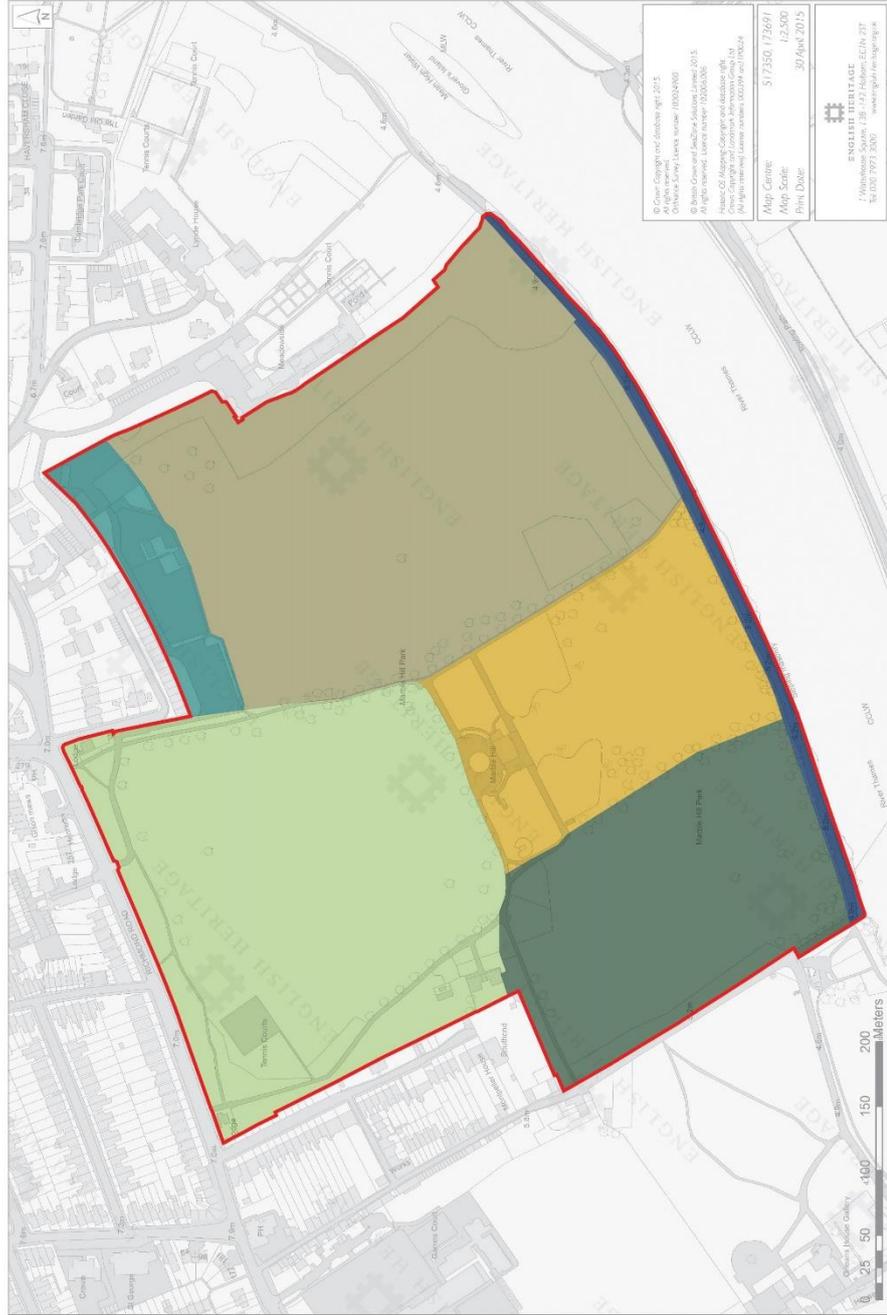


Marble Hill
Site
Character Areas



- █ Guardianship boundary
- █ Pleasure Ground
- █ Great Lawn and Sweet Walk
- █ West Meadow
- █ East Meadow
- █ Car park, playground and works area
- █ River Terrace



Marble Hill is included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It is listed at Grade II* for its special interest as the remains of an eighteenth century garden and park created for Henrietta Howard by, amongst others, Alexander Pope and Charles Bridgeman. Work on a formally planned landscape with structures in the grounds began in the autumn of 1724, soon after the construction of the house had commenced. The acquisition of land to enlarge the estate continued up to and indeed beyond Howard's death in 1767. The formal planting and landscaping had been eroded by the early nineteenth century, and alterations were then carried out by Jonathan Peel at a date prior to 1850. By the time Marble Hill was acquired by the LCC and other local authorities in 1902 the grounds were badly overgrown. Since then, alterations to and construction in the park have been focussed largely on maintaining it as a public amenity with sports facilities.

Detailed information about the history and conservation of the park are provided in the Landscape Management Plan included in the appendix. The six character areas are, however, described briefly here to aid understanding of the site and to place the buildings described in the gazetteer in their context.

Pleasure Grounds

This area comprises the immediate setting of the Mansion and the section of the park running south down to the Thames, which was the main landscape feature of Bridgeman and Pope's original design. The original design was based on a series of terraces of varying form and size stepping down the sloping site towards the river, bordered by groves of trees running along the eastern and western boundaries. The essential features of this layout can still be discerned. To the east and west of the Mansion are four small woodland compartments that frame it in views from both the north (i.e. from the Great Lawn) and south. That to the northwest forms the setting of the Ice House and former Ladies' Convenience, while that to the southeast forms the backdrop to the Grotto.

Great Lawn and Sweet Walk

During Howard's lifetime most of the land between the Mansion and Richmond Road was still in different ownership and the only a turning circle for carriages in front of the north elevation and drive (which today forms the entrance from Beaufort Road and the eastern boundary of this area) were included in the Estate. By the time of the Saulthier map of 1786, however, all of the remainder had been acquired and grassed over to form the Great Lawn. A dense band of trees and shrubs had been planted along the northern and western edges to screen the Lawn and House from Montpellier Row and Richmond Road. Soon after he acquired Marble Hill, Jonathan Peel created a new drive through the band of trees from Richmond Road to the house. This, unlike the planting along the northern edge, survives well and is known as the Sweet Walk. At the road entrance he built the White Lodge, while on the western side, at a right angle to the house and overlooking the Great Lawn and new drive, he put up the Stable Block. In the twentieth century several new additions were made: a wooden block of changing rooms was erected immediately to the north of the Stable Block, hard tennis courts were created in the northwest corner of the Great Lawn adjacent to the White Lodge, and a new lodge-type building with accommodation for a superintendent was put up at the Beaufort Road entrance.

West Meadow

This large, flat area is bounded by the Pleasure Grounds to the east and the river front to the south. To the west it is enclosed by Orleans Road, which forms part of the western boundary of the park, although it is screened from view by a line of trees, which also extends through 90 degrees to run along the river front. Historically fields and meadows, after Marble Hill became a public park the West Meadow was turned into rugby pitches. There is a slight fall in the land from east to west and a shelter was built on the eastern side to take advantage of the views.

East Meadow

The East Meadow occupies a large portion of the site and stretches all the way to its easternmost extent. It is bounded to the west by the Great Lawn and Pleasure Grounds, to the south by the Thames, and to the north by the playground and car park. Historically it seems to have been mostly open ground, apart from a strip along the eastern side which was formerly occupied by the gardens of Little Marble Hill and was therefore formerly separate property, only being joined to the main estate in c.1876 after that house was demolished. The East Meadow is flat and largely occupied by football pitches. The eastern edges and river front are quite

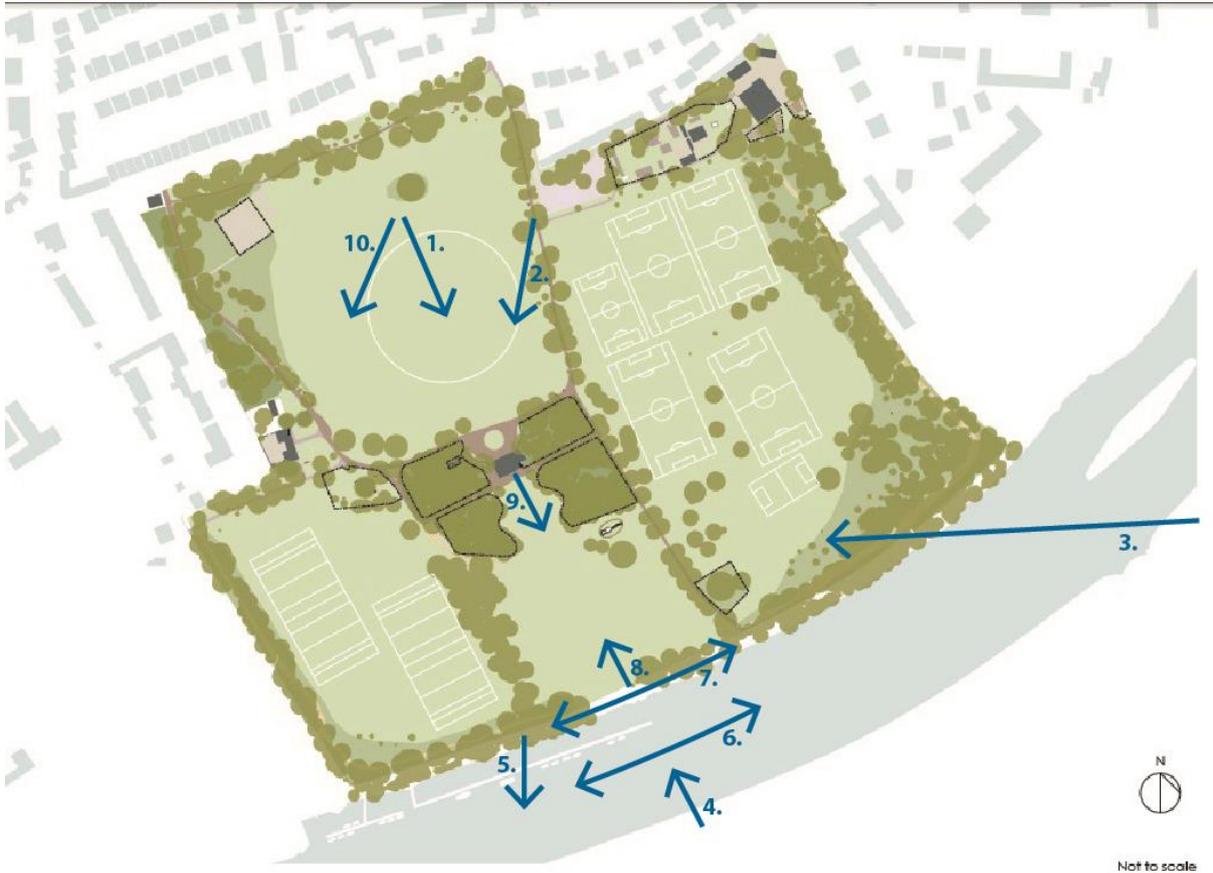
thickly wooded and Jeanie Deans's Avenue runs along the western edge where it adjoins the Pleasure Grounds. This is a grove of trees that appears to have been extant by the time of the Sauthier survey of 1786 and includes an American black walnut tree on the eastern side of the central path, which may date back to Howard's time.

Car Park, Playground and Works Area

The north-eastern corner of the park was formerly occupied by the estate's kitchen garden, which is visible on Rocque's map of 1746 and was still functioning when Marble Hill was offered for sale in 1890. By the time the estate was purchased by the LCC and its partners, however, it had been abandoned. The western third is occupied by a visitor car park, reached from the Beaufort Road entrance to the site. The middle third has been occupied since the early 1970s by the Marble Hill Playcentres building and the adjacent playground. The easternmost third is occupied by the Sports Changing Room and Works Yard. To the south of that area, extending into the band of trees running along the eastern boundary of the East Meadow, are the community gardens used by Jam Today Jam Tomorrow.

River Terrace

A tarmacked footpath, known as Warren Parth, runs along the entire length of the river front of the site, from which it is separated by iron railings. At its western end it provides access to Riverside, the continuation of Orleans Road that runs into the centre of Twickenham. It also extends east in the direction of Richmond.



VIEW 1 – From Great Lawn to house

Reason for selection

This is one of the most prominent views of the house, seen by visitors as they approach the site, people using the park as an amenity and passers-by travelling down Richmond Road.

Description

The house presents one of its main elevations, flanked by the curving screen walls, to the Great Lawn. It is glimpsed from Richmond Road between trees along the northern boundary of the site, somewhat better from the path running behind them along the northern edge of the Great Lawn. Unobstructed, frontal views of the house are only possible from here and the Great Lawn itself; visitors walking or driving up to the main entrance see it obliquely.

History

The Great Lawn was not part of Henrietta Howard's original concept for the site since during her lifetime Plumbush, the field immediately to the north of the house, and the land to the west were in different ownership – the grounds encompassed just the carriage turning circle in front of the house, which was linked to Richmond Road only by a long drive. The Great Lawn took shape at some point between 1752 and 1786 when the land was added to the estate. Since it was presumably used for agriculture there must always have been unobstructed views of the north elevation of the house across it, but these could not be enjoyed from Richmond Road since there were a deep line of planting along the boundary. The house was always flanked by areas of planting which screened all views of the river. Jonathan Peel created a second drive from Richmond Road, which opened up more views of the house across the Great Lawn. The planting along the northern boundary thinned in later years and late nineteenth/early twentieth century housing on the north side of Richmond Road took advantage of the views that opened up.

Significance: Moderate



VIEW 2 – From old carriage drive

Reason for selection

This is one of the most prominent views of the house, seen by visitors as they approach the site from the Beaufort Road entrance.

Description

Views looking southwest open up between the trees that line the drive. The north elevation of the house, flanked by the curving screen walls, is seen at an angle. The plainer east elevation is visible although always partly obstructed by trees to a varying degree, depending on the season.

History

The carriage drive follows the line of an ancient byway called Worple Way that provided access to the land along the Thames and so predates the Marble Hill estate. It was the main land approach to the house from when it was first completed to when Jonathan Peel created a second drive through the Sweet Walk in the 1820s. It was therefore from here that most visitors would have had their first glimpse of the house. The best views would have opened up from a distance, diminishing at close range. On the 1752 plan only the east side of the drive is planted with trees but they later appeared on both sides. It also shows trees along the east-west drive across the front of the house, which must further have restricted views of it.

Significance: High



VIEW 3 – From Richmond Hill (long distance view)

Reason for selection

The Marble Hill Estate forms an integral part of the celebrated view looking down from Richmond Hill over the bend in the River Thames and the surrounding landscape. This viewpoint allows the whole of the site to be taken in at a glance from a distance and also presents it in its wider context.

Description

This view opens up from Richmond Hill (the B321), the road which runs from the centre of the town up the hill towards the former Star and Garter Home and the Richmond Gate of Richmond Park. It is a kinetic view, which does not reveal itself immediately in its entirety. It starts to appear a little way south of the junction with Friar's Stile Road and disappears beyond the junction with Nightingale Lane where it is hidden by buildings along the western side of the road. A line of trees planted along the pavement partly obstructs the view for motorists although an unencumbered view can be enjoyed by pedestrians from the terrace on the other side of them. Marble Hill can best be seen from a point in the vicinity of the Roebuck pub. The house itself is largely hidden by the trees growing on Petersham Ait and on the river front of the East Meadow although naturally the view and sightlines within it change with the seasons and varying degree of tree cover.

History

Although the view is formed by natural features in the landscape, its importance was quickly recognised when Richmond began to expand in the eighteenth century. It was much celebrated by painters, including Joshua Reynolds and J.M.W. Turner, and poets, including William Wordsworth. The importance of conserving it was also quickly appreciated. In 1765 Miss Susanna Houblon bequeathed her house on Richmond Hill (Ellerker House, now the Old Vicarage School) to her great-nephew on the condition that no buildings should be erected to obscure the view. In 1886 the Richmond Vestry acquired the combined former Lansdowne/Buccleuch estate to create Terrace Gardens on the slope of the hill, which opened in May 1887 and in 1936 purchased the area along the river then occupied by Buccleuch House, which was demolished in 1938 to create public gardens. In 1896 the Trustees of the Earl of Dysart leased Petersham Meadows to the Corporation to save them from development and under the Richmond, Petersham and Ham Open Spaces Act 1902 they were vested in the Corporation as public recreation grounds and open spaces. In 1900 Max Waechter, who lived in Terrace House on Richmond Hill, bought Petersham Ait and gifted it to the Council and then in 1902, Waechter gave it the freehold of Petersham Lodge and grounds. The purchase of the Marble Hill Estate secured another important part of the view. In 1927 Mrs Nellie Ionides purchased Orleans House to preserve it from industrial use and in 1930 Deed of Covenant was entered into by Richmond Borough Council, Twickenham Borough Council and Surrey, Middlesex and London County Councils to restrict future development to certain limited areas only.

Significance: High



VIEW 4 – From opposite bank of the Thames

Reason for selection

This river is a crucially important element in the setting of Marble Hill. Many historic illustrations are based on this view. View 4 is also effectively the reciprocal of View 5 (see below). Many local residents and tourists see the house from this angle while travelling along the towpath on foot or bike or down the river by boat.

Description

This view is obtained from the towpath running upstream from Richmond towards Kingston along the opposite bank of the Thames. The mansion is seen across the water, framed by the two groves of trees that enclose the Pleasure Ground. This means that the number of viewpoints is somewhat restricted – they are all located on a short stretch of the towpath in front of Ham Polo Club – although this is to some extent a kinetic view in that the house gradually reveals itself to anyone passing along the river or towpath and then disappears from sight again. Marble Hill cannot be viewed directly from Ham House – it is necessary to travel a short distance downstream to obtain View 5. Views can also be obtained from the water by anyone travelling on the Ham House to Marble Hill foot ferry.

History

The mansion and park were conceived in relation to the Thames. As first built, the house was intended to be seen primarily from the towpaths and water (early visitors to the house would have reached it by boat from central London) and Bridgeman's layout of the park exploited the location with the terraces and Pleasure Ground leading down from the south front to the river. Although several elements in that design have been lost or altered the view survives largely unchanged from the eighteenth century.

Significance: High



VIEW 5 – To Ham House (seasonal view)

Reason for selection

This is one of the most important sightlines that opens up from the river front of the park, providing a visual interconnection with another historic stately home of exceptional significance located only a short distance away.

Description

Ham House stands on the south bank of the Thames slightly upstream from Marble Hill. Like its counterpart on the opposite side, it is set back from the towpath and screened from it by two lines of trees. Since the two houses are staggered, Ham House can be seen only from the section of the river terrace in front of the West Meadow and then only obliquely. The view opens up in the winter when the trees shed their foliage. The distance to Ham House and the fact that the sun is behind it for most of the day reduces the amount of detail that can be made out but its considerable bulk with tall chimneys forms an imposing backdrop to views of the river.

History

Being a Jacobean building, Ham House predates Marble Hill. When first built it was surrounded by open country. Although later development encroached on its surroundings, the house and outbuildings were surrounded by extensive grounds which ensured that its immediate setting was protected. Although part of the estate was sold off in 1949, the same year the house was donated by the Tollemache family to the National Trust who ensured its preservation. The view has therefore changed little apart from relatively insubstantial additions in the foreground such as landing stages and jetties for pleasure craft.

Significance: High



VIEW 6 – Both ways along the river (from a boat)

Reason for selection

The River Thames has always been an important transport route – initially as a means of communication with central London, then from the nineteenth century onwards for day-trippers travelling on pleasure craft. Marble Hill is one of a number of landmarks visible on this stretch of the river.

Description

This is a kinetic view which reveals itself gradually whether one is travelling upstream or downstream as the boat draws level with the Pleasure Ground and sightlines along it to the south front of the mansion. Travellers heading upstream see first Marble Hill on the starboard side, then a short distance later Ham House on the port side and then ahead Eel Pie Island in Twickenham. Travellers heading downstream see these same features in reverse sequence and on opposite sides. The sharp bend in the river means that looking almost directly ahead they see Petersham Meadows and, above them, Richmond Hill and the Royal Star and Garter Home.

History

The main features which appear in this view have been described above. As originally built, Marble Hill and the other mansions along the banks of the Thames, such as neighbouring Orleans Park, formed the principal architectural accents and were intended to impress travellers on the river. But with increasing appreciation of the surrounding landscape as a beauty spot from the late nineteenth century onwards other views from river craft began to vie with them in importance.

Significance: Moderate

No photograph available

VIEW 7 – Both ways along the river terrace

Reason for selection

The river terrace is an important thoroughfare from which the House and ground can be viewed by members of the public without entering the site. Views also open up looking along the towpath upstream or downstream.

Description

This is a kinetic view which changes as one walks along the towpath in either direction. Looking directly ahead along the towpath, elements of the Marble Hill site are visible only at the edge of one's field of vision. In the foreground the towpath itself and the verges are visible; in the distance the wider setting of the house (from some points the reciprocal of View 3) can be appreciated. This includes features such as Petersham Meadows and Petersham Ait.

History

Early views of the house show the pleasure ground extending all the down to the river bank. On the 1786 Sauthier map of Twickenham a narrow strip running along it can be identified. On the first edition Ordnance Survey map the towpath can be clearly identified and trees had started to grow up along it. In place, especially where it passes in front of the East Meadow, the foliage is now dense in the summer months. As described above in the entries for Views 3 and 5 the surroundings of Marble Hill have been well protected from twentieth century development and therefore the views along the towpath have not changed substantially, although from it in the distance prominent landmarks such as the Royal Star and Garter Home on Richmond Hill of 1919-24.

Significance: Moderate



VIEW 8 – From Thames to house

Reason for selection

This is the reciprocal of View 9 and very similar to View 4, with the exception that the river is not visible in the foreground and the south front of the Mansion is seen at slightly closer range.

Description

The south front of the house is seen across the Pleasure Ground framed by groves of trees. Those that line the upper terrace immediately in front of the house reflect the original formal planning more closely, those that line the wider terrace that stretches down to the Thames are thinner and less regular. Since there is no path or roadway running across the Pleasure Ground access may not be very easy in poor weather and the view is most frequently appreciated by people using the towpath, which has a hard surface.

History

As described above (see entry for View 4), the Pleasure Ground was an important component in the Bridgeman's original plan for the garden. It was also important as a formal approach to the house for visitors arriving by boat. While the original layout can still be traced and, to a degree, appreciated, it has been much eroded.

Significance: High



VIEW 9 – From house to Thames

Reason for selection

This is the reciprocal of View 8: if the House was conceived in relation to the Thames and intended to be seen in conjunction with it, views looking out of it across the Pleasure Grounds to the river and beyond were no less important. The single aspect of the Great Room takes advantage of this view as seen from the first floor, underscoring its importance.

Description

In the foreground is the lawn of the Pleasure Ground, with low, curving banks marking the location of the terraces stepping downward towards the river into which it was formerly divided. It is framed on both sides by groves of mature trees. Trees growing along the towpath restrict longer-range views in the summer months, but control over development in Petersham on the opposite bank of the Thames, which has remained low rise, and the presence of Richmond Park beyond mean that the skyline is unencumbered.

History

See above

Significance: High



Reason for selection

This is one of the most important views in the northern half of the site since it presents the second largest historic building on the site after the Mansion in its wider setting.

Description

This view is obtained from the Beaufort Road entrance to the Mansion and opens up soon after one enters the site if one looks southwest across the Great Lawn. Although Montpelier Row is located almost immediately behind the Stable Block yard, it cannot be seen since the trees along the western boundary of the site, including the Sweet Walk, form a visually impermeable backdrop, even in the winter months.

History

The Stable Block was built by Lieutenant General Jonathan Peel (1799-1879), probably soon after his purchase of Marble Hill in 1825. At some date between the death of Henrietta Howard in 1767 and the Saulthier plan of Twickenham made in 1786, the fields to the north of the mansion stretching all the way to the Richmond Road were added to the estate. Peel created a second drive to the Mansion that branched off Richmond Road at the White Lodge (see above). A point along this drive would have been a logical location for a Stable Block, although when it is approached by this route along the Sweet Walk is reveals itself only at the last moment. However, the spacious ground in front of the site provided an incentive for a broad, spreading front to exploit the position, as well as views from the original drive in which it could be seen at a distance. The view has little changed in the intervening years.

Significance: High



