

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CHRIST CHURCH

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

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**CHRIST CHURCH**

Name:	CHRIST CHURCH
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	Oxford (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.747435 Longitude: -1.2531008 National Grid Reference: SP5166105679 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000441 Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

## Details

C16 and later college gardens and quadrangles, with adjacent meadow surrounded by ornamental walks.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Christ Church was founded by Cardinal Wolsey in 1525, as Cardinal College, the buildings straddling the site of the south City Wall, partly on the site of St Frideswide's Priory which Wolsey had suppressed in 1524. Various college buildings, including the Hall and the south side of Tom Quadrangle, together with parts of the west and east ranges, were completed by the time of Wolsey's fall in 1529, the buildings bounded to the south by open water meadows. Henry VIII refounded the college in 1546 as a unique joint foundation of cathedral and college, renaming it Christ Church and incorporating various priory buildings, including the church as Christ Church cathedral. By the 1570s a perimeter walk had been established, running around much of the meadow as far south as the River Thames, marked on Agas' map of 1578 by a double row of trees and named as 'Christ Church Medows and Walkes'. By 1675 (map, Loggan) what later became known as the Broad Walk was established, and Tom Quad had been completed except for the tower, which was completed by Sir Christopher Wren in the early 1680s. Loggan shows the terrace around the inner edge of the Quad, together with a central pool and fountain, and the Broad Walk in its current position in the Meadow, named as 'new walks'. Earthworks had been erected approximately along the line of the Broad Walk during the Civil War in the 1640s. Peckwater Quad was built from 1705(14, and Meadow Buildings from 1862-6. In 1863 Dean Liddell (Dean 1855-91) laid out the straight New Walk running south through the Meadow to the river, in line with the centre of the south front of Meadow Buildings, and opened in 1872 by Princess Louise. Charles Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, lived at Christ Church for forty-seven years from 1851, writing Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and other books during the 1860s and 1870s, taking Dean Liddell's daughter, Alice, as his inspiration. The site remains (1997) in college use.

### DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Christ Church lies close to the centre of Oxford towards the south end, and on the east side of St Aldate's. The c 32ha college and its grounds lie largely on level ground which rises slightly to the north-west where the buildings are located. The college is bounded to the west by St Aldate's and south of this the Trill Mill Stream, to the north by Blue Boar and Bear Lanes and Oriel Square, together with the City Wall sections which now form

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the south boundaries of Corpus Christi (qv) and Merton Colleges (qv). The east boundary is formed by the River Cherwell, and the south boundary by the River Thames. The college is set within a group of colleges, the closest of which are Corpus Christi and Merton to the east, and Pembroke to the west, with the University Botanic Garden (qv) at the north-east corner. To the south and east, beyond the rivers, lie college playing fields and further meadows.

**ENTRANCES, APPROACHES AND QUADRANGLES** The main approach, off St Aldate's, opposite St Aldate's church, enters beneath Tom Tower, emerging into the square Tom Quad (1526, 1668, listed grade I) which is the largest quad in Oxford. The Quad is largely laid to lawn, with two central cruciform paths meeting at a central pond (1670, listed grade I), a round stone basin in which stands the Mercury Fountain (bronze figure of Mercury acquired 1928, pedestal Sir Edwin Lutyens 1935). The outer ends of the paths are connected by a perimeter terrace with several sets of steps down to the lower central level. The interior of the Quad is shown by Loggan (1675): the perimeter terrace, with baroque, semicircular steps at the centre of each side (except the west), leads down to the central lawn and cross paths converge on the circular basin containing a globe and serpent fountain (William Bird 1670). Each set of steps is shown connected to its immediate neighbours by a straight path across the lawn. Dean Liddell lowered the terrace in the 1870s, at the same time unexpectedly revealing the base of the cloister shafts, and the steps were altered to the current arrangement.

A path flanked by stone walls, leaving the north-east corner of Tom Quad beneath Fell Tower, leads into the Palladian Peckwater Quad (Dean Aldrich, 1706(11, listed grade I). The Quad encloses grassed panels of lawn separated by broad gravel paths, laid out in 1978, based on an unexecuted C18 design (Williams 1733). The south side is dominated by the Library (Dr George Clarke (1716-61), listed grade I), and at the south-east corner the path continues into Canterbury Quad (James Wyatt 1773, listed grade I). Here a Doric gateway is incorporated within the centre of the east range which gives access from Oriol Square, providing a triumphal arch at the beginning of the progress to the imposing Peckwater Quad. A wall and screen (probably Dean Aldrich, C18, listed grade II\*) defines a space north of Canterbury Quad overlooking Oriol Square, with a stone wall punctuated by piers with ball finials, and five wrought-iron panels between the piers.

A passage at the south-east corner of Tom Quad leads through to the cathedral cloister (rebuilt c 1500), with a path continuing south to the brick and stone Meadow Buildings (T N Deane 1862(5, listed grade II), through which a lofty central passage gives onto the west end of the Broad Walk and the Meadow, with views south along New Walk and across the Meadow to the Thames. The formal approach to the Meadow is through the War Memorial Garden, laid out in the late 1920s to commemorate college members lost in the First World War. The entrance is off the east side of St Aldate's, through wrought-iron screens (1920s, listed grade II) set on a low stone wall and separated by stone piers, flanking two single wrought-iron gates with overthrows. Larger piers with vase finials flank central double gates with an ornate overthrow. The gates give access to a broad, straight, stone-flagged path which rises 75m east of the entrance, ascending a short flight of stone steps with flanking stone walls (1920s, listed grade II) before crossing the canalised Trill Mill Stream, to enter the Meadow at its north-west corner and join the Broad Walk, on which the War Memorial Garden path is aligned. The garden is divided into several sections by stone walls, with lawns and herbaceous borders, and a line of limes set into the lawn south of the path.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** A group of small gardens lies to the east and north of Tom Quad. The Masters' Garden, lying adjacent to the west side of Merton Field, was laid out in 1926 as the first corporate college garden (until 1867, when the students acquired power, the college's corporate identity was represented by the Dean and canons, all of whom had, and retain, their own houses and private gardens within the college). The Masters' Garden is entered from Merton Field to the east via an iron gateway, and from the south-west from the area behind Meadow Buildings. It contains a central lawn surrounded by gravel paths and herbaceous borders along the bottom of stone boundary walls (1926, listed grade II), including the City Wall to the north, overlooked by the Fellows' Building and garden of Corpus Christi College. The Priory House Garden, lying adjacent to the west of the Masters' Garden, is also largely enclosed by stone walls and laid to lawn; it contains a C17 plane tree. The Cathedral Garden lies adjacent to the east and north sides of the cathedral, enclosed by stone walls and laid to lawn, with a grass terrace along the north boundary in which wall is set a small door through to the Deanery Garden. This enclosed garden was the garden for the royal apartments, with a special door for Queen Elizabeth I to enter the cathedral. It is dominated to the north by the south elevation of the Library, and contains a chestnut tree said to have been used as the model for that in

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which Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat 'appeared'. The Deanery to the east of Tom Quad, and Canons' Gardens to the north, are attached to individual dwellings within the college and maintained as private gardens.

Christ Church Meadow lies to the south-east of the grouped college buildings, a meadow surrounded by ornamental public walks. The Meadow is enclosed by waterways, including the Trill Mill Stream to the west, and is separated from Merton Field to the north by the straight, 400m long, gravel Broad Walk, with its flanking avenue of semi-mature plane trees set wide apart (these planted in 1975 with alternating oriental and London planes, to replace the earlier elms). The Meadow is largely pasture surrounded by a circuit walk. From Meadow Buildings in the north-west corner of the Meadow the straight New Walk (also known as Poplar Walk), flanked by mature poplars, runs south for 400m to the Thames, returning east along the north bank as an informal path which curves north along the west bank of an arm of the Cherwell. The edges of the walk are lined with mature trees and shrubs, including exotics such as Zelkova, with views north and north-west across the centre of the Meadow, over the college buildings towards the Oxford skyline. The walk continues north, past the east end of the Broad Walk, around Merton Field, past the Botanic Garden to the east, reaching the Rose Lane gate in the north-east corner, the gateway defined by large iron gates and flanking iron screens giving onto the south end of Rose Lane. From here the walk returns west along Deadman's Walk (so called because in the Middle Ages it was used by Jewish funeral processions from St Aldate's to the burial ground on the site of the Botanic Garden) at the bottom of the City Wall which here bounds Merton and Corpus Christi Colleges. The path turns south at Merton Grove gate to rejoin the Broad Walk, having encircled the playing fields which now constitute Merton Field.

#### REFERENCES

Country Life, 57 (20 June 1925), pp 988-95; 65 (9 March 1929), pp 336-8 H Trevor Roper, Christ Church, Oxford (1950, 3rd edn 1989) E G W Bill, Christ Church Meadow (1965) N Pevsner and J Sherwood, The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire (1974), pp 109-27 M Batey, Oxford Gardens (1982), pp 64-7, pls 13, 14

Maps [all held at Oxon Centre for Local Studies] Agas/Bereblock, Map of Oxford, engraved 1728 from 1578 original Hollar, Map of Oxford, 1643 Loggan, Map of Oxford, 1675 W Williams, Collegium Aedis Christi, from Oxonia Depicta, 1732 R Davis, A New Map of the County of Oxford..., 1797

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1881-2 2nd edition published 1901 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880

Description written: November 1997 Amended: March 1999; April 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: January 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.