

Design Statement, Heritage Statement and Access Statement – Balcony Railings, Maryon Hall

This application was withdrawn mid-2012 for this resubmission to include:

1. Clearer, more-detailed drawings of roofline.
2. A more delicate railing design supported by historic evidence and similar railings in Hampstead Conservation Area.

This statement contains evidence that the existing wrought-iron balcony railings are not the original, are a substitute of inferior workmanship and materials, and it is long past time for these to be replaced by railings more fitting to the significance and architecture of the building. (**Photos 1, 2, and 3**)

DESIGN

The design that the applicant is submitting is partly based on railings in Hampstead Conservation Area, on the facades of late Georgian buildings (50 Downshire Hill and 12 Keats Grove) (**Photos 4 and 5**).

However, the proposed design for Maryon Hall is much simpler, less ornate, with only one (as opposed to two) round bushes on the uprights, and whereas the railings in **photographs 4 and 5** show a slightly Gothic arch, where the uprights meet the handrail, that predicates the later Victorian Gothic, the proposed design for Maryon Hall uses instead a simple, little Roman arch design which is more historically correct to the earlier Georgian building.

The proposed railings would be uprights of 1100 mm lengths of 12 mm wrought iron, to conform with Building Regulations, with a delicate Roman arch curving up to the handrail between each pair of uprights, with a single, small round bush half way up each upright. It is proposed to paint the railings grey to fit in with the Welsh slate walls and roofing. (**Drawing 3 – Detail of proposed railings.**)

The proposed design is also supported by figure 59 (**Photos 6 and 7**) dated 1783 (*The Eldorado-Metal... All Sorts of Plain and Ornamented Iron Railings, Gerrard St, Soho, London*). Although figure 59 shows a railing design too ornate and devoid of current safety requirements, it does show the Roman arch shape at the top of the railing, with a small bush half way up the railing, dated 1783 just prior to the building of Maryon Hall circa 1797.

HERITAGE and ACCESS

Maryon Hall (19 Frognal Lane NW3 7DB), a mansard-roofed residence consisting of basement, ground, first and second floors, was built by Thomas Pool circa 1797 for the lord of the manor, Lord Maryon-Wilson, however, the latter never lived there. Pool had already built, or rebuilt, the house now numbered as 23 Frognal Lane, according to a report, dated 17 September 1987, by DK Bolton, Assistant Editor, the Victoria County History of (Inner) Middlesex, University of London, which also records the following:

“A second house (nos. 19 and 21 [Frognal Lane]) had been built by Pool by 1797 and he laid out more money on it between 1798 and 1800 ... “

Title deed No LN251784 Land Registry dated 9 November 1898, signed by Sir Spencer Pocklington Maryon Maryon-Wilson (sic), and other members of the Maryon-Wilson family, is the conveyance document for the sale of Maryon Hall to architect Francis William Tasker.

That document's wording predicts the division of Maryon Hall into two residences, which is what took place shortly after, creating Maryon Hall (19 Frognal Lane) and Maryon House (21 Frognal Lane).

In the intervening period, the most well-documented leaseholder of Maryon Hall was William Carr, a solicitor to the Excise, with a large family, the children sharing their parents' interest in literature and art. (*Book of Carrs*, privately published), with visits from some of the most popular writers of the time, such as playwright Joanna Baillie, who lived nearby in Church Row.

The writer Maria Edgeworth often stayed with the Carrs at Maryon Hall and, in her letters, frequently described the house, the "large, affectionate family", their friends and neighbours. In a letter dated 4 April 1819 Maria Edgeworth describes Maryon Hall: "We have a delightful airy bedchamber with cheerful bow window ..." (*Maria Edgeworth Letters from England 1813-1844* Edited by Christina Colvin, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971.)

On another visit to Maryon Hall, Maria Edgeworth was accompanied by her two young sisters, Fanny and Harriet, and on 3 January 1822 the houseful of guests and family all participated in a spur-of-the-moment costume party. (*Maria Edgeworth and Her Circle in the Days of Buonaparte (sic) and Bourbon*, by Constance Hill, John Lane, London, pp 206 – 207.)

After FW Tasker's purchase and the division of Maryon Hall into two, there followed the demolition or incorporation of a rectangular extension in the north west corner of Maryon Hall, into a new and larger extension with an attractive multi-faceted roofline as exists today, and a smaller extension to the north east side of Maryon Hall.

Today, there is evidence that an earlier balcony railing existed, because in the parapet coping stones there are at least two vestiges of previous ironwork, partly covered with mortar, positioned in symmetrical positions on either side of the balcony parapet coping stones, commensurate with where wrought-iron upright supports would have been positioned to hold an earlier balcony railing. (**Photos 8 and 9**). One cannot know if these are vestiges of railings installed by Pool when Pool "laid out more money on it [Maryon Hall] between 1798 and 1800 ..."

However, when Maryon Hall was built, circa 1797, wrought iron work was readily obtainable and had been growing in popularity and availability since the reign of William and Mary, (*Wrought Iron and Its Decorative Use*, Ayrton and Silcock, Charles Scribner's & Son, London and New York, 1929 pp 73 – 74) and as demonstrated in the previously mentioned wrought-iron pattern book dated 1783 (*The Eldorado-Metal... All Sorts of Plain and Ornamented Iron Railings*, Gerrard St, Soho, London).

A five-minute walk from Maryon Hall, Fenton House had already acquired its magnificent gates by Jean Tijou, setting a high benchmark for Hampstead's

prosperous and acquisitive Georgians. During the latter half of the 1700s decorative ironwork flourished and “leapt to the forefront and became one of the characteristic features of the architecture of the day.” (*Wrought Iron and Its Decorative Use*, Ayrton and Silcock, Charles Scribner’s & Son, London and New York, 1929 pp 73 – 74).

Although, if railings of very great elegance were ever fitted to Maryon Hall’s balcony, it is unknown, and we can only speculate about why and when previous railings were removed. The balcony now part of Flat 2 has had the existing railings from at least the 1960s when the flat was owned by Michael Marshall, MP, but the existing railings could predate that by many decades. One of the reasons it is so difficult to exactly date the existing wrought-iron balcony barrier is that the design has been in continuous use certainly from the mid-to-late 1800s.

It seems most likely that someone, markedly cost conscious, replaced original railings with what was known in the 19th and early 20th centuries as “continuous fencing”. It is a form of wrought-iron fencing still manufactured and used today but is now better known now as “estate fencing” or “deer fencing”.

The design of “continuous fencing” or “estate fencing” has not changed conspicuously in over a hundred years. The attached photograph (**Photo 10**) shows a contemporary version that has been painted white, making it easier to see how it is structured, and can be compared to the attached photograph (**Photo 11**) which shows the close-up detail of the existing Maryon Hall balcony iron railing. They are virtually identical in design, flat uprights with holes through which pass the horizontal bars.

Therefore the noble façade of Maryon Hall has been tarnished for many years by what is in fact agricultural fencing designed specifically for corralling livestock, as see in the attached illustration (**Photo 12**) from *Bayliss, Jones, & Bayliss’s Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue, Patent Wrought Iron Hurdles, Continuous Wrought Iron Fencing, September 1878*.

The attached illustration garnered from the internet (copyright permission obtained) shows that the same product is still in production (**Photo 13**) and now called “estate fencing” .

Further, whoever installed “continuous fencing” as a balcony railing did the work in a haphazard fashion, leaving unfinished the northern end of the iron barrier, which juts out, roughly tapering into uneven, unfinished prongs. (**Photo 14**)

In conclusion, Maryon Hall, an otherwise attractive Grade II-Listed building has been for too long wearing agricultural *fencing* on its façade. The applicant hopes that others will also recognize and agree that it is long past time for befitting balcony railings to be awarded this fine old building.

H McCarthy