

43: GARRADS ROAD

This conservation area straddles the boundary with the Borough of Lambeth. The part in Wandsworth covers the south east section of Tooting Bec Common.

History and topography

The development of the area is bound up in the history of the neighbouring parishes of Streatham and Tooting. Both contained extensive common lands; Garrads Road is adjacent to one of these. Tooting Bec Common, together with the area of common called Graveney, in the parish of Tooting, are remnants of much larger common areas reduced by enclosures.

The commons were watery and boggy in parts and gravelly in others, and were used predominantly for grazing but also for mineral extraction or dumping of waste. A number of watercourses drained the area; two were of particular significance. Falcon Brook flowed south to north across the common, approximately on the line of the railway cutting (the present western boundary of the conservation area). The Woodbourne (or Streatham Brook) entered the common from the northeast (on the line of the present Mount Ephraim Road) and flowed eastwards to the York Ditch (a third watercourse on the line of the present Dr. Johnson Avenue). Although no longer in existence, these historical natural features to some extent formed the framework on which the present structure of the common developed. There is a gentle gradient from the south-east corner down to the north-west corner of the common.

The commons were further divided by the development of the railways. Two lines cross the commons: to the north the West End and Crystal Palace line opened in 1855; and, running north-south, the London, Brighton and

South Coast line was built in 1861. The latter separates the part of the common now in the conservation area from the rest of Tooting Bec Common.

The remaining common areas were vested in the late C19 in the Metropolitan Board of Works, whose purpose included the maintenance of the land as open space for public benefit. They were subsequently transferred to the LCC and eventually to Wandsworth Council.

Most of the common within the conservation area lies between Tooting Bec Road in the south and Bedford Hill in the north, with a small detached area north of Bedford Hill. A number of tracks cross the northern part of the common, but of particular note is the bridleway running around three sides of the common and northwards from Bedford Hill. The boundaries are open, except the one along the railway cutting.

Landscape

This area of common retains less of the original semi-natural appearance than much of the rest. This is probably because of its virtual separation by the railway and its proximity to the areas of Victorian middle class housing. The hard surface games area and associated building reinforce this more park-like image. Nevertheless, the area is open and has a well-treed landscape. Of particular note is an avenue of oak trees of historic significance, close to the eastern edge of the common. Though less complete than when originally planted, these oak trees commemorate a visit of Elizabeth I to the area in the late 16th century. A line of elms along the southern boundary (Tooting Bec Road), provides a clear edge to this part of the common.

Buildings

No substantial buildings are located on the common itself, but it is bordered on three sides by development, and these buildings (in the LB Lambeth part of the conservation area) give a strong definition to the edges of the common, and dominate views outwards from it.

This surrounding area was built up in the late Victorian and Edwardian era, although earlier less dense development existed at least from the C15. Most buildings are in an Arts & Crafts style, with detailing typical of the time. In Garrads Road, to the east of the common, 'Mindaroo' is a Voyseyesque design with an interesting massing and long sloping roofs, gables and chimneys, and rough cast walls. The existing building of greatest antiquity is 'Saxoncroft', originally of c.1870 but much altered and extended since. The other buildings in Garrads Road were mainly built between 1900-1914 and 1935-1940, with some more recent insertions.

To the south, in Tooting Bec Gardens, buildings of particular note are No.38, erected in 1905 for the Bishop of Southwark; 'Carn Brae' of similar date and design; and, the earlier 'Sussex House' (c.1880), on the corner of Ambleside Avenue, which is by the noted local architect Frederick Wheeler.

The houses in The Spinney and 233-243 Bedford Hill, on the north side of the common, were built by Messrs Wates just before the second world war.

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.