

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

WATERLOW PARK

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

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**WATERLOW PARK**

Name:	WATERLOW PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Camden (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.568046 Longitude: -0.14485784 National Grid Reference: TQ 28674 87094 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000849 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

## Details

C19 public park laid out 1889-91 on the site of C17 to C19 private grounds, further developed during the C20.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The original house was built in c 1580 for Richard Martin, twice Lord Mayor of London. In 1641 the property was purchased by the Countess of Home for her daughter Anne. Anne married the second Earl of Lauderdale, one of the five unpopular ministers of Charles II, known as his Cabal because their initials made up this word. The house was extensively rebuilt for him in the mid C17. During the Commonwealth the house was occupied by General Ireton's brother, John, but Lauderdale regained possession at the Restoration. Lauderdale is said to have lent the house to Charles II as a summer residence for Nell Gwynn. The Countess of Lauderdale died in 1671 and Ireton bought the house and lived there until his death in 1677. The property was then in various hands before becoming a boarding house ( in which John Wesley stayed) in the C18 and then a school. By the early C19 Lauderdale House was occupied by Mrs Sheldon's School and by 1843 the House was the residence of Lord Westbury. Early C19 plans show the House with formal gardens on terraces to the west and south and fields and meadows beyond ('Home Field', 'Pond Field', 'Hill Field' and 'Pond Meadow'). These contained linear ponds described as 'Upper Pond' and 'Moat' to the north-west and a rectangular Pond called 'Lower Pond' to the west. The 'Moat' was filled in by the mid C19.

Between Lauderdale House and Fairseat House (later part of Channing School, founded 1885), stood Andrew Marvell's cottage. This building was demolished in 1869. In 1871 Sir Sydney Waterlow (Lord Mayor of London 1872-3, and philanthropist), purchased Lauderdale House and grounds, the site of Marvell's cottage and the leasehold interest in Fairseat House. Waterlow lived in Fairseat House and granted Lauderdale House rent-free to St Bartholomew's Hospital as a convalescent home.

In 1889 Waterlow presented Lauderdale House and grounds to the London County Council, with a donation of £6000 towards the cost of laying out the gardens as a public park or purchasing the freehold interest in Fairseat House. Although Fairseat House and grounds were initially intended to be part of the park, the freehold interest was not purchased and the money was spent on improvements. The estate consisted of '29 acres of beautifully undulating grounds, well timbered with oaks, old cedars of Lebanon, and many other well grown trees and shrubs, with 11/2 acre of ornamental water supplied from natural springs' (Hornsey Local Board Review 1889-90). By 1889 the planting, paths and upper ponds were in a similar layout to the

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present one but additional work was needed to convert it into a public park, including the construction of the southern lake, tennis courts, new entrances and paths, a rustic bandstand (demolished late C20), an octagonal aviary (demolished late C20; on the site of Marvell's cottage, demolished 1869), and some further planting. The park was opened to the public in October 1891 as a 'garden for the gardenless'.

The House was restored in 1893 and a statue was erected to Sir Sydney Waterlow by public subscription in 1900. The final layout was shown on a LCC plan of c 1895 and there have been few changes since this date. In 1907 Evelyn Cecil described Waterlow Park as 'undoubtedly the most beautiful of all the parks [of London]' and it was renowned for its magnificent views. The park is well preserved and still has fine views.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Waterlow Park, c 10ha, is located to the south-east of Highgate. The park is bounded by Highgate Hill to the north-east, Dartmouth Park Hill to the east, the gardens of the houses on Bisham Gardens to the north-west, Highgate East Cemetery (qv) to the south, and Swain's Lane and Highgate West Cemetery (qv) to the west. The ground within the park undulates. The north, west and east sides of the park are on higher ground, artificially levelled into terraces around the House, which falls steeply towards the centre and the south of the park. There are good views from the higher ground southwards towards central London and the City. The boundaries of the park are marked by a mixture of walls and fences.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance is from Highgate Hill, 20m north-east of the House, through C18 gate piers with entrance gates (together with walls listed grade II). Three further entrances are served by C19 lodges: one from Swain's Lane with a C19 Tudor-style lodge (listed grade II) 300m to the south-west of the House, and two from Dartmouth Park Hill, one 150m south-east and one 250m south-south-east of the House. Smaller entrances lie on Swain's Lane to the north-west and on Highgate Hill in the far north-east corner of the site.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The C16 house now known as Lauderdale House (listed grade I) is mainly two storeys and on a half-H plan. Originally it was probably on a courtyard plan. The south-east range of the C16 house survives. It was altered in the late C17 and late C18, with partial refronting. The House was restored in 1893 by the LCC and again in the 1970s following a fire in 1963. It is now used as a community arts centre, exhibition space, cafe, and for children's events.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Lauderdale House stands on a C17 terrace with a terraced walk along the south-east side and an open, lawned garden with a large, C19 wrought-iron sundial (listed grade II) to the south-west. A flight of C18 stone steps, flanked by Portland stone urns (listed grade II), leads down from the south side of the upper terrace to a lower terrace, arranged in a geometric pattern (but in 1998 dug up as part of an archaeological investigation prior to restoration). Both the upper and lower terraces are retained by C17 brick walls (listed grade II), with an extensive herbaceous border against the south-west wall and bedding displays along the south-east wall. From the north-west corner of the upper terrace a slope leads down to the lower terrace and then, past the herbaceous border, to the main part of the garden. Between the House and Channing School (formerly Fairseat House) to the north is an area of predominantly evergreen shrubberies and lawn (the site of the octagonal aviary (c 1900) and Andrew Marvell's cottage). The paths through this area and those from the terraces join onto the main path which circuits the park.

This main path leads to the north-west around the edge of a large sloping lawn with scattered trees, to a bronze statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow (listed grade II) on a Portland stone pedestal by F A Taubman, 90m to the west of Lauderdale House. From here there are good views to the south across the lawn. The path, which is backed by a shrubbery, continues to the west to a small C18 pond (Upper Pond), 200m west of the House, where the path divides. The path to the north leads past a drinking fountain to tennis courts and a putting green in the north-west corner, and a lawn with scattered trees, backed by shrubberies, in the north-east corner, to the northern entrance on Highgate Hill.

From the west and east sides of the small pond two paths lead south, running parallel with each other; the west path runs along the boundary of the park and is backed by shrubberies, while the east path runs through lawns with scattered trees to a small shelter and then along a row of limes. At the south-west corner of the park the paths join and lead west to the entrance on Swain's Lane or east to the southern part of the park. The central and southern portions of the park are dominated by two large, linked

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ponds. The C18 northern pond (Lower Pond) is rectangular in shape and has a bonded-bronze abstract sculpture by Naomi Blake (Image, 1979) set within it. The pond to the south, laid out in the 1890s, is irregular in outline and is fed from the northern pond by a cascade. The north side of the southern pond is laid out as a rockery and both ponds are surrounded by shrubberies and trees. To the west of the rectangular pond is a large asphalted area, formerly the site of the bandstand and now an open-air theatre. Paths lead around the ponds and between them via a bridge and then return towards the terraces and the House to the north-east, or via a small children's playground to the south-east corner of the park. There are fine trees and shrubs throughout the park in shrubberies and scattered on the lawns and around the ponds. These include ailanthus, ash, beech, catalpa, cherry, chestnut, Lebanon cedar, swamp cypress, deodar, ginkgo, limes, oak, philadelphus, prunus and weeping willow.

**KITCHEN GARDEN** To the south of the terraces, in the south-east corner of the park, are gardens laid out in the former kitchen garden. There are greenhouses 100m south-south-east of the House, with an aviary at the west end. To the south of the greenhouses is a path which runs east to one of the entrances on Dartmouth Park Hill and west to the main part of the park. The path has a rockery on the north side and bedding displays set in grass to the south. The former kitchen gardens lie to the south of the path and are quartered: the northern quarters used as a nursery for the park and the southern quarters as an arboretum. The west/east path dividing the northern and southern quarters is planted on either side with herbaceous borders.

#### REFERENCES

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OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873 2nd edition published 1894 3rd edition published 1913  
Description written: November 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.