

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

STRAWBERRY HILL

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**STRAWBERRY HILL**

Name: STRAWBERRY HILL

County: Greater London Authority

District: Richmond upon Thames (London Borough)

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.437631  
Longitude: -0.33435654  
National Grid Reference: TQ 15871 72275  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000214  
Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

## Details

Remains of Horace Walpole's C18 landscape garden.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1747 Horace Walpole purchased the lease of a small house, Chopp'd Straw Hall, and 5 acres (c 2ha) of land on Strawberry Hill shot (Batey 1994). In 1748 he was able to purchase the freehold of Strawberry Hill and an additional 4 acres (c 1.6ha) of land. Walpole started to plant up the grounds even before he started work on the house, and gradually over the years he acquired 46 acres (c 19ha) allowing him access and control of the view towards the Thames.

After his death in 1797 the estate was left to his niece, the sculptress Anne Seymore Damer, who relinquished it to the Waldegrave family. By 1835 the house was empty and in 1842 Walpole's collection of books, works of art, and curios was sold at auction raising £33,450.11.9d. In 1848 Frances Waldegrave, widow of George, seventh Earl Waldegrave, remarried. This, her third marriage, was to the much older George Granville Harcourt (of Nuneham Courtnay qv). Frances was the daughter of John Braham, an internationally famous Jewish opera singer who converted late in life. By 1856 she had decided to restore and expand the now derelict Strawberry Hill and imposed many of her own ideas on the scheme, which included the grounds as well as the mansion. By the time of her death in 1879 she had turned Strawberry Hill once more into one of the most famous houses in London.

The house was then purchased by the Jewish financier Herman Stern, a Portuguese baron and banker and the head of Stern Bros. of London, Paris and Brussels. The de Stern family resided there until 1923, when the estate was bought by the Catholic Education Council as a new home for St Mary's Teacher Training College (now St Mary's University College) and extensive developments including a chapel, lecture room, and dormitory blocks were built in the grounds.

During the Second World War the college suffered extensive bomb damage and the necessary renovations were conducted by the architect Sir Albert Richardson. A new chapel was built on the west end of the serpentine walk, cutting off the 'Chapel in the Woods' from Walpole's garden.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The 3ha triangular site is surrounded by residential development and bounded to the west by Waldegrave Road (A309) and to the east by a footpath to the rear of Strawberry Vale and Michelham Gardens. These houses, built on Walpole's Thames-side meadows, have effectively blocked the views to the

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Thames, Twickenham, and Richmond Hill which were once important as the setting for Walpole's garden. Playing fields and halls of residence, part of the college, provide the south boundary.

Strawberry Hill stands on level ground, with a slight slope down to the north-east in the direction of the River Thames.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrance to the house is opposite nos 293 and 331 Waldegrave Road where the semicircular drive follows the line of the old road, which was relocated in the C19 to its present alignment by Lady Waldegrave. The entrance to the garden is through high wooden gates to the north-east of the house.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Strawberry Hill (listed grade I) was built between 1749 and 1776 by Horace Walpole who, with William Robinson and James Essex as executive architects, converted and extended Chopp'd Straw Hall, built in 1692, into his famous 'Gothick Castle'. Some of the interiors were designed by Richard Bentley, John Chute, Thomas Pitt, and Robert Adam. Walpole's aim was to create a house that was a cross between a medieval castle and an abbey. The chief facades are to the east and provided Walpole with 'an animated view of the country and moving pictures, a gay variety of the scene with out, which is very different from every side, and almost from every chamber' (ibid). The extensions to the south, which encase the base of Walpole's circular tower (1759), are the C19 additions added by Lady Waldegrave.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Entering the grounds through the main gate, the house is immediately to the south with a lawn extending 200m to Lady Waldegrave's shrubberies to the south and east. The shrubberies and the mature trees along the boundaries screen (in summer) the residential development which has spread over the land between Strawberry Hill and the Thames. From the north-east side of the lawn a tarmac path leads north-east for 75m then describes a curve round to the south where the tarmac finishes and a terraced woodland walk begins. Above the walk to the west is the lawn, screened by a variety of trees, including some mature oaks and hollies. To the east a downward sloping bank is divided from a public footpath by a wooden fence. The terrace walk, which Walpole started to create in 1750 on the brow of a natural hill to command the river view, continues c 200m south along the length of the lawn.

After 200m the terrace walk curves to the south-west where it links up with the remains of Walpole's serpentine 'sweet walk', shown on the 1791 plan of the estate published in Walpole's Extra Illustrated copy of *A Description of the Villa*. This wooded walk, which has now lost its serpentine paths, was formed from the boundary hedge which Walpole bought from his neighbour, nurseryman Mr Ashe, in 1752, but many of the mature trees are probably the result of Lady Waldegrave's planting. The shell bench recorded on a plan of 1791 has gone, as has the gothick gate a few metres to the east. The walk continues west for 100m, past Lady Waldegrave's summerhouse and shrubbery, in the direction of the 'Chapel in the Woods'. The Chapel (listed grade I), the only stone building built by Walpole, was designed by Chute and Gayfere, the master mason at Westminster Abbey. Walpole's original oak gothick bench and a head of St John the Baptist by Donatello have been replaced by 'Our Lady of Strawberry Hill', commissioned by the Vincentian community from a Viennese sculptor after the Second World War. The Chapel was built to the south-west of the mansion between Hampton Court Road (now Waldegrave Road) and Ashe the nurseryman's land, roughly half way round Walpole's serpentine 'sweet walk'. Some of the trees to the east of Walpole's Chapel were felled c 1950 when the Richardson chapel was built and the association between the walk and the 'Chapel in the Woods' has gone. The woods around the Chapel have been replanted. The 1791 plan shows how the serpentine walk continued west past the Chapel to the service area of Walpole's house. This has been replaced with car parks and other buildings associated with the college and only an occasional tree remains, probably from Lady Waldegrave's time at Strawberry Hill.

**OTHER LAND** Walpole expanded his estate by purchasing meadows to the east and south and in 1753 described the view thus: 'the lawn before the house is situated on top of a small hill from where to the left you see the town and church of Twickenham ... and a natural terrace on the brow of my hill with meadows of my own down to the river' (Idden 1996). A gothic gate led from the serpentine walk to the meadows on the banks of the Thames to the south-east and an obelisk was set up as an eyecatcher at the junction of what was then Hampton Court Road and Cross Deep, on the edge of the meadows to the north-east. The meadows to the east were developed for residential use in c 1930 but some of the open space to the south survives as playing fields for the college. All the views to the Thames, Twickenham, and Richmond are lost.

**REFERENCES**

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H Walpole, *A Description of the Villa* (1784) *Architectural Review*, (September 1957), pp 157-9 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2 South* (1983), pp 543-50 Blest *Retreats, A history of private gardens in Richmond upon Thames*, (Richmond upon Thames Library and Information Services 1984), pp 19-20 M Batey et al, *Arcadian Thames: the river landscape from Hampton to Kew* (1994), pp 59-64 J Idden, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill* (1996) A Chalcraft, *A Paper House* (1998)

Maps J Rocque, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark and the country near ten miles around*, surveyed 1741-5, published 1746 *Plan of the estate, 1791* (reproduced in Idden 1996)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1863 2nd edition published 1896 1934 edition

Illustrations A number of illustrations are published in John Idden's *guide to Strawberry Hill* (1996); these include: Samuel Own, *The View of Strawberry Hill* William Pars, *Strawberry Hill from the Garden*, 1780

Description written: June 1997 Amended: October 2001 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: November 2001

This list entry was subject to a Minor Enhancement on 01/05/2019

## 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.