

25: WANDSWORTH COMMON

(a) THE COMMON

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

Wandsworth Common.

Topography

The Common covers some 70.8 hectares (175 acres) and is generally flat with a slight incline to the south-west. It is dissected by two railway cuttings which restrict accessibility between its various parts. Apart from road bridges at Battersea Rise, Bellevue Road and Trinity Road, the only bridge linking the main area of the common, east-west, is a footbridge linking Nicosia Road and Bolingbroke Grove.

Geologically, it consists of London Clay overlain by Tertiary river gravels. The soils are a mixture of acidic and intermediate. Originally it had a typical heathland ecology with heather and gorse. However, man's influence has resulted in changes to the original habitat, giving it a more parkland appearance.

Buildings

Within the Common there are two major public buildings; the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building and the Emmanuel School. The London County Council acquired the RVPB and the surrounding site in September 1951 for educational and housing purposes. In 1957 Spencer Park Secondary School was opened on land adjoining the RVPB, using the existing RVPB in conjunction with new buildings until 1974, when additional buildings were erected on the site. The RVPB then remained vacant for a number of years. The 'new' school, re-named after John Archer in 1986, became redundant and was demolished in 1994.

By 1995, the LCC had built 5 eleven storey point blocks on part of the curtilage to the south west of the RVPB. Constructed of pale grey brick with projecting balconies they were arranged so as to retain views as well as a large number of trees.

The RVPB (grade II*) consists of regular three storey rectangular ranges around a symmetrical plan with enclosed cloister walks around two open courts. It is of yellow brick with Yorkshire stone dressings in a Scottish baronial style with Jacobean and French Gothic elements, notably the five towers with pyramidal roofs and corner tourelles. The windows are of metal divided into small panes. The chapel (1864-66), is in a thirteenth century French Gothic style. The whole ensemble makes for an important landmark on the common.

Emmanuel School to the north, (1872), is a red brick Gothic composition by the architect H. Saxon Snell. The entrance to the site is via a lodge with its boundary wall and piers on North Side.

The 'toast-rack' and other housing developments.

Buildings & Townscape

The group of streets in the centre of the Common, known as the "Toast-rack" is characterised by groups of semi-detached properties on a grid of streets. The buildings are substantial, of two and three storeys, and constructed mainly of red brick. In Baskerville Road buildings are generally two storey with a gabled roof with an attic storey. Two storey canted bays predominate. They are of red brick with rendered surrounds to windows. Some properties have decorative eaves cornice and semi-circular bargeboard to gable. A few have attractive projecting cast iron canopies to porches with curved zinc roof covering.

Others have projecting gabled timber porches with timber balustrading and bargeboards. Front boundaries were brick piers with spherical stone cap with timber fences and gates in between. Many survive. The three storey blocks of flats are plain in design and do not reflect the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Dorlcote Road has mainly two storey paired buildings with gable fronts, canted or square bay windows. Mainly red brick construction, several have been pebble-dashed or painted, detracting from their appearance. Henderson Road has three storey semi-detached buildings with gabled frontages. They are constructed mainly of red brick with single and two storey bays. The decorative cast iron balconies to nos.29-35 are of interest. Stained glass doors and tessellated tile paths reinforce the Victorian character. Square columned porches exist on a few properties at the western end. Nicosia and Patten Roads both contain two storey, mainly red brick, buildings with gabled frontages and two storey bays. In Patten Road projecting gabled porches with decorative stone arch and timber bargeboard add richness. In Nicosia Road the properties on the east side have distinctive stone doorcases with triangular pediments and ovular transom window with stained glass. Front boundaries are red brick walls and piers to Nicosia Road and timber fences and posts to Patten Road.

Routh Road, and parts of Lyford Road and Trinity Road were all developed at the same time (around 1890) in a similar style with detached or semi-detached houses, of two storeys with gabled frontage with an attic

storey. Two storey canted bays predominate with stone string course, egg and dart brick mouldings to eaves and cornice to porches together with yellow stock brick banding below eaves. Carved brick motifs add architectural richness. On the north side of Routh Road east of Trinity Road porches are crowned with classical entablatures. All have timber sashes.

To the south and west side of Lyford Road development was slightly later; substantial 2 storey houses, mainly detached. Nos. 38-64 have gabled street frontages with canted bays; red brick with roughcast to bays and parts of first floor. Leaded light casement windows are typical. No.66 is larger with a distinctive octagonal bay above a Doric columned porch.

No.68 (The White Cottage, grade II) is dated 1903 and is a typical Arts and Crafts design by C.F.A.Voysey. It is of two storeys, divided into three bays, of brick construction finished in roughcast with stone dressings and mullions. The quadruple casement windows with leaded lights give a strong horizontal emphasis. The central projecting square bay rises through the eaves into a third storey belvedere.

Nos.70-76 are mainly two storey detached, red brick buildings with plain clay tiled hipped roofs and projecting gables to porches with timber supports. The style is typical of the Arts and Crafts movement.

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.