

ORIGINS OF SURROUNDING AREA

The Cope Hill conservation area is surrounded on the north by the Drax Avenue conservation area, to the north-east by the Wool Road conservation area and a short distance to the east by Wimbledon West conservation area. The woodland to the north of the conservation area was owned by John Samuel Sawbridge-Erle-Drax MP until his death in 1887 and remained undeveloped until the early part of the 20th Century when areas of land were parcelled up and sold by his successors. Immediately to the north of Thurstan Road is the former site of the Wimbledon Cottage Hospital which was demolished in the 1980s to make way for new housing development. Apart from this development the area to the north of Cope Hill remained largely undeveloped until the 1920s comprising areas of woodland originally the Wimbledon Wood, formerly known as Brooms Down Wood, and some school playing fields.

From the earliest maps, the main tangible historic elements which appear to have influenced the present topography of the area are surviving areas of woodland, remnants of historic field boundaries and the alignment of historic roads, Woodhayes Road, Cope Hill and Coombe Lane.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF SURROUNDING AREA

Although the conservation area benefits from a number of historically significant buildings there are also several other properties of historic importance along Cope Hill which have associations with the area's development and specifically the Cottenham Park Estate.

Two of the oldest surviving houses built along Cope Hill stand just west of Christ Church down a narrow lane off Cope Hill in the past referred to as 'The Avenue'. At Number 11 is Colbyfield, a Grade II Listed Building, built in 1862 and designed by Francis Cranmer-Penrose a distinguished Architect and Surveyor of the fabric of St. Paul's Cathedral. He lived there with his family until his death in 1903. Its neighbour Oakfield, the home of the Grenside family, was completed some five years earlier in 1857.

Another substantial house, The Firs, once occupied the site immediately to the west of the conservation area fronting onto Cope Hill, now the site of nurses accommodation bearing the same name. The house was built in 1854 by two young barristers, Thomas Hughes and John Ludlow, who were leading figures in the Christian Socialist Movement. The house was unusual in that it had been designed as an experiment in communal living as a pair of houses linked by a shared living room. Thomas Hughes, however, is better known for his novel, Tom Brown's Schooldays, first published in 1857, which he wrote while living at the house. The house survived until 1967 when it was demolished to make way for the nurses' flats.

Built at the same time and adjacent to the Firs to the west was Lindisfarne House; the owner was Joseph Burrell, founder of a Wimbledon family of solicitors. The house and estate were purchased by relatives of the Spanish Royal family named Jiminez. Their home farm extended south and included the Oberon Playing Fields. This family enriched the area by planting exotic trees, some of which, together with a Victorian greenhouse, remain today in the gardens on the south west side of Cope Hill and the northern side of Lindisfarne Road.

Following the death of the owner, at the turn of the century, part of the estate was sold off by his widow. A right of access to her land was retained which survives to the present day as the foot path linking Cottenham Park Road with Lindisfarne Road.

Immediately to the north of the conservation area, at the end of Thurstan Road is the former site of the Cottage Hospital, Wimbledon's first hospital. Opened in 1870 the old hospital building was demolished and rebuilt to a design by Sir Thomas Jackson RA, a distinguished architect who lived at Eagle House, in 1912. Much extended over the years the building survived until the 1980s when it was pulled down and replaced with modern housing development.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The part of the Cope Hill conservation area to the north of Cope Hill, is located within the Wimbledon Common Archaeological Priority Zone. Immediately to the south and including land occupied by the main hospital buildings is the Wimbledon Village Archaeological Priority Zone which extends along the south side of the Ridgway and Cope Hill.

Cope Hill together with the Ridgway is possibly a portion of an old Roman road linking the Sussex coast with Kingston and Weybridge. Alternatively it may have been part of an old Neolithic salt route which joined a farming community in Kingston to the nearest source of salt, the Thames Estuary marshes around Greenwich.

Prior to its development in the late 18th and 19th Centuries, the area comprised a group of open fields and woodland, its use was therefore primarily agricultural. Before that the area was covered in extensive woodland. Apart from remnants of ancient field boundaries there are no known archaeological features of significance or recorded finds within the conservation area. The area's main archaeological significance, therefore, relates to its proximity to the pre-Roman ancient route and to potential surviving evidence of the Prospect House and its extensive landscaped grounds.

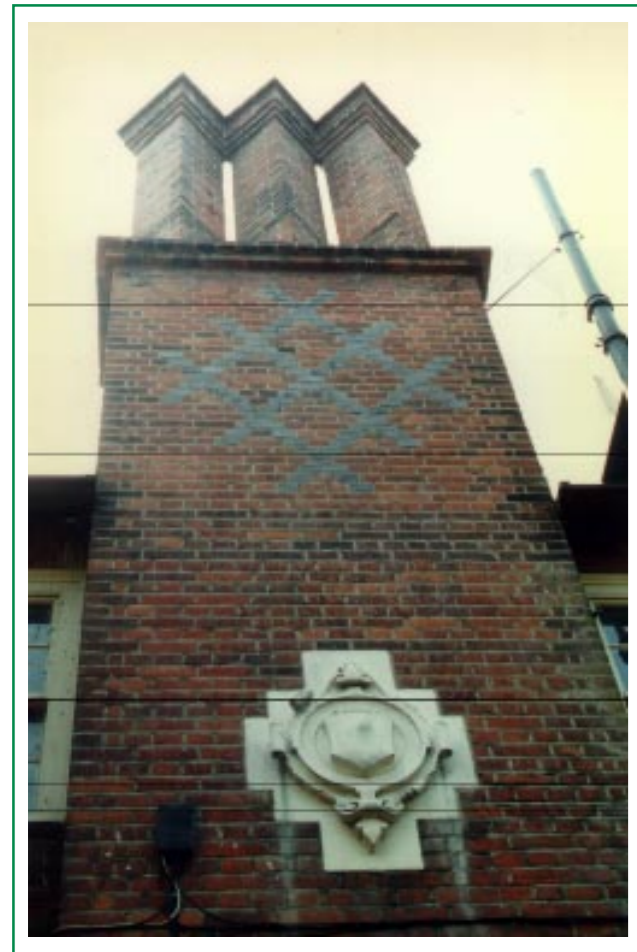
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SURROUNDING AREA

Located approximately 750 metres to the north of the conservation area is Caesar's Camp formerly known as The Rounds or Bemsbury, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The surviving earthwork is of unknown provenance but is probably within the site of an early iron age hill fort which extended over an area of 43 hectares. There is no real evidence to link it with the Roman Empire.

Caesar's Well, like the camp, is probably not of Roman origin but is known to have been used since very early times. During the eighteenth century it was known as Robin Hood's Well. Its waters were thought to have medicinal properties.

General evidence from the area suggests fairly widespread Palaeolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age activity within each of these two Archaeological Priority Zones.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS IN THE CONSERVATION AREA



Designations- Statutory List

There are four buildings of note in the conservation area of which two, Cottenham House and the former stables, both of which are located within the Atkinson Morley grounds were added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest on 11th October 1974, both at Grade II.

Cottenham House is of a neo-Tudor style. The description in the statutory list, is as follows:

Large detached house. Mid to later C19. Red brick. Steeply pitched slate roof to eaves. Painted stone dressings. Neo-Tudor style. 2 storeys plus roof storey. 11 irregular bays including 3 slightly projecting gabled wings to either end and left of centre. Entrance to third bay from right in Tudor arched doorway within 2 storey projecting porch. Projecting stack to right of this; polychrome decoration. Square headed windows; timber mullions and transoms (these replaced by C20 windows in some cases). Tall stacks with rows of chimneys.

The stable block is described in the statutory list as follows:

Former stables now workshops. Early to mid C19. Brown brick, slate and tiled roof. 6 main bays to north facade. 2 storeys. Pilaster strips between bays. Arched thermal windows in arched reveals to ground floor (some blocked). Upper storey with gauged square headed windows (frames mainly C20). Blind south facade to road.

There appears to have been some confusion over the stable block's orientation: the elevation described as the north elevation is actually the south elevation, and vice versa.

Building records held by the Council enable the later development, and alteration of the house to be understood. There are entries in the register for the middle years of the 1890s, including various alterations commissioned by Rev Sir Pelle Thompson Bart. However, the main alterations, including the construction of the substantial side extension were, carried out in 1899, for Miss Adela Schuster who was a socialite and hostess renowned for her lavish parties which appear to have required much larger reception rooms.

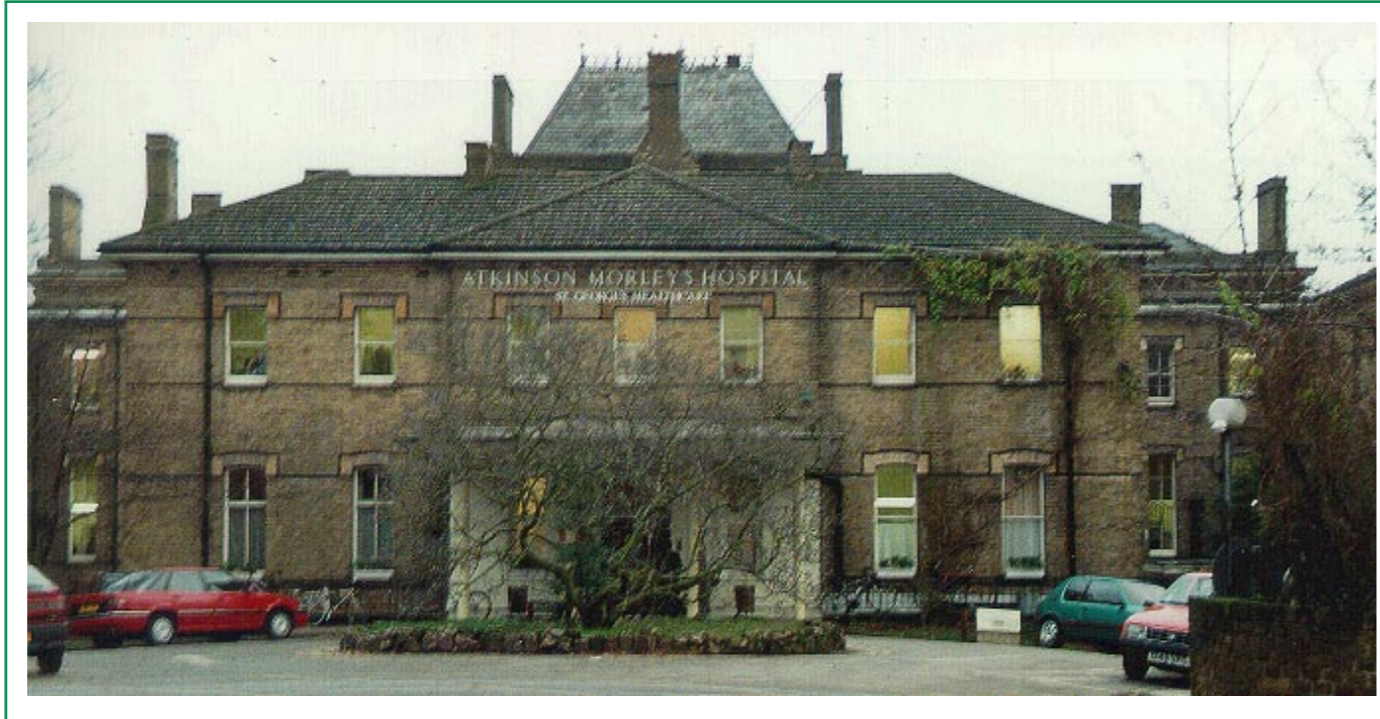
The main (front) elevation of the original house is asymmetrical with a central slightly projecting, three and a half storey, gabled cross wing. This is balanced, to the west, by the square, two storey, entrance porch, and a large chimney stack set on the north wall, and, to the east, by the projecting, two and a half storey, service wing, with a large chimney stack set across the ridge. The original west elevation is concealed by the 1899 side extension. The east elevation is also partly concealed by a small extension. Records indicate that there was once an open, walled yard at this end.

The south (garden) elevation was considerably altered as part of Miss Schuster's extension and modernisation of the house. The main feature of this elevation is the three and a half storey gabled end to the cross wing, with upper windows set in pairs, and a square bay window at ground floor level. This is balanced on each side by two and half storey gabled sections with the service wing to the east, well set back. The section to the west had, originally, a neo-Tudor projecting, square bay matching that further to the east, this has been replaced by the two slightly canted bay windows to the sitting room.

The internal arrangement of the house appear also to have been considerably altered at that time. Partitions were removed to create larger reception rooms and the west end was altered to accommodate the extension. Sadly little remains of the internal decorative detail.

Other Buildings Of Note Within The Conservation Area

Although there has been significant development within the hospital grounds over recent years there are a number of buildings of quality due to their overall proportions, materials and detailing. The main hospital building, although not listed, is generally agreed to be a most imposing structure of architectural interest which makes a striking impression on the skyline, viewed both from within the area and, more distantly, from the A3. The original historic core has been greatly extended and various new buildings and structures have been erected on the site. In particular the main original hospital building is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Other buildings within the conservation area include the Wolfsen rehabilitation Centre, also a striking building which dates from the late 1960s to designs attributed to Watkins Gray and Partners. The contribution this building makes to the Cope Hill conservation area derives from the way it relates to the sloping site and the fact that it barely projects above street level in Cope Hill. As a result, even though it has a deep plan, long distance views towards the south, over the top of the building, are maintained unobstructed. Positive aspects of the design include the strong horizontal lines of the building as accentuated by the use of deep pre-cast concrete fascia panels. This could be considered to be representative of a style of architecture that was prevalent at that time.

The latest of a series of pavilions dating back to 1908, the St. George's Hospital Sports Ground pavilion, located just off Cottenham Park Road behind the caretaker's house, is a 1976/77 replacement for, two earlier timber pavilions dating from 1947 and 1961 and which were successively destroyed by fire. Constructed of exposed concrete blockwork with a flat roof behind plain parapets the design of the building is modern and functional, combining, in a rather restrained manner, aspects of the 'International Style' and 'New Brutalism' which marked the end of the 'Modern Movement' in Architecture.

Located opposite the corner of Cottenham Park and Oakwood Roads is the home of the Scout Group. The buildings on the site have been restored in recent years following a fire in 1989 which destroyed the main building. They house a large group whose activities benefit from the surrounding open space.

Just outside the conservation area boundary is the pavilion off Lindisfarne Road serving the former Oberon Grounds, now Raynes Park High School playing fields, which was built in 1931 It is well sited, slightly above the field and looks best illuminated by the mid-afternoon sun when it helps to give a village green feel to the grounds.



Characteristics of Residential Development within the Conservation Area

The houses in Thurstan Road and the north side of Cope Hill on the other hand are of a much more modest but, nevertheless, attractive style. In Thurstan Road these comprise terraces of two-storey Victorian Cottages arranged in pairs with prominent, projecting, paired gables with deep recesses

and single storey cant bay windows which present an attractive aspect to the street. The houses on Cope Hill comprise four pairs of two-storey semi-detached Villas arranged in two groups respectively named Catherine and Marguerite Villas after the daughters of the builder. These have single storey square bays to the front, the roofs of which extend across the front doors, supported on timber brackets to form recessed porches.

The detailing of the houses is an essential element the traditional look of this part of the conservation area. Particular characteristics include the timber sash windows with narrow glazing bars, panelled doors, yellow stock brick elevations with red brick banding and window arches, pitched slate roofs and projecting party wall parapets. The houses in Thurstan Road have been re-roofed in concrete pantiles and have had their party wall projections removed.

The tight planning of these houses give them a much more urban character than the grounds of the hospital and Cottenham House, which together with the regular rhythm of the terraces results in a strong uniformity of development.

Known Architects.

The only architects of note associated with the design of buildings within the conservation area are Watkins Gray and Partners who designed the Wolfsen Rehabilitation Unit. Now Watkins and Gray International the practice were also involved in other hospital developments during the 1960s and other buildings of note in the London area include Guys Hospital at London Bridge and Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup.

CHARACTER AND HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACES AND TOWNSCAPE QUALITY

Overview Of The Area

The essential character of the south side of Cope Hill are the large areas of open space. Located within this and the adjacent Wimbledon West Conservation Areas are some large detached houses in extensive grounds set back from the road. Many of these houses originally had modestly scaled coach houses, of which the stable block to Cottenham House is a surviving example. These houses, although for the most part converted to other uses, are enhanced by their landscape settings which include significant numbers of mature trees.

Landscape/Built Environment Relationship

The way the built form fits into the wider area of predominantly open space, particularly on the south side of Cope Hill along with the natural landscaping in front of buildings and the views to the south and west are significant contributing features to the area's character which is contrasted by the cohesiveness and tight planning of the fine terraces of similar Victorian houses within Thurstan Road to the north of Cope Hill.

The characteristic feel of the area derives from the relationship between the buildings and open and unbuilt lands, with their footpaths, fields, woods, including the playing fields and allotments. The relationship of buildings to the surrounding landscape, particularly the numbers of mature trees and the soft landscape zone that extends between the building frontages and the road boundary contributes significantly to the open, semi-rural character of this part of Cope Hill and the views to and through the open space from the surrounding area.

CONTRIBUTION OF TREES, GREEN SPACES AND OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA

The part of the conservation area to the immediate south of the hospital complex is also designated as both Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and open space. These lands are largely Council or Area Health Authority owned and contain woodland areas, playing fields, pavilions, an adjacent school, scout hut and other community uses within the allotment area and the Council attaches a high priority to their preservation and enhancement. Many of the trees within the hospital grounds are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders.



The area is also of significant importance in terms of the diversity of recreational, leisure and sporting activities it supports. This is contrasted by the small enclosed garden areas associated with Victorian houses within Thurstan Road and on the north side of Cope Hill. The area's elevated location, rising some 30 metres between Cottenham Park Road and Cope Hill, and topography mean that it is both highly visible from the south and west as well as itself benefiting from long-distance views.

Ecology

The extent and nature of open spaces are a significant feature of the area's open character which is complemented by mature trees, natural landscaping and the significant and unusual ecology particularly within the grounds of the Atkinson Morley Hospital. The woodland behind the Atkinson Morley Hospital is not ancient but has some large oaks that might date back to the ancient woods that were once in the area. It has developed naturally and provides a habitat for a range of wildlife including many birds, foxes, badgers and squirrels. The woodland has been described in the handbook 'Nature Conservation in Merton' and all is included within a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Grade I). Also included in the Site of Importance is an area of acid grassland lying between the woodland and hospital buildings and the location of an old pond beside the western part of the woodland.

There are also splendid rows of trees bordering both the footpaths within this conservation area, and many of the trees in the gardens bordering the area contribute to the general semi-rural effect. A small brook lined with trees and shrubs runs through the allotments; this provides shelter for a variety of wildlife, particularly foxes which have extensive earths in the banks of the stream.

There is a very wide range of birds in the area including less common birds such as goldcrests, nuthatches, fieldfares, bullfinches, blackcaps and great spotted woodpeckers; redwings flock on the playing fields each winter.

The existence of such a large range of species is due to the continued existence of open lands protected from development, resulting in the extensive variety of habitats within the conservation area. In particular the allotments, especially uncultivated plots, provide a food source for birds such as goldfinches which nest in other parts of the area.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

Historical land use patterns

Initially agricultural fields and woodland, the pattern of development was influenced by the remnants of historic woods and field patterns and surviving elements of the landscaped grounds to 'Prospect Place', attributed to Humphrey Repton, which formerly occupied the site.



There are a number of recreational, leisure and sporting activities which take place within the conservation area. Not only does the area provide significant amenities to many people, adults and children, both from nearby but also from further afield in the Borough and elsewhere. The very nature of these activities makes a significant contribution to the overall character of the area. For this reason, it is important that these activities should be protected and encouraged.

Current land use patterns

The Conservation Area is a unique, semi-rural mix of open spaces woods and footpaths in the middle of a Metropolitan Borough. The many people, adults and children, who walk along these footpaths every day can experience the feel of the countryside a few steps away from the bustle of the town. The peaceful sporting, leisure and recreational activities which take place on the open spaces only serve to heighten the feeling of rus in urbe.

LANDSCAPE

Topographical features

Located at one of the highest parts of the Borough, the site rises to the area between Cope Hill and the rear garden area to Cottenham House which is approximately 50 metres above sea level and elevated over steep embankments below which the land falls away steeply to the south and west, the allotment gardens being between 30 and 35 metres lower. The embankments around the east end of the hospital building are a distinctive feature of the conservation area's topography. These steep gradients have to an extent influenced the way the area to the South of Cope Hill has been developed, particularly the design of the Wolfsen building clearly relates to the site topography and the vistas provided by these changes in level are a distinctive feature of the area.

Panoramic views

As a result of the area's topography and its open nature and the relatively low density of development providing significant gaps between the individual buildings, long distance views are afforded through the conservation area towards the downs to the south and west which contribute significantly to the special character and appearance of this conservation area. Many of the views out of the area are spectacular, especially the panoramic view from the hospital to the south-west.

Internal views from the footpaths and the road along the southern boundary of the Atkinson Morley playing fields of open spaces and the principal buildings within the area including the Hospital building and the Oberon Sports Pavilion are also significant.

The distant views of the conservation area from the A3, the railway and Coombe Lane are also a distinctive feature of the area.

Negative Factors

The allotments have been temporarily scarred by the recent additions of a new central building, new hard roadways and a severe fence on the northern boundary which faces the Oberon fields These disfigurements can be readily and cheaply obscured by planting suitable shrubs and climbers.

CONTRIBUTION OF STREETScape TO TOWNScape QUALITY

Street Audit

The main contributing feature of the streetscape which contributes to the conservation area's character is the sweeping form to Cope Hill with its broad pavements lined with street trees.

Traffic calming measures introduced along the length of Cope Hill, including the section through the conservation area, have involved the introduction of some non-traditional materials, surfaces, colours, and additional signing and street furniture, so significantly changing its appearance.

The small front gardens to the Victorian cottages in Thurstan Road and fronting Cope Hill in particular are important in contributing to the character of this small part of the conservation area. Generally the front boundaries to the properties are relatively low; in Thurstan Road comprising distinctive hooped railings with shrub planting behind and gateway arches, whilst properties fronting onto Cope Hill have low painted timber picket fences. These along with the planting in the front garden areas create an important softening of the street scene and make an attractive contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area. There remain some low shrubs and grass which are vestiges of earlier street planting.

In contrast the landscaped grounds to Cottenham House and the hospital are set behind a brick wall which also contributes to the areas character.

Materials and Surfaces

Throughout the area, large granite kerbs and gutter sets survive and in some cases large granite quadrants at driveway locations. Much of the paving surfaces have been replaced with a mixture of incongruous concrete paving slabs and tarmac and at the lower end of Thurstan Road concrete block paviers. Some new development has kerbing of inappropriate concrete.

Other Features

Other features include a old George Reign Letter Box and some fairly modern concrete and timber seats on Cope Hill adjacent to the hospital boundary wall.

Detrimental Street Furniture

The character of Cope is somewhat marred by the clutter of street furniture and equipment including salt containers, litter bins, redundant street name signs and public telephone booths.

Neutral areas

The street lighting is rather utilitarian and neither enhances or detracts from the areas character.

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| RICHARD MILLWARD | - HISTORIC WIMBLEDON |
| G. HAWTIN | - WIMBLEDON |
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