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Cannon Hall, No.14 Cannon Place Hampstead

**A Heritage Appraisal of the Building and
the Possible Impact of Proposals to
areas in the Ground, First and Third
Floors.**

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1 Introduction

1.01 This report seeks to describe the historic Cannon Hall, detailing the heritage significance of the building and its site. The proposed works will be described with design drawings which are appended to the LBC application.

2 Designations

2.01 Cannon Hall is an important historic building in Hampstead. Its significance is recognised by inclusion within the designated Hampstead Conservation Area. It is also Listed Grade II Star as being of special architectural or historic interest and is noted as having group value with neighbouring buildings. The listing description reads;

Cannon Hall

*Grade II**

Detached mansion. Early C18 with later alterations and additions.

EXTERIOR:north front:brown brick with red brick dressings. Hipped pantiled roof with dormer. 2 storeys and attic. 6 windows (second to left blind) plus early C19 extension at east end and north addition (former coachman's house) and stable block with weather-boarded clock and bell-turret (now converted to a garage). C20 portico with pilasters supporting an entablature; panelled door with side lights. C20 passage along the front of the house. Segmental red brick arches and dressings to slightly recessed sash windows with exposed boxing. Red brick cornices and parapet. South (garden) front: 6 windows with early C19 addition at east end and 1 window, 2 storey, C18 addition at west end. Segmental red brick arches and dressings to slightly recessed sashes with

exposed boxing; 2nd floor with projecting red brick surrounds and aprons. Red brick cornice and 1st floor band.

INTERIOR: not inspected but noted to retain some good panelling including bedrooms and back staircase. Some early C19 fireplaces in extension. Good early C20 staircase in mid C18 style with twisted balusters and carved brackets.

HISTORICAL NOTE: part of the stable block was once a magistrates' court dealing with prisoners in the Parish Lock-up, Cannon Lane (qv). Sir James Cosmo Melville, Secretary to the East India Company lived here during the C19 century; Sir Gerald du Maurier, actor-manager, from 1916-34 (GLC plaque)

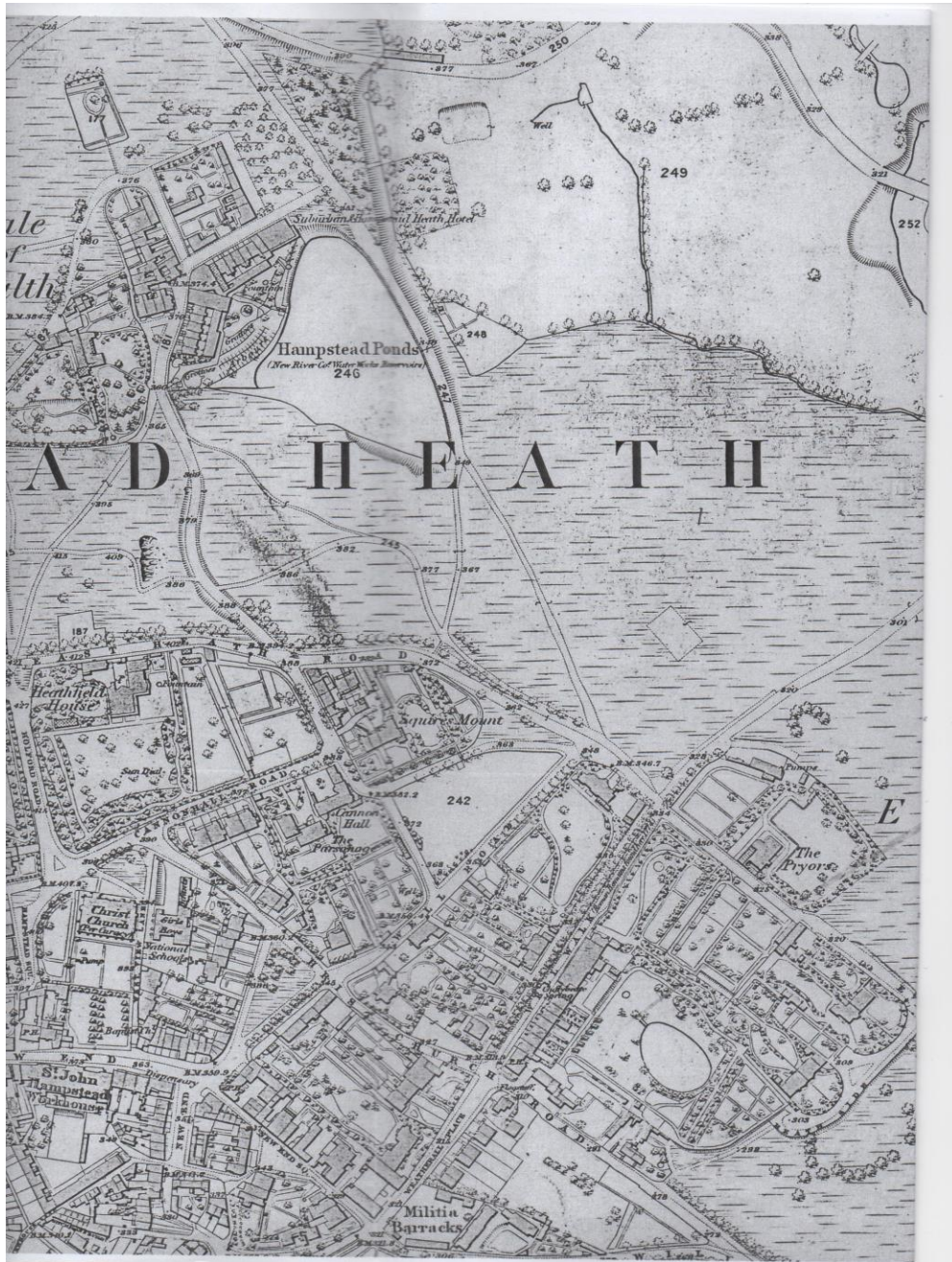
3 Heritage Significance

3.01 The heritage significance of Cannon Hall to the wider historic environment is recognised by its inclusion within the Hampstead Conservation Area. Intrinsically, the house is of high heritage significance as a Grade II Star Listed building, dating mostly from the early 18th century, with later alterations and extensions, dating from the later 18th century as well as the 19th and 20th centuries.

3.02 This site was originally known as Rous's Buildings after John Rous, a lessee of the local Wells Estate. Rous's Buildings may have dated from the 17th century, before the existing early 18th century Cannon Hall. The site was also much larger than the present boundaries, extending to Well Road and Christchurch Hill, including three other houses. The 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey (1865) shows this larger plot as well as Cannon Hall much as it is today with the exception of the glass house on the south garden elevation which has been replaced by the current swimming pool enclosure along the eastern boundary and the loss of what was perhaps a wash house from the south western corner.

3.03 The main part of Cannon Hall was built circa 1730. The house was leased to a widow, Sarah Holford from about 1745. One of the earliest inhabitants from 1780 was Sir Noah Thomas (1720-1792), who was Physician-in Ordinary to George III. In 1838, the house was occupied by Sir James Cosmo Melville (1792-1861), the last secretary

to the East India Company. He reputedly named the house Cannon Hall after the cast iron cannon he placed in the garden, which are still in position. The 1841 census shows Sir James, his wife, six daughters, two sons and four servants in residence. By 1850, the Melvill family had moved to Tandridge Court in Surrey.



1st Edition O.S. 1865

3.04 The Hampstead parish Lock-Up is built into the eastern garden wall of the southern part of the site no longer within the ownership of Cannon Hall. It was used to detain prisoners before their appearance in front of the local magistrates. It fell into disuse with the foundation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. James Marshall was a local magistrate who lived at Cannon Hall by 1870 and who converted the room next to the stable on the north side of the house into a magistrate's court room.

3.05 In 1916, the actor and manager Sir Gerald du Maurier (1873-1934) bought Cannon Hall and lived here till his death . His wife Muriel Beaumont was a noted actress. They had three daughters; Daphne, Angela and Jeanne. Daphne became the most famous as the author of novels such as "Rebecca" and "Jamaica Inn".

3.06 The original central section of Cannon Hall is the six-window wide two storey house of early 18th century date. Although the windows on both the north (entrance) and south (garden) elevations retain their original exposed sash boxes and semi-flush windows, most of the sashes are of later 18th century date and some are more modern replacements. Internally, many windows have panelled shutter boxes with astragal mouldings typical of the later 18th century. This central section of the house is of particular heritage significance.

3.07 At the west end of the main house is a 19th century service wing, of lesser heritage significance but still designed in a well-mannered brick idiom. This continues as a single storey service block on the west side of the north entrance yard. At the east end is a more substantial early and middle 19th century full height extension built in plainer brick to the original house. This extension continues from the garden front to the north yard where there is a 19th century magistrate's courtroom, some guest accommodation and a coach house/stable building. These service buildings to the east and west of the main house contribute to the overall character of the site but are of subsidiary significance to the main house. As the magistrate's courtroom is of social historical importance, this feature of the house is of particular heritage significance.

3.08 There is an early 20th century single storey conservatory lobby on the north elevation which provides a covered way from the entrance hall to the magistrate's courtroom (which latterly was used as a billiard room.) This addition adds to the mixed and varied character of the entrance elevation and is of subsidiary heritage significance.

3.09 There are also a substantial swimming pool enclosure in the garden and a south conservatory added to the kitchen elevation. Both of these structures are modern and of little heritage significance.

3.10 The major feature of the ground floor interior is the grand oak cantilevered staircase that rises to a first floor gallery. Despite the impressive craftsmanship and gracious dimension of the staircase designed in a middle 18th century style, this is a late 19th century addition and is somewhat out of scale with the early 18th century house. Nevertheless, this later insertion of high quality craftsmanship is of heritage significance. Some areas of raised and fielded panelling and doors remain from the early 18th century. The dining room to the east now has 20th century varnished pine panelling designed in a middle 18th century style.

3.11 The kitchen, breakfast room and the utility areas at the west end of the house all now have plain modern finishes.

3.12 The first floor landing is spacious and gives access to a drawing room to the east formed, possibly in 20th century, by knocking together two rooms which have later 18th century details. The high quality 18th and 19th century chimney pieces found throughout the house appear to be have been fitted later, as is the parquet flooring. The bedroom and bathroom to the east, (over the magistrate's courtroom) have been refitted in the 20th century and is of low heritage significance. There are a number of second floor rooms within the original house with 18th century painted timber panelling.

3.13 The third floor or roof storey has for many years been laid out as mostly a single open space, lit by a dormer window and some small roof lights.

4 The Proposals

4.01 KITCHEN/DINING ROOM This room and the current proposals affecting it are the subject of a separate and concurrent application for Listed Building Consent.

4.02 The formal dining room to the east of the entrance hall has been timber panelled in the middle 18th century manner. The panelling was installed in 1996, following the granting of Listed Building Consent. The somewhat liverish colour of the varnished modern pine is untypical of 18th century work and somewhat unsightly. To match the finish elsewhere in the house, it is intended to paint this modern panelling in a matt appropriate colour.
(Drg CH/2B)

4.03 FIRST FLOOR (Drawing CH/3&4B) This proposal concerns changes to the existing bedroom and bathroom at the east end of the house, over the 19th century magistrate's courtroom on the ground floor. This part of the house is a 19th century extension and the existing rooms are simply finished with a later cornice detail. The use of this area as part of the house bedroom accommodation is a later afterthought as demonstrated by the rather awkward three steps from the main house landing into this area. The proposal envisages some minor partition changes to provide an improved bathroom with a study area adjacent to the existing bedroom. No features of heritage significance would be lost in these minor changes to an area of lesser heritage importance.

4.04 FIRST FLOOR LANDING & DRAWING ROOM. This area, at the core of the historic house is much altered from its original form. The late 19th century grand scale staircase introduces an altered bigger sense of scale. This change in scale is further emphasised by

the uniting of the drawing room and sitting room to provide a large entertainment reception room.

4.05 The gallery landing, drawing room and sitting room have all had parquet flooring fitted, probably in the late 19th or early 20th century. This form of flooring is untypical of an early 18th century house. Unfortunately, the floor has been harshly sanded, so that much of the depth of the wood has been removed leaving the nail heads exposed. It is proposed to remove the parquet flooring and examine the older floor boards beneath. If these are in reasonable order, the original boards would be renovated or alternatively wide natural finish oak boards would be provided. As the house requires rewiring, disruption to the parquet flooring is unavoidable, providing an opportunity to restore a boarded floor more in keeping with the original house. (Drg CH 5 and 5A)

4.06 THIRD FLOOR This area is composed of mostly open roof space, converted to a studio. The existing roof lights provide sufficient natural light but do not permit a view from the room. It is proposed to replace the existing lights with conservation-pattern roof lights in the same positions, but longer in form to permit a view from the studio to the garden. Conservation-pattern lights would sit flush with the roof tiles and be less visually intrusive than the existing fittings. The roof lights would be supplied by the Rooflight Company, a pioneer in the manufacture of quality conservation roof lights. The longer format would be hidden behind the parapet wall when viewed from the garden. Overall, the view and lighting to the roof storey would be improved with a more discreet design of roof lights. (Drg CH/6 and 6A)

5 Conclusion

5.01 The proposals are modest and carefully considered so as to not destroy important historic fabric or interfere with the special character of this Grade II Star house. Such measures as painting the modern panelling will enhance the character of the house, with a more historically typical flat paint finish to match historic panelling elsewhere in the house. The new oak floorboards to the first floor

will restore a more typical quality finish in this area in place of the badly worn modern parquet. The changes to the west first floor bedroom are modest and do not damage any fabric of heritage importance, being located in a later 19th century extension. The replacement roof lights on the roof slopes of the third floor are less intrusive in design than the existing lights and provide more light and views from this floor.