

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BOTANIC GARDEN, CAMBRIDGE

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Name: BOTANIC GARDEN, CAMBRIDGE

County: Cambridgeshire

District: Cambridge (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.193674
Longitude: 0.12778067
National Grid Reference: TL 45535 57182
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1000612
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

A botanic garden laid out on meadow land from 1846 onwards, to a design of Andrew Murray, in a formal and landscape style, further extended from the 1950s onwards.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Cambridge University Botanic Garden is over 200 years old, having been established originally in 1762 at Free School Lane in the centre of the city. John Stevens Henslow, Professor of Botany from 1825 to 1860 was a key instigator of the establishment of the gardens on a new 16ha site which the University acquired in 1831 to provide an area for teaching and research. A design for the western section of the gardens was prepared by A Murray, the first Curator of the new garden in 1835 and it was laid out from 1846 almost exactly as planned, with much of the detail of the planting provided by Professor Henslow. A previous plan by Samuel Lapidge, dated 1826, for a New Botanic Garden and glasshouse range was also partly followed and the Garden was first opened to the public in 1846. A succession of Curators culminated in the career of R I Lynch (1879-1919) under whose administration the range of glasshouses was rebuilt and many other features were established. Following Lynch's retirement in 1919 the University appointed a scientific Director of the Garden and the present arrangement of Director and Superintendent was established. The development of the eastern half of the garden did not commence until after the Second World War, under the direction of John Gilmour, Director of the Garden from 1951 to 1972. The Garden continues to develop and change within the strong design layout provided by Murray and Henslow, and later by Gilmour in the C20.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The University Botanic Garden lies c 1km to the south of the city centre and is bounded by Bateman Street to the north, Hobson's Conduit (built in the C17 to serve the city) and Trumpington Road to the west, Brooklands Avenue to the south, and Hills Road to the east. It occupies c 16ha of generally flat land on the edge of city, situated beside the remains of extensive water meadows which lay to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The Garden has pedestrian entrances in Bateman Street to the north and Hills Road to the east, with the main gates and entrance in the centre of the west boundary, off Trumpington Road. Here the entrance crosses a single-span, cast-iron bridge over Hobson's Conduit (listed grade II) which leads to the ornate wrought-iron Trumpington

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Gates (c 1765, listed grade II) which were moved from the original garden site in 1909. These gates with their arched overthrow are attached to semicircular cast-iron screens on brick bases. Brooklands Lodge (listed grade II) is an early C19, two-storey, gothic-style cottage located in the south-west corner of the gardens. It was built at the entrance to the main approach drive to Brooklands House which lay to the south of the Garden but was severed from the property when Brooklands Avenue was laid out. The Lodge was then taken into the grounds of the Botanic Garden. The small area of land to the south of the Lodge was originally an elm spinney and bluebell wood which was developed as a pinetum once the boundary of the Botanic Garden had been extended.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Between 1924 and 1925 a house was built in the gardens, to a design by the architect M H Baillie Scott as the residence of the Director of the Garden. Cory Lodge (listed grade II) is a small, white, neo-Georgian two-storey house with projecting wings to north and south. It stands to the east of centre in the Garden and faces west, aligned on the main walk and the Trumpington Gates and was named after Reginald Cory, a major benefactor of the Garden. Cory Lodge was converted into administrative offices in 1984 when the original colonnade to the west was moved outwards and the former bay enclosed to form part of the library. The previous Garden offices, known as No 1 Brookside (listed grade II), stands in the north-west corner of the Garden. It is a two-storey house of grey gault brick, the south front having two semicircular bays facing towards the Garden and the north front facing onto Bateman Street.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The Botanic Garden has, since the 1950s, become a single unit, but can be described by dividing the area into the Victorian gardens to the west and the modern C20 gardens to the east.

Entering the Victorian gardens from the Trumpington Gates the main axial walk, lined with a rare collection of pines and cedars, leads east to a fountain of stone and steel, completed in 1969 to a design by David Mellor of Sheffield. Beyond this to the east lies the mid C19 brick Custodian's Hut and the lawn in front of Cory Lodge. A perimeter walk runs around the Garden, interrupted only along part of the northern boundary where the research area is located. Following the circuit walk north from the Trumpington Gates, the path leads through collections of chestnuts and maples to a woodland and bog garden, created in 1882, through which passes a stream, fed from Hobson's Conduit, which runs into the lake. The woodland includes an ornamental bamboo collection established in 1883, the first such outdoor collection in the country. The path emerges from the woodland and turns east along the northern boundary, past the lake which was made in a disused gravel pit, the spoil being piled to the north to create a mound which encloses the bog garden. On the north-east corner of the lake is the Rock Garden, created in the 1950s. The walk continues east past a series of glasshouses, originally built in the 1880s with a central section redesigned and opened in 1989. To the east of the glasshouse range is the Terrace Garden planted with shrubs and dwarf conifers, built in the 1860s as a Rock Garden and renamed in the 1950s when the new Rock Garden was constructed. The path then turns south to become the Middle Walk and crosses the centre of the gardens, through groups of mature oak and beech and the Old Pinetum, which represent the original plantings along what was then the eastern boundary of the Garden, and which today (1999) mark the division between the Victorian garden and the C20 garden. The Middle Walk rejoins the circuit path on the southern boundary and in completing the tour of the Victorian garden, turns west past a collection of Rosaceae and other families of trees to Brooklands Lodge on the western boundary. Turning north back towards Trumpington Gates paths enclose the Systematic Beds (a feature designed by Murray in 1846 based on an influential early C19 botanical text (de Candolle 1819). It houses the eighty-four families of the hardy herbaceous plants which could be grown in Cambridge. The beds are arranged with a central section of monocotyledons surrounded by an oval hawthorn hedge. Radiating from this are four more hawthorn hedges which create defined spaces for the four groups into which dicotyledons were thought to fall. In addition, the individual beds were laid out to represent the pages of the book so that a visitor could complete a circuit of the beds moving from the first to last pages. Along the western boundary, opposite the Systematic Beds, is a collection of lime species, the Common Lime beside the gates having been planted in 1846 to commemorate the opening of the Garden.

To the east of Middle Walk is the C20 garden, developed continuously from the 1950s onwards. Turning east from Middle Walk at the southern boundary, the circuit path passes groups of birches and alders, and a newly established late C20 maze planted with an ornamental grass. The walk runs through the Rose Garden to the eastern boundary where the herbaceous island beds and some of the nine national collections are located. Turning back towards the west the path passes the Scented Garden,

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Chronological Bed and the Winter Garden, where a turn to the north leads to a picnic area recently developed (1990s) with shrubs and trees for autumn interest. Continuing west along the main walk, the path passes the Genetics Garden, the Dry Garden and the Ecological Areas before rejoining the Middle Walk to the south-west of Cory Lodge.

OTHER LAND In the north-east corner of the Gardens is a c 2ha Research Station, laid out from c 1950 onwards and composed of laboratory, glasshouses, frames and field plots. Between the laboratory building and Cory Lodge is the first winter garden to be created on the site. Nearby stands the Gilmour Building which was built in 1989 and contains a meeting room, refreshment area and shop.

REFERENCES

de Candolle, *Tenue de systematique des plantes* (2nd edn 1819) *Gardeners' Chronicle*, ii (4 November 1882), p 585; ii (8 November 1958), p 280 *The Garden* 59, ii (16 February 1901) p 109 *J Roy Horticultural Soc* LXV, (6 June 1940), p 171 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire* (1970), p 214 *Garden History* 7, no 3 (1979), pp 49-52 S M Walters, *A Guide to the Cambridge University Botanic Garden* (1979) S M Walters, *The Shaping of Cambridge Botany* (1981) *Visitor's Guide*, (Cambridge University Botanic Gardens 1998)

Maps A Murray, *Plan of the New Botanic Garden, Cambridge*, 1835 (copy held at Cory Lodge)

Description written: November 1999 Amended: December 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2001

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.