

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TRINITY COLLEGE

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Name: TRINITY COLLEGE

County: Oxfordshire

District: Oxford (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.755255
Longitude: -1.2569414
National Grid Reference: SP 51387 06546
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001111
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

College quadrangles and garden, largely laid out C16(C18).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Trinity College was founded in 1555 by Sir Thomas Pope, a civil servant, having obtained the site and buildings of Durham College, suppressed in 1544, which he used as the basis for Trinity buildings and garden. Durham College's C15 main quad was reused as Trinity's initial quad, and appears to have been the only building on the site during the C16 (Agas, 1578). The southern half of what is now St John's College garden (adjacent to the north) was also in the possession of Durham College, before Henry VIII assigned it in the 1540s to St Bernard's College which occupied the site before St John's (founded 1555); c 1558 the dividing wall was built between Trinity College and St John's. Garden Quad was built in the late C17, with work by Sir Christopher Wren, its open east side overlooking the garden. The garden, which became increasingly formal in its layout during the C17 and early C18, ran east from Garden Quad as far as Parks Road, being remodelled in very formal Dutch style in the late C17 or early C18 (Loggan, 1675; Williams, 1732), and re-landscaped in informal style in the early C19. The garden and quadrangles remain (1997) part of the college.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Trinity College lies at the centre of Oxford, adjacent to the north side of Broad Street, on level ground. The 2ha college is bounded to the north by the C16 stone wall which separates Trinity from the adjacent St John's College, to the east by a continuation of this stone wall, to the south by Broad Street and the Bodleian extension, and to the west by Balliol College. The college is set within a group of city centre colleges, the closest of which are the adjacent St John's (qv) and Balliol, with Wadham (qv) to the east, and Jesus and Exeter to the south. The view north from Turl Street, south of Broad Street, focuses on Front Quad, backed by the south side of the C17 chapel.

ENTRANCES, APPROACHES AND QUADRANGLES The main college entrance, in the south-west corner of the site, approaches off Broad Street to the south, through a gateway flanked by iron gates given by Lord Guilford (later Lord North) in 1737 and hung on massive stone gate piers (1886, rebuilt 1968) copied from those on the east boundary of the garden. A broad, straight path, overlooked by Balliol College's chapel to the west, cuts through Front Quad's lawn towards the west side,

arriving at the archway at the bottom of the tower on the north side of the Quad (1691-4, listed grade I). The open, rectangular lawn of Front Quad, planted with specimen trees, is surrounded by paths, and bounded to the west by the boundary wall with Balliol (C18 or earlier, listed grade II), to the north by the tower and chapel (1690s, listed grade I), and President's Lodgings (Sir Thomas Jackson 1880s, listed grade II), and to the east by the Jackson Building (Sir Thomas Jackson 1880s, listed grade II); to the south are cottages and the lodge adjacent to the main gate. A doorway in the west wall gives access to the Fellows' Garden (remodelled 1990s), leading south off the west range of Durham Quad towards Balliol chapel. Enclosed mostly by high stone walls and on the north side by the Senior Common Room, the terraced Fellows' Garden contains a raised border at the south end, and a lower terrace reached at the north end by stone steps, the whole dominated by a central pool and fountain. The remains of a summerhouse/gazebo floor (including knuckle bones) were found in the south-west corner of the Fellows' Garden during recent (mid 1990s) remodelling, consistent with a small square garden building shown in this position in Loggan's engraving for *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675).

The archway at the bottom of the tower on the north side of Front Quad leads through to the south-west corner of Durham Quad (C15, C17, C18, listed grade I), enclosing a central raised octagonal lawn surrounded by paving, with a further passage in the north-west corner giving access to the late C17/C18 Garden Quad (listed grade I). The open east side is bounded by a wrought-iron screen with a pair of gates and overthrow (listed grade II), erected as a memorial to those killed in the Second World War, giving access to the college garden.

GARDENS A straight, gravel path runs c 120m east from the east side of Garden Quad through the centre of the college garden to the elegant wrought-iron grille and overthrow set between massive, angled stone gate piers with niches and ball finials (masonry possibly William Townesend, ironwork possibly Thomas Robinson, 1713, listed grade II*), set into the east boundary wall and stepped down slightly from the level of the adjacent Parks Road. The path, aligned at a slight angle to Garden Quad, is flanked by open lawns, the garden bounded to the north by the dividing wall with St John's (C16-C18, listed grade II), against which several mature yew trees stand within an herbaceous border running along the bottom of the wall. The southern third of the garden is more enclosed, set out with specimen trees on lawn, including several mature yew trees. The freely growing, mature yews may be remnants of early C18 topiary or part of later planting, those trees against St John's wall possibly being the remnants of yews cut into a sculpted hedge disguising the wall (Williams, 1732). A further gateway, set at the south end of the east wall (listed grade II), is flanked by ashlar gate piers with cornices and ball finials, from which hang modern wooden gates. The paved Library Quad opens off the south side of the garden, surrounded by an assortment of C19 and C20 buildings. The President's Garden lies at the south-west corner of the college garden, bounded by stone walls on the north and east sides, by the Old Library to the west, and the President's Lodgings to the south. Its central lawn is surrounded by perimeter borders, with a yew hedge at the south end, and a stone gateway set in the east wall giving access to the college garden.

The college surroundings from the mid C16 to mid C17 consisted largely of a grove of trees on the site of the current (1997) college garden (Agas, 1578; Hollar, 1643). Later in the C17 the central east/west path from Garden Quad appeared, leading straight to a gateway in the east wall in a similar position to the current early C18 screened gateway, north-west of which was a small mound. South of this path the garden was divided by two diagonal paths, the whole area being irregularly planted with a grove of trees (Loggan, 1675). By the early C18 a complex formal garden had been laid out (Williams, 1732), the focus of which was the gate screen (1713) in the east wall. Although not all the features seem to be shown accurately by Williams, the general design was probably laid out, and included rectangular quarters flanking the main east/west axial path, ornamented with topiary pillars and pyramids and two small mounds, with a double avenue adjacent to the south and an elaborate labyrinth to the south of this. The whole was overlooked by the college buildings at the west end, and surrounded by walls on the other sides. By the end of the C18 this had been considerably simplified, the areas to north and south of the main path being laid to lawn, with the double avenue surviving, and the remains of the labyrinth to the south of this (Davis, 1797). By the mid C19 (Hoggar, 1850) only a single avenue remained, and a serpentine path had been created on the site of the labyrinth, much as survives today (1997). Front Quad was only created in its present spacious form in the later C19, during the construction of the President's Lodgings and Jackson Building, having been gradually widened over the years from a narrow passage linking Broad Street and the south front of Durham Quad (Agas, 1578; Loggan, 1675), incorporating former town house plots and a kitchen garden.

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REFERENCES

William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta* (1732) *Country Life*, 18 (25 November 1905), pp 730-4; 67 (1 March 1930), pp 318-24; (8 March 1930), pp 352-9 *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire* 3, (1954), pp 238-48 N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), pp 203-7 T Martine Ronaldson, *Drawings of Trinity College, Oxford* (1904), var pls M Maclagan, *Trinity College, 1555-1955* (1955) M Batey, *Oxford Gardens* (1982), p 87 *J Garden History* 8, (1988), p 263 Maps Agas/Bereblock, *Map of Oxford*, engraved 1728 from 1578 original Hollar, *Map of Oxford*, 1643 Loggan, *Map of Oxford*, 1675 R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford ...*, 1797 Hoggar, *Map of Oxford*, 1850 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1876 2nd edition published 1900 1921 edition OS 1:500: 1st edition published 1878 Description written: December 1997 Amended: March 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

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.