



# The Royal Hospital, Haslar

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## Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Park and Garden**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1001558**

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Date first listed: 18-Oct-2001

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## Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Hampshire

District: Gosport (District Authority)

Parish: **Non Civil Parish**

National Grid **SZ 61738 98671**

Reference:

## Details

The grounds of the first large naval hospital, opened in 1753 and completed in 1762, which was influential in Britain and Europe. The strongly axial design was further developed during the C19, including the addition of enclosed airing-court gardens overlooking the Solent to the south-east, and a separate isolation hospital set in its own grounds.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the mid C18 it had become increasingly necessary that purpose-built hospital facilities should be provided for sailors in the Royal Navy. Finally an Order in Council stipulated that hospitals to be run by the Royal Navy should be constructed at the main naval ports, Gosport, Plymouth, and Chatham. In 1745 Theodore Jacobsen provided plans to accommodate 1500 patients in a hospital at Gosport, which were executed on the ground from 1746 by James Horne. The site chosen was former marsh and agricultural land. The north-east side of the building was completed by 1753 and patients were admitted from then onwards, but the rest of

the building was not completed until 1761. A detached chapel was completed in 1762. The projected fourth side of the quadrangular design was never built; instead the quadrangle was later closed by railings erected in 1796 to deter desertion (RCHME 1998). This was the earliest of the three naval hospitals to be completed, the three together offering most of the beds for seamen throughout the C19 and much of the C20.

From the outset the hospital was set in spacious grounds of c 25ha. In 1775 a description of the hospital referred to the 'airing ground' being one mile in circumference, surrounded by a 12 foot (c 3.5m) high wall, with a burial ground separately enclosed beyond the airing ground (Portsmouth Guide).

By 1831 (Taylor) the grounds were laid out as a series of walled enclosures for various purposes. The main building was fronted by a formally laid out forecourt, from which a drive led round to the axially placed chapel, and beyond this to the officers' terrace with attached gardens which had been erected 1796-8, on the same axis as the entrance, main building, and chapel. On the south-east side of the main building enclosures were laid out as gardens and airing grounds for the patients with mental conditions in the adjacent wards. Much of the grounds was informally laid out in the style of parkland, with a formal cemetery area adjacent to the officers' terrace. It appears that a significant area of the ornamental grounds was used for burials from the earliest days.

In the mid C19 a further open area dividing the grounds from the seashore was enclosed and

laid out with ornamental airing grounds enclosed by brick walls. It appears to have been laid out in conjunction with the use of the adjacent wing of the main building for the treatment of lunatics. An isolation hospital, the Zymotic Hospital, was erected 1898(1902 at the southern corner of the grounds, comprising a series of brick blocks set in their own grounds, enclosed by a brick wall which prevented communication with the main hospital. This overlaid an area formerly given over as a 'Play Ground for Students of the Royal Naval College' (Taylor, 1831).

The hospital remains in use, owned and run by the Royal Navy (2001).

## DESCRIPTION

### LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Haslar Hospital stands at the south-east edge of Gosport, 1km south of the town centre on a peninsula which is flanked by Haslar Lake to the north and the Solent to the south. The c 25ha site occupies largely level ground, its setting being partly marine and partly urban, with several military sites adjoining to the north-west and north-east. A military playing field also lies adjacent to the north-east. To the south-west is an area of early C20 housing, and to the south the Haslar Holding Centre, formerly barracks. The site is bounded by roads on all sides, including Haslar Road, Clayhall Road, and Dolphin Way. The boundaries are largely marked by a high brick wall (north-east section mid C18, listed grade II) on all but the south-east side, which is in turn bounded by a chain-link fence, allowing views over the Solent towards Southsea, Palmerston's Forts standing in the Solent, and the Isle of Wight. The boundary wall was erected

at the time of construction in the mid C18 to deter deserters.

## ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main approach to the hospital enters the site c 50m north-east of the main entrance to the hospital building, close to the centre of the north-east boundary. This entrance is now (2001) approached via a road off Haslar Road to the north-west, but formerly provided direct access from Haslar Jetty lying 300m north-east of the entrance. An avenue of lime trees flanks the approach from the jetty, which was the main arrival point for sailors approaching from their ships in the Solent before admission.

The main entrance (1750s, listed grade II) is marked by a carriage gateway consisting of two massive brick piers with pediment caps, supporting iron gates with an elaborate iron overthrow. The piers are flanked by low stone copings on which stand iron railings, leading outwards to pedestrian gates set in round-arched brick gateways. The entrance is in turn flanked by long, narrow, single-storey medical stores buildings (1853, listed grade II). The gateways lead into the centre of the forecourt, which is laid largely to panels of lawn flanking a broad central drive which leads to the entrance to the hospital building. Two mature cedars stand on either side of the drive on the lawns, close to the building. The forecourt is surrounded by a perimeter drive, parts of which are used for car parking. Beyond the north-west and south-east sides of the forecourt stand two pairs of former medical staff officers' houses (1750s, listed grade II) flanking the main axis. They are reached directly via drives cutting diagonally across the panels of lawn from the main entrance to the site. The houses are set back, each

pair in its own shared, walled forecourt enclosing a turning circle. Small gardens lie behind the houses.

From the north-west side of the forecourt a service drive runs along the north-west side of the hospital building to a second entrance off Haslar Road, 300m west of the main entrance. Close by to the north-east of this entrance stands a massive brick water tower with stone dressings (1881(5, listed grade II). A third entrance lies at the south corner of the site, giving access off Dolphin Way c 550m south-west of the main entrance. This entrance was created in the 1890s or 1900s to give direct access to the Zymotic Hospital on the south-east boundary.

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Haslar Hospital (T Jacobsen 1745-62, listed grade II\*) stands at the north-east end of the site, of three storeys, brick-built with stone dressings, around three sides of a quadrangle. The initial intention was that the building should close the fourth side of the quadrangle, but this was never carried out. Its entrance is at the centre of the north-east front, below a massive pediment decorated with the Royal Coat of Arms and other decoration in high relief with the initials 'GR II'. The entrance to the building is via an archway giving access to an arcaded lobby off which there is access to the rest of the building. From here a long view extends back beyond the forecourt down the avenue leading to the jetty. Formerly a view also extended from the lobby south-west across the quadrangle to the entrance front of the chapel, but this is now obscured by the late C20 Cross Link block. From the ends of the north-east block coupled wings extend south-westwards, with the remains of open yards between the coupled elements.

Two further octagonal courtyards occupy the spaces where the wings meet the front block. Formerly the open quadrangle which was enclosed by the three blocks was laid to panels of lawn. The lawns were divided by a cruciform pattern of paths linking the wings and chapel, and surrounded by a perimeter path, this layout having survived since the C18 (Howard, 1789). By the mid C20 the path linking the main entrance and the chapel was lined by an avenue of trees (Revell 1984). In the 1980s this quadrangle was partly filled with the two-storey Cross Link hospital block, leaving much reduced panels of lawn between the Link block and the main block to the north-east.

Some 200m south-west of the entrance on the north-east front stands the chapel (T Jacobsen 1762, listed grade II\*). It is a simple brick building in Classical style, set in lawns and aligned with the main entrance to the site and the hospital building, its entrance overlooking the former quadrangle to the north-east. Some 200m south-west of the chapel and main hospital building, and on the same axis, stands a terrace of three-storey officers' houses (S Bunce 1796(8, listed grade II). When a Governor and his Lieutenants were appointed in 1795 residences were required to supplement those flanking the forecourt, and the resulting terrace comprised a central Governor's house and, for the other officers, flanking terraces of four houses per side.

#### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens include the officers' terrace gardens and the airing courts overlooking the Solent, linked to the main hospital block by a large open area of pleasure grounds.

The pleasure grounds occupy the area between the main hospital building and the officers' terrace to the south-west. The area is laid largely to open lawns, divided into two by the axial drive linking the chapel and the officers' terrace, and planted with scattered mature trees. The straight drive is flanked by an avenue of semi-mature lime trees which replaces an earlier avenue (Map of Gosport, 1832), with a view north towards the distant South Downs. The lawn has been encroached upon by several C20 buildings, and its north-west side is now (2001) laid to a car park. Some 100m south of the main building a C19, two-storey look-out pavilion stands in open lawn. It takes the form of an octagonal brick drum supporting a small, open-sided wooden shelter. This is thought to have been built as a watch tower to spot deserting sailors, but was later ornamented and used as a bandstand. Formerly each half of the pleasure grounds was laid out symmetrically with an L-shaped path flanked by trees (now gone) and planted with several clumps of trees (OS 1856, 1933).

The officers' terrace is approached via the axial drive from the chapel to the north-east. The drive arrives at a forecourt on the north-east front of the terrace, terminating at the central Governor's house and the tarmacked forecourt which runs alongside the whole of the terrace. The drive divides 30m in front of the terrace, where two spurs lead north-west and south-east respectively to the far ends of the terrace, enclosing two rectangular panels of lawn. These panels contain several mature specimen trees and are bounded by high stone kerbs which formerly supported railings or posts and chains.

The row of gardens attached to the south-west of the terrace is divided into two groups of four

long narrow enclosures flanking the central broader, Governor's garden, all enclosed by high brick walls. The narrow officers' gardens, c 50m long by c 5m wide, are entered from the garden fronts of the respective houses and are largely laid to lawn. The central Governor's garden, c 60m long by c 25m wide, is entered from a central garden door on the south-west front of the building. A short flight of steps leads from beneath a first-floor iron verandah down to a narrow terrace. From here a lawn extends south-westwards, edged with flower beds and surrounded by an oval, gravel perimeter path. A further walled compartment laid to lawn leads off the south-west end of the main garden via a doorway in the south-west wall, this rectangular area in turn giving access to The Paddock beyond.

The terrace gardens were laid out at the same time as the construction of the terrace in the mid 1790s. They are broadly analogous with the Officers' Terrace at Chatham Dockyard (qv) where the gardens were laid out in the early C18 in formal patterns and were themselves derived from the Officers' Terrace at Portsmouth (designed 1692) (Longstaffe-Gowan 2001).

An area adjacent to the south-east wing of the hospital, overlooking the Solent, was given over to airing courts for the patients. This strip of ground was divided into a row of enclosed courts which was later extended towards the sea with the addition of a parallel strip of ground (OS 1856). The original area, close to the building, has largely been built upon, but much of the extension strip, closer to the sea, remains and retains its magnificent sea views. Two main enclosures remain, largely laid to lawn and bounded by a grassed bank on the seaward side. These flank the former Canada nurses' home (1920s) which stands 75m south of the main

building, set in lawns. The north-east area is laid to lawn and planted with many multi-stemmed holm oak trees. A circular viewing mount crowned by a C19 octagonal wooden shelter stands at the south-west end, with, to the south of this, a C20 rectangular wooden shelter set on a mound at the boundary. An early C20 brick and rendered two-storey shelter stands at the eastern corner of this enclosure overlooking the sea, marking the easternmost point of the site. It has a first-floor verandah reached by a central flight of steps on the seaward side which gives access to the main viewing room. This enclosure is dominated by a late C20 medical building which stands towards the centre. A brick boundary wall remains on the north-west boundary. The second airing court, to the south-west of the former Canada nurses' home, is enclosed by C19 panelled, high brick walls, and is approximately square in plan. It contains a brick villa ward at the south-west end (possibly built as a lunatic ward) and a grassed viewing mount at the north-east end. This mount is also crowned by a wooden octagonal shelter in similar style to that to the north-east. One of these mounds and shelters was depicted in Navy and Army Illustrated in 1897 (in Revell 1984) and the airing courts were praised as a very popular part of the therapeutic facilities for the patients, as it was believed that there was 'no other hospital in the kingdom so well provided with exercising grounds for the patients as Haslar'.

To the south-west of these courts the site of the playground for students of the Royal Naval College (Taylor, 1831) was given over in the late C19 to the Zymotic Hospital, for patients with infectious diseases. The Zymotic Hospital (1898-1902) consists of the remaining three of a row of four detached villa wards with a central administration block. The Zymotic Hospital is set in its own grounds laid largely to lawn, and surrounded by a high brick wall except on the south-

east side which overlooks the Solent and is bounded by the chain-link boundary fence. That stretch of wall to the north-west is probably part of the original C18 hospital wall. The main entrance to the Zymotic Hospital enclosure was formerly via a gateway giving access from the south-west off Dolphin Way, which now also gives access to the whole site. A further gateway exists at the north corner of the Zymotic Hospital enclosure, giving access directly from the main hospital buildings to the north, opened up later in the C20.

By 1831 (Taylor) the land for the outer strip of airing grounds and RN students playground (the latter area later occupied by the Zymotic Hospital) had been incorporated into the hospital grounds. By the mid C19 much of this area was laid out ornamentally with serpentine paths, informal planting, and 'summerhouses' (OS 1856). A small, rectangular Turkish Burial Ground was sited on the north-west boundary of the RN students' playground area (OS 1856), the tombstones and remains being moved to the Clayhall Cemetery c 1864 (R Harper pers comm, Jan 2002).

## PARK

The main area of parkland, known as The Paddock, lies to the west and south of the officers' terrace and formerly included the area later covered by the officers' terrace and gardens and the cemetery to the north. As well as being bounded by the outer boundary wall, it is enclosed to the north by the brick walls of the cemetery and the officers' terrace gardens, and to the south by a further wall linking the terrace with the Zymotic Hospital grounds. It is laid to lawn and contains a few specimen trees, the levels having been raised by up to 1m during the late

C20. This area was used from the earliest days of the hospital as a burial ground for the patients and still contains their remains, many having been buried closely together in only their hammocks, near the surface. By the mid C19 (OS 1856) it contained specimen trees and was crossed by several paths, and by the early C20 (OS 1911) was well planted with groups of trees. Views extend west over nearby housing and into the grounds of the Haslar Holding Centre.

#### OTHER LAND

To the north of the officers' terrace lies the nearly square cemetery, c 1.5ha in extent, enclosed by a high brick wall. It is approached from the north end of the officers' terrace forecourt, the entrance being via an iron gate set into the curving screen wall which extends north from the terrace. The gateway gives access to the east corner, down a steep ramp to the level cemetery. A path leads from the entrance north-eastwards for 30m, turning south-west and leading for a further 30m to the centre of the cemetery, this section of path being lined by the overgrown remains of a holly hedge. At the centre lies the base of a former shelter (OS 1856). The cemetery is largely laid to lawn with scattered stone memorials, some of which have been moved to the edges, and mature tree planting, particularly evergreens. At the north-east end a section is set aside as a nursery, with lean-to glasshouses against the north-east wall (mid C19, OS 1856). The cemetery was laid out in 1826 (Tait 1905), to replace the practice of burying in the wider grounds, and closed in 1859 when a replacement cemetery was opened nearby in Clayhall Lane. Some of the tombstones formerly scattered over The Paddock were moved to the edges of the cemetery (ibid).

## REFERENCES

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C Stevenson, Medicine and Magnificence (2000), pp 174-84

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## Maps

Taylor, Map of Hampshire, 1759

Faden, Map of Hampshire, engraved 1776, published 1791

Fortifications in Alverstoke, 1783 (16M51/8), (Hampshire Record Office)

George Ledwell Taylor, Plan of His Majesty's Naval Hospital Haslar, 1831 (plan 32 in Index to the Dockyards (LAD/10, National Maritime Museum))

Map of Gosport, 1832 (in Edelman 1993)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1856, published 1870

3rd edition revised 1906-7, published 1911

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1933 edition

#### Illustrations

A perspective view of the Royal Hospital ... at Gosport in Gentleman's Magazine (September 1751), p 400

#### Archival items

Hospital file 100117, (National Monuments Record, Swindon)

Early plans and maps of Haslar and Gosport (National Maritime Museum)

Description written: September 2001

Amended: February 2002

Register Inspector: SR

Edited: February 2002

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 3 July 2025 to amend the language in the description and to reformat the text to current standards

## Legacy

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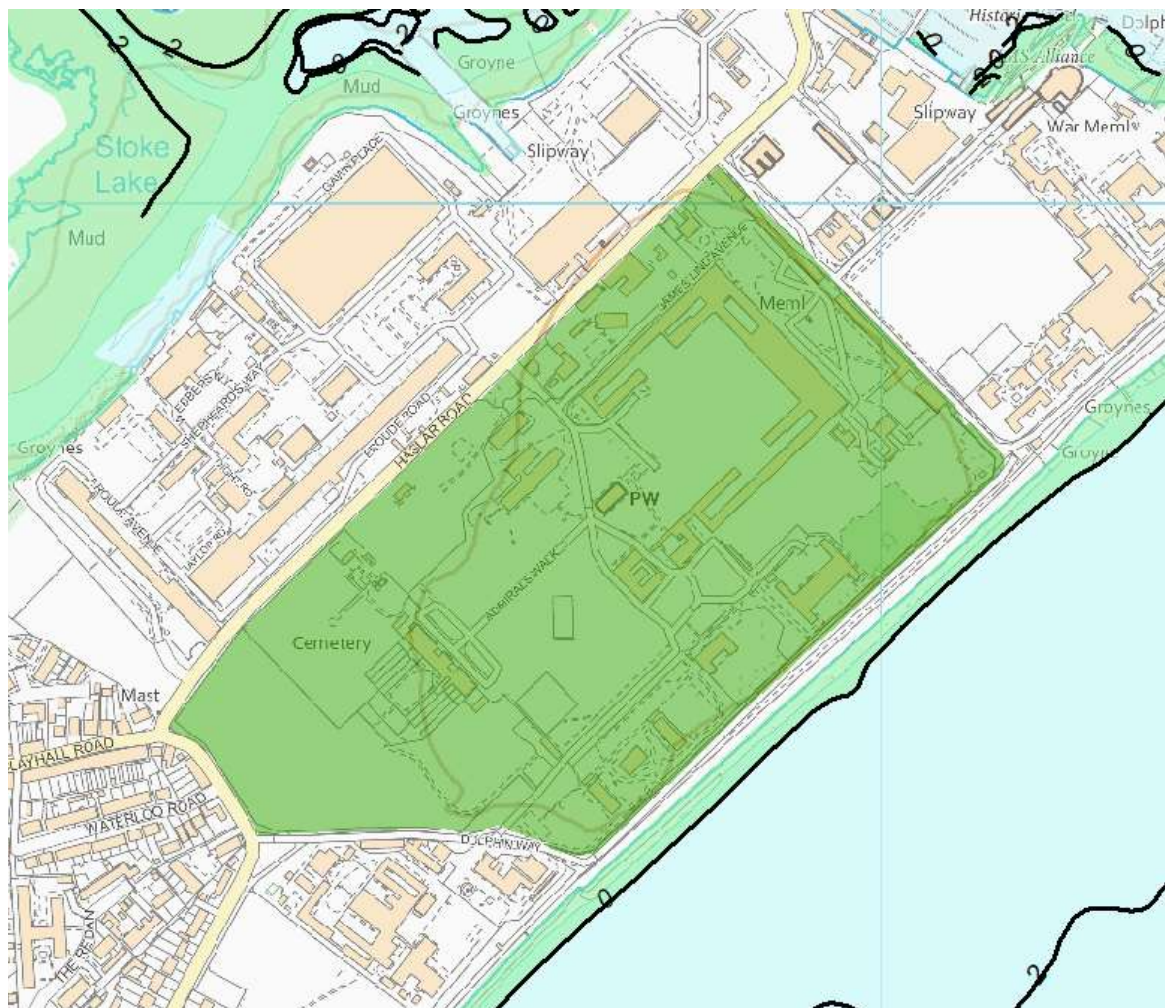
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## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.



## Map

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