

Local list description and map for Stanmore Recreation Ground

Adopted 23rd September 2021

This area meets the following criteria for local listing:

- (A) Date and rarity.** The older a designed landscape is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Likely to be designated are:
- i. sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time
- (B) Further considerations** which may influence selection, and may exceptionally be sufficient by themselves to merit:
- i. Sites having an association with significant persons or historic events
 - ii. Sites with a strong group value with other heritage assets

Summary and introduction:

The site of Stanmore Recreation Ground is of special interest partly for being part of the estate of Stanmore Hall originally built in the 18th century by the Duke of Chandos who owned the Canons estate. Therefore, there are strong associations with the grade II* listed Stanmore Hall and the Little Common Conservation Area. It is thought that the 1st Duke of Chandos owned and probably built Bowling Green House, more or less on the site of the present Stanmore Cricket Club ground. Therefore there is a history of Stanmore has a history of having a bowls green extending back over at least 300 years. The recreation ground is also important for being purchased by public subscription and charitable donations in the 1930s to ensure this land remained open space. It has fine trees at the entrance on Dennis Lane including mature oak and areas of shrub planting near the pavilions. The opening event in the 1930s was attended by Sir John Fitzgerald and the Earl of Cavan.

Details:

Stanmore Recreation Ground is located north of Coverdale Close, Stanmore with entrances on Stanmore Hill and Dennis Lane. It extends to 2.63 hectares providing one senior football pitch, one bowls green (Stanmore Bowls Club), changing facilities, café, children's nursery, children's play area, and a car park. The changing facilities, café and nursery are currently under reconstruction.

The recreation ground is part of the estate of Stanmore Hall originally built in the 18th century by the Duke of Chandos who owned the Canons estate. Reference to OS County Series maps, scale: 6 inches to 1 mile, for 1868-1877 and 1897, show field boundaries much as they are today surrounding the Recreation Ground. Each of these maps also show Stanmore Hall Farm on both sides of Dennis Lane with farm buildings located where Hall Farm Close stands today, off Dennis Lane. It seems therefore the land now forming Stanmore Recreation Ground was originally agricultural land with similar boundaries to the present day, and formed part of Stanmore Hall Farm and therefore the Stanmore Hall Estate, at some point. There are therefore strong associations with the Little Common Conservation Area and the grade II* listed Stanmore Hall.

In the late C18th the owner of Stanmore Hall was James Forbes (1749-1819) who had married Rose Gayland of Stanmore in 1788. He had travelled to India for the East India Company between 1765 and 1784, and was very knowledgeable about Indian culture, flora and fauna, later publishing 'Oriental Memoirs'. He enlarged the house and undertook works in the garden, which included building a small octagonal pagoda in which he displayed Hindu sculptures that he had been given by the Brahmins of Hindustan. Stanmore Hall was conveyed by the then owner Thomas Teed to Matthew John Rhodes in 1842 and the house was re-sited in order to command south-easterly views. In 1847 Stanmore Hall was purchased by Teed's son-in-law Robert Hollond MP, whose widow Ellen Julia (nee Teed) lived here until her death in 1884. The Hollond mausoleum was in the old parish church at Great Stanmore (q.v.), but it was later vandalised and reduced to a slab.

In 1889 the estate was purchased by William Knox D'Arcy, who had made a fortune in Australia in partnership with 3 prospectors who found gold in 1882 and later developed the Anglo-Persian Oil Field. He not only modernised Stanmore Hall but also laid out the garden 'on a lavish scale. [. . .] He introduced many rare and tropical plants and laid down magnificent glass houses, but the show piece was a waterfall and ornamental lakes, which he stocked with fish, plants, and waterfowl'. He lived here until his death in 1917. The house was then used as an assize court and during WWII was used by US troops and then a nurses' home for the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in 1947 until 1971.

By the 1930s the grounds were already being built over by new houses and the recreation ground appears on OS Maps of the 1930s. The Hendon Rural District Council Minutes dated 6 November 1930 record that a Parochial Committee constituted by the whole of the Members from time to time of the Great Stanmore Parish Council and the Rural District Councillors from the said parish be formed', 'for layout, maintenance, and upkeep of 4a. 3r. 26p. of land to be used as Public Open Space and Recreation Ground between Stanmore Hill and Dennis Lane (more

particularly described in a Conveyance to the Rural District Council dated 27 January 1930)' ¹

The Recreation Ground was formally opened as the Great Stanmore Recreation Ground, on Saturday, 7 May 1932 by General the Earl of Caven (a vice president of the National Playing Fields Association). Many guests attended including Sir John and Lady Mildred Fitzgerald (who owned Warren House) and the band of the Royal Horse Guards performed from a bandstand².

Sir John Fitzgerald introduced the Earl of Cavan, who in his speech mentioned that funds to had come from various sources: '£1000 was raised by local subscriptions and donations', and the National Playing Fields Association and the United Kingdom Carnegie Trust together gave a further £550, to raise the £1,550 required to acquire the land. He also mentioned that it was important to keep children off the streets and the physical welfare of the nation would be protected. He said he was 'proud to know that this little bit of green England would always remain open space' and 'houses would spring up all around, but this area would always be to them what Hyde Park was to London'³.

The Harrow District Council Minutes dated 6 November 1934 record they 'Read a letter dated 23 October 1934 from Sir John Fitzgerald, offering to convey to the Council for the purpose of extending Great Stanmore Recreation Ground certain land adjoining the entrance to the Ground from Dennis Lane'. They resolved 'that the Council accepts from Sir John Fitzgerald the conveyance, free of cost, approximately 1.1acre of land adjoining, and south of the entrance to Great Stanmore Recreation Ground from Dennis Lane'. The land was to be laid out as a bowling green if practicable, not as tennis courts⁴.

Clearly the land gifted by Sir John Fitzgerald to extend the Recreation Ground in 1934, to create the bowling green which remains in place today, was by then under his ownership, and had therefore been purchased by the Warren House Estate, as had the land to the East of Dennis Lane, now known as Stanmore Country Park.

Stanmore Past by Eileen M. Bowlit notes that 'The 1st Duke of Chandos owned and probably built Bowling Green House, more or less on the site of the present Stanmore Cricket Club ground. It was let to Samuel Symons along with the bowling green, for £10 a year in 1714 and was probably the same building where the young James Bridges had enjoyed convivial meals with friends after games of bowls in the 1690s, when he had been visiting his aunt, Lady Drax, in Stanmore.'. So it seems Stanmore has a history of having a bowls green extending back over at least 300 years.

¹ Hendon RDC Minutes 1930 – 1933.

² Harrow Observer, 13 May 1932

³ Harrow Observer, 13 May 1932

⁴ Harrow UDC Minutes 1935 - 1935

Sources:

London Parks and Gardens Trust, The London Inventory Historic Green Spaces, Harrow 2003

London Gardens Online: <http://www.londongardensonline.org.uk/gardens-online-record.php?ID=HRW051>

National list description:

Stanmore Hall: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1194606>

Walter W Druett 'The Stanmores and Harrow Weald Through the Ages' (The Hillingdon Press, 1938)

Email from Trevor Gray dated 26th March 2019

