

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TRENT PARK

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Name:	TRENT PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Enfield (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.662346 Longitude: -0.14012667 National Grid Reference: TQ 28735 97589 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000484 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

Late C18 landscape park, lakes and woodland, developed throughout the C19, and further developed early C20 by Sir Philip Sassoon with advice from Norah Lindsay.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1777 George III gave his consent to an Act of Parliament to divide, enclose and disafforest the royal hunting forest of Enfield Chase. The ancient forest had been poached to such an extent during the C18 that it no longer made a profit. The fringes of the Chase were assigned to neighbouring parishes and farms and the remaining area was divided into lots and leased as farmland. The Act also provided that the deer should have the protection of the ancient park laws and lots 21 and 22 were therefore earmarked as a miniature hunting park. The lease of this principal portion of Crown land was granted in c 1780 to Dr Richard Jebb, the physician to George III. The property and a knighthood (in 1778) were given to Jebb as a reward for saving the life of the King's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, at Trento in the Austrian Tyrol. The land included one of the old Chase lodges, which Sir William Chambers converted into a miniature villa, known as Trent Place. A deer park of 200 acres (c 83ha) and a lake were laid out in the late C18.

Sir Richard Jebb died in 1787 and the estate was purchased by the Earl of Cholmondeley, who sold it to John Wigston of Edmonton in 1793. It was probably Wigston who enlarged the house with the addition of wings and was also said to have spent lavishly on the estate. In 1810 Wigston sold the property to Sir Henry Lushington, who went bankrupt and sold it on to John Cumming in 1813. Cumming was said to have spent £20,000 on repairs and improvements to the house and grounds (Robinson 1823).

In 1833 the estate was purchased by David Bevan, a partner in Barclays Bank. Bevan passed the estate on to his eldest son, Robert Cooper Lee Bevan, in 1837. Robert Bevan resided at Trent for fifty-three years and was responsible for many improvements to the property, which he re-named Trent Park. By the mid C19 the park was 700 acres (c 291ha) in extent and the whole estate was 3000 acres (1250ha), with a seven-mile ride around the perimeter (Keane 1850). In 1890, Robert Bevan died and was succeeded by his son, Francis. Francis Bevan applied to the Duchy of Lancaster in 1893 for a building grant to reconstruct the house.

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Bevan sold the estate in 1909 to Sir Edward Sassoon, a merchant banker born in India into the internationally famous Baghdadi Jewish business dynasty, known to contemporaries as 'the Rothschilds of the East'. Sassoon settled in England where he married Aline Caroline de Rothschild and became a Conservative MP for Hythe. Sir Edward died in 1912 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir Philip Albert Gustave David Sassoon, a British politician, art collector and connoisseur of the decorative arts (in the tradition of the Rothschilds). Sassoon rebuilt parts of the house and laid out new gardens.

Sir Philip Sassoon died in 1939 and the house was requisitioned as an officers' prisoner of war camp and interrogation centre for enemy airmen (the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre).

From 1947 the mansion with c 81ha of land became the Trent Park Training College, a teacher training college. In 1974 this became the Middlesex Polytechnic and from 1992, Middlesex University. In 1951 the entire estate was compulsorily purchased by Middlesex County Council (subject to the life tenancy of Hannah Gubbay, Sassoon's cousin) as Green Belt land. In 1965 the Greater London Council took over the administration of the park and the London Borough of Enfield took over the college. Hannah Gubbay died in 1968 and most of the land was adapted for use by the public as Trent Country Park, officially opened to the public in 1973. The London Borough of Enfield took over the responsibility of managing Trent Country Park in April 1986, following the demise of the GLC.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Trent Park, c 320ha, is located to the north-east of Cockfosters, in the London Borough of Enfield. The Park is bounded by Hadley Road to the north, Cockfosters Road (A111) to the west, open farmland to the north-west and east, and Trent Park Public Golf Course, open farmland and small woods to the south. A valley runs west/east through the centre of the site and the ground falls from west to east. There are good views from the higher ground, and from the terrace to the north of the house, over the lakes and park. The boundaries are mostly marked by wooden fences.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The approach to Trent Park house is from Cockfosters Road to the west (1km south-west of the house), through the late C19 west entrance gateway (listed grade II), with semicircular red-brick and stone quadrant walls, with returned ends, flanking two large piers, with finials of urns and garlands, supporting panelled wood gates. On either side of the entrance are seven stone bollards with ogee domed tops (listed grade II). The entrance masks the half-timbered Victorian lodge. The drive curves north-east through the park and then from the southern end of Oak Wood leads east through an avenue of lime trees (planted in the 1840s). There are early C18 monuments originally from Wrest Park, Bedfordshire (qv) at either end of the avenue, bought to Trent Park by Sir Philip Sassoon in 1934. That to the west (listed grade II) is a tall stone column with a pineapple finial (inscribed 'To the memory of Jemima Crewe, Duchess of Kent'), and that to the east (listed grade II) is a short stone obelisk with a melon finial (inscribed 'To the memory of Henry, Duke of Kent'). The drive then passes a small inner lodge to the south, enters a wood known as The Rookery and then branches, the northern branch leading to the entrance (south) front of the house. The southern branch leads to the stable courtyard (120m south of the house). An alternative approach to the house (no longer in use) was from Bramley Road (A110) to the south, up Snakes Lane, with a small lodge at Bramley Road and another small lodge at the south side of The Rookery.

The west entrance is also the main entrance to the country park, the drive dividing at the first monument and leading north into Oak Wood, to a cafe and a car park. There is a further vehicular entrance to the country park from Hadley Road to the north, with a car park in Moat Wood. From Moat Wood a drive (no longer used) leads south down Camlet Hill and between the lakes and around the west side of the gardens, to join the west approach. A pedestrian entrance from Hadley Road, at the western edge of Moat Wood, leads directly to Camlet Moat (see below).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The present house, Trent Park (listed grade II), was largely rebuilt between 1894 and 1931. The original villa on the site was one of the Enfield Chase lodges and was altered and enlarged by Sir William Chambers for Sir Richard Jebb, in c 1777. This was extended to the east, west and south during the late C18 or early C19, and again in the mid C19. Francis Bevan rebuilt much of the house, including the south front. Sir Philip Sassoon rebuilt the east and north fronts, changed the windows, and refaced the whole house in C18 bricks from William Kent's demolished Devonshire House. Between 1926 and 1931 the Victorian additions were demolished or altered, except for the west service wing, and projecting wings were

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added to the entrance (south) front. The work was carried out by Philip Tilden for Sir Philip Sassoon and the result was a large, early Georgian-style mansion.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS On approaching the house, the entrance drive leads past a pair of stone gate piers, supporting urns (c 1700, listed grade II), c 25m south-west of the house. To the south of the house is a large forecourt, laid out in a pattern of setts and paving stones and marked off by bollards from an area of tarmac to the west, used as staff car parking. To either side of the main entrance to the house are lead figures, to the left (west) Actaeon (listed grade II) and to the right (east) Venus (listed grade II). Both date from c 1700 and were brought here in the 1930s from Wrest Park.

To the south of the forecourt are lawns with scattered mature trees and naturalised daffodils, planted by Sassoon in the 1920s. To the south-east of the house is the stable courtyard, three sides composed of gabled gothic buildings and the fourth with polychrome brick arches. To the south and south-west of the stables are the kitchen gardens and several estate cottages, built by R Bevan between 1837 and 1890. Grouped around the stables and the cottages is a range of 1960s-70s buildings.

Running along the east side of the kitchen gardens and extending northwards on line with the house, are formal gardens, laid out in the 1910s in three parts. The southernmost part, to the east of the kitchen garden, is the Wistaria Walk laid out in the 1910s for Sir Philip Sassoon. It consists of a pergola (listed grade II), with columns of Italian pink marble, entwined with massive wistarias, supporting a wooden structure. The pergola is orientated north/south and is paved with stone slabs. The Walk is bordered to the east by a hedge and to the west by the kitchen garden wall. The southern end leads into the kitchen garden through an C18 cast- and wrought-iron gate (listed grade II) set in gate piers of c 1915, which are set in the kitchen garden wall. To the north of the Wistaria Walk the gardens continue as three pairs of beds forming long borders, planted with herbaceous plants, enclosed by yew hedges. To the north of the borders are four 'rooms', two on each side of the central walk, walled with yew hedges. The 'rooms' contain rectangular lily ponds, each set in lawn and surrounded by a border of roses. Originally the formal gardens continued further to the north and had views from a rondpoint, on which some of the statue groups and the water gardens were aligned along an avenue of limes. These views were destroyed when the two buildings (the new library and hall) which now terminate the north end of the gardens were built in the 1970s.

To the north of the house is a long, raised, early C20 terrace with balustrading around the edge and flights of steps on either side. At the top of the steps to the east is a pair of lead sphinxes by Nost (c 1700, listed grade II), brought from Stowe (qv). At the west end of the terrace there is an early C18 marble group of two female figures and a winged male figure (listed grade II, from Stowe or Milton Abbey). There are extensive views from the terrace: overlooking the lawn down to the lakes and park to the north; to the water gardens to the north-east; and up to a stone obelisk (see below) on the north-west boundary of the park, seen through a ride cut through Moat Wood. The terrace continues around the east side of the house and overlooks a rectangular early C20 swimming pool at a lower level. The pool is set in a lawn and bordered on the west side by the terrace wall, to the north and south by beech hedges and to the east by an early C20 red-brick orangery by Reginald Cooper (listed grade II together with terrace and sphinxes). The orangery is angled and has brick walls to either side enclosing a small terrace, four steps higher than the level of the swimming pool. Its parapet supports three urns flanked by cherubs. The low walls to either side of the steps are terminated with stone piers, decorated with Coade stone roundels and supporting Coade stone sphinxes (dated 1787). The Music Centre (1973) was built on to the back (east side) of the orangery and is adjacent to the formal gardens.

On lawns below the terrace there are two lead groups from Stowe, both by Nost after Giovanni de Bologna: Hercules wrestling Antaeus (listed grade II), c 20m to the north-east of the terrace, and against the west wall of the new library; and Samson defeating the Philistine (listed grade II), c 12m north-west of the terrace and surrounded by large cedars of Lebanon. Around the west end of the house area stands a group of 1960s-70s buildings, including a teaching block, hall/theatre, gymnasium, tutorial rooms and science labs.

The lawns to the north of the terrace run down to the lake edge and continue around to the west of the house, where they merge into the mid C19 pleasure grounds, with scattered mature trees and some remaining shrub groups. On the eastern edge of the pleasure grounds is an C18 stone urn on a pedestal (c 120m north-west of the house, listed grade II). A track leads north through the pleasure grounds to the pair of linked lakes, which run west/east for 600m, the larger lake being c 200m north of the house. At the eastern end of the larger (eastern) lake are the early C20 water gardens in Icehouse Wood, with groups of azaleas, maples,

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magnolias and eucalyptus trees. A pair of small bridges connect the north and south lake edges. Sassoon kept a collection of exotic birds and waterfowl, including flamingos, pelicans and king penguins on the lake (now gone).

PARK To the east, north and west of the lakes is open parkland, with scattered mature trees (mostly mid C19 oak trees but with some trees remaining from the C18 and earlier). The park to the north of the lake island was laid out as a golf course in the early C20 (removed mid C20) and some of the mounds can be seen in the ground. Around the eastern and northern edges of the park are woods: Williams Wood to the east, Ride Wood to the north-east, Moat Wood to the north, and Rough Lot to the north-west. A circuit drive connects the woods and there are further walks through the woods, which have mixed planting, mostly oak, beech, birch and holly. Between Rough Lot and Oak Wood the park continues to the west up to the boundary by Ferny Hill Wood. A long narrow wood known as Seedfield Spinney runs along the course of the water supply for the lakes. A narrow boundary plantation wraps around the north-west, west and south-west boundaries. On the north-west edge of Moat Wood is the early C18 obelisk (c 900m north-west of the house, brought to Trent Park from Wrest Park in the 1930s, listed grade II), which is seen from the house terrace. Near the north boundary of the Moat Wood is Camlet Moat (scheduled ancient monument), a substantial moated site with traces of buildings, said to be the manor house of the Mandevilles, earls of Essex, and a haunt of Dick Turpin (Robinson 1823).

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is located 150m to the south of the house and 50m to the south of the stable courtyard. It has C18 red-brick walls on each side and rows of old apple trees along some of the paths.

REFERENCES

W Robinson, *History and Antiquities of Enfield I*, (1823) W Keane, *Beauties of Middlesex* (1850) *Country Life*, 13 (21 February 1903), pp 240-6; 66 (20 July 1929), pp 78-80; 69 (10 January 1931), pp 40-7; (21 February 1931), pp 237-9; 72 (16 July 1932), p 65 S Doree, *Trent Park: A Short History to 1939* (1974) *Trent Park: A History, guidebook*, (P Campbell nd) B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4: North* (1998), pp 471-3

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1867 2nd edition published 1896 3rd edition published 1914

Description written: December 1998 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.