

25: WANDSWORTH COMMON

(h) ST. JAMES

(For an account of the history of the area see **Wandsworth Common: Introduction.**)

History

Development to the south of the Common, apart from the Heaver development in Dalebury and Crockerton Roads, was mainly incremental through plot sub-division. Buildings were developed singly, in pairs and in short terraces by a number of builders. A station at Wandsworth Common was first opened in 1856 to the north of Bellevue Road, but was closed two years later when a new station on the south side of Battersea Rise was built. In the 1870s the land earmarked for railway enclosures identified the station at its present location to the south of Bellevue Road bridge. It was opened in 1895. The proximity of the station no doubt contributed to the hastening of development through the sub-division of plots of land for building.

By 1897 the area between Beechcroft Road and St. James's Road (later Drive) was substantially developed. The open land between Burntwood Lane and the rear of properties in Brodrick Road had by 1897 been laid out as a cricket ground. Most of the main thoroughfares leading to the Common were, in 1871, lined with trees conveying the effect of a very leafy suburb, but by 1897 many of these had been taken down during the development process. However, it appears that a number of trees were planted in Avenues through Wandsworth Common, a deliberate planting scheme of the Metropolitan Board of Works.

Buildings & Townscape

The first impression of the character and appearance of this area is of a 'village on the common', which derives from the origin and growth of the area. The buildings are mainly individual in design, although there are several groups in the form of unified terraces.

Bellevue Road has a primarily commercial function and character, developed partly in response to its proximity to Wandsworth Common Station. The mainly Victorian buildings are of two and three storeys. Generally they are constructed of yellow stock brick, although a few are of red brick. Some have been rendered. The shop fronts represent a combination of those purpose built and others that developed from houses adapted through the addition of a projecting ground floor. Some good examples of shopfronts remain but others are inappropriate in design and would benefit from enhancement. Nos.2 and 3 form part of a three storey terrace, with moulded stone window surrounds and bracketed heads. The cast iron decorated shop canopy to no.2 is of architectural interest.

The essential character of St. James's Drive derives from the variety of building types of two and three storeys, predominantly of yellow stock and gault brick, and the differences in architectural detailing and decoration. Nos.49, 83 and 97 are two storeyed, double fronted buildings in gault brick. No.53 is a detached Gothic style building with dominant chimneys and built in gault brick. It forms a group with nos.55-59, all of gault brick, with no.55 having an imposing entrance.

Nottingham and Althorp Roads contain a variety of early to mid Victorian buildings, generally of yellow stock brick construction. Some have rustication to ground floors, some have basements, notably Smiths Terrace, a unified group of seven properties. Many buildings have retained a number of their original architectural features, including several with cast iron front boundary railings.

The Surrey Tavern, a mid-Victorian building of three storeys, gives a strong architectural presence to the corner of Bellevue Road and Trinity Road. Wiseton Road is similar in character and appearance. Nos.12-14, one of the earliest developments in the street, are of architectural interest, with hipped slate roof, stone quoins to corners of facade, and attractive round headed and segmented stone window arches.

The western end of Balham Park Road comprises predominantly detached late Victorian properties. They are two storey, double-fronted and constructed of gault brick with red dressings. Single and two storey canted bays are much in evidence, symmetrically arranged around a central porch or doorcase. They are Victorian Gothic in style and detailing. Decorative cornices of alternating red, gault and dark brick together with decorative panels add architectural enrichment. All the buildings incorporated timber sash windows and natural slate was used for covering roofs. The front boundary treatment was in the form of low brick walls with piers and cast iron railings, the latter being lost in the War.

Trinity Road, the main route across the Common linking Wandsworth to Streatham, forms a north-west to south-east spine onto which a number of streets join in a grid fashion, giving a very permeable layout. Due to the importance of the route there are several public buildings, notably Trinity Road Chapel and St. Mary Magdalen Church, which form landmarks along the route. They are different in style and appearance. The former is of yellow stock brick with an interesting tower.

The latter is of yellow stock brick with red dressings, and has a massive gabled elevation to Trinity Road divided into three bays with Gothic stained glass window to each. 172 Trinity Road, on the corner with Brodrick Road, a three storey building, is noted as being the residence of Thomas Hardy, the writer. Nos.167-171 form an interesting group of detached buildings, three storeys of stock brick with stone mouldings to windows and doorcases. The latter have the date 1878 engraved in the entablature with is supported with polished granite columns. No.165 is a two storey red brick composition with Baroque stone doorcase, although the door has been replaced with an inappropriate window (as at No.167). Nos.161-163 are similar to no.165, but with ornate dormers to roof crowned with triangular pediments.

Brodrick Road comprises a variety of building types developed over the period 1850-1920. They are mainly of three storeys, in pairs of semi-detached buildings, short terraces or singly. Yellow stock brick predominates on the facades. Architecturally the buildings exhibit a variety of detailing to door and window surrounds.

Wandle Road is similar in character and appearance, with a variety of building types resulting from the process of incremental development.

1-3 Wandle Road are a pair of 'Italianate' style buildings of two storeys with basement and attic storey. Classical embellishments to triple first floor window adds visual interest. Original front boundary wall and piers survive. No.13 is a two storey building with canted bays. Decorative eaves brackets and dentil cornice are attractive architectural features.

No.26 Wandle Road (listed grade II) is a two storey yellow stock brick building with a projecting stone balcony to first floor supported on iron piers. It carries an iron balustrade and piers which in turn support the tent roof; the whole being of great delicacy. To the front the original boundary wall with balustrading and piers survives.

Hendham Road comprises mainly late Victorian two storey buildings of red brick construction, with canted bays. Nos.48-50 were developed as part of the larger development to the south by Alfred Heaver. They are of three storeys in a Queen Anne style with patterned sash windows and decorative carved brick motifs.

This character statement is intended to give an overview of the development and current character of the conservation area; it is not intended to be prescriptive, nor to be a summary of planning constraints or an inventory of individual buildings or other features whether listed or otherwise.