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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WADHAM COLLEGE

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Name:	WADHAM COLLEGE
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	Oxford (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.756309 Longitude: -1.2544467 National Grid Reference: SP 51558 06665 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001293 Date first listed: 13-Nov-1984

Details

College quadrangles and gardens, laid out late C18-C20, incorporating the site of formal C17 gardens.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Wadham College was founded by Dorothy Wadham (the wife of Nicholas Wadham, d 1609; together they are regarded as joint founders) in 1610, when building was begun, and completed by 1613. It was built just outside the city walls on the site of an Augustinian friary which had gone by the late C16, when the site seems to have been given over to market gardens and orchards (Agas, 1578). The area which was to become the present (1998) Fellows' Public Garden was sub-let to a market gardener and left as an orchard, as instructed by Dorothy Wadham, only being laid out in 1651 (Batey 1982). This formal garden, with a small central mount (Loggan, 1675), was laid out in a manner to please the distinguished set of natural scientists who were at the college during the mid C17, including the young Christopher Wren, and was described by John Evelyn in his diaries of the 1650s (Batey 1982). The mount was removed in 1755, and the gardens enlarged to the west during the late C18, incorporating what is now (1998) the Fellows' Private Garden. They were landscaped by Mr Shipley, the Duke of Marlborough's gardener, who was said to be a pupil of Lancelot Brown (ibid). In 1929 Rhodes House was built on part of the then Warden's Garden, which is to the north of the present Fellows' Private Garden. The Rhodes House garden was separated by a stone wall from Wadham gardens, which continue in college use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wadham College lies towards the north-east corner of the centre of Oxford, just outside and to the north of the course of the former city walls. The 2.5ha site is bounded to the west by Parks Road, to the north by a stone wall separating the gardens from Rhodes House (1929, listed grade II) occupying part of the former landscape garden, and to the south by buildings bounding Holywell Street. To the east the site is bounded along the northern section by Love Lane (formerly a public lane, now closed) separating the college from Mansfield College, and along the southern section by C20 Wadham college buildings including Library Court which overlooks Cloister Garden. Set on largely level ground at the edge of the medieval city, Wadham lies close to several other colleges, including Trinity (qv) and St John's (qv) whose gardens lie adjacent on the west side of Parks Road.

ENTRANCES, APPROACHES AND QUADRANGLES The college, set back off Parks Road, is approached from the west, through a forecourt defined by a stone kerb on the west side, and to the north, west and south by college buildings. A stone path leads between the forecourt's rectangular panels of lawn to the main entrance at the centre of the west range of Front Quad.

The entrance, through the central tower in the west range of the square Front Quad (William Arnold, mason, 1610-13, modified C18, listed grade I), emerges into Front Quad, which is enclosed by three-storey stone ranges, surrounding a perimeter path which in turn encloses a square panel of lawn, this lawn having been turfed in 1809 (Davies and Garnett 1994).

From Front Quad a passageway in the south range gives onto the rectangular Back Quad, enclosed by the south range of Front Quad on its north side, a C20 range on the east side, partly by a stone wall to the south, and by C17 and C18 college buildings (listed grade II*) to the west, these buildings being separated by a gateway giving access from Parks Road.

A passageway from the north-east corner of Front Quad, past the chapel entrance, gives access to the gardens to the north.

In the late C17 (Loggan, 1675) a central forecourt giving access to the main college entrance off Parks Road was divided from the road by a high wall along its west side, entered from an enclosed outer apron bounded by a wooden post and rail fence. The forecourt was divided by walls from two flanking garden compartments, each containing two rectangular panels of lawn enclosed by a low clipped hedge and with a central conifer, and bounded to the west by the high wall adjacent to the road. The forecourt was still enclosed by the wall in the early C18 (Williams 1732), although laid out in a more elaborate fashion. Back Quad was opened up in the later C19 (Hoggar, 1850; OS 1900) with the removal of buildings and small gardens, and extended to its present size in the C20.

GARDENS The gardens lie largely north of the college buildings. The almost square Fellows' Public Garden is surrounded by high stone walls (C16 and later, listed grade II) to the west, east and north, the last of which separates it from the Fellows' Private Garden to the north. The west wall separates the Fellows' Public Garden from the Warden's Garden, and the east wall marks the boundary with Love Lane. The southern boundary is largely marked by the north range of Front Quad and the chapel, being open at the east end where it joins with Cloister Garden.

The Fellows' Public Garden is laid largely to lawn and planted with scattered, mature ornamental trees, with a perimeter path giving access to a doorway into the Fellows' Private Garden set at the east end of the north wall and border. The south-east corner leads south into Cloister Garden, a small, enclosed, informal area bounded to the east by the stone boundary wall and to the west by the college cloister. The western half (formerly the college cemetery; Davies and Garnett 1994) is laid to lawn, while the eastern half, which contains mature trees and a late C20 sculpture, is overlooked to the east by the late C20 library building. The Fellows' Public Garden was the site of the elaborate garden of 1651. This was laid out in four quarters, enclosed by clipped hedges with standard trees at intervals, divided by two paths set in cruciform pattern. The whole was enclosed on all four sides by stone walls standing above an adjacent perimeter path. Each quarter was in turn subdivided into four quarters by paths, each quarter again being surrounded by low clipped hedges. At the centre of the garden, where the two main paths met, stood a low, circular mount, ascended from the south by a flight of steps, at the top of which, on a balustraded platform, stood a statue of Atlas. The southern part of the Fellows' Garden was ornamented with various curious devices related to the furthering of science, including transparent apiaries designed by Christopher Wren (Batey 1982) which supported dials and vanes, a speaking statue and artificial rainbows created by misting water. The garden was described in this form by John Evelyn in the 1650s and illustrated by Loggan in 1675 (*ibid*). In the early C18 it largely retained its C17 layout, which seems to have been made more intricate (Williams 1732) with minor alterations to the planting.

The mount was removed after, in 1755, the statue of Atlas had blown off in a high wind and smashed. The garden was landscaped by Mr Shipley, the Duke of Marlborough's gardener, in 1796, being laid out in similar fashion to that seen now (1998), although at the time many trees were cut down (Batey 1982).

The doorway at the north-east corner of the Fellows' Public Garden leads into the south-east corner of the Fellows' Private Garden, opening onto the bottom of the ramp up to the walk along the terrace which bounds the east side of the garden. The Fellows' Private Garden is bounded by walls, enclosing an open lawn planted with scattered, ornamental specimen trees and surrounded by a gravel perimeter path and borders. The garden terrace, a Civil War earthwork of the 1640s, reused in similar fashion to that at St John's College (qv), was incorporated in the garden in the late C18, overlooking to the east what is now

Mansfield College gardens and grounds, and to the west the rest of the Fellows' Private Garden. The gravel path running along the top of the straight terrace is reached from the south end by the ramp up from the entrance to the Fellows' Public Garden, and from the north by a flight of informal stone steps leading up the earth bank from the lawn below to the west. The terrace is supported to the east by a stone retaining wall forming the boundary with Love Lane, the west side being fashioned into a sloping earth bank, set into the centre of which stands the stone 'cowshed'. This, a square, single-storey building with a pyramidal roof and a doorway on the west side, is probably of the late C18 and was designed for a milch-cow (Davies and Garnett 1994). Mature trees and shrubs stand on parts of the west slope. The terrace extends north into the garden of Rhodes House, from which it is separated by a low wall, as far as South Parks Road to the north.

Originally comprising a 2ha site, occupying a corner of the old earthworks erected during the Civil War and known as the Warden's Close, the area now (1998) called the Fellows' Private Garden (but then part of the Warden's Garden) was incorporated into the college grounds in the late C18 by Warden Wills. In 1796, when the gardens were landscaped by Mr Shipley, the Civil War earthwork terrace was retained, and probably enhanced, as part of the circuit walk of the whole area (including that part now occupied by Rhodes House), which was given an informal perimeter path enclosing an open lawn with scattered trees and shrubs. The area was halved when Rhodes House was built on the northern half in 1929, surrounded by its own grounds and separated by a stone wall. The remaining garden was given over entirely to the Fellows after the Second World War.

An opening at the south-west corner of the Fellows' Private Garden leads into the Warden's Garden, enclosed to the west, north and east by stone walls. It is laid largely to lawn, with mature specimen trees and an informal perimeter path and borders, much as seems to have been carried out by Mr Shipley, with an open forecourt by the Warden's Lodgings to the south. In the late C17 (Loggan, 1675) it was laid out with compartments containing mature trees, together with a tunnel covered by trained trees. By the early C18 (Williams 1732) the garden comprised three compartments, with a forecourt from which extended a path flanked by two panels of lawn leading out of the Lodging and into the second compartment, an orchard. An elaborate gateway led north from the orchard into the third compartment, laid out in formal fashion with four quarters surrounded by paths, and a central Doric pavilion. Mr Shipley seems to have landscaped the garden in the 1790s, giving it the structure it still bears.

A service area lies west of the Fellows' Private Garden, from which it is divided by a wall; partly in stone, the majority of this has been rebuilt in brick. The area is bounded to the west by the stone, college boundary wall which is broken by Wadham Cottages (C17, listed grade II). These, two gardener's cottages standing in line, were formerly the home of the late C17 market gardeners on the site, the Buddards. The area is used for car parking and for nursery purposes, having been a nursery or productive area since at least the mid C19 (Hoggar).

REFERENCES

Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675) William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta* (1732) *Country Life*, 72 (10 December 1932), pp 662-8
N Pevsner and J Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974), pp 213-17 M Batey, *Oxford Gardens* (1982), pp 43-9, 116, 118 C S L Davies and J Garnett (eds), *Wadham College* (1994), pp 100-21

Maps Agas/Bereblock, *Map of Oxford*, engraved 1728 from 1578 original Hollar, *Map of Oxford*, 1643 Loggan, *Map of Oxford*, 1675 R Davis, *A New Map of the County of Oxford*, 1797 Hoggar, *Map of Oxford*, 1850

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1921 OS 1:500: 1st edition published 1878-80 2nd edition published 1901

Description written: November 1998 Amended: November 2004 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 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.