

APPENDIX 13

Survey of the Walls around the Walled Garden

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WALLS AROUND THE WALLED GARDEN

Historical background

The walled garden forms part of the Brockwell Hall estate, built in 1811-13 for John Blades. The garden, and the garden temple which forms one of its sides, appear to have been built at the same time as the Hall and its lodges. For example exactly the same profile of octagonal column is used on the portico of the temple and on the colonnades of the stables, which are part of the ensemble of the main house.

In the late nineteenth century the estate was made into a public park and the walled garden, which it is assumed would primarily have been a kitchen garden, was re-landscaped. A formal arrangement of paths and planting beds was introduced. An aspect of the planting scheme was to show examples of plants referred to in the works of William Shakespeare.

The walls are one-and-a-half bricks thick, of overburnt London stocks in Flemish bond. There are piers and buttresses at intervals. The site of the walled garden slopes down from east to west, and as a result the west and east walls partly act as retaining walls, to a depth of about 1m.

Changes to the fabric

A number of modifications have been made to the walls, and it is likely that they were carried out at the time that the LCC took over the estate. They are as follows:

- Six courses of softer red bricks were built at the top of the east, north and west walls. These may have been replacements for brickwork originally built to that height, or they may have formed an addition to a wall that was originally lower.
- A larger area of the west wall was re-built in soft red bricks. An aviary, since demolished and replaced by two pergolas, was built against the outer face of this wall.
- The wall at the south west corner of the walled garden was reduced in height, presumably to make its entrance more visible and welcoming.
- The stone coping that now runs around the entire wall may have been added at the same time that these other modifications were made.
- The small door opening through the east wall, in the area now used by the Community Greenhouse Project, may also be a later modification.

Significance:

Although the character of the walled garden has changed, with the introduction of the flower beds, paths and pond, the basic form of an early nineteenth century kitchen garden is still intact. It forms part of the larger ensemble of house, lodges, service wing and stables. This ensemble is unique in inner

London as an example of an early nineteenth century “gentleman’s house” with all its associated subsidiary buildings.

Issues for future management and investment:

- The structure appears to be generally sound.
- Areas of the wall are covered by ivy and other creepers, although these are being gradually reduced.
- An area of bowing has been identified, at the northern end of the pergolas facing the ponds. This may be associated with a large eucalyptus nearby in the garden. This has recently been reduced in size and there are plans to remove it entirely.
- Much of the pointing of the original brickwork may be original. It is soft lime mortar with shell and flint aggregate. It is generally eroded, but to varying degrees. Some areas may have been re-pointed in a closely matching mortar, perhaps when the park was developed by the LCC. The red brick upper sections of wall are also pointed in lime mortar, of slightly different character from the areas below.
- Re-pointing in hard cement mortar has been done in some areas, particularly on the east wall. However this only amounts to about 20% of the east wall, and about 10% of the other walls. Some of this cement mortar can be easily detached, but in other areas it adheres firmly. It is desirable in principle to replace the cement mortar with appropriate lime mortar pointing, but this has to be done with great care, to avoid damaging the bricks.
- All the joints between the coping stones need to be re-pointed. The joints, which are presently open, form an obvious route for rain to penetrate into the fabric of the brickwork.
- A proportion of the soft red bricks have eroded on the west and east sides, and need to be replaced. In some cases the pointing is much harder than the bricks, and has remained intact while the brick has eroded. On the north side the laurel hedge makes it difficult to assess the degree of damage.
- The area of wall facing the ponds, behind the pergolas, has the most obvious defects. There is an area of very poor pointing, a good deal of erosion of the red bricks, and the pointing of the original stock bricks is generally eroded. This is also the area where the wall is bowing, possibly because of the adjacent eucalyptus.
- There has been a fire at the doorway near the north-east corner of the walled garden (between the two areas of the Community Greenhouse project) and this has burnt the timber lintel and spalled the stone copings above.

Proposals:

Maintenance work to the walls will form part of the programme of planned maintenance for structures in the park: there are no proposals for specific expenditure as part of this application. The priority areas to be considered for planned maintenance work will include:

- A detailed plumb survey of the walls.
- Removal of ivy and other creepers.
- Repair of the lintel, brickwork and copings where the fire has occurred on the east wall.
- Repair and re-pointing of the west wall at the rear of the pergolas, following a detailed appraisal of options.
- A rolling programme of re-pointing, using lime mortar to match the original.