

NORTHLANDS HOUSE 1882–2004: THE LAST COUNTRY HOUSE IN SOUTHAMPTON?

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ABSTRACT

Northlands House was a high quality, late 19th-century house, built in 1882 for Arthur James Day, joint owner of the Southampton shipbuilding firm of Day, Summers and Co. It was extended on at least two occasions by 1896, and again by 1909. It was sold in 1929, when the family business closed, and converted to a private nursing home. In local authority ownership since 1948, two major extensions (1972–1973 and 1986–1988) extended its institutional life until 2004, when it was demolished to make way for a purpose-built replacement.

INTRODUCTION

The house, at NGR SU 441113, was allocated site code SOU 1285. A team from Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit under M Smith made a survey in December 2003, and the building was demolished shortly after. The site archive, including a fuller report, has been deposited with Southampton City Council Archaeology Collections (Accession number A.2004.9).

SITE LOCATION

The house was in the Banister Park area of Southampton, about 1.6km north of the medieval town of Southampton, and about 2.5km west of Mr Day's Northam shipyard. When constructed, it was on the edge of the town, with the Common beyond. The house was situated on the east side of Westrow Road, just south of its junction with

Westrow Gardens and to the north of Archers Road (Fig. 1).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area

In the late 15th century the surrounding area was known as Banister's Court or Banister's Farm (Davies 1883, 43–4). The estate was acquired in 1858 by Sir Edward Hulse of Breamore House, who divided the grounds up for housing development from the late 1860s onwards (Vale 1975, 181). The 1868 Ordnance Survey map shows the site as open land, although the encroaching suburbs can be seen, and some roads in the area, notably Archers Road, had already been laid out.

Northlands House and its grounds occupied 5.5 acres of land in the centre of the estate, adjacent to Banister's Court, and included part of its fishpond. By 1896 much of the remaining Banister estate had been developed with large detached houses along the more secluded Hulse and Northlands Roads, and substantial semi-detached dwellings around the edge of the development along Archers Road and Cavendish Grove.

The Day family

Charles Day was a joint owner of Day, Summers and Co, the large shipbuilding firm in Northam, Southampton. The Day family had bought into the yard in 1836, when it was experimenting with iron ships, launching its first all-iron ship in 1840. They built vessels for many famous lines, such as

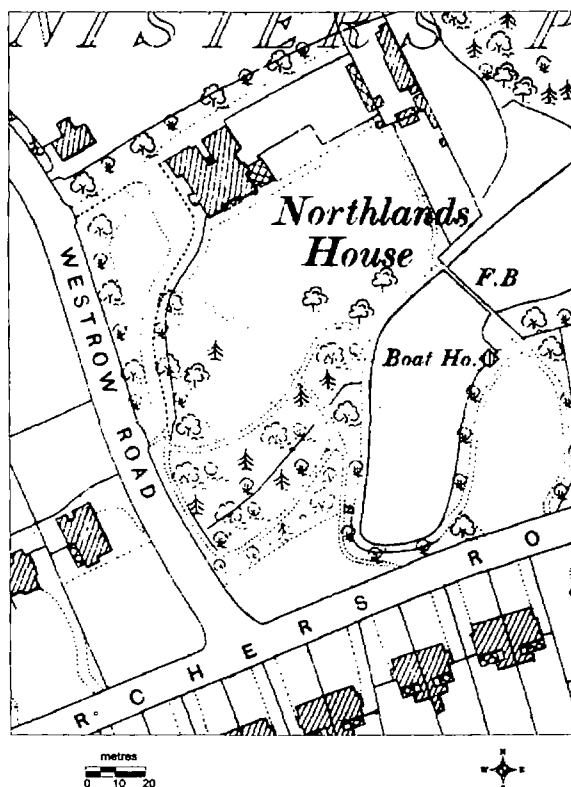


Fig. 1 Extract from the 1896 Ordnance Survey map, showing the location of the house off Westrow Road, and the layout of the grounds.

P&O, The Union Steamship Co, and the Hamburg America Line. The Great Eastern was repaired at Northam in 1860, and the yard built private steam yachts for wealthy clients such as the King of Siam. With a reputation for innovative, high quality ironwork they were chosen in 1888 to build the submarine *Incognita* for American backers. The yard was too far upriver to launch vessels over 3000 tons and changed to making smaller vessels in the early years of the 20th century, building steam yachts, ferries, the Southampton Floating Bridges, tugs, minesweepers and barges. The yard finally closed in 1929 (Rance 1981, *passim*). Steam engines from two of the Southampton Floating Bridges built by Day, Summers and Co have recently been acquired by

Southampton City Council (Accession numbers A 888.2001 and A 889.2001).

Arthur James Day, who built Northlands House, was born in 1847, and was the third son of Charles Day. After a period at Naval College and a year abroad, he joined the yard aged 17, working first in the pattern shop before progressing to the drawing office. He and his two brothers took over the firm in 1871, when he was 24 (Rance 1981 *passim*). Soon after he married Georgiana; they had ten children between 1873 and 1888.

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING

Seven periods of activity were identified, and are summarised as follows:

Period 1	About 1882	Original construction
Period 2	c1882-1896	Ballroom and larger servants' wing
Period 3	1986-1909	L-shaped block and cottage
Period 4	1909-c1929	No certain changes
Period 5	1929-1972	Change of use to nursing home
Period 6	1972-1973	Extension to north-east
Period 7	1986-1988	Extension to south-east

Period 1, c. 1882

The Southampton City Council Archives hold deeds to the site of Northlands House from 1882 (D/HCC 106/1-12). They show that Sir Edward Hulse leased the land in that year to Arthur James Day of Cumberland Terrace (now Cumberland Place), Southampton for £95 per annum.

The original house was of two storeys with basement. It was constructed of red bricks measuring 9 inches by 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (228 mm by 108 mm by 68 mm), with oolitic limestone details (Fig. 2 and Fig. 5). The west elevation, fronting onto Westrow Road, had an off-centre entrance porch, somewhat 'baronial' in style, constructed in oolitic limestone, with a heraldic crest over the porch, which sheltered a heavy wooden front door. To the north of the porch were two bays, the northern one projecting forwards slightly. Each bay had a sash window, with a

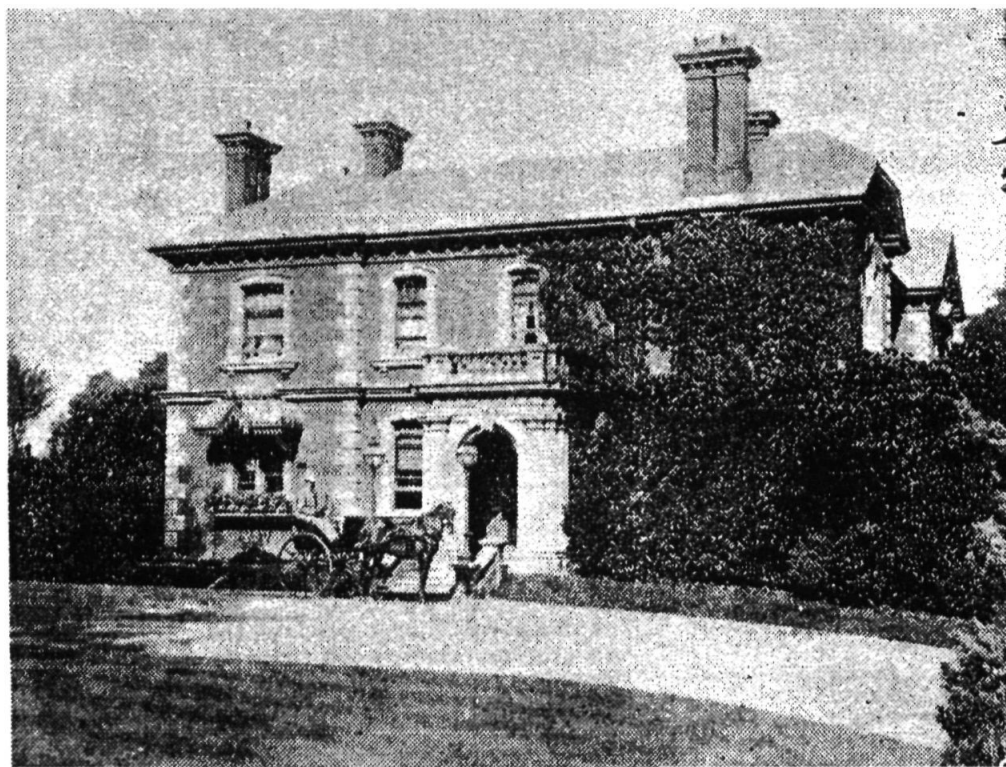


Fig. 2 A 19th-century photograph of the west elevation published in the *Southern Evening Echo* of 15th February 1964. Taken between 1882 and 1896.

stone surround, on each floor. An early photograph shows the ground floor windowsill was very deep, to allow plants to be placed in front of the window. There were no windows to the south of the porch, this stretch of wall being occupied by a large chimneybreast, featuring tumbled-in brickwork and stone keystones. Each corner of the house was defined by limestone quoins, those at ground floor being rusticated. A moulded limestone stringcourse separated the floors.

The south elevation fronted onto the gardens, and would have overlooked the boating lake. There were projecting bays at either end of the elevation. The north bay had a Venetian sash window at each floor, the sash windows in the south bay differed, the upper window was pedimented, the lower quasi-Venetian (Figs 4 and 6). The corners were all defined by limestone quoins,

rusticated at ground floor level and the floors were separated by a moulded stringcourse. The windowsill on the lower window of the west bay was unusually deep, again presumably to hold plants.

The wall between the projecting bays had plainer sash windows at first floor level, and French windows at ground floor. In front of the French windows was a glass-canopied veranda supported on cast-iron columns and floored with polychrome tiles. To the east of the house was a large conservatory (Fig. 6).

The north elevation was much simpler. The east elevation was largely obscured by later additions, but where a length of it was exposed at the south-west corner, it could be seen that it continued the decorative scheme of the south elevation.

In plan the building consisted of a square block



Fig. 3 The west front in 2003, showing the period 2 gable at the north end.

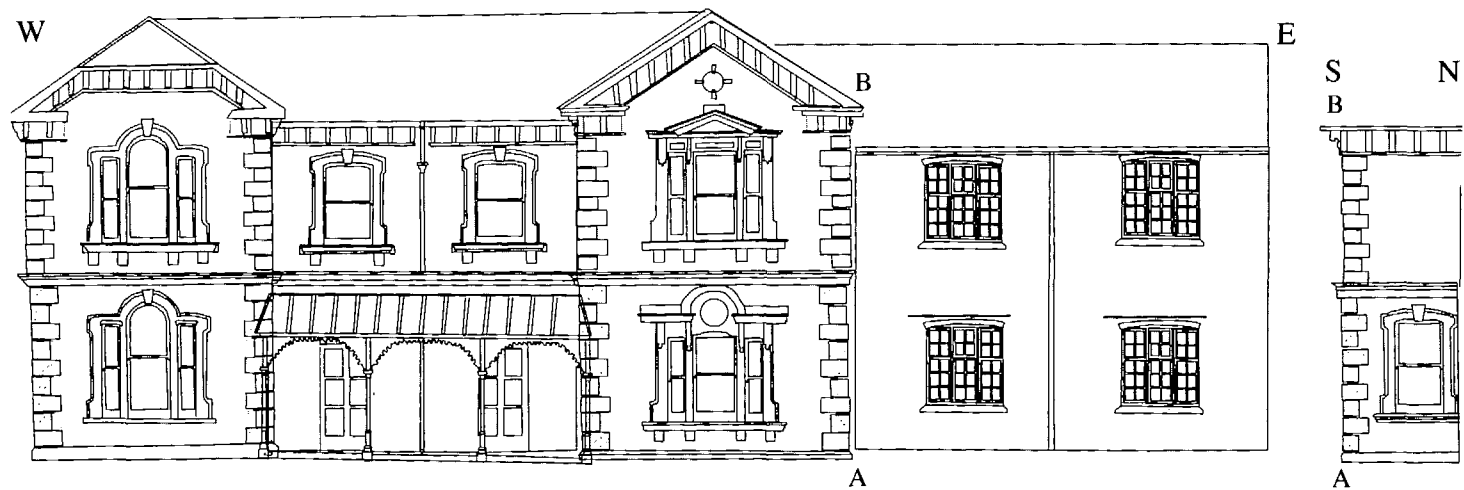


Fig. 4 South facing elevation in 2003. The two eastern bays are the nursing home phase of 1929.



Fig. 5 The west elevation in 2003.



Fig. 6 The south front in 1926, with the conservatory beyond.

of family accommodation, its north-east corner joining a block that contained the domestic offices and servants' accommodation (Fig. 7). On the ground floor an east-west corridor ran through the building from the lobby by the front door. Painted glass panels, including a depiction of a 'Tudor' archer and his lady, flanked the internal door. To the south of the corridor were three large rooms with garden views, the central room opening onto the veranda through two sets of French windows. To the north of the corridor was a room just inside the front door, then the stairs, then three rooms, separated by a corridor leading to the servants' quarters. The eastern of these three had a door to the servants' area; it was perhaps the dining room. A further room on the west front was accessed down the stair corridor. The dog-leg stair was in dark varnished wood with heavy newels and turned banisters. A painted glass window with scenes of birds lit the half landing.

The servants' quarters rose to the same height as the family accommodation, but, with lower ceiling heights, consisted of three storeys rather than two. Externally it was plain, lacking the stone detailing around the windows. In place of the stone stringcourse between floors there were bands of black-glazed bricks. The only other decorative details were white-painted brackets at eaves

level. In the centre of the block a servants' stair gave access to the family accommodation through linking corridors. This area had been converted and no evidence for the original layout on the ground floor could be seen.

The upper floors followed a similar layout to the ground floor. In the family area an east-west corridor gave access to four bedrooms above the three ground floor rooms; a north-south corridor gave access to three bedrooms above the two rooms and lobby below. To the north of the east-west corridor were two small rooms flanking the servants' corridor, with a further room above the putative dining room, which had perhaps been a bathroom and toilets. Above the ground floor in the servants wing were a number of bedrooms, showing a progression from large to small as one progressed upwards to beneath the roof.

The basement was located beneath the domestic area, the stairs, and the central room on the west front. It was accessed from a door beneath the stairs. It contained a fireplace and fixed shelving, and was perhaps originally a kitchen or ancillary space.

Very few original fittings survived, though a number of marble fireplaces, especially at ground floor level, were probably original. Each one was different, but a general gothic style was predominant.

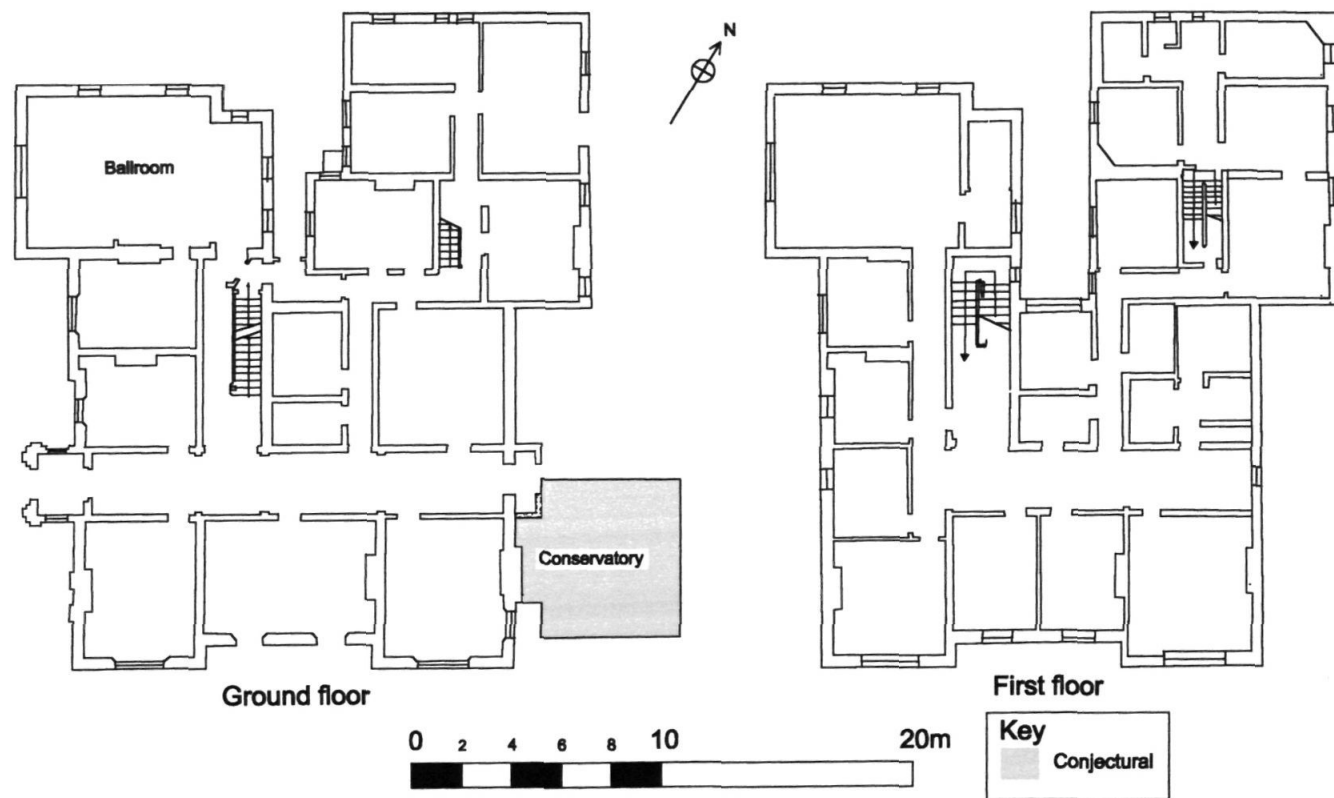


Fig. 7 Plan of ground and first floor of Northlands House as it probably was in 1896 after northern additions of the ballroom and extension of the servants' wing.

It might be expected that Day would have employed a recognised architect to design the house; no records of it survive in the RIBA archives.

Period 2, c. 1883–1896

The household was recorded on the 1891 census. Arthur Day (Marine Engineer and Shipbuilder) was 48, his wife Georgina was 40. Eight children were present. Seven, aged 4 to 17 years, were listed as scholars, and there was also a 2-year-old boy. The seven house servants who lived in were all female and consisted of nurse, parlour maid, three housemaids, cook, and kitchen maid. The groom, the only male servant, was listed as living in the stables. Other staff, such as gardeners, must have lived out.

During this period the north-west corner of the house was rebuilt and extended by the addition of a ballroom in a prominent gabled bay to the west (Fig. 3). This new bay was a near copy of the eastern bay on the south elevation (compare Figs 3 and 4), although its east elevation, facing the servants' quarters was plain. Internally, it opened off the period 1 stair lobby. It became the largest room in the house, with a large bedroom and dressing room above (Fig. 7). The servants' quarters were extended to the north by a further bay. The new work was only two storeys, and the pitched roof met uncomfortably with the earlier work of three storeys. The glazed brick stringcourse was continued, but in black paint.

The 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows the house, set back from the street, down a sweeping drive with two entrances from Westrow Road (Fig. 1). The building was now nearly rectangular, with two wings projecting to the north, and the conservatory at the south-east corner. A number of outbuildings were shown to the east.

Period 3 – 1896–1909

The 1909 Ordnance Survey map shows little change from that of 1896, with the main house unaltered in plan. Some building work had taken place around it; the conservatory was enlarged, and an L-shaped block had been added by its north-east corner. A small cottage had been added

to the complex of outbuildings to the east; this was adjacent to a substantial single storey brick building with a concrete floor, and was possibly a chauffeur's residence with nearby garage. The size of the garage suggests more than one car of substantial proportions.

Period 4 – 1909–c. 1929

The family lived in the house until the death of Mrs Day in about 1929. A series of photographs taken in 1926 and held by Southampton City Council Local Collections show the house and grounds as it was then. No recognisable changes to the building took place in this period. In 1929 the firm of Day, Summers and Co closed and the yard was sold to a ship breaker. The house was sold.

Period 5 – c. 1929–1972

After 1929 the house became a nursing home. The conservatory was demolished and its footprint replaced with a new two-storey block. Only its southern facade survived in 2003 (Fig. 4). Externally it was very plain, built in red bricks measuring $8\frac{3}{4}$ inch by 4 inch by $2\frac{5}{8}$ inch (222 mm by 100 mm by 66 mm).

A small extension was made to the north wall of the large room on the north-west corner of the house, and the old servants' quarters were also extended northwards; this enlargement of the kitchen area probably reflects the requirement to produce meals for many more people than had lived in the house previously. The extension to the kitchen was in a utilitarian style; the painted stringcourse was not continued on its external brickwork.

The probable chauffeur's cottage was also enlarged by 1933. The 1933 Ordnance survey map also shows that the south lawn, with its sloping wooded bank of coniferous and deciduous trees leading down to the boating lake, had been sold off, the lake had been filled in, and the whole area built over.

Apart from a lift inserted in 1964 there was no evidence of major works being commissioned in the period 1948 and 1972.

Period 6 – 1972–1973

In 1972 a major refurbishment of the nursing home was carried out by Southampton City Council. The period 3 block to the east of the original house was demolished and replaced with a new two-storey structure. It was a plain, sub-rectangular, building of no architectural merit, brick-built, with a slate-clad first floor. The ground floor primarily consisted of two large rooms, a kitchen and a dining room. The first floor was built around three sides of a patio area, and provided eight bedrooms.

Period 7 – 1986–2004

A new two-storey block was added to the south of the period 6 block in the period 1986–88 by Hampshire County Council. Its external appearance was designed to complement the 19th century structures, mostly in red brick with pale buff bricks in imitation of the 19th century stone dressings. It had a T-shaped plan, and was substantially the same on both floors, providing 11 bedrooms on each floor with a day room placed on the sunny, south-west corner. Plans to refurbish the entire home were mooted in the 1990s, but a decision was made in 2003 to replace the old building, by now reaching the end of its useful life and hampered by many changes in levels between the different elements, with a purpose-built care home. Some elements of the original house have been salvaged for reuse in the new building.

CONCLUSIONS

The house was built in, or shortly after, 1882 for a wealthy local business man, Arthur Day. It was the largest property to be built on the remains of the Banister Estate, and it was built on a grand style in what was still a semi-rural location on the edge of town. Such locations had been chosen in the late 18th-century and early 19th-century for a series of country houses built around the outskirts of the town by wealthy families (Vale 1983). One of these mansions was that built at Banisters Court in 1791 by William Fitzhugh.

The mansions and their grounds began to be

sold off from 1801. In some cases single substantial houses were built, such as Mayfield House built on part of the Weston Grove estate. These large 19th-century houses were mostly funded by industrialists, with wealth created by the boom that the steam ship and the new docks brought to Southampton (Vale 1983, 183–4). Northlands House, set in grounds of only 5.5 acres, could be considered to be the last of this phase of ‘country house’ building.

The external elevations show great attention to detail on the sunny, west and south fronts, suggesting that these were the faces of the building most visible to its owners and their visitors. The other two elevations would not have been visible except to servants and were plainer. Although the servants’ quarters rose to three storeys, they sat close to the house and were only visible from the kitchen garden and service areas. Within the house the servants were separated physically from the family, with their own narrow staircase and corridors on each floor allowing access between the two classes.

The addition of a large ballroom only a few years after the original build suggests that the Day’s aspirations had grown in a short time. The politics of the Day family had always been Conservative; Charles Day, founder of the firm had achieved some notoriety when his workforce of 1,500 hands were threatened with dismissal if they were found to have voted for the Liberal candidates in the general election of 1868 (Temple Patterson 1975, 20). The ballroom may have provided a meeting place for like-minded people, it was certainly the scene of the launch of the women’s branch of the Conservative Association by Mrs Georgiana Day in 1911 (Echo Feb 15 1964).

Major changes took place in 1929 when the building was converted into a nursing home. The change from family home to care home involved the removal of homely characteristics such as the conservatory. The size of the original house with large rooms and wide corridors ensured that it could be readily altered to provide suitable accommodation for a period of 25 years. By 1972 extra rooms were required and a new block provided space for eight rooms in an uncompromisingly modern addition; the 1988 block added a further

22 in a more pleasant building, designed to blend in with the original. At the same time the original house was used more for office accommodation, the palatial rooms with their marble fireplaces providing somewhat incongruous surroundings for the Social Services staff.

The fate of Northlands House is typical of many of the large 19th-century buildings on the outskirts of Southampton. Originally built to a high specification, such large dwellings were no longer suitable for most families in the period after the First World War. Some were divided for multiple occupation, others became guest-houses and hotels. In the 1970s and 1980s, as demand for housing grew, many of those with large grounds

were bought by developers and demolished to make way for apartment blocks. By the time conservation areas were devised to attempt to control the destruction of such areas most of the large houses in the Banister Park area had gone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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