

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

MIDDLE TEMPLE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**MIDDLE TEMPLE**

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|---------------------|--|
| Name:               | MIDDLE TEMPLE  |
| County:             | Greater London Authority   |
| District:           | City and County of the City of London (London Borough)   |
| Parish:             | Non Civil Parish   |
| County:             | Greater London Authority   |
| District:           | City of Westminster (London Borough)   |
| Parish:             | Non Civil Parish   |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 51.511347<br>Longitude: -0.11156576<br>National Grid Reference: TQ 31144 80848<br><a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a> |
| label.overview:     | Heritage Category: Park and Garden<br>Grade: II<br>List Entry Number: 1001453<br>Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987                                  |

## Details

Gardens of medieval origin, developed in the C17, with C19 and C20 layout and planting.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late C12 the Knights Templar moved from Holborn to the Temple area and it is likely that there were gardens associated with the monastery that they built there. The Knights Templar were suppressed in 1312 by Pope Clement V and the Temple passed firstly to the Earl of Pembroke and then, in 1324, to the Knights of the Order of St John. By 1346, when the Knights took full possession of the Temple, it was already leased to students of law and it was later granted to them in perpetuity for use as a place of study and residence.

The gardens were renowned for their roses and Shakespeare set the dispute which led to the War of the Roses in the Temple gardens (Henry VI Part 1, Act 2):

'This brawl today, / Grown to this faction in the Temple-garden, / Shall send, between the red rose and the white, / A thousand souls to death and deadly night.'

By the mid C15 the Temple buildings and gardens had been separated into the Middle and Inner Temple (although the formal division did not take place until 1732). The division approximately followed the line which divided the consecrated land to the east from the unconsecrated ground. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries the Temple was seized by the Crown which, in 1608, granted the freehold to the Benchers of the Temple.

The gardens and buildings of the Middle Temple were reworked in the mid to late C17. In the 1640s the gardens were enclosed with a new brick wall and work was carried out on the gardens. The wall along the south side ran approximately on a line with the northern end of Temple Gardens and the centre of the Queen Elizabeth Building, and preserved the gardens from flooding

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by the Thames at high tide. By the late C17 the gardens included the Benchers' Garden (on the site of the western portion of the present Fountain Court and extending to the south and north), the Hall Court to the east of the Benchers' Garden (the eastern portion of the present Fountain Court), a terrace to the south of the Hall, and the main garden below the terrace, with grass plats and formal rows of trees (Ogilby, 1676).

In 1681-2 Fountain Court was formed in the central part of the Benchers' Garden. The central fountain, with a single jet (which reached 'a vast and incredible altitude'), was 'fenced with timber palisades, constituting a quadrangle, wherein grow several lofty trees, and without are walks extending on every side of the quadrangle, all paved with Purbeck, very pleasant and delightful' (Hatton 1708). A parapet wall was built on the edge of the terrace, which overlooked the lower garden. In 1715 the wooden palisades were replaced with iron railings. Mid C18 plans show the design unaltered (Rocque, 1746). The fenced enclosure was expanded and the Purbeck paving was replaced with granite in the 1780s, only to be replaced with flagstones in 1791, and York stone paving in 1828 (London Gardener 1997-8). Following various alterations to Fountain Court in the C19, the Court was restored in 1919 to its 'Ancient simplicity by the removal of modern and ornate additions' (ibid).

The C18 layout of the lower garden (the northern half of the present Middle Temple Garden) consisted of grass plats with a central avenue of trees (Rocque, 1746). The remnants of this avenue were shown on Holwood's plan of 1813, by which date the gardens had largely taken on their present form in Fountain Court, Garden Court and the northern half of the present Garden. The last major change to the gardens occurred in 1870, when the Victoria Embankment (started in 1864) was completed. This more than doubled the area of the Middle Temple Garden. The new layout developed after 1870 is shown on the 1st edition OS map of 1873 and the structure has been little altered since that date.

On the undertaking that the Benchers would preserve the Garden and squares as permanent open spaces, they were exempted from the provisions of the London Squares Preservation Act, 1931.

The Garden was described at that time (London Squares Preservation Act, Appendix III) as 'An attractive ornamental garden of irregular shape adjoining the Inner Temple Garden'.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The gardens of the Middle Temple, c 0.75ha, are located to the south of Fleet Street, west of the Inner Temple (qv) and north of the River Thames, in the City of London. The gardens are irregular in shape and include a lawned area (Middle Temple Garden), laid out on ground which slopes southwards to the Thames, an L-shaped court (Fountain Court), and a narrow court (Garden Court) between the Garden and Fountain Court. The courts and Garden are on different levels and are connected by flights of steps at the north and south ends of Garden Court. The gardens are surrounded by railings along Temple Place to the south-west, Victoria Embankment to the south, and Middle Temple Lane to the south-east, and by buildings along the other boundaries.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Fountain Court is approached from New Court to the north-east, Middle Temple Lane to the east and from Garden Court to the south-west. Garden Court provides the approach from Fountain Court to Middle Temple Garden to the south and the exit to the Temple at Temple Place. In the summer, the Garden can also be approached through Middle Temple Library on the east side.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The buildings that surround the Garden and courts provide the setting to the gardens. Middle Temple Garden is bounded by the Queen Elizabeth Building (Sir Edward Maufe 1958; on the site of the former Middle Temple Library) to the west; and Plowden Buildings, Middle Temple Library (rebuilt by Sir Edward Maufe in 1956), and Temple Gardens (listed grade II) to the east. Garden Court is bounded by Nos.1-2 Garden Court (listed grade II) to the west, Middle Temple Garden to the south, Middle Temple Hall (listed grade I) to the east and Fountain Court to the north. Fountain Court is bounded by Garden Court to the south-west, Middle Temple Hall to the south-east, Middle Temple Lane to the east, Essex Court (Nos.1-3 listed grade I, No.4 listed grade II\*) and Brick Court (No.1 listed grade II) to the north-east, New Court to the north-west, and Fountain Court Buildings to the west. (For further details on the buildings see Pevsner 1985 and the Listed Building descriptions.)

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Fountain Court is a large court, paved throughout with flagstones in 1999 (replacing the late C20 gravel surface, which had paved paths connecting the main approaches). The narrower east side (known as Hall Court until the late C17), is approached from Middle Temple Lane and is unornamented except for a few trees. On the wall of

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Essex Court, which forms part of the north side of Fountain Court, is a sundial dated 1685. The wider west side has a fountain (listed grade II) at its centre, with a white marble moulded basin. The fountain was constructed in 1681 and is reputedly the oldest permanent fountain in London (Pevsner 1985). It was by this fountain that Ruth Pinch met John Westlock in Charles Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewick*. Within Fountain Court are mature planes (mid C19), chestnuts and two mulberries set around the fountain (planted in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee), as well as various other trees planted in the late C20. Before Fountain Court was laid out in the late C17, the west side formed part of the much more extensive Benchers' Garden. Garden Court is approached down a flight of stone steps and is in reality a broad paved path lying between Garden Court building and the northern part of the Middle Temple Garden. At the southern end of the Court are steps, and gothic parapets in Bath stone, the remnants of the mid C19 Middle Temple Library on this site, which was bombed during the Second World War. From this position there are views south, over the garden and down to the river.

The Middle Temple Garden (formerly the Lower Garden) is approached from the east side of Garden Court. The Garden is terraced at the northern end, which is at a higher level. The southern end of the terrace is marked by two borders (of low-growing conifers and shrubs, with bedding) separated by a stone path which runs west/east from Garden Court to Plowden Buildings. To the north-west of these borders is a lawn, which runs along the west side of Middle Temple Hall and is terminated at its northern end by a bank of shrubs, retained by stone wall. There are three large rectangular rose beds on the lawn planted with red and white roses. Traditionally it was in the Temple Garden that the white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster were plucked. The roses became the emblem of the War of the Roses, the civil war between the Houses of York and Lancaster. A line of late C20 trees runs up the west side of the lawn, alongside the flower beds.

Steps lead down from the west end of the terrace to an extensive sweep of lawn, which slopes down to the southern end where there is a raised gravel walk, lined by large plane trees. The southern half of the lawned area was taken into the gardens following the completion of the Victoria Embankment in 1870. The lawn is flanked by a shrubbery along the west side and is bounded by occasional trees including cherry, almond and ailanthus. On the southern half of the lawn is a large circular flower bed, planted with roses, with a sundial (1719) in the centre. This is a variation of the late C19 scheme where the sundial was further south and there were two circular beds (OS 1873). Also on the lawn is a stone statue of a boy holding a book, which was erected in 1930 in memory of Charles Lamb.

#### REFERENCES

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Maps Richard Newcourt, *Exact Delineation ... of London*, 14" to 1 mile, 1658 J Leake, *Exact Surveigh ... within the ruins of the City of London*, 1666 J Ogilby and W Morgan, *A Large and Accurate Map of the City of London*, 52" to 1 mile, 1676 Stow, *Map of London* (published in *Survey of London*, 1720 edn) John Rocque, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster ...*, 1744-6 Richard Horwood, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster*, 2nd edn 1813  
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1873 2nd edition published 1894 3rd edition published 1913  
Description written: June 1998 Amended: November 1999 Register Inspector: CB Edited: May 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.