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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS

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Name: PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS

District: City of Peterborough (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.572391
Longitude: -0.23937392
National Grid Reference: TL 19416 98630
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001638
Date first listed: 30-Jul-2002

Details

A series of gardens spaces dating from the C12, now of mainly C19 character, surrounding the Cathedral Minster Precinct buildings.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Roman remains occur on the site of the Minster Precincts at Peterborough and Bede's History of the English Church records Saxulf, made Bishop of Mercia in c 674, as the constructor of the first monastery. It was refounded in the C10 as a defended settlement named Burh which was fortified by the Normans and Tout Hill, a mount which survives in the Deanery Garden, survives from this period (Mackreth 1994). During the C13 the church was doubled in size and became an abbey and by 1539 a Benedictine monastery had developed around it, containing buildings, productive gardens, orchards, vineyards, cemeteries, and a herbarium. This layout is still reflected in the plan of the Precincts today. Extensive grounds were laid out around the Lodgings (later the Bishop's Palace) and the great Norman Gate was created. To the north of the abbey the Prior's Lodgings were developed (later to become The Deanery). Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the new Diocesan order came into being, the Bishop took over the Lodgings (the grounds of which were substantially reduced) and the Dean was installed in the Prior's Lodgings. The remaining monastic buildings became six Prebendal Houses and the occupation of the buildings and their gardens was ensured. At the beginning of the C19 a further phase of garden development took place as the Lay Folks' Cemetery was restored and given a picturesque quality under the direction of Dean Monk. Also during this period the gardens of the Bishop's Palace, The Deanery, and The Vinery were the subject of major developments, while all the Prebendal Houses were given Victorian gardens. At the beginning of the C20 the architect Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) was commissioned to extend the Bishop's Palace, which he orientated on the existing refectory garden. During the C20 the layout of some of the garden spaces has been simplified but the general pattern and structure of the landscape retains its medieval origins, overlain by a Victorian character. The site remains (2002) in divided ownership, partly the responsibility of the Dean and Chapter and partly owned by the Church Commissioners.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Minster Precincts lie in the centre of the city of Peterborough. The c 9.5ha site is bounded to the east by Vineyard Road, to the south by Gravel Walk and a car park, to the west by the Market Place and Causeway, and to the north by Wheel Yard and buildings running up to City Road. The generally level

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site is enclosed by walls and/or buildings which divide it from the city, the main view across its surroundings being afforded from a mount located in The Deanery garden.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are several vehicular and pedestrian entrances into the Minster Precincts. The main pedestrian entrance comes into the site from the Market Place on the western boundary, through an arched gateway known as the Norman Gate into the Minster Court lying below the west front of the cathedral. Vehicular access is also afforded by the Wheel Yard entrance off Midgate in the north-west corner of the site, with a further pedestrian route entering the site off Bishop's Road in the south-east corner.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Peterborough Cathedral stands at the centre of the site, surrounded by a collection of other historic buildings within the Minster Precinct wall. These include the Bishop's Palace, The Deanery, The Vineyard, Canonary House, Archdeanery, and The Infirmary. These structures and their interconnecting spaces span a period of over 1300 years of ecclesiastical use and together with walls and monuments contain sixty-two listed structures, including nineteen listed as grade I and six listed as grade II*.

THE GROUNDS The whole of the Precinct area is enclosed by either the Precinct buildings or a boundary wall. There have been few losses to the medieval wall which remains largely intact. Internally the grounds surrounding the Minster buildings are divided by walls into a series of discrete garden areas relating to each of the various buildings and their uses. From the main gate off Market Place the path leads into the Minster Court which is enclosed by the Precinct walls and is laid to grass, cut with paths. In 1718 this area was laid to gardens and orchards which by 1800 had become the garden for the Master of King's School. During the C19 the present character of grass areas set with paths was laid out and by 1886 (OS) the present (2002) straight path layout had been determined.

Immediately surrounding the cathedral building to north, east, and south are three cemetery areas. These include the Lay Folks' Cemetery (founded in the C7, remodelled by Dean Monk in 1822), the Monks' Cemetery (also remodelled in 1822), and the Canons' Cemetery. A perimeter carriage drive runs alongside boundary borders which are filled with mixed planting and some mature trees. The area within the drive comprises grass lawns set with flower and rose borders in a layout which changed little between 1718 and 1822. Alterations in the 1920s included the simplification of the planting, the removal of several mature trees, the relocation of headstones, and the redirection of the carriage drive, resulting in the character which survives today (2002). In 1828 Britton noted that:

in manner of laying out and embellishing the old Churchyard the Dean and Chapter have initiated one of the best practices of the Parisians. Here, as in Pere La Chaise cemetery in Paris, the graves are planted and embellished with willows, laurels, pines and various trees; shrubs and flowers.

To the north of the cathedral and Lay Folks' Cemetery stands The Deanery set in its own walled garden. Mainly laid to lawn with specimen trees, the garden is surrounded by a perimeter path running alongside mixed borders of Victorian character, containing a high proportion of evergreen shrubs on the south side and herbaceous planting on the north side. To the north-west lies the Deans Entrance and vegetable garden. In the north-east corner of the garden stands an C11 mound with a serpentine path running to its summit, and shrubs and evergreens planted on its slopes. From here there are views out over city. During the C11, Tout Hill, as the mound was known, was part of the motte and bailey defence of Peterborough Castle and in 1718 the Eayre map records it standing in the deer park attached to The Deanery, the grounds of which contained fishponds and orchards. In 1825 Dean Monk filled in the fishponds and began to develop the gardens, the mount being brought into the grounds at the end of the C19 when the deer park was lost to city developments. At this time Dean Barlow gave the gardens their present character. Beyond the cathedral along the eastern boundary stands The Vineyard and its grounds. A vineyard was planted in 1147 but by 1718 the area had become a lawned garden to accompany the house. The lawns, dotted with trees and enclosed by a perimeter path alongside borders of mixed evergreen shrubs and herbaceous planting, were laid out in the C19 and have changed little since that time, apart from the southern end of the grounds where two small C20 houses have been erected.

On the south-west corner of the cathedral is a small cloister, laid to grass with a cross path set beside a wellhead. This area formed the C12 cloister for the Benedictine monastery. It was destroyed in 1643 and then let to John Glover for use as a nursery garden on condition he supplied laurel leaves to the cathedral. In 1686 the diagonal path was laid in the grass and the area has

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changed little since that time. Beyond the cloister, in the south-west corner of the Precinct, is the Bishop's Palace, set in its own expansive garden which comprises lawns, a woodland garden, and a large kitchen garden. The kitchen garden is divided by box hedging which was planted after the Second World War when the area ceased to be used for growing vegetables. In 1302 Abbot Godfrey de Crowland's famed gardens stretched as far as the River Nene and were doubly moated (see plan in Harvey 1981). The Derby Yard, named as a corruption of 'herber', is now a city car park, but other sites identified by Harvey from 1302, persisting through Eayre's map of 1718, remain as garden areas. Bishop Hinchcliffe created a model farm here in 1769 which remained into the C20, but the main character of the gardens was determined in the C19 and much of this survives. In 1900 Edwin Lutyens designed a new service wing for the Palace which was orientated to fit in with the existing layout of the garden. The south-east corner of the site is dominated by a collection of Precinct buildings including the Prebendal Hall, Norman Hall, Almoners Hall, Infirmary, and Canonry House. The medieval spaces surrounding these buildings were given a C19 garden character, which has subsequently been altered by C20 uses. The kitchen garden associated with Canonry House survives in part in the far south-east corner of the Precinct area, divided into two compartments by two rows of mature yews. The western half is now (2002) a car park, the eastern half partly laid to grass and partly cultivated for vegetables. The perimeter path surrounding the cultivated areas, shown in this position on the 1886 OS map, survives in this section of the garden.

REFERENCES

S Gunton, *The history of the church of Peterburgh* (1686; reprinted 1990, edited by Peter Clay) J Britton, *History and Antiquities of the Abbey and Cathedral Church of Peterborough* (1828) [copy in Cathedral Library] *The Story of Peterborough Cathedral* (1932) [copy in Cathedral Library] J Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (1981), pp 16, 85 D Mackreth, *Peterborough History and Guide* (1994), p 3 *Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Plan*, (Dejardin Design 1999)

Maps T Eayre, *Map of Peterborough*, c 1718 (BM Add Ms 32467 folio) *Map of the precincts of the Cathedral Church of Peterborough*, 1822 (Cathedral Library)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886

Archival items Many of the papers relating to the cathedral and its precincts are held in the Cathedral Library.

Description written: May 2002 Amended: September 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: November 2002

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.