



From: <http://www.hampsteadheath.net/famous-hampstead-houses-in-1910.html>

80 - 82 CHISWICK HIGH ROAD, LONDON W4 1SY. T 020 7993 6573

E: paulv@paulvick.co.uk

Building history

Keats House, or Wentworth Place as it was originally known, was built in 1814 by William Woods, a local builder and completed in 1816. Originally two separate houses, the larger side of the property was first occupied by Charles Wentworth Dilke and his family, while the smaller, eastern side was occupied by Charles Brown. It was to Brown's side of the house that John Keats came to live in 1818, staying here for just 17 months before travelling to Italy where he died.

A major change to the building happened in 1838 when it was bought by the actress Eliza Jane Chester. She removed the staircase in the Keats/ Brown side of the house and knocked through the walls to create a single house. She also added the drawing room at the eastern end of the house (the Chester Room). Miss Chester was famous during the 1820s and early 1830s for playing the lead roles in comedies and especially for her appearances as Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing and Lady Teazle in The School for Scandal. She was known for her beauty and elegance rather than her acting ability or her voice. She had a wealthy and influential patron, and later became a favourite of King George IV.

Following the changes made by Miss Chester, the house remained largely unaltered and continued to be a private residence until the early years of the 20th century. In 1920, however, it was threatened with demolition to make way for a row of flats. The property was offered for sale at £3,500 and a Memorial Committee was formed to raise the £10,000 necessary to buy the house, repair it, and maintain it as a memorial to Keats. After a successful fundraising effort in Britain and the United States, the property was formally acquired on 24th March 1921, and in April of the following year the Committee resolved to offer the house to Hampstead Borough Council.

Keats House opened to the public on 9th May 1925 and a ceremony to mark the occasion was held, at which Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch delivered the inaugural address.

Sir Charles Dilke, grandson of Charles Wentworth Dilke, had donated his collection of books, letters and artefacts relating to Keats to Hampstead Borough Council and this was displayed at Hampstead Central Library in Finchley Road, a mile away from the house. In order to display the

collection in a more convenient location, a building was erected next to the house in the area which had once been stables and kitchen gardens. As well as housing the collections, part of the building was used as a branch library. The new building was opened on 17th July 1931 by the Marquess of Crewe, son of Lord Houghton, the first biographer of Keats.

In 1974-5 the London Borough of Camden, with the aid of a grant from the Historic Buildings Council, undertook a restoration programme which included a complete redecoration of the interior. The Victorian conservatory was also replaced, and changes were made to the layout of the basement.

In 1998 the City of London assumed responsibility for Keats House. A programme of conservation work began in 1999 and in 2007 the house was awarded £424,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to allow for the internal restoration of the building. In 2014 Keats House was awarded a grant by Arts Council England to redisplay the house and make more of the collection accessible to the public.



Keats House (Lawn Bank) c. 1895 with family

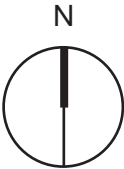
Source:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/keats-house/keats-history/Pages/History-of-the-house.aspx>

Urbanisation

Notes:
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Source:
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Full Title: Middlesex XI (includes: Hendon; Wembley; Willesden)
Surveyed: 1864 to 1865
Published: 1873



Full Title: London (First Editions c1850s) VII (includes: Hampstead)
Surveyed: 1866
Published: 1870



Full Title: London (1915- Numbered sheets) I.16 (includes: Hampstead)
Surveyed: 1912
Published: 1915



Full Title: London (1915- Numbered sheets) I.16 (includes: Hampstead)
Surveyed: 1934 to 1936
Published: 1938

Local Area Historic Development

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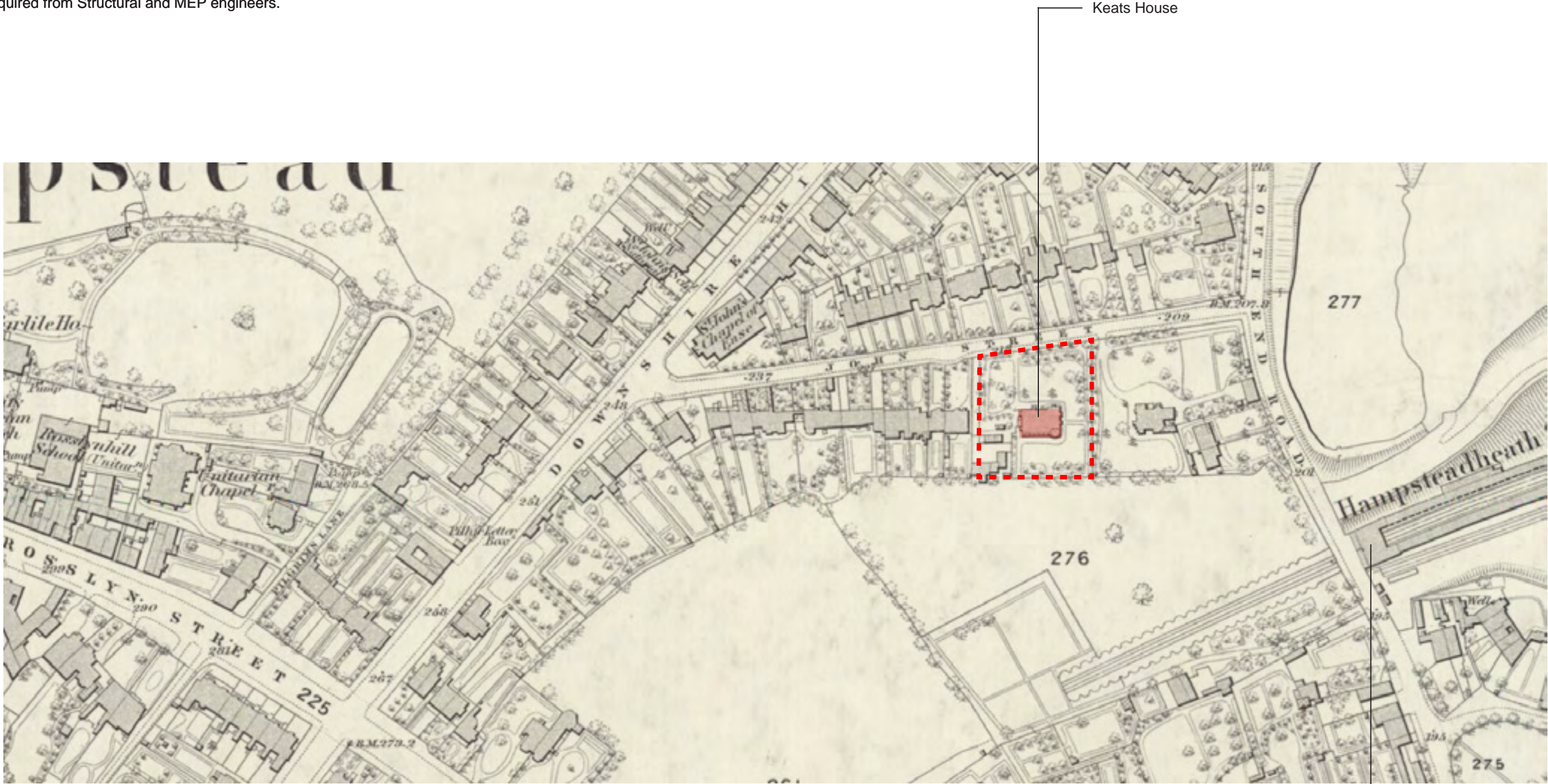
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Surveyed: 1864 to 1865
Published: 1873

Source:
<http://maps.nls.uk/view/102345949>

The Site 

Hampstead Heath Train Station

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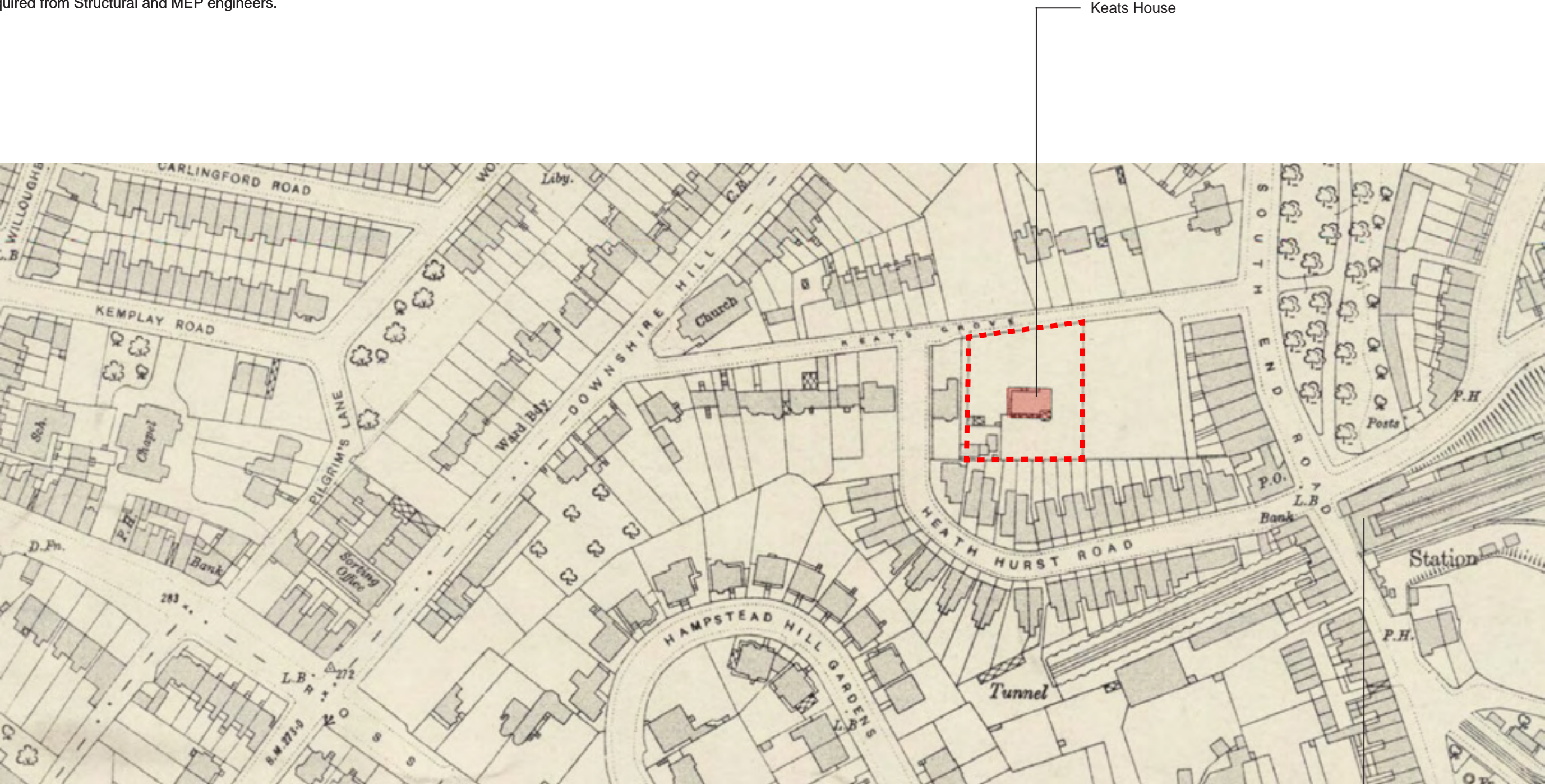


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The Site

Hampstead Heath Train Station

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Full Title: London (1915- Numbered sheets) I.16 (includes: Hampstead)
Surveyed: 1912
Published: 1915
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The Site

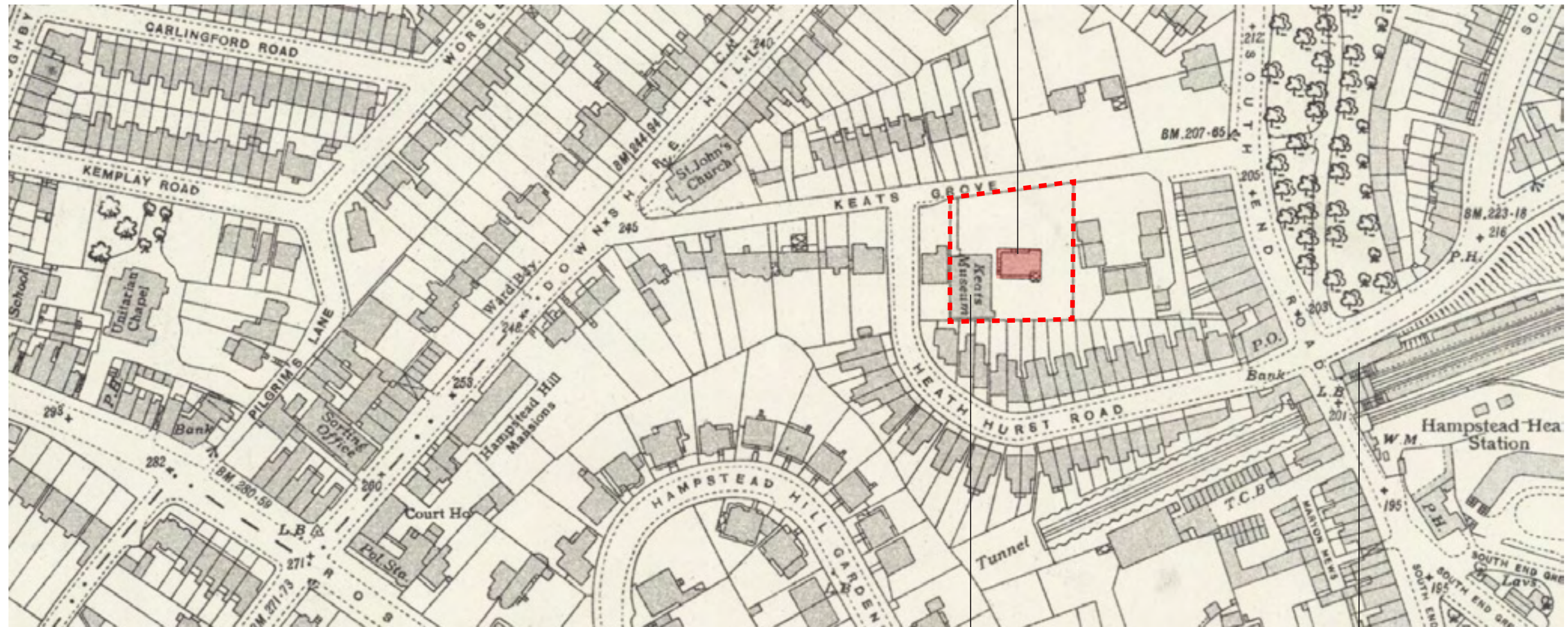


Hampstead Heath Train Station

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Full Title: London (1915- Numbered sheets) I.16 (includes: Hampstead)
 Surveyed: 1934 to 1936
 Published: 1938

Source:
<http://maps.nls.uk/view/103313207>

The Site

Keats Museum/Library
Added in 1931

Hampstead Heath Train Station

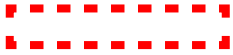
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Keats House
Date: 2017

Source:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=true>

The Site

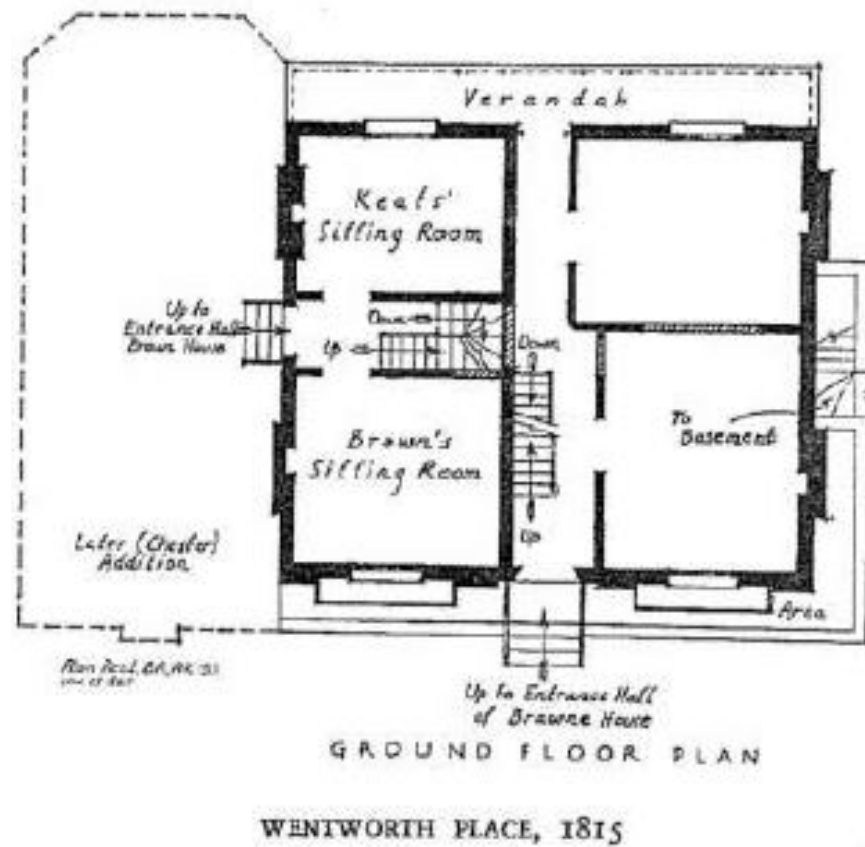
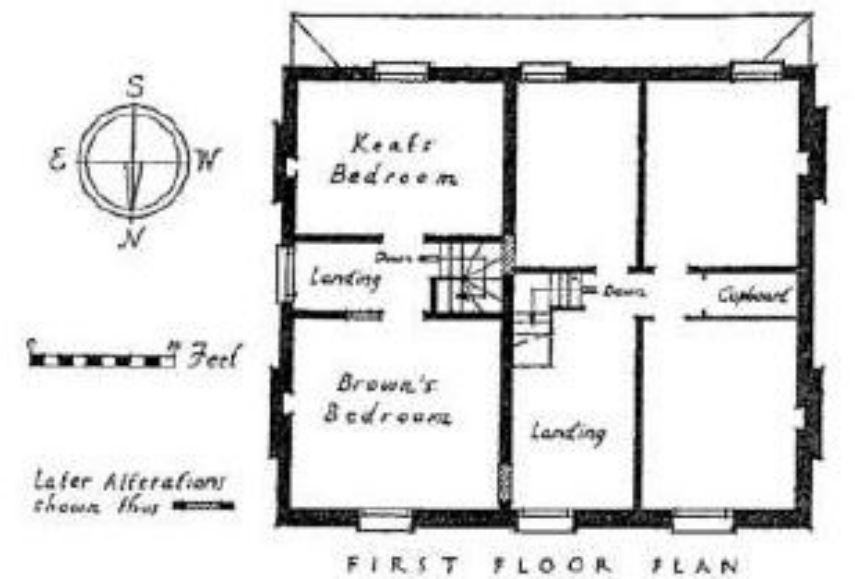


Keats Community Library
Listed Grade II (2016)
List entry No: 1430883

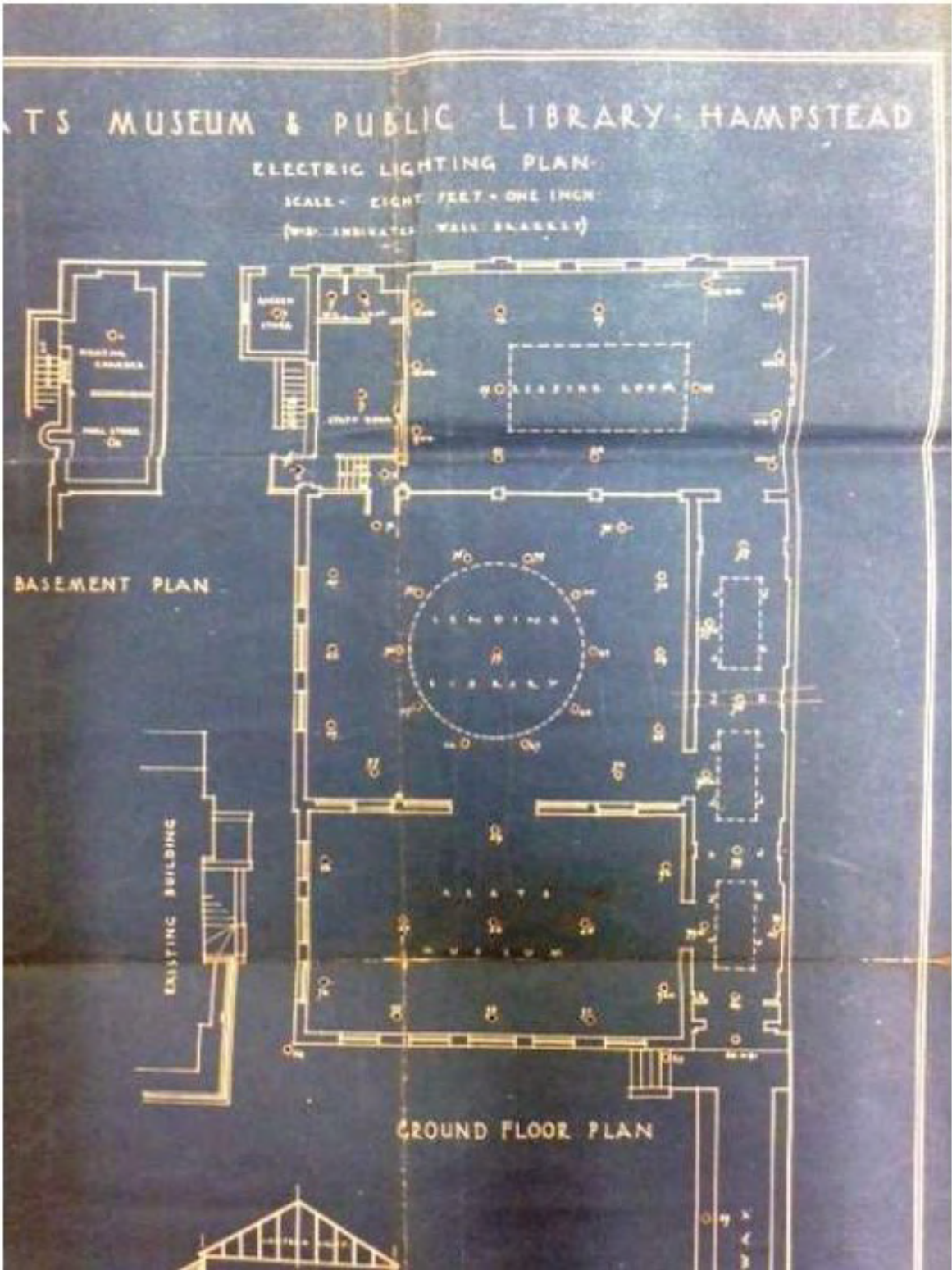
Hampstead Heath Train
Station

Keats House Plans

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Plan of the museum and library 1931

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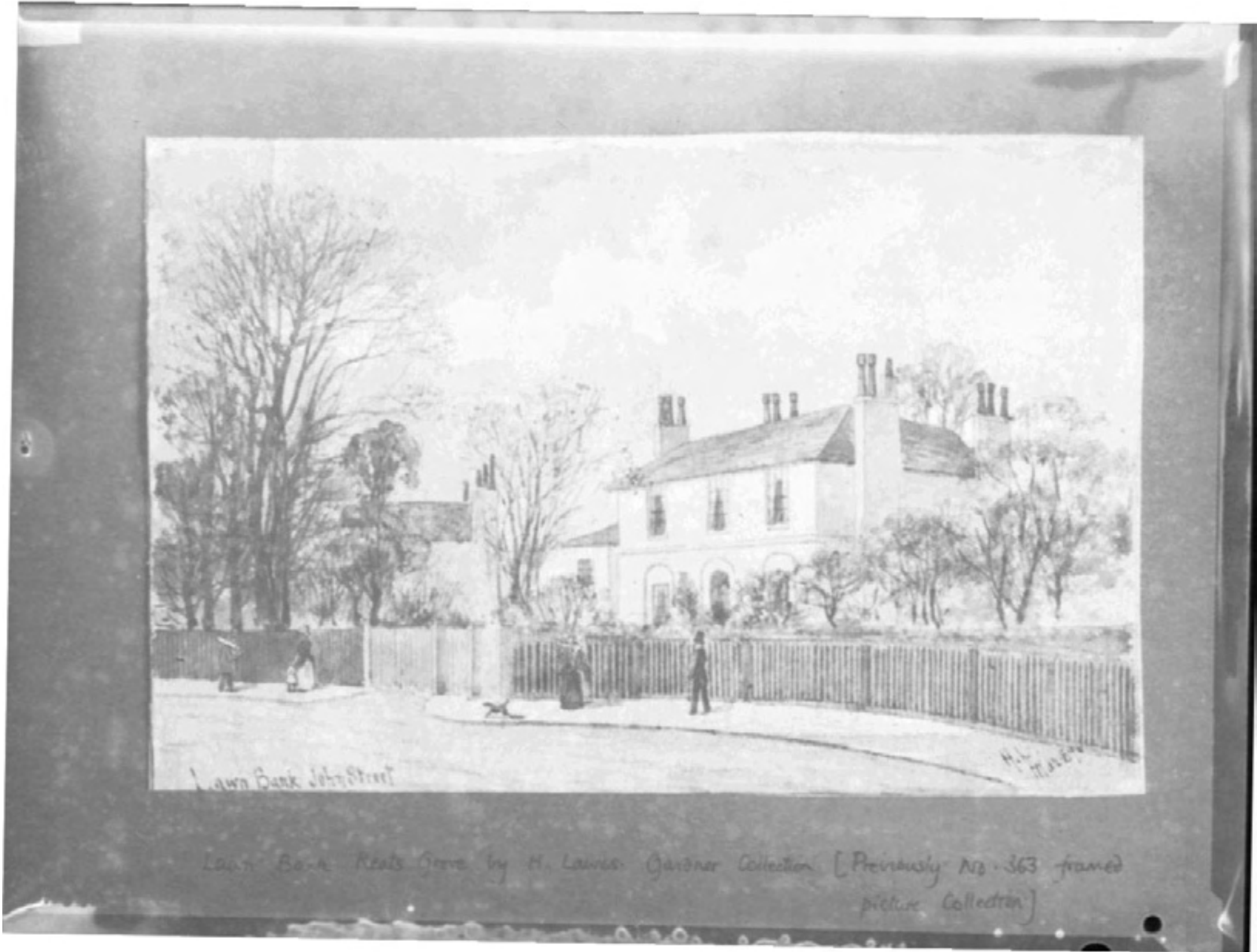
Plan of the house before 1990s work_ 9th edition guide book

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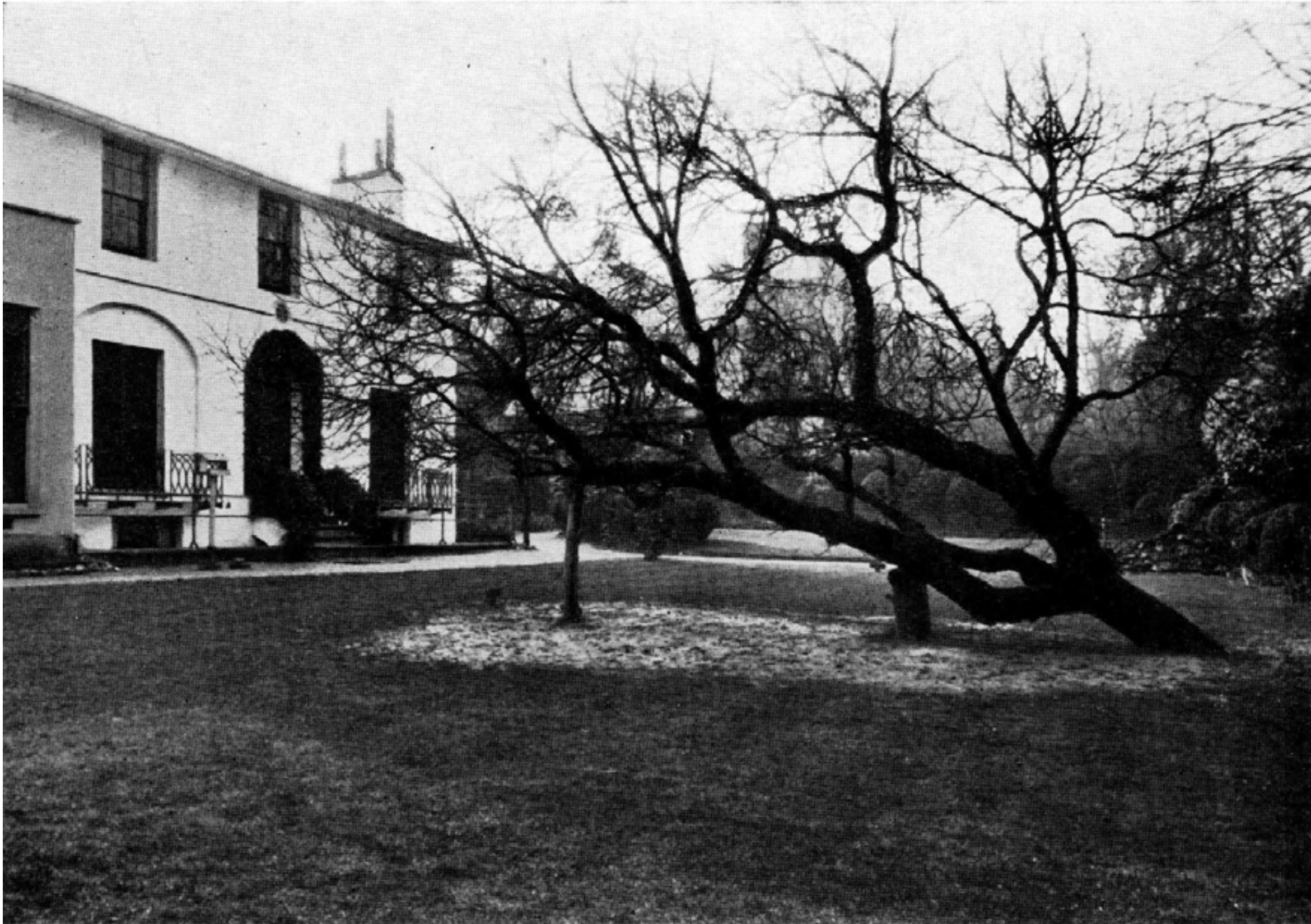
Keats House (known then as Lawn Bank) early 1890s

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Keats House (Lawn Bank) c. 1890s? The gates are for the driveway to the coach house (where the library path is now).

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Keats House (Lawn Bank) c. 1890s

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Keats House (Lawn Bank) c. 1895 with family

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Keats House (Lawn Bank) by Hull, 1907

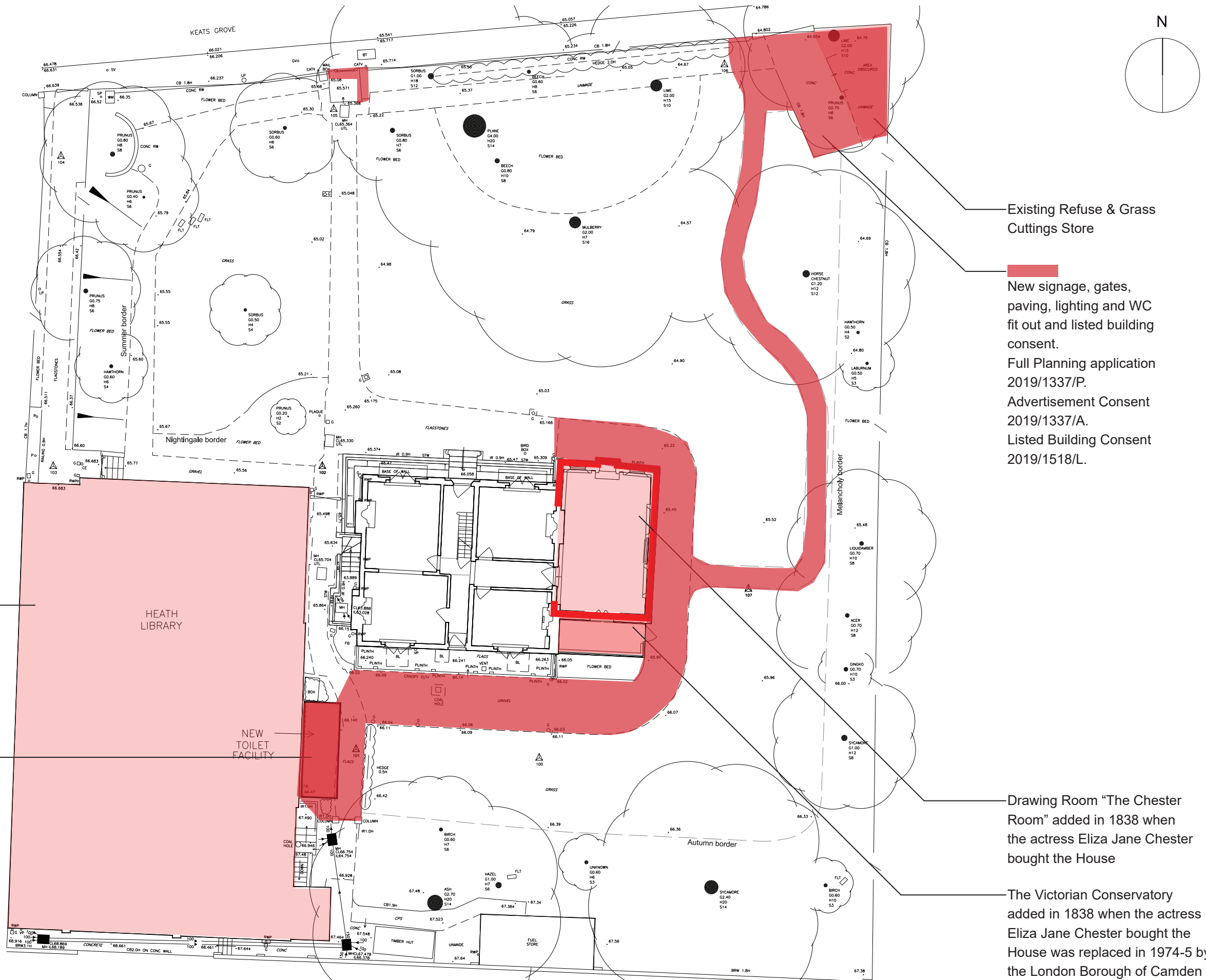
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Keats House (Lawn Bank) c 1920

Keats House Historical Development

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History of Front Fences

'A lady, born at Hampstead, and who resided there till twenty-two years of age, remembers that a low fence encircled the garden [of Wentworth Place], within which was a hedge of laurustinus and China roses ; latterly it was railed round.'

From: White, Mrs Caroline A. Sweet Hampstead and its associations. London. Stock, 1900. p. 357.

The above is the most specific description found by Keats House historian, Ken Page. It is open to interpretation. It does however indicate that there was a 'low fence' which 'latterly it was railed around'. This appears to indicate a visual permeability and rails.

Looking to the context of the time, a mix of high brick walls, low brick walls, hedges, and railings were commonplace in Hampstead. Keats House is part of the Downshire Hill estate (Downshire Hill, Keats Grove, and the houses facing onto East Heath Road) and there is a definite mixture in the area of types of boundaries.

For example the house at the top of Devonshire Hill attached image (below - https://archive.org/details/b24876586_0003/page/88/mode/2up) shows the house to the right with a mix of low walls with railings above and full height solid walls, as well as St John's opposite with railings above the low brick wall.

The view of houses between Downshire Hill and Pilgrim's Lane (Elm Cottage, which Keats knew, is the low house in the middle of the picture) showing houses now demolished but also from the Downshire Hill estate shows low fences (see image below - https://archive.org/details/b24876586_0003/page/n357/mode/2up) This view is by H. Lawes, so that dates the picture of Keats House in the document to about the same date, 1887. In another variation, one of these contemporary houses, is still standing (on the corner of Pilgrim's Lane) and that now has a high brick wall and solid gate.

This 1830 view of Heath Mount School elsewhere in Hampstead has a high wall all round see image on next page - https://archive.org/details/b24876586_0003/page/n369/mode/2up

More contemporary front conditions show a mix of high solid walls as well as low brick walls with railings above.

Keats House itself to the front has metal railings and balustrade (see AP_065 of this report). The existing front timber fence is unoriginal and the Conservation Management Plan identifies it as needing replacement (Keats House, Conservation Management Plan, 31.03.2020)



St. Johns Chapel with low brick wall and metal fence above. p.89 The Annals of Hampstead

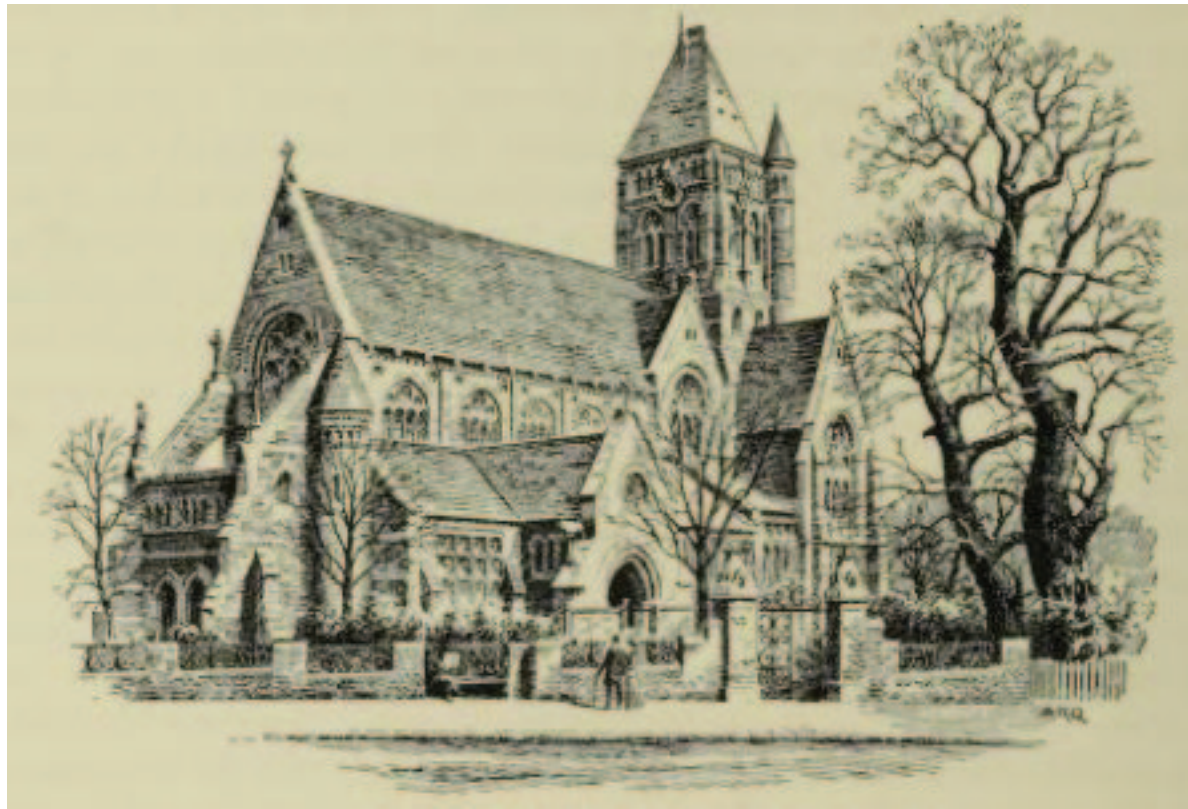
From early 1900s from Barratt's 'Annals of Hampstead' shows the a mix of a mix of low walls with railings above and full height solid walls, as well as St John's opposite with railings above the low brick wall.



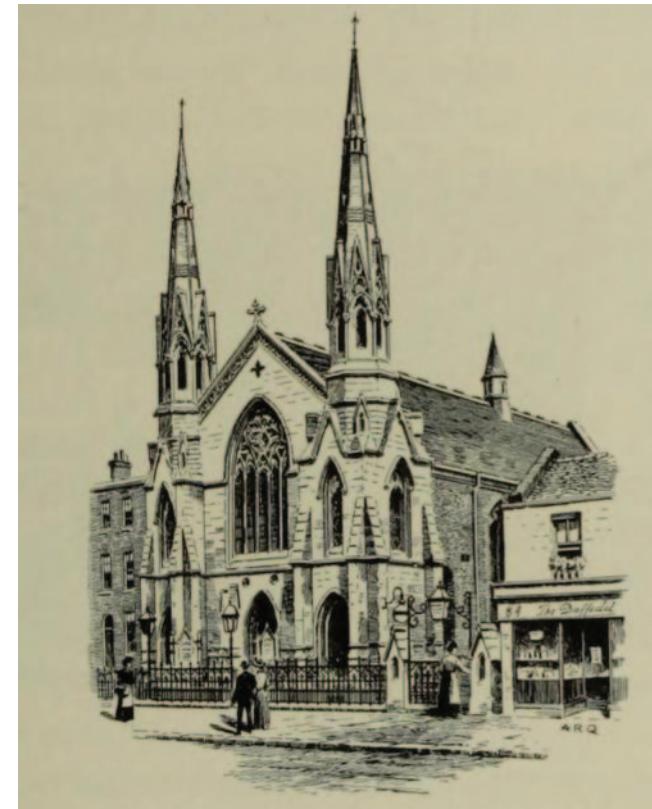
Houses on Rosslyn Hill shows the a mix of a mix of low walls with railings above. p.271 The Annals of Hampstead



Burgh House and Hampstead Museum.
Hereford house beyond with low brick wall and railings above and full height and brick wall.



St. Stephen's Church with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.96 The Annals of Hampstead



Heath Street with metal fence above.
p.101 The Annals of Hampstead



Hampstead's First with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.102 The Annals of Hampstead



Old Houses and Friends with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.107 The Annals of Hampstead



A Heath street cottage with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.267 The Annals of Hampstead



Holly bush steps with low brick wall with metal fence above.
p.278 The Annals of Hampstead



Upper terrace with low brick wall and metal fence above and full height brick wall on right.
p.22 The Annals of Hampstead



The Flask with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.128 The Annals of Hampstead



Cromwell house with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.142.1 The Annals of Hampstead



Norway house with full height brick wall.
p.20 The Annals of Hampstead



The Grove with low brick wall and metal fence above.
p.152 The Annals of Hampstead



New Grove house with full height brick wall.
p.48 The Annals of Hampstead

Keats House Archaeological Survey

