in the late C20 and was then largely demolished after being vandalised. It was built in the 1790s and was of two storeys on a rectangular plan, with a decorated (shells, pebbles and spars) grotto room with two pointed open arches on the ground floor and a Tea House with a single round-headed window on the first floor, reached by a curved exterior wooden staircase, with Chinoserie trellised hand rail. The grotto may have been the work of the grotto maker, Josiah Lane (Collier Notes).

PARK To the west and east of the gardens and pleasure grounds (outside the boundary of the registered site) are open fields grazed by horses, with few trees but the remnants of boundary tree belts, which formed the C19 parkland and ferme ornee. Paths led from the southern end of the pleasure grounds, along boundary tree belts to the west and east. The path to the east led through a boundary tree belt with areas of pleasure ground, circuiting an area of open parkland to the east of the house and gardens. The path to the west of the pleasure grounds led along the south side of the ferme ornee to an area of pleasure ground in the south-west corner of the farm.

KITCHEN GARDEN A small area of C18 walled kitchen garden lies to the north-west of the house, and immediately west of the coach house. The garden is approached from the north-west side of the pleasure grounds or from the inner courtyard by a staircase that leads up the south side of the coach house. The area is on two levels with the remains of a range of glasshouses along the north wall and the remains of a range of pits along the north side of the lower level.

An area of former kitchen garden existed from the late C18 to the mid C20 on the east side of the pleasure grounds. The area is now open grassland with the pleasure grounds to the west and south but in the early C19 (Chertsey Scrap Book) was enclosed by beech hedges on the north and east sides, with grass walks between the beds, a small hothouse at the north end (the remains of which survive as a shed), an adjacent flower garden for cut flowers to the east, and an orchard.

REFERENCES

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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) Mavis Collier, Historical Notes, 1996 [copy on EH file]

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.