

York House Gardens Statues



You are in the riverside part of York House Gardens looking at sculptures carved in the renowned Italian white marble of Carrara. They represent the Oceanides, or sea nymphs of Greek mythology, and although we cannot be sure of the name of the sculptor it seems that they came from the Roman studio of Orazio Andreoni at the turn of the nineteenth century.

These sculptures were brought to England to adorn the Surrey property of the financier Whitaker Wright, but were dispersed when in 1904 he was found guilty of fraud and unexpectedly died. Similar pieces from his collection can be seen in the Beale Wildlife Park near Pangbourne. The York House Garden Statues came to Twickenham in 1909 still in their packing cases, bought for £600 by the last person to own York House and arranged in their present display by the firm of J. Cheal & Sons, specialists in handling garden statuary.

Their new owner was Sir Ratan Tata, the Indian merchant prince and philanthropist knighted by King George V. He and his wife were popular in Twickenham and used to hold parties in the gardens for local people. Sir Ratan died in 1918, and when his wife returned to India she sold York House to Twickenham Urban District Council for use as Municipal Offices. The statues were not part of the sale, but remained.

In the late 1980s a spirited local citizen named Elizabeth Bell-Wright encouraged the York House Society and the Twickenham Society to save the statues, then on the brink of destruction by neglect and vandalism. Further restoration has been carried out in 2007.

You now see them as we hope they will remain.

York House Society



Statue faces from left to right.