

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CHRIST'S COLLEGE

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Name: CHRIST'S COLLEGE

County: Cambridgeshire

District: Cambridge (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 52.206236
Longitude: 0.12278992
National Grid Reference: TL 45153 58569
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000616
Date first listed: 16-Jan-1985

Details

College courts and gardens, laid out C16-C20.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Christ's College was founded as 'God's-house' in 1437 on the site of what is now King's College, moving to its present site in 1448, and was refounded as Christ's College in 1505 by the Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. The college was gradually expanded over the centuries, incorporating adjacent land to achieve its present size. The site remains (1999) in college use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Christ's College lies at the centre of Cambridge, on level ground. The c 2ha college is bounded to the north by King Street, to the west by Hobson Street, and to the east by Christ's Pieces, a public park. The college is set within the older commercial centre of Cambridge, close to several public open spaces, with several other colleges close by, including Emmanuel College (qv) to the south and Sidney Sussex and Jesus Colleges to the north.

ENTRANCES, APPROACHES AND COURTS The college is approached off the north end of St Andrew's Street, close to where it becomes Sidney Street, through an archway beneath the early C16 gatehouse, entering First Court (C16-C19, listed grade I). This is the oldest part of the college, enclosed in the C15 and refaced in stone in the C18. A central circular lawn is surrounded by cobble paving in which is laid a stone path. A passage at the east corner leads to the south side of Second Court. Second Court is dominated by the Fellows' Building (1640-2, listed grade I) at its north-east end, with the C19 east range forming the east boundary facing the wall of the Master's Garden on the west boundary. This sub-rectangular court is laid largely to panels of lawn divided by paths, the main path leading north-east from First Court to the pedimented archway in the centre of Fellows' Building giving access to the Fellows' Garden. A path leads north-west from Second Court to Third Court, bounded on three sides by accommodation ranges (C19-C20, north range J J Stevenson 1889, listed grade II), and on the fourth, south side by the Master's Garden wall, with a central, oval sunk lawn with perimeter beds.

GARDENS The Fellows' Garden, reached from the archway through Fellows' Building is laid out informally, the current layout probably dating from the early to mid C19, with a gravel perimeter path surrounding an informal lawn with various shrub beds and mature specimen trees. A broad, gravel terrace runs along the north side of the Fellows' Building, from the east end of which the perimeter path runs north along the east boundary wall of the garden (rebuilt C19, listed grade II), flanked by shrubs, with glimpses over the open lawn and back to the Fellows' Building. Some 100m north of the Fellows' Building the path reaches a small, single-storey brick building with a lattice-work wooden porch against the central door flanked by two windows. This is the south side of the summerhouse connected with the bathing pool to the north (the whole mid C18 or earlier, listed grade I). The path winds around the west side of the summerhouse, met from the west by a branch crossing the lawn from the west perimeter path, and continues towards the north boundary wall (stone, C15-C16 and later, listed grade II), screened from the pool by a belt of shrubs and yew hedging. A spur off this path, close to the wall, runs south-east, giving access to the rectangular bathing pool known as the Bath. The path opens out close to the Bath, which is surrounded by a paved path and enclosed by shrub beds. The C18 summerhouse at the south end, containing a panelled room and a three-arched loggia in Classical style, overlooks the pool. A large plane tree stands adjacent to the east of the summerhouse. At the north-west corner of the garden stands a small glasshouse, to the south of which, earthed-up, is 'Milton's mulberry tree', said to be the only survivor of a group of mulberry trees planted in 1608 (the year of Milton's birth) to boost the English silk industry (Wilkinson 1995), although unlikely to be of this great age. A second tree, similarly earthed-up, has been grown from a windfall of the first, older tree.

By the mid C17 (Lyne, 1574) the north half of the Fellows' Garden (leased in 1507 and purchased in 1554) had seemingly been laid out as an ornamental space, depicted as a kind of grove with trees. In the late C17 (Loggan, 1688, 1690) the garden was laid out in simple quarters separated by cruciform paths, with a bowling green along the west boundary, and a small multi-sided pavilion on the east boundary (all now gone). The bathing pool and its associated summerhouse were first referred to in 1748 (Thomas Salmon) and again in 1763 (*Cantabrigia Depicta*, 1763), but the pool may be even earlier. The garden layout is probably c 1825, possibly influenced by J C Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822, fig 563, p 1182).

The Master's Garden lies north of First Court, bounded to the north by Third Court and to the east by Second Court, and separated from them by a wall. The Master's Lodge runs along the south and part of the west sides. A small brick summerhouse is set into the wall at the north-west corner of the garden, projecting back into Third Court. The garden is laid out formally. The present layout probably dates from the early C20 (OS 1888, 1925), around an axial canal with an apsidal east end, this being surrounded by stone paving and flanked to north and south by lawns with their outer edges terraced to a higher level. The canal is flanked by planting bays along its long sides, and runs west along the garden to a low archway in a brick wall forming the west boundary of the garden. Beyond this the canal continues west, flanked by lawn, terminating in a small circular pool in front of a white-painted brick loggia. The east-facing loggia contains three central round-headed arches and two flanking square-headed doorways with circular openings above, in similar style to those in the south front of the summerhouse in the main part of the Master's Garden.

REFERENCES

Loggan, *Cantabrigia Illustrata* (1690) Beeverell, *Les Delices de la Grand Bretagne ...* (1707) *Christ's College Magazine* 1, (1886) *Country Life*, 40 (30 September 1916), p 378; (7 October 1916), pp 406-12; 79 (25 April 1936), pp 430-4; (2 May 1936), pp 456-61 *Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire III*, (1959), pp 429-35 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire* (1970), pp 49-55 L P Wilkinson, *Le Keux's Engravings of Victorian Cambridge* (1981) R Gray, *Cambridge Colleges* (1984), pp 15-16 M Batey, *The Historic Gardens of Oxford and Cambridge* (1989), pp 24, 39, 100, 143 T A H Wilkinson, *Short Guide to Christ's College* (1995) [leaflet]

Maps Lyne, *Map of Cambridge, 1574* Hamond, *Map of Cambridge, 1592* Loggan, *Map of Cambridge, 1688* (from *Cantabrigia Illustrata, 1690*) Custance, *Map of Cambridge, 1798* Baker, *Map of Cambridge, 1830*

OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1925 OS 1:500: 1st edition published 1888

Description written: February 1998 Amended: February 1999 Register Inspector: SR 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.