

**Lost in the Long Books: Revealing the organisation, operations and uses of
the collegiate gardens in the University of Oxford between 1733 and 1837**

Volume 1 (of 2)
Text, Chapters 1-8

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Abstract

This is the first scholarly assessment of the collegiate landscapes of the University of Oxford based in their organisation, operation and use between 1733 and 1837. The thesis was a localised case study using primary data from archival sources and contemporary literature. The identified material was then assessed and interpreted using thick description and Reception theory. Adopting approaches used in material culture studies made it possible to identify the technologies and skills that had been used in the gardens. The core period of the study (1733-1837) was selected to cover an era during which the University retained its position as the paramount civic authority in the city of Oxford and became a cultural centre in England.

The thesis establishes that the gardens were maintained by contractors rather than the colleges employing their own labour. These businessmen in turn sub-contracted skilled gardeners by the day to service the needs of the gardens. The analysis of financial data from contractors' bills demonstrated that figures previously considered wages for work in the garden were instead day rates to be paid by the colleges. This discovery has implications for our understanding of the wages for skilled and unskilled labour in the gardens. The findings in this thesis demonstrate that the contractors managed sophisticated horticultural businesses to service the college's needs.

This study informs landscape history through the exploration of collegiate landscapes, garden contracting, wages and the wider employment of Oxford's horticultural trade in the gardens. Furthermore the roles of other trades, such as carpenters and the largely absent material culture in the gardens are assessed.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of illustrations	ix
List of tables	xv
Abbreviations and explanations	xvi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1. Aims	1
1.1.1. Research Question	1
1.2. Significance of the study	1
1.3. Identification of the subjects and period of study	3
1.4. The structure of the study	4
1.5. Methodology	7
1.5.1. Use of Archival Material and Libraries	7
1.5.2. The use of archival sources in the study of Oxford college gardens	8
1.5.3. Systematic data collection	11
1.5.4. Economic history and material culture	13
1.5.5. The reception of the garden	14
1.5.6. Analysis of data: Thick Description	15
1.6. Literature review	16
1.6.1. Early writers on Oxford Colleges and their gardens	16
1.6.2. Analysis of modern and contemporary garden history scholarship on college gardens	18
1.6.3. Analysis of wider publications on academic landscapes and garden history	23

	1.6.4. Analysis of material culture, patterns of consumption and absent objects	28
	1.6.5. Analysis of publications on economic history and the garden	30
Chapter 2	The topographies of the University and the college gardens	31
	2.1. The city of Oxford in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries	31
	2.2. The topographical concepts of the University and its colleges	35
	2.3. The idea of the University conveyed through the prospects of Oxford	45
	2.4. Representing landmarks and sites of interest	51
	2.5. Topographical representations of the college gardens	54
	2.6. A typology of college gardens	60
	2.7. Summary	64
Chapter 3	Governance, administration and financing of collegiate gardens	65
	3.1. The college officers	65
	3.2. The foundation statutes and the garden	68
	3.3. The college convention book	70
	3.4. The administration of the college, the gardener and the gardens	72
	3.5. The costs of the gardener and the garden in the annual accounts	76
	3.6. Funding college gardens from additional income sources	82

	3.7. The use fees and fines to subsidise the garden	84
	3.8. Redirection of funds and loans for the gardens	89
	3.9. Donations and bequests	91
	3.10. Summary	92
Chapter 4	Material culture: buildings, ornaments and furniture	94
	4.1. Picturing the garden	94
	4.2. The consumption of materials	97
	4.3. The use of the college gardens and material culture	99
	4.4. Material improvements in the garden	102
	4.5. Summer houses and other buildings	105
	4.6. Seats, chairs and stools	113
	4.7. Ironwork screens, gates and palisades	123
	4.8. Summary	127
Chapter 5	Material culture: structures and implements in the garden	128
	5.1. Flower stages, frames and hotbeds	128
	5.2. <i>Trellage</i> work in the garden	132
	5.3. Implements of labour	140
	5.4. Instruments of operation	142
	5.5. Instruments of direction	149
	5.6. Utensils, machines and articles	150
	5.6.1. Utensils	151
	5.6.2. Machines	155
	5.6.3. Articles	164

	5.6.4. Shreds and listing: by-products of tailors and the cloth industry	169
	5.7. Summary	173
Chapter 6	Gardeners in the collegiate gardens	175
	6.1. The typology of gardeners	176
	6.2. Gardeners, civic status and protectionism	177
	6.3. The status of the contractor within the horticultural trade	180
	6.4. Sub-contracting	182
	6.5. Apprenticeships and horticultural skills required by contractors	185
	6.6. Skills for maintaining a productive landscape	192
	6.7. Robert Penson as college garden contractor	198
	6.8. Maintenance contracts	200
	6.9. Daily rates and real wages	205
	6.10. The profitability of the businesses of tradesmen-gardeners	215
	6.11. The contractor as a diverse consumer of goods	217
	6.12. Nurserymen	218
	6.13. New work contracts	235
	6.14. The contractors' calendar	240
	6.15. Summary	248
Chapter 7	Uses and users of the gardens	250
	7.1. The garden as social space used by the members of the college and their guests	250
	7.2. Elite cultural activities in college gardens	254

7.3. The college gardens as public spaces	258
7.4. The gardens and tourists	273
7.5. Framing college gardens as places of moral jeopardy and illicit pleasure	286
7.6. The college garden and Oxford's social season	297
7.7. Summary	303
Chapter 8 Conclusion	305
8.1. Summary of findings	313
8.2. Recommendations for the future	313
References	315
Appendix 1 Data Sheets on the college gardens in the University of Oxford	329

List of illustrations

Figure 1.1	Wadham College 1777 Michaelmas and Christmas Account Book. Wadham College Archive. Copyright: the author.	10
Figure 2.1	David Loggan, <i>Oxonia Illustrata</i> , 1675, engraving, title page. Copyright: the author.	36
Figure 2.2	Anthony Wood, <i>Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis</i> , 1674, engraved by R. White, engraving, title page. Copyright: the author.	37
Figure 2.3	David Loggan, “The Prospect of Oxford from the East near London Road/The Prospect of Oxford from the South near Abingdon Road”, in <i>Oxonia Illustrata</i> , 1675, engraving. Copyright: the author.	45
Figure 2.4	Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, “The South West Prospect of the University and the City of Oxford”, 1731, hand coloured engraving. Copyright: the author.	46
Figure 2.5.	John Boydell, “A South Prospect of the City of Oxford”, 1751, engraving. Copyright: the New York Public Library.	48
Figure 2.6	Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, “The South East Prospect of the University and the City of Oxford”, 1753, hand coloured engraving. Copyright: HM’s Government Collection.	48
Figure 2.7	John Donowell, “A View of Magdalen College in the University of Oxford,” 1755, engraving. Copyright: the author.	52
Figure 2.8	William Williams, Corpus Christi College, in <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 40. Copyright: the author.	54
Figure 2.9	John Baptist Malchair, <i>The Mound, St John’s College, Oxford</i> , 1775, pen and brown ink, 1775. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library.	58
Figure 2.10	J and H.S. Storer, “Wadham College (from Trinity College Garden)”, in Rowley Lascelles, <i>The University and City of Oxford</i> , 1821, engraving. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.	59

Figure 2.11	Map of Oxford, 1808, engraved by John Toper. Copyright: Antique Maps.	61
Figure 3.1	The Garden Master's Book, Corpus Christi College Archive. Courtesy of Corpus Christi College Archive.	74
Figure 3.2	C. Wilde, <i>Wadham College from the Fellows' Garden</i> , after 1796, watercolour. Courtesy of the Wadham College Library.	85
Figure 3.3	Trinity College Benefactors Book, Trinity College Archive, ink. Courtesy of Trinity College Library.	90
Figure 4.1	Detail from Edward Dayes, <i>A View of Wadham College, from the Garden</i> , 1794, watercolour. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.	93
Figure 4.2	James Maddock, <i>The Florist's Directory</i> , 1792, engraving, hand coloured plate 5. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	98
Figure 4.3	Taxonomic table for mechanical agents employed in the garden, John Claudius Loudon, <i>Encyclopaedia of Gardening</i> , 1832, page 512. Copyright: the author.	102
Figure 4.4	William Partridge's advertisement for Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest Chairs and stools: <i>Oxford Journal</i> , 13 July 1754. Copyright: the author.	113
Figure 4.5	Double Windsor chair, Jesus College, Oxford, c.1740-55. Copyright: Bob Yates.	115
Figure 4.6	Iron gate and palisade, New College, Oxford, by Thomas Robinson, 1711, in J. Starkie Gardener, <i>English Ironwork of the XVII and XVIII Centuries</i> , 1911, plate XXV. Copyright: the author.	122
Figure 4.7	Decorated initial letter of Thomas Robinson's clairvoie for Trinity College, Oxford, in Trinity College Benefactors' Book, Trinity College Archive, ink on vellum. Courtesy of Trinity College Archive.	123
Figure 5.1	James Maddock, <i>The Florist's Directory</i> , 1792, engraving, hand coloured, plate 6. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	128
Figure 5.2	Figure 5.2. New College Garden and Bowling Green, in William William, <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733; engraving, plate 25. Copyright: the author.	130

Figure 5.3	Detail from garden at Doornsberg, in Matthaeus Brouerius van Nidek, <i>De Zegapraalande Vecht</i> , 1719, engraved by Daniel Stopendael, plate 12. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	132
Figure 5.4	Figure 5.4. Detail from the garden at Middelhoek, Matthaeus Brouerius van Nidek's <i>De Zegapraalande Vecht</i> , 1719, engraved by Daniel Stopendael, plate 55. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	136
Figure 5.5	Detail of Trinity College Garden, from William Williams' <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.	136
Figure 5.6	George London and Henry Wise, <i>The Retir'd Gard'ner</i> , 1706. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	140
Figure 5.7a	Balthasar Nebot, <i>The Allees and Arcades behind Hartwell House</i> , c.1738, oil on canvas, Copyright: Buckinghamshire County Museum.	143
Figure 5.7b	Detail from Balthasar Nebot, <i>The Northwest Woodlands with Gardeners Scything Hartwell House</i> , c. 1738, oil on canvas. Copyright: Buckinghamshire County Museum.	144
Figure 5.8	Detail from Pieter Andreas Rysbrack, <i>View of Tottenham Park, Wiltshire</i> , c.1737, oil on canvas. Private Collection. Copyright: Christies.	144
Figure 5.9	[A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville], <i>The theory and practice of gardening</i> , translated by John James, 1728, engraving. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	148
Figure 5.10	Detail from Peter Andreas Rysbrack, <i>Chiswick. View of the Orange Tree Garden</i> , c.1728-32, oil on canvas. Copyright: The Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.	150
Figure 5.11	William Hanbury, <i>A Complete Book of Planting and Gardening</i> , vol. 1, frontispiece, 1770, engraving. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	152
Figure 5.12	Detail from Abbe Rozier, <i>Cours complet d'agriculture</i> , volume II, 1783, engraving, plate xvii. Copyright: Lindley Library RHS.	155

Figure 5.13	“The exceptional cascade in the garden of Prince Schwarzenberg” in Salomon Kleiner, <i>Viererleÿ Vorstellungen</i> , c. 1730, engraving, plate 16. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	158
Figure 5.14	Dawson Warren, <i>View of Trinity College from the Garden</i> , 1801, pen and ink. Copyright: Trinity College.	161
Figure 5.15	Thomas Rowlandson, <i>Picking Mulberries</i> , n.d., watercolour, Yale Center for British Art. Copyright: Yale Center for British Art.	164
Figure 6.1	The use of a wooden pattern in the gardens of Versailles by modern gardeners. Copyright: EPV/Thomas Garnier.	187
Figure 6.2	[A.J. Dezallier d’Argenville], <i>The theory and practice of gardening</i> , translated by John James, 1728, engraving. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	187
Figure 6.3	Detail from James Maddock, <i>The Florist’s Directory</i> , 1792, engraving, hand painted, plate 6. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	189
Figure 6.4	Detail from Michael Angelo Rooker, “The Libraries and Schools, From Exeter College Gardens”, 1786, engraving. Courtesy of Exeter College Archive.	193
Figure 6.5	Michael Angelo Rooker, “The New Building, Magdalen College from the Grove”, 1787, engraving. Copyright: the author.	195
Figure 6.6	Bill for St John’s College for trees, shrubs and plants from Matthew Cook, December 19 1760. Courtesy of St John’s College Archive.	220
Figure 6.7	“Tagg’s Catalogue of Green-House Plants, etc.”, n.d. Courtesy of Worcester College Library.	225
Figure 6.8	Detail from Salomon Kleiner, “Avenue of chestnut trees from the so-called “garden of the former favourite”, planted during the reign of Emperor Joseph I” in <i>Viererleÿ Vorstellungen</i> , c. 1730, engraving, plate 8. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.	245
Figure 7.1	Attitude in Shooting: Thomas Waring, <i>A Treatise on Archery or the Art of Shooting with a Long Bow</i> , 1830, engraving, frontispiece. Copyright: the author.	254

Figure 7.2	The city walls of Oxford surrounding New College Garden: Decorated letter in Exeter College Benefactors' Book. Courtesy of Exeter College Library.	255
Figure 7.3.	Edward Dayes, <i>A View of Wadham College, from the Garden</i> , 1794, watercolour. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.	259
Figure 7.4	"Plan of Christ Church Meadow Merton Fields etc.", surveyed by J. Bennett, 1799. Courtesy of Christ Church Archive.	260
Figure 7.5	T. Taylor, "Christ Church Walk, Oxford", 1803, etching, aquatint and hand coloured. Copyright: the author.	261
Figure 7.6	Prospect of Oxford from the Parks, c.1753, wood engraving. Copyright: the author.	263
Figure 7.7	Bird's-eye view of Trinity College Garden and Garden Quadrangle, Benefactors' Book, before 1733. Courtesy of Trinity College Archive.	265
Figure 7.8	Trinity College in William Williams, <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.	266
Figure 7.9	The two groves in the second division of Trinity College Garden: Detail from Trinity College, William Williams <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.	267
Figure 7.10	St John's College in William William, <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 48. Copyright: Harvard University, Houghton Library.	269
Figure 7.11	The Wilderness, forming the third division of Trinity College Detail from Trinity College, in William Williams, <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.	276
Figure 7.12	The Inner Grove of St John's College: Detail from St John's College, in William Williams, <i>Oxonia Depicta</i> , 1733, engraving, plate 48. Copyright: Harvard University, Houghton Library.	277
Figure 7.13	Attributed to George Knapton, <i>A Graduate of Merton College, Oxford</i> , 1755 or later, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Copyright: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.	287

- Figure 7.14 Detail of *A Graduate of Merton College, Oxford*, 288
 Attributed to George Knapton, 1755 or later, oil on
 canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
 Copyright: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
- Figure 7.15a William Hogarth, *Before*, 1730-31, oil on canvas, Tate, 290
 London. Copyright: Tate, London.
- Figure 7.15b William Hogarth, *After*, 1730-31, oil on canvas, Tate, 290
 London. Copyright: Tate, London.
- Figure 7.16 “Aerostation. Mr Sadler’s Ascent from Merton Fields, 299
 Oxford”, n.d. engraving. Copyright: the author.
- Figure 7.17 Robert Cruikshank, “Shew Sunday-Sketches of 301
 Character in the Broad Walk, Christ Church Meadows,
 Oxford.”, 1824, etching, aquatint and hand coloured,
 plate XIV. Copyright license: Alamy.

List of Tables

Table 6.1	Day rates for gardeners working in colleges between 1747 and 1789	209
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Abbreviations and explanations

Text based abbreviations

n.d.= no date.

n.p.= no page number.

op.= opposite.

ed/s.=editor/s

trans.=translated

Currency based abbreviations

Pre-decimal British currency used in this study is abbreviated as below:

£= pound/s.

s.= shilling/s.

d.= penny/pence.

Non-decimal currency explanations

£1 was equal to 20 s. or 240d.

1s. was equal to 12d.

A guinea was worth one pound and one shilling. In accounts and bills it was usually written as £1 1s. Payments in guineas were usually used for professional charges.

Civic explanations

In the text 'University' refers to the University of Oxford and 'City' refers to the City of Oxford. The City and University were two separate civic authorities. The physical city of Oxford is described in the text as the 'city'.

Referencing

Archive references are written in full in this thesis and are not abbreviated when repeated.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Aims

The aim of this study is to provide an assessment of the ways in which the college gardens within the University of Oxford were organised, operated and used.

1.1.1. Research Question

The research question that the study answers is ‘what can be revealed concerning the organisation, operation and use of Oxford college gardens, from 1733 until 1837, from a critical analysis of archival and printed sources?’ The study advances the case that collegiate landscapes, which consist of gardens and walks, should be treated as culturally distinct landscapes. The thesis contributes to the understanding the size and scope of the roles that the horticultural trade, amongst several others, played in the supply of goods and maintenance of the gardens. The approaches used in this study have challenged the folklore and existing historical positions relating to the college gardens and replaced them with evidence based claims. To date there has been little investigation into the effect of the horticultural trade and its levels of expertise found in a regional or localised area of England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

1.2. Significance of the study

This is the first scholarly assessment of the collegiate landscapes of Oxford University based on the assessment of their organisation, operation and use. Historians have traditionally sought to describe collegiate gardens within general

stylistic trends. This method of analysis was commonly used while garden history was an emerging discipline. The visual impact of William Williams' engravings for *Oxonia Depicta* (1733) have, cuckoo-like, taken residence in the minds of historians as the accepted representation for Oxford college gardens for a much longer period than appropriate.¹ Such an approach was used by Mavis Batey in *Oxford Gardens* and *Historic Gardens of Oxford and Cambridge*, neither of which acknowledged the specific social and cultural influences on the development of the collegiate landscapes.²

The assessment of the consumption of goods and services in the gardens for this study required methods drawn from material culture studies. The integration of perspectives from material culture into the garden and landscape history study has allowed for a greater understanding of the relationship between the college gardeners and the other tradesmen. This approach was used to identify the technologies that were used in the gardens to augment the gardeners' skills and support them in their tasks rather than relying solely on the theoretical recommendations made in the contemporary horticultural publications. Mowl has claimed that the only way to understand the landscape is to walk in it.³ While such an approach is extremely valuable, a knowledge of the management and operating systems that were used in gardens is also integral to developing an understanding of how historic landscapes were maintained.⁴

¹ William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta* (Oxford: 1733), plates 25, 45, 48.

² Mavis Batey, *Oxford Gardens: The University's Influence on Garden History* (Amersham: Avebury, 1982); Mavis Batey, *The Historic Gardens of Oxford and Cambridge* (London: MacMillan, 1989).

³ Tim Mowl, *Gentleman Gardeners. The men who created the English landscape* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), x.

⁴ Shenna MacKellar Goult, *Heritage Gardens: Care, conservation and management* (London: Routledge, 1993), 72-73, 77, 79-91; Peter Thoday, "Science and craft in understanding historic gardens and their management", in *Gardens and landscapes in historic building conservation*, ed. Marion Harney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 143-4, 145-8; Tom Williamson, "Garden History

1.3. Identification of subjects and period of study

The study addresses the landscapes of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford: Merton, Balliol, University College, The Queen's (commonly known as Queen's), All Souls, Oriel, New College, Exeter, Lincoln, Brasenose, Magdalen, Corpus Christi, Christ Church, St John's, Trinity, Jesus, Wadham, Pembroke and Worcester (detailed data sheets for the college gardens are found in Volume 2). All of the nineteen institutions identified and used in the study were foundations that were confirmed by charter as the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford in 1733. The un-endowed academic halls in 1733 were not included in the study as they were institutions affiliated with the University but did not form part of its corporate body.⁵ Together with the colleges of the University of Cambridge they possessed the only academic landscapes of English universities until 1832 when the University of Durham was founded.

Gardens held by virtue of a college appointment, such as head of the college or senior fellow, were excluded from the study. These green spaces were enjoyed by the office holder and, in the case of heads of colleges, their families; these landscapes were not administered by the colleges. The adoption of this rationale allowed the study to address only the landscapes which were directly controlled and administered by the colleges. These shared spaces form a cultural sub-type of the academic landscape, the collegiate garden or walk.

and Systematic Survey", in *Garden History: Issues, Approaches, Methods*, ed. John Dixon Hunt, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 13 (Washington D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1992), 59, 60.

⁵ Lawrence Stone, "The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1530-1910", *The University in Society*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 7.

The core period of the study (1733-1837) was selected to cover an era during which the University retained its position as the paramount civic authority in the city of Oxford. During this period of time the University became an important social, and cultural, national institution. The study begins in the last year that the Public Act (the formal acknowledgement of the benefactors of the University and conferment of honorary degrees) was held. From the third decade of the eighteenth century the University sought to gain the attention of the nation and claim its place as a powerful institution.⁶ For the remainder of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century the University and its colleges enhanced their civic reputation with improvements in the City. The study ends in 1837, with the accession of Victoria to the throne and the attempted reform of the University by the Hebdomadal Board (an executive body made up of the heads of houses and proctors responsible for the statutes and privileges of the University).

1.4. The structure of the study

The study is divided into eight chapters; the first chapter contains the literature review and it is divided into two parts, consisting of an analysis of the material written on the subject of Oxford college gardens after 1960 and the relevant publications on garden history, material culture and economic history. The chapter includes an explanation of the methods used to research, analyse and write the study, and the reasoning for their adoption.

⁶ W.R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 149.

The second chapter of the study provides an assessment of the effects of the topography of Oxford and the collegiate garden sites on their use, organisation and operation. This chapter offers an extended analysis of the collegiate garden as real and poetic landscapes that expressed the University's cultural claims to be a second Athens during the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century the colleges created and maintained landscape features which expressed the University's claim that it was the successor of the Athenian academies. The acknowledgement of the cultural context for the gardens prevents the obscuring of the idea of a collegiate landscape through the generalised sociocultural expectations of visiting 'a garden'. Additionally the chapter assesses the college gardens as a sub-type of academic landscape, preventing the poetics of Oxford's topography from being displaced by the reliance of outmoded and generalised stylistic debates.

The methods used by the colleges to organise, finance and administer their gardens are assessed in the third chapter. Through a careful examination and analysis of the systems and structures used by the colleges, the chapter demonstrates the costs of maintaining the gardens. By following the accounting protocols, the study was able to ascertain who paid for various services and how this was achieved.

The fourth chapter introduces the importance of a material culture led approach in the study and focuses on the identification of the range of buildings and furniture that existed in the college gardens. These structures are largely absent from the current landscapes and only exist in an array of financial papers of the colleges. Through an assessment of the diversity of the structures used by the colleges in their gardens the chapter analyses the roles that the objects played in supporting the landscapes

uses. The roles and scale of the employment of tradesmen in the gardens operating outside of Oxford's horticultural businesses is scrutinised. Finally the chapter discusses the financial implications associated with the purchase and maintenance of the garden structures in relation to the sociocultural aspirations of the colleges and their members.

The types of technological support that were available to the college gardeners are identified and assessed in the fifth chapter. Through the identification of these, now, absent objects, the chapter analyses the horticultural skills and the techniques required to undertake tasks in the gardens. Technology, in both basic and advanced forms is also scrutinised in relation to the demands, uses and consumption of and by the college. The costs of servicing the technological support required by the garden contractors are identified and assessed in order to understand the scale of the colleges' financial commitments for maintaining the gardens.

The operations run by the college garden contractors and their employment of other horticultural services found in Oxford are assessed in the sixth chapter. The contracts or agreements are assessed and related to the collegiate systems of paying gardeners stipends and bills. Contractors' daily labour rates and real wages for the garden labour are evaluated and compared with other Oxford tradesmen. Finally a calendar of the college gardeners' year is provided to contextualise the techniques, labour employment patterns and tasks.

The seventh chapter addresses the uses of the college gardens in a thematic way, and the users' responses to the landscapes. Using Reception Theory to understand the changing emphasis in the roles of the college gardens the chapter draws attention to the multiple types of users of the sites. The chapter assesses the

sociocultural tensions caused by combining the idea of a collegiate garden and the public walk. Furthermore the chapter assesses the role of the gardens as presenting an expression of the colleges' and the University's taste.

The final chapter is the conclusion to the study and responds to the research question.

1.5. Methodology

The study's research question interrogated the uses, organisation and operations of the college gardens in Oxford through the critical analysis of archival and published sources. Together, the college gardens in the University of Oxford formed a localised case study. A localised study was necessary to assess the connections between contractors, colleges and users. To be able to address the research question it was necessary to adopt methods and approaches that provided a suitable framework for the research, analysis and interpretation of the study; a cross disciplinary approach was found to allow the necessary perspectives.

1.5.1. Use of Archival Material and Libraries

The study made use of archival sources to build a body of appropriate material to support the assessment of the uses, organisation and operations of collegiate gardens. Additionally the assessment of the use of the gardens required the collection of descriptions and responses to gardens, or events in them, from contemporary publications, diaries and letters. Together archives and libraries provided material that connected the college gardens with their users and the employees, seasonal tasks, objects, features and topography.

The archives of seventeen out of the nineteen constituent Oxford colleges, extant in 1733, were visited and assessed for material relevant to their gardens; All Souls College and Oriel College were not assessed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The National Archives at Kew and the Oxfordshire History Centre contained gardeners' wills providing the genealogical information that helped identify the connections that existed between the various individuals involved in the horticultural trade. Searches of newspapers, contemporary with the period covered by the study (1733-1837), were accessed via the British Library's collections.

Drawings and prints from the collections in the British Library, Wadham College Library and Corpus Christi College archives were used to help understand the topography of Oxford. The rare book collections in the British Library, London; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; and Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C, provided the majority of the published material on contemporary horticultural practices and the descriptions of the collegiate gardens. Maps, plans and prints held in the individual college archives in Oxford were also used in the study.

1.5.2. The use of archival sources in the study of Oxford college gardens

A lack of published research into collegiate gardens in Oxford was evident from the literature review for this study, which meant that much of the material needed to be collected through methodical searches of the college archives. Many of the college archives are catalogued following the General International Standard Archival Description, which places files of material and single items within a wider hierarchical

structure.⁷ This system has resulted in bills associated with the annual accounts being catalogued amongst the financial collections of the colleges. Files of annual financial records, in some cases, comprising of hundreds of bills, are not catalogued individually, making it almost impossible to identify the quantity and quality of material associated with the garden without an assessment of every file and item.

The identification of bills and individual charges relevant to the gardens but which were not entered in the New College *Long Books' horti* title (garden section) drew attention to the complexity of the entry system for expenses. Garden expenses at New College and other colleges were literally lost in the annual accounts and the surviving bills had to be used to track down the location of the entries. The bills became important pieces of evidence to help understand accounting conventions used by college bursars.

The archive catalogues did not provide explanations of the college mechanisms for organising their finances unless a detailed description was included as a guide to the archive. Therefore it was necessary to adopt a method for the understanding of the accounting systems as well as the catalogues' structures (see image 1.1). By understanding the structures of the catalogues and the methods used in accounting for the funding the gardens in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it became possible to search other parts of the archives that hitherto had not been understood to contain material on the college gardens.

⁷ International Council on Archives, *ISAD (G): General International Standard Archival Description* (Ottawa: ICA, 2000), 36.

that is available to them.⁸ Bills, forming part of the financial records of the colleges, referring to tasks, daily labour charges and materials, were cross-referenced with the accounts providing rich and alternative sources to support an increased understanding of how these landscapes operated. This approach did however require a large amount of reading of contemporary gardening manuals and calendars in order to be able to identify, support and contextualise the materials used by the tradesmen in the collegiate landscapes.

1.5.3. Systematic data collection

The study was limited to a tight geographical area and the landscapes belonged to the same social and cultural group. A systematic approach to collecting the data on the use, organisation, operation and design of the gardens allowed for the assessment of the sites both independently and as a network of culturally and administratively connected institutions. A garden history systematic survey was developed as a tool by Tom Williamson in response to those used in archaeological surveys.⁹ Williamson's use of a systematic survey provided an example of a successful method to study a group of designed landscapes from a small geographical location.¹⁰

The systematic survey of the college archives required a prior understanding of the process of creating the hierarchies of cataloguing as laid down by the ISAD(G).¹¹

The sub-fonds (the sub-division of a collection of documents) dealt with the governance of the colleges, their financial organisation and records and any other

⁸ John Dixon Hunt, "Approaches (New and Old) to Garden History", in *Perspectives on Garden History*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1999), 89.

⁹ Williamson, "Garden History and Systematic Survey", 60-62.

¹⁰ Williamson, 59-78.

¹¹ International Council on Archives, *ISAD (G): General International Standard Archival Description*, 36.

relevant areas was assessed to see how the garden was administered. These sub-fonds were often divided into smaller groups of documents known as series, sub-series and files. By tracking the structure of the catalogue it was possible to identify the different ways in which the colleges funded the gardens and how they were administered. The adoption of this system allowed for a much more detailed survey and assessment of possible sources of information relevant to the gardens between 1733 and 1837. By searching the catalogue down and up the hierarchy of the collection (sub-fond, series, sub-series, sub-sub-series, files, items) it was possible to find more sources and understand their administrative relationships with other items.

The strength of developing a systematic survey for documentary studies was that it collected material which answered simple questions, such as the date for an appointment of a gardener, and it provided information for larger questions such as 'why did a contractor pay their sub-contractors different rates?' Once the surveys were completed it was possible to build a bigger picture and make connections between the gardens and their management. The systematic approach to using the archives provided the study with a great deal of detail about the organisation and operation of a single garden and the landscapes within their local context. Data sheets were produced on each garden (Appendix 1.) as an outcome of the survey and through the collection of detailed information about the college gardens the overall material available became 'thicker' in their description, the value of which will be discussed later in this chapter. The connections between gardens showed the strength of the contracting system in Oxford but the gaps, which appeared in the sheets, generated important questions about the gardens and gardeners as well.

1.5.4. Economic history and material culture

A cross-disciplinary approach, using elements from economic history and material culture, enabled a deeper understanding of contract gardening and the collegiate landscapes. In economic history the measuring of standards of living and wages has generated lively debate over the last century or more. The arguments for the reassessment of real wages and daily labour rates, by Judy Z. Stephenson and John Hatcher have arisen because of the unreliability of the data that has been used by other economic historians.¹² The use of daily rates of pay, a system of labour costs charged to the client by the contractor, has been misunderstood as the final wage that the craftsman received.¹³ The lively debate and discussion on this issue in contemporary economic historical studies was a vitally important contribution to support the understanding of the garden contracting system that operated in Oxford. Stephenson looked briefly at the building contractors in Oxford and she observed that they operated in the same manner as, but on a smaller scale than, London.¹⁴ Analysis of the material from the financial documents in the college archives had already drawn attention to the fact that the figures in the contractors' bills referred to a daily labour charge rather than wages. The work of Stephenson stimulated a more detailed reassessment of the roles of the garden contractors and sub-contractors. The analysis of daily labour rates charged by garden contractors allowed larger questions to be postulated about the financial implications on the organisational

¹² John Hatcher and Judy Z. Stephenson, eds., *Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1-11; Judy Z. Stephenson, *Contracts and Pay. Work in London Construction 1660-1785* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 32-4.

¹³ Hatcher and Stephenson, *Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages*, 9.

¹⁴ Judy Z. Stephenson, "'Real' Wages? Contractors, workers and pay in London building trades, 1650-1800", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 71, no.1 (2018): 125.

structures for tradesmen-gardeners and the economic viability of college contracts for the horticultural trade in the City and for their individual businesses.

Methods used in material culture studies were deployed as a way to assess the sites and provided important support for the study's garden history approach. A lack of surviving buildings, structures, tools and materials in the gardens, dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and their absence in the visual records meant an alternative approach was required. An assessment of the absent material culture, using the records held in the archives, provided a new perspective for understanding the consumption and use of goods in the gardens. Textual sources, in the form of descriptions of the garden, accounts and bills provided a way to consider the uses, organisation and operations of college gardens. The appraisal of absent objects in the financial records of the colleges allowed for the identification of specific horticultural techniques as well as providing evidence for understanding complex social and cultural behaviour of the users. The use of material culture to identify and develop an understanding of the human activities in the garden was vital to this garden history based study.

1.5.5. The reception of the garden

The changes in the buildings, structures and types of objects used in the college garden emphasised the importance of the reception of the landscapes. An understanding of a particular landscape differs from the reading of a painting or piece of sculpture because it changes physically over time. The temporal nature of the garden makes the traditional stylistic narrative of the landscape problematic. Reception Theory, used in garden and landscape history, acknowledges that interpretations of the gardens are cultural readings of a space and that the cultural

experience of the visitor is based on a series of sensory and/or emotional stimulations.¹⁵ The individual's perception and emotions are themselves based on social and cultural instructions on how to see, understand and respond to a landscape. Tom Williamson and John Dixon Hunt have both drawn attention to scholars' desire to get back to the original designs of landscapes and the problems this causes in developing an understanding of the temporal nature of the site.¹⁶ The experience of a site, as Dixon Hunt suggests, offers an alternative approach to the history of a landscape, one grounded in the actual reception of the space rather than through a stylistic association with either a group of gardens or a designer's milieu.¹⁷

The strength of Reception Theory for landscapes in this study was that it was able to support the contextual nature of a 'thick description', by means of both personal experiences and cultural codes. It contributed to a more detailed study of the organisation, operation and use of the gardens than if a purely typological approach had been taken.

1.5.6. Analysis of data: Thick Description

The data gathered by the application of the systematic surveys and through the assessment of material culture allowed the interrogation of the research question in greater depth. Clifford Geertz's approach to the interpretation of cultures, known as 'thick description', provided a vehicle for the reading of the data gathered from the systematic survey.¹⁸ Thick description provided a way to investigate the multiple layers of understanding the landscapes.

¹⁵ John Dixon Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 196.

¹⁶ Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes* (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), 7; Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*, 17-8.

¹⁷ Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*, 11.

¹⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3-30.

Thick description contextualised individual activities, moving the study away from an analysis of singular historical events, to addressing an interpretation of the social and cultural roles that the garden performed.¹⁹ Responding to multiple interactions within the gardens and events that took place rather than singular facts (thin description) allowed the experiences of visitors, townspeople, members of the University and gardeners to be acknowledged. Adopting thick description as a method allowed the study to look at the way that these groups assigned significance to the landscapes or objects within them. This approach enabled the study to go beyond a fact-based account and provide an interpretation and understanding of the effects that these sociocultural groups had on the organisation, operation and use of the collegiate gardens.

1.6. Literature review

The literature review is divided into two parts, consisting of an analysis of the written material on the subject of Oxford college gardens and wider publication on academic gardens, garden history, material culture and garden history.

1.6.1. Early writers on Oxford Colleges and their gardens

An early writer to devote a chapter to the history of college gardens was R.T. Günther in his publication *Oxford Gardens* (1912).²⁰ He relied heavily on secondary sources in the chapter but he also used material which others had gathered directly from the college records. Writing about Magdalen College's landscape, Günther

¹⁹ John Dixon Hunt, *A World of Gardens* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 20.

²⁰ R.T. Günther, *Oxford Gardens Based upon Daubeny's Popular Guide to the Physic Garden of Oxford: With Notes on the Gardens of the Colleges and on the University Park* (Oxford: Parker and Son, 1912), 201-236.

used information from the college accounts that had been extracted from the notes made by William Macray.²¹ Günther, in the same chapter, used the work Thomas Jackson had published on Wadham in 1893.²² Jackson had taken extracts from the Convention Book to discuss the developments in the Fellows' garden at the end of the eighteenth century.²³ Günther and Jackson had both used the college muniments to create narrative histories through it members, following the 'great man' tradition of writing history.

Thorold Rogers, a pioneering economic historian, appears to have made the first direct use of the college financial records as evidence for social and cultural history in his six-volume study on agriculture and prices (1866).²⁴ Roger's examined bills and accounts from college records to extract data for his research. His approach to using the colleges' records was not developed further by any academic until the twentieth century. Unlike Rogers, Günther and Jackson had concentrated on recording events to support a narrative history rather than an analysis of the gardens or other parts of the colleges. Historians and writers of the Oxford colleges repeatedly used duplicated material, transcribed from the muniments during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the gardens and this information formed the core of the documentary knowledge for the college landscapes until this study.²⁵

²¹ Günther, *Oxford Gardens*, 212-18.

²² Thomas Graham Jackson, *Wadham College* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), 213, 214, 216.

²³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

²⁴ J.E.T. Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England: 1259-1793* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866).

²⁵ Tim Richardson, *Oxford College Gardens* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2015); Mavis Batey, *Oxford Gardens: The University's Influence on Garden History* (Amersham: Avebury, 1982); Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's *Oxford's College Gardens* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1932).

1.6.2. Analysis of modern and contemporary garden history scholarship on college gardens

The earliest and most scholarly of the modern studies on the subject of college gardens was Mavis Batey's *Oxford Gardens: the University's influence on garden history* (1982) which also included private estates such as Rousham and Nuneham.²⁶ Batey's method was based on an art historical approach in which the gardens were analysed in stylistic terms. The emphasis on a chronological narrative used in the book emphasised key garden styles rather than detailed histories of individual gardens. Batey's analysis of Wadham's naturalisation for example, in which she suggested that the garden was naturalised in 1796 in spite of the existence of "A View of Wadham College, from the Garden.", a watercolour by Edward Dayes (dated 1794) providing evidence that the private Fellows' Garden was already laid out in an informal manner in the 1770s by John Foreman.²⁷

In Batey's publication the college gardens were generally only explored within specific periods of time in much the same way as Ralph Dutton and Miles Hadfield had done.²⁸ The Trinity College garden was analysed in terms of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century garden design while the remainder of the eighteenth century developments were ignored.²⁹ There were attempts to contextualise the college gardens in terms of other historic landscapes within the county but there was little in-depth study of the spaces themselves, how they were formed and used.

Batey's *The Historic Gardens of Oxford & Cambridge* (1989) also looked at the

²⁶ Mavis Batey, *Oxford Gardens*, 104-122.

²⁷ Wadham College Library, Griffith Collection Box IX; Helen Petter, *The Oxford Almanacks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 80; Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

²⁸ Ralph Dutton, *The English Garden* (London: Batsford, 1937); Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening* (London: John Murray, 1979).

²⁹ Batey, *Oxford Gardens*, 88-9.

gardens of the two universities together.³⁰ In this publication Batey used a similar approach to addressing the gardens through general stylistic developments as found in *Oxford Gardens* but she employed an even broader narrative.

In the fifth volume of *The History of the University of Oxford* (1986), edited by Lucy Sutherland, Howard Colvin contributed a chapter titled 'Architecture'.³¹ A small part of the chapter was devoted to the college gardens and unlike earlier and later writers on the subject, he used the college archives to support his research.³² Colvin's general thesis was that the college gardens did not change from formal to informal landscapes until c.1762, beginning at New College, and that a number of them did not alter until the end of the century.³³ This point of view was tightly aligned with Mavis Batey's own thesis in *Oxford Gardens*, which claimed that the naturalised landscape, or elements of it, came late to the college gardens.³⁴ Apart from briefly mentioning Robert Penson, no other eighteenth century Oxford gardener was mentioned by either Colvin or Batey.³⁵ Neither historian looked into the sociocultural influences on the gardens. In Colvin's discussion of the improvements of Worcester College's landscape he ignored the first part of the project (1817-19) and inaccurately placed the scheme's chronology in the 1820s.³⁶ At the end of the chapter Colvin suggested that the authorities of Christ Church did not consider the potential of its Meadow, a claim that ignored the evidence available in the College's archives and contemporary descriptions.³⁷ Colvin's work on the college gardens was

³⁰ Mavis Batey, *The Historic Gardens of Oxford and Cambridge* (London: Macmillian 1989).

³¹ Howard Colvin, "Architecture" in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 5, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 831-53.

³² Colvin, 851-3.

³³ Colvin, "Architecture", 852.

³⁴ Batey, *Oxford Gardens*, 116-8.

³⁵ Colvin, "Architecture", 852; Batey, *Oxford Gardens*, 117-8.

³⁶ Colvin, "Architecture", 852-3.

³⁷ Colvin, 853.

a very short study on their stylistic changes but it lacked the necessary contextualisation with both urban and academic landscapes to support it and deeper archival research.³⁸

Ronald Gray and Ernest Frankl's *Oxford Gardens* (1987) was a brief survey of the gardens of the University.³⁹ Unusually, Gray and Frankl included a simple but helpful description of the topography of Oxford. Much of the historical material in the sections devoted to individual colleges was culled from earlier publications and, as a result, Gray and Frankl continued to perpetuate incorrect claims. The chronology of the development of Wadham's Fellows' garden was confused, nor did they separate their discussion of it from the Warden's garden.⁴⁰

Following Batey's emphasis in *Oxford Gardens* on seventeenth and nineteenth century developments in the gardens, Gray and Frankl almost entirely ignored the developments in the landscapes during the eighteenth century.⁴¹ They described the eighteenth century as a period of decline for the New College garden, disregarding the creation of an early theatrical shrubbery behind the Mound and the improvements in the Bowling Green.⁴² Gray's and Frankl's attitude towards the University in the eighteenth century echoed the attitude of some modern historians that it was culturally backward institution during that time.⁴³

³⁸ Christ Church Archive, CH. CH. MS XII. C. 242; Christ Church Archive, CH. CH. MS XII. 243; Christ Church Archive, Maps CH. CH. M5.

³⁹ Ronald Gray and Ernest Frankl, *Oxford Gardens* (Oxford: Pevensey Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ Gray and Frankl, *Oxford Gardens*, 60-1.

⁴¹ Gray and Frankl, 61.

⁴² Gray and Frankl, 36.

⁴³ Gray and Frankl, 36; Lawrence Stone, "The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1530-1910", 37.

Timothy Mowl's chapter titled 'The college gardens of Oxford' in his publication *The historic gardens of England: Oxfordshire* (2007) comprised of a cursory survey.⁴⁴ Like Grey and Frankl, this was not a detailed inspection of the gardens. The text also contained a number of errors relating to the early development of Wadham College's Fellows' Garden.⁴⁵ Much of the historical material in the chapter related to the period before the third decade of the eighteenth century, with particular emphasis placed on the second half of the seventeenth century. No gardeners or other members of Oxford's horticultural trade were mentioned, nor was there any discussion of the historic roles that the college gardens had played. The chapter was dominated by a discussion of formal and informal design, following the established routes that had already been taken by Batey and Colvin, without advancing the understanding of collegiate gardens any further.

Mowl, like Batey and Colvin, fell into the trap of assuming that clear developments between formal to informal design took place and this caused further factual errors in the text. His brief and dismissive discussion of Magdalen's landscape ignored the evidence that it had been described by Pierre-Jacques Foucheroux in 1728 as the most interesting garden in Oxford, including a yew (*Taxus* sp.) hedge containing representations of the twelve Caesars.⁴⁶ Historically, the Magdalen landscape had not been a planning failure, as Mowl labelled it, rather he failed to understand the changes that had taken place to the space.⁴⁷ Mowl's chapter, like the earlier Grey

⁴⁴ Timothy Mowl, *The historic gardens of England: Oxfordshire* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), 133-148.

⁴⁵ Mowl, 135.

⁴⁶ David Jacques and Tim Rock, "Pierre-Jacques Foucheroux: a Frenchman's commentary on English gardens in the 1720s", in *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Martin Calder (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2006), 224; *British Curiosities in Nature and Art* (London: 1713), 60.

⁴⁷ Mowl, *The historic gardens of England: Oxfordshire*, 138.

and Frankl publication, functioned as a survey of the subject rather than as serious contributions to the history of college gardens and walks.

Tim Richardson's *Oxford College Gardens* (2015) was a survey of 32 collegiate gardens as well as other University gardens and designed landscapes.⁴⁸ Like Gray and Frankl and Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's *Oxford's College Gardens* (1932), the publication comprised broad surveys of the gardens, mixing historical facts with descriptions of the contemporary plantings.⁴⁹ Richardson's text lacked any references and much of the text was devoted to describing the site of each college. In many of the chapters references were made to eighteenth and nineteenth century prints and drawings but these were neither referenced nor illustrated. A pen and ink drawing of the unified groves at St John's was described as an unknown and unpublished image, suggesting a hitherto undocumented view of the College garden.⁵⁰ The drawing, when identified in the British Library collections, was in fact a poorly drawn copy of the well-known engraving 'St John's College from the Garden' by Michael Angelo Rooker produced for the 1783 Oxford Almanack.⁵¹ A combination of a lack of documentary research and a reliance on image based analysis of the gardens caused Richardson to make a number of unsubstantiated assumptions. He shed doubts on the creation of a new garden at Lincoln College, depicted in the 1743 Oxford Almanack, without checking the College financial accounts for that period which suggest otherwise.⁵² His chapter on Worcester College emphasises the importance of Richard Greswell and William Sheffield, ignoring the evidence in the institution's archive that indicates the importance of Robert Penson (pre 1816) and

⁴⁸ Tim Richardson, *Oxford College Gardens* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2015).

⁴⁹ Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *Oxford's College Gardens* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1932).

⁵⁰ Richardson, *Oxford College Gardens*, 252.

⁵¹ British Library, Maps 144.e.5. "Views of the public buildings in the City and University of Oxford".

⁵² Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/34 1738, 1739.

The Reverend Francis Hungerford Brickendon (post 1816) in the development of the College's gardens.⁵³ While the addition of plans of the college sites is helpful, the value of Richardson's book as a contribution to the understanding of the college gardens in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries is relatively small.

Surface led historical analysis of collegiate gardens and comparisons with those owned by individuals has caused the roles and requirements of a collegiate landscape in Oxford to become obscured. Richardson (2015, 2019) in his publications on the gardens of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge universities did not address the ideas of what were academic landscapes, the influences of collegiate culture or their civic responsibilities.⁵⁴ Batey, in her two publications on academic landscapes, concentrated on a stylistic analysis of these landscapes rather than assessing the cultures that formed, administered, used and maintained them. The separation of collegiate landscapes from the institutions they belonged to and the people who managed and operated them has, up until now, limited the understanding of them as their own form of cultural expression.

1.6.3. Analysis of wider publications on academic landscapes and garden history

Specific studies on academic landscapes in England and their operation are almost non-existent. Beardsley and Bluestone (2019) identified the academic campus as a landscape type, with its origins in the United States during the late eighteenth

⁵³ Richardson, *Oxford College Gardens*, 301, 302.

⁵⁴ Tim Richardson, *Cambridge College Gardens* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2019).

century.⁵⁵ The cultural importance of the academic landscape within the garden and landscape history in the United States is established as an area of scholarly investigation.⁵⁶ English collegiate landscapes were regularly recorded in the literature, poetry and visual arts of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century but they had not been studied as a separate type of cultural landscape. John Dixon Hunt's (2019) "A "Landscape of Learning" for New British Universities" did begin to address the issue.⁵⁷ In the chapter Dixon Hunt asked 'How do landscapes represent what goes on within seats of learning...how do they shape their students?'⁵⁸ Although he was primarily asking these questions about the new universities in post-war Britain, the chapter acknowledged the idea of a collegiate landscape as a cultural landscape type.⁵⁹

Publications by Mark Laird, Claire Hickman, and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan on English flower gardens, hospital gardens and gardens in London have provided models for studies of hitherto relatively misunderstood or ignored areas of garden history.⁶⁰ Their evaluations of the subjects within garden history, through atomised explorations of both the themes and individual case studies, offer positive models for understanding the gardens as cultural landscapes.

⁵⁵ John Beardsley and Daniel Bluestone, eds., *Landscape and the Academy*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture XL (Washington D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 2019), 1-2.

⁵⁶ Paul Venable Turner, *An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.:MIT Press, 1984); Frederick Doveton Nichols and Ralph E. Griswold, *Thomas Jefferson: Landscape Architect* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981).

⁵⁷ John Dixon Hunt, "A 'Landscape of Learning' for New British Universities", in *Landscape and the Academy*, eds. John Beardsley and Daniel Bluestone, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture XL (Washington D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 2019), 235-255.

⁵⁸ Hunt, 238.

⁵⁹ Hunt, 238.

⁶⁰ Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds 1720- 1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999); Clare Hickman, *Therapeutic Landscapes: A History of English Hospital Gardens Since 1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden* (New Haven: Yale, 2001).

Studies of gardeners have largely concentrated on major figures, who have a national reputation, such as Henry Wise, Stephen Switzer, Charles Bridgeman, John Fairbairn and Richard Woods.⁶¹ The focus on gardeners and designers employed by the English elite and their operations has obscured the regional horticultural trades that served the smaller urban and rural garden owners. Blanche Henrey's posthumous publication on Thomas Knowlton was a study that highlighted the education and interests of an important but lesser known gardener.⁶² Henrey's work emphasised Knowlton's horticultural skills, ability as a designer and his diverse intellectual interests.

Stephen Daniels' *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography England* (1999) investigated the effects of social and cultural change on Repton's work. Further studies on the social and cultural effects on Repton's working practises were published to coincide with the bicentenary of his death in 2018.⁶³ Daniel's approach demonstrated the importance of social and economic factors in the development and alterations of landscapes in the second half of the eighteenth century. Through the changing social scale of Repton's clientele, Daniels was able to explore the altering demands and expectations of the consumer. The impact of the changes in consumer demands and expectations, according to the social pretensions and economic capacities of patrons, was an important issue to consider, especially

⁶¹ David Green, *Gardener to Queen Anne: Henry Wise (1653-1738) and the Formal Garden* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); William Alvis Brogden, *Ichnographia Rustica: Stephen Switzer and the designed landscape* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018); Peter Willis, *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Elysium Press Publishers, 2002); Michael Leapman, *The Ingenious Mr Fairchild: the forgotten father of the flower garden* (London: Headline Books, 2000); Fiona Cowell, *Richard Woods (1715-1793): Master of the Pleasure Garden* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009).

⁶² Blanche Henrey, *No ordinary gardener Thomas Knowlton, 1691-1781*, ed. A.O. Chater (London: British Museum, 1986).

⁶³ Patrick Eyres and Karen Lynch, *On the Spot: The Yorkshire Red Books of Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener* (Huddersfield, New Arcadian Press, 2018); Toby Parker and Kate Harwood eds., *Structure and Landscape- William Wilkins and Humphry Repton at Haileybury 1806-1810* (Hertford: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, 2018).

when moving away from the vast projects of landowners such as the Duke of Bedford at Woburn. Without developing an understanding of the sociocultural desires associated with small-scale landscaping there is the danger, as Sarah Spooner reminds us, of the reading of these spaces simply as attempts to ape the elite.⁶⁴

The first serious studies of the tradesmen-gardener, after David Green's monograph on Henry Wise (1956), began with the pioneering work of E.J Willson's *James Lee and the Vineyard Nursery, Hammersmith* (1961) and was followed by John Harvey's *Early Nurserymen* (1974).⁶⁵ The limitation of these studies is that they both concentrated on nurseries and did not look at the contracting element of the tradesman-gardener's business. Longstaffe-Gowan in "Gardening and the Middle Classes 1700-1800" (1990) and "James Cochran: Florist and Plant Contractor to Regency London" (1987) acknowledged the importance of the jobbing gardeners and contractors in urban gardens but little other literature has been generated on this subject.⁶⁶ Fiona Davison's (2019) work on the careers of gardeners, who trained at the Horticultural Society's garden, in the first half of the nineteenth century provided a more detailed understanding of their lives.⁶⁷

Sally O'Halloran and Jan Woudstra analysed the roles and duties of gardeners of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, studying surviving gardeners' books in "The gardener's calendar: the garden books of Arbury, Nuneaton, in Warwickshire

⁶⁴ Sarah Spooner, "'A prospect two fields' distance': Rural Landscapes and Urban Mentalities in the Eighteenth Century" *Landscapes* 10 (2009): 120.

⁶⁵ E.J. Willson, *James Lee and the Vineyard Nursery Hammersmith* (London: Hammersmith Local History Group, 1961); John Harvey, *Early Nurserymen* (London: Phillimore, 1974).

⁶⁶ Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, "Gardening and the Middle Class 1700-1800", in *London's Pride: The Glorious History of The Capital's Gardens*, ed. Mireille Galinou (London: Anaya, 1990), 122–33; R. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, "James Cochran: Florist and Plant Contractor to Regency London", *Garden History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring, 1987): 55–63.

⁶⁷ Fiona Davison, *The Hidden Horticulturalists* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019).

(1689–1703)" (2013).⁶⁸ O'Halloran's and Woudstra's article provided insights into the organisation of private gardens in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This was developed further, in terms of the scope of the subject and in its detail, together with the assessment of the training of gardeners in O'Halloran's thesis *The Serviceable Ghost: the forgotten role of the gardener from 1630-1730* (2013).⁶⁹ O'Halloran's work drew much needed attention to the education and roles of the gardener.

The day to day management and operation of English gardens from 1733 to 1837 has received very little attention, with many historians concentrating on the roles of the owners or national figures in garden and landscape design. Gardeners have remained at best minor figures in English garden and landscape history. Although an enormous amount of literature has been written and published on gardens in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the study of the management structures, operational systems, financial costs and the types of labour required to maintain and support them has produced a relatively small scholarly output.

There remains a lack of literature that identifies how gardeners and other horticultural tradesmen impacted on the operations of gardens, in a local context, for non-elite employers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Developing out of his work studying the landscapes of Norfolk, Tom Williamson in his paper "Garden History and Systematic Survey" (1989) made a major contribution, offering an explanation of a method devised for garden and landscape history rather than

⁶⁸ Sally O'Halloran and Jan Woudstra, "The Gardener's Calendar: The Garden Books of Arbury, Nuneaton, in Warwickshire (1689–1703)", *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* vol. 33, no. 1 (January 2013): 16–38; Jan Woudstra and Sally O'Halloran, "The Exactness and Nicety of Those Things': Sir John Reresby's Garden Notebook and Garden (1633-44) at Thrybergh, Yorkshire", *Garden History*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring, 2008): 135–93.

⁶⁹ Sally O'Halloran, *The Serviceable Ghost: the forgotten role of the gardener from 1630-1730* (Sheffield University: unpublished PhD, 2013).

appropriating one from other disciplines.⁷⁰ The emphasis on the importance of the site, and developing a body of information about the site, rather than an interpretation of a scheme, allowed the historian to build an understanding of the site. Through his studies of the landscapes of Norfolk and Hertfordshire, Williamson has developed a powerful and persuasive body of writing that advocates the importance of understanding that different regions can have distinct landscape histories and traditions, a point of view also shared by Edward Harwood in his article 'Whither Garden History' (2007).⁷¹

1.6.4. Analysis of material culture, patterns of consumption and absent objects

Material culture engages the study of objects to understand their own materiality and, or, to understand the societies that used them. Studies of material culture found in an institution can reveal the ways in which it was used and to represent the cultural aspirations of the owners. There are a growing number of studies which analyse material culture solely through the surviving documentary evidence. These studies have deepened the understanding of the sociocultural life of an institution which no longer possesses the objects.

Helen Clifford's *The Silver at Brasenose College, Oxford: Patterns of Purchase and Patronage in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (1996) was an important study on consumption, taste and the social status of an Oxford college and their fellows, using a collection of tradesmen's bills and the silver at Brasenose College.⁷²

The article evolved out of a larger research project that Clifford undertook with the

⁷⁰ Williamson, "Garden History and Systematic Survey", 59-78.

⁷¹ Edward Harwood et al., "Whither Garden History?", *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* vol. 27, no. 2 (2007): 91–112.

⁷² Helen Clifford, "The Silver at Brasenose College: Patterns of Purchase and Patronage in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century", *Studies in Decorative Arts* 3, no. 1 (1995): 2–28.

Ashmolean Museum on the development of silver collections owned by the Oxford colleges.⁷³ The shifting tastes for commissioning silver and the gifts from gentleman commoners at Brasenose were used by Clifford as a vehicle to explore the patterns of consumption and the social changes that took place in collegiate society. The themes of consumption and social changes were also applied in Clifford's doctoral thesis (1988) and *Silver in London: The Parker and Wakelin Partnership 1760-1776* (2004).⁷⁴ The Brasenose article explored the commissioning items for a corporate body and the responses to changing fashions within the confines of college traditions. Clifford's article is one of only a handful of studies that has explored the importance of material culture at Oxford University, most of which have also concentrated on college silver.⁷⁵

While Clifford was able to combine physical and documentary evidence for her studies, this approach is not always possible. Helen Smith's study "Gender and Material Culture in the Early Modern Guilds" (2015) assessed the involvement of women in the halls of the Livery companies of London.⁷⁶ Many of the Livery halls that existed in the seventeenth century are now destroyed, which required Smith to work

⁷³ Helen Clifford, *A Treasured Inheritance: 600 Years of Oxford College Silver* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2004).

⁷⁴ Helen Clifford, *Parker and Wakin: a study of an eighteenth century goldsmithing firm with particular reference to Garrard ledgers ca. 1760-1776* (Royal College of Art and Victorian and Albert Museum, PhD, 1988); Helen Clifford, *Silver in London: the Parker and Wakelin Partnership 1760-1776* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 2004.

⁷⁵ Helen Clifford, "Corporate Dining", in *Elegant Eating. Four hundred years of dining in style*, eds. Philippa Glanville and Hilary Young (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002), 132-5; C. Ellory, H. Clifford and F. Rogers eds., *Corpus Silver, Patronage and Plate at Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (Barton under Needwood: Needwood Press, 1999); M. Hayward, "The storage and transport of Oxford silver", *The Silver Society Journal*, no II (Autumn 1999): 245-251.

⁷⁶ Helen Smith, "Gender and Material Culture in the Early Modern London", in *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600*, eds. H. Greig, J. Hamlett and L. Hannan (London: Palgrave, 2015), 128-44.

on absent spaces and objects using only documentary sources. The chapter provided a persuasive model for studies that are based around absent objects.

1.6.5. Analysis of publications on economic history and the garden

Roderick Floud's *An Economic History of the English Garden* (2019) was the first book devoted to assessing the costs associated with making gardens and how they were funded.⁷⁷ Beginning in 1660 the book was a wide ranging survey and did not provide any detailed case studies; Floud did provide one case study in his paper "Capable entrepreneur? Lancelot Brown and his finances" (2016).⁷⁸ As a book on economic history it used the records of gardens as data, rather than investigating how the horticultural trade operated. Furthermore the study looked at the horticultural elements of the gardens and it did not assess costs associated with construction and maintenance of the plethora of buildings and other structures. However its publication did start a much needed discussion about the importance of understanding the role of economic factors on the development of landscapes and gardens.

There is a limited range of literature on Oxford gardens and relevant subjects available but to understand how the green spaces developed over time it is necessary to analyse the topographic representation of the University and the City from a range of perspectives and that aspect is investigated and analysed in the next chapter

⁷⁷ Roderick Floud, *An Economic History of the English Garden* (London: Allan Lane, 2019).

⁷⁸ Roderick Floud, "Capable entrepreneur? Lancelot Brown and his finances", in *Occasional Papers from The RHS Lindley Library*, vol. 14 (October 2016): 19-41.

Chapter 2 The topographies of the University and the college gardens

The literary and visual representations of college gardens between 1733 and 1837 in the topographies of Oxford presented the ideals and expectations of members of the University and City. This chapter identifies the impact that the physical features of the City, its surrounding countryside and the gardens had in developing the myth that Oxford was the second Athens. It critically examines the reasons for associating the college gardens with the idea of the *locus amoenus* (the classical concept of a pleasant resting place for men and gods and suitable for contemplation). Through this approach the importance of framing the classical associations of the physical landscape of the University and colleges is emphasised in the study. The creation of a typology for the gardens identifies the impact that the physical development of the City and location of the colleges had on their development and arrangement.

2.1. The city of Oxford in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In the early eighteenth century the City of Oxford was set amongst mixed farmland and water meadows. It only started to exceed the boundaries created by the medieval walls in the seventeenth century.¹ Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, seated on an eminence with well-drained soil on fine gravel, the site was considered to be an attractive and healthy spot. Oxford Castle remained as a picturesque ruin and the City's skyline was dominated by the towers and spires of its churches, the University's colleges and other public buildings. The Bocardo or North Gate still controlled access to and from Cornmarket Street making movement

¹ Alan Crossley, ed., *A History of Oxfordshire. vol. 4. The City of Oxford* (Oxford: For the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1979), 89.

of goods, livestock and waggons difficult. Oxford's East Gate remained the entry onto the High Street and acted as an awkward, narrow aperture for traffic before opening out on to what was the widest street in the City.

In 1667 the poll tax assessments recorded 8,566 people, excluding the members of the University who were treated as a separate population.² The City's population had grown to c.9,500 in 1750 with an estimated 2,057 further inhabitants from the University.³ Overall, Oxford's population grew slowly with an economy that was heavily reliant on providing services for the University rather than expanding to meet national or regional demands for goods. By the end of the eighteenth century the population had reached 12,000 and Crossley noted that the increase caused a reduction in the size and number of gardens in the centre of Oxford during that same period.⁴ The loss of green spaces was not a new occurrence; between 1580 and 1630 the land use of the southern side of Broad Street had changed from gardens to buildings.⁵

Arable land located in the north of the City, in an area known as the New Parks or Parks bordered the Warden's and Fellows' gardens at Wadham College for much of the eighteenth century. However, in 1795 Hairness Garden, which comprised a portion of the area known as the Parks, was absorbed by the College as an extension to the Warden's garden.⁶ In the first half of the eighteenth century nurserymen such as the Wrench family, and later the Taggs, had their growing grounds based on the south-west and western sides of the city.⁷ In the second half of

² Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 76.

³ Crossley, 76.

⁴ Crossley, 89.

⁵ Crossley, 91.

⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁷ Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 114.

the century and into the nineteenth century nurseries operated by families such as the Taggs and Pensons were well established growing grounds in the north and south edges of Oxford, renting land from two of the larger college landowners in the City, Merton and St John's.⁸ John Humphrey's Nursery, founded c.1830 along the Banbury road, was created from land had been recently enclosed by the landowner.⁹ Market gardeners had found Oxford a favourable site from at least the seventeenth century because of the fertility of the soil, good drainage and conducive weather conditions. The market gardeners and nurserymen working in the suburbs of Oxford remained undisturbed on their plots until the increase in growth in the population encouraged landowners to sell off their property to developers from the 1830s.¹⁰ In 1837 the former Tagg family nurseries at Jericho and Paradise Gardens, were sold for housing development.¹¹

Inside the medieval walls the layout of the city was densely packed with historic encroachments in and around the streets and gates, making access by cart and carriage difficult. The city was served by the daily markets that took place in the streets, blurring the usage of the spaces and making it difficult in the eighteenth century for visitors and residents to move between the sites recommended in their guide books. In 1770 Oxford was struggling to keep up with other cities in England. Bath (1706 and 1757), Gloucester (1750), Exeter (1760), Chester (1762) and York

⁸ John Claudius Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", *The Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 10 (1834): 107-8.

⁹ Loudon, 109.

¹⁰ Tanis Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 25.

¹¹ *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 11 February 1837; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 20 May 1837.

(1763) had already obtained improvement Acts giving them greater civic powers to control the growing problems of urban life.¹²

In March 1771 the Oxford Mileways Act was passed by Parliament, allowing the medieval North Gate and East Gate to be demolished, in addition to clearing Broad Street over the next decade.¹³ Market and Paving Commissions were formed under the Act, with equal representation given to the University and the Corporation.¹⁴ Alterations to the City's medieval layout along with other developments were now possible. The building of a new covered market (1774) enabled Oxford to finally widen its streets, opening up the vistas of the University and the City.¹⁵ The effect of a ban on the sale of produce on the street was to make it more conducive for the inhabitants and tourists to perambulate around the sites of interest.¹⁶ The Mileways Act was not without its critics, who accused the authorities of using the toll money for the ornamentation of the City and not its citizens.¹⁷ The modernisation of the City after the 1771 Act encouraged the writers of guides to Oxford to link the colleges and other public buildings together and design tours of the City that took in the improvements made by the Corporation and the University.¹⁸ Thomas Quincey's *A description of tour of the Midland Counties of England performed in the Summer of 1772* responded positively to the improvements that were already taking place in the

¹² Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002), 71; Peter Borsay, *The Eighteenth Century Town* (Harlow: Longman, 1990), 143.

¹³ Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 188.

¹⁴ Crossley, 189.

¹⁵ Malcolm Graham, "The Building of Oxford Covered Market", *Oxoniensia*, XLIV (1979): 81; Colin Harrison, *John Malchair of Oxford: Artist and Musician* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1998), 54.

¹⁶ Graham, "The Building of Oxford Covered Market", 81.

¹⁷ Rosemary Sweet, "Local identities and a national Parliament c.1685-1835", in *Parliaments and Identities in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Julian Hoppit (Manchester and New York; University of Manchester Press, 2003), 52.

¹⁸ Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 188.

City, noting that the streets were well paved and the lighting was excellent.¹⁹ Quincey recorded that the private houses were neat and the public buildings of the University were sumptuous.²⁰ *The Monthly Review's* assessment of The Reverend Dr Edward Tatham's *Oxonia explicata and ornata. Proposals for disengaging and beautifying the University and City of Oxford* (1773) acknowledged that the 1771 Act had encouraged a spirit of improvement and that steps were already being taken to improve the 'convenience and magnificence' of the place.²¹ By the 1770s Oxford was a city that considered itself able to take its place amongst the cultural centres in Britain in spite of the University's outmoded and unreformed academic curriculum.

2.2. The topographical concepts of the University and its colleges

From the seventeenth century onwards the topographic representation of Oxford and the University was as important as the physical landscape. Michael Drayton in the *Poly-Olbion*, written between 1596 and 1622, described the City as:

*Renowned Oxford built t' Apollo's learned brood; And
on the hallowed bank of Isis' goodly Flood, Worthy
the glorious Arts did gorgeous Bowers provide.*²²

The idea of the University as a place inhabited by the gods, who sponsored academic endeavour, was a powerful and successful one. In 1674 Anthony Wood developed the idea further when he wrote about the similarities between Oxford and

¹⁹ [Thomas Quincey] T----- Q-----, "A Tour of the Midland Counties of England, Performed in the Summer of 1772", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (1774): 412.

²⁰ [Quincey], 412.

²¹ *The Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal*, vol. XLIX (1773): 154; [Edward Tatham], *Oxonia explicata and ornata. Proposals for disengaging and beautifying the University and City of Oxford* (London: 1773).

²² Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London: 1612), 180.

examples of classical geography.²³ Wood claimed that the Magdalen College Water Walks were, at certain times of the year, as 'delectable as the banks of the Eurotas', a site favoured by Apollo.²⁴ Creating an association between Oxford and the physical geography of ancient Greece provided the City with an impeccable provenance for claiming to be the successor to Athens. Sir John Peshall went further in his history of the University (1772) to create an ancient Greek provenance, hinted at by Drayton, for its foundation. Peshall claimed that the University had been founded by Gerion, a philosopher and twelve other Greeks who had arrived in Albion with Brutus.²⁵ Gerion and his followers, it was maintained by Peshall and other antiquaries, created the first academy amongst the groves of Oxford and dedicated it to the muses.²⁶

David Loggan's title page for *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675) articulated the idea of the University as a *locus amoenus*.²⁷ The engraving depicted Minerva, seated in the area of Oxford known as the Parks, next to Wadham College (just out of the composition) with the buildings of New College forming the backdrop (Figure 2:1). In 1675 Loggan created one of the earliest visual representations of Oxford as the home of deities and muses grounded in the physical topography of the City. A year earlier the engraving by Robert White for the title page of Anthony Wood's *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis* (1674) had included the figure of Minerva (Figure 2:2). The goddess was portrayed as the patroness of the University and accompanied Tyche, the civic personification of the University, portrayed as

²³ Anthony Wood, *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis*, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1674), 211.

²⁴ Wood, 211.

²⁵ John Peshall, *The History of the University of Oxford, to the death of William the Conqueror* (Oxford: 1772), 1.

²⁶ Peshall, 5-7.

²⁷ David Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata* (Oxford: 1675), frontispiece.

receiving a charter from Charles II with the Sheldonian Theatre in the background. The complex symbolism of the scheme used for Wood's frontispiece made White's engraving, as a composition, less successful than Loggan's as it lacked a specific topographic location.²⁸ The image of Minerva amongst the Parks was used again, albeit in a less elegantly engraved manner, by William Williams for *Oxonia Depicta* in 1733.²⁹



Figure 2.1. David Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata*, 1675, engraving, Oxford, title page. Copyright: the author.

²⁸ Wood, *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis*, frontispiece.

²⁹ William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, (Oxford: 1733), frontispiece.



Figure 2.2. Anthony Wood, *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis*, 1674, engraved by R. White, engraving, title page. Minerva supports the personification of the University of Oxford, Tyche, as she kneels before Charles II and Fame blows her trumpet and points to the University. Copyright: the author.

In 1703 the *Oxford Almanack* published another strong, classically inspired composition which connected the groves of Athens with the University and its achievements.³⁰ An idealised college was placed in the background of the engraving,

³⁰ Helen Petter, *The Oxford Almanacks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 42.

with men wearing contemporary academic dress, in the middle ground, conversing in the grove. On each side of the grove buildings enclosed the composition, reminding the viewer of the classical concept of *rus in urbe* (the illusion of the countryside in the city). In the foreground of the *Almanack* the goddess Tyche, was surrounded by six attendants, all of whom were lodged at the edge of a river, possibly representing the Isis. While Loggan's representation of Oxford differs from that of the 1703 *Almanack*, based as it was on the actual physical landscape of the City, the ideas conveyed in both images used the same theme. Oxford and its groves were claimed as sites suitable to provide a *locus amoenus* for deities and their entourages.

The physical and conceptual natures of the University were joined together to create an 'idea' of the place within the arts from the late seventeenth century. Alicia D'Anvers in her ode *To the University* (1690) acknowledged the two natures of Oxford.³¹ She also hailed the beauty of the landscape, and praised 'the Heav'n begotten darlings' that lived there'.³² By the beginning of the eighteenth century the University had created a powerful and popular topographic concept which drew strongly upon classical associations between the landscape and learning.³³

The idea that Oxford was a place favoured by gods and the muses continued well into the nineteenth century.³⁴ Robert Montgomery's *Oxford: A Poem* (1831) described the inspirational nature of University's landscape and its classical associations.³⁵ Montgomery wrote that 'A Spirit wafted from collegiate bowers'

³¹ Alicia D'Anvers, *Academia, or, The Humours of the University of Oxford, in Burlesque Verse* (London: 1730), n.p.

³² D'Anvers, n.p.

³³ Nancy Worman, *Landscape and the Spaces of Metaphor in Ancient Literary Theory and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158.

³⁴ M. Aubry, *The Beauties of Oxford: A Poetical Translation of a Latin Poem, Written in the Year 1795* (London: 1811), 34; Daniel Cabanel, *Poems and Imitations* (London: 1814), 8.

³⁵ Robert Montgomery, *Oxford: A Poem* (Oxford: 1831).

provided inspiration to the studious and he reminded readers of the 'museful' qualities of University's landscape.³⁶ The Greek origins of Oxford were also emphasised in the poem with Montgomery borrowing heavily from Peshall's history of the University.³⁷

More than a century earlier than Montgomery's work Thomas Tickell in his 1707 poem *Oxford* wrote:

*That there at once surpris'd and pleas'd we view
Old Athens lost and conquer'd in the new;
More sweet our shades, more fit our bright abodes
For warbling muses and inspiring gods.*³⁸

In the lines above the poet combined the importance of the University's prospects, its relationship with Athens and the suitability of it as a home for the gods. Additionally Tickell evoked a classical convention of blending sensory effects, by using sight and sound, to describe a *locus amoenus*.³⁹

Tickell's description combined the ideas of art and nature together, noting that the University possessed 'Aspiring tow'rs and the verdant groves', and individual college gardens helped to create a series of varied effects that delighted the viewer.⁴⁰ In the poem Tickell described Christ Church and the other colleges generally as 'green retreats' and the University as a 'blessed abode'.⁴¹ While the poem itself was titled *Oxford*, the poet clearly described the University and not the City. The University was presented as Oxford and it encouraged others to consider it as such through the use

³⁶ Montgomery, *Oxford: A Poem*, 15.

³⁷ Peshall, *The History of the University of Oxford*, 1-6.

³⁸ Thomas Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell: With the Life of the Author* (London: 1796), 67.

³⁹ Worman, *Landscape and the Spaces of Metaphor*, 67.

⁴⁰ Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell*, 67.

⁴¹ Tickell, 78, 73.

of topographical imagery. Nature and the built environment were balanced together in the presentation of the University as a magnificent institution offering pleasant places in the groves of its colleges for the muses to dwell.

Thomas Warton applied the concept of a collegiate *locus amoenus* in his ode *To a New Plantation of flowering shrubs in Trinity College Garden* (c.1750).⁴² In the poem Warton sought to encourage the dryads and the *genius loci* (the spirit/essence of the place) to return to the Trinity garden after the damaging frosts of 1739/40 had destroyed the College's wilderness.⁴³ Warton claimed the College was attempting to lure the spirits back from their exile with newly planted flowering shrubs which would enable inspiration to return to the College.⁴⁴ The description of the Trinity wilderness, as a place once loved by the dryads, emphasised the idea that the college gardens were important to Oxford's reputation as a place of inspiration and the landscapes were successors to classical groves.⁴⁵ Warton and others writing about Oxford sought to continue and develop the associations between the physical topography of the City and the classical themes.

The portrayal of a college garden as a *locus amoenus* was not a new concept when Wharton composed his verses in the middle of the eighteenth century. Tickell alluded to the concept of a 'pleasant place' in his poetic work *Oxford* by claiming it was Apollo who 'perfumed the air and paints the grot with flowers' at Magdalen.⁴⁶ In the poem *On seeing Miss B-ts-y N-ch-les*, published in 1759, the Magdalen Water Walks

⁴² Thomas Warton and Joseph Warton, *The Poems of T. Warton, and J. Warton*, The British Poets, vol. 68 (Chiswick: 1822), 75.

⁴³ Warton and Warton, 75; Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds, 1720-1800* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 80.

⁴⁴ Warton and Warton, *The Poems of T. Warton, and J. Warton*, 75.

⁴⁵ Warton and Warton, 75, 76.

⁴⁶ Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell*, 74.

continued to be identified as a place where the muses and nymphs resided.⁴⁷ Lord Kames in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762) and the August 1771 edition of the *Lady's Magazine* both observed that the college gardens of Oxford functioned as spaces to inspire and improve the students.⁴⁸ The variety of effects that the writer found in the design of St John's College's Inner Grove were described as silent muses that stimulated the imagination of the students and possessed their souls with poetic responses.⁴⁹ Kames and others in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century presented Oxford college gardens as spaces where it was possible for students to become *mousikos* (muse inspired).⁵⁰ The gratification that the collegiate landscapes gave was intended to be inspirational and encourage virtuous behaviour.⁵¹ The writings of the Roman poet Horace emphasised the dual role of leisure as both *dulce et utile* (both pleasant and profitable). Collegiate landscapes were used to refresh and invigorate their users' senses and minds.⁵² College gardens such as Trinity and St John's were represented as creative environments, academic spaces devoted to *dulce et utile*, in which members of the University could thrive.⁵³ During the eighteenth century Oxonians emphasised the claim that the University was a seat of elegance as well as learning. Thomas Tickell identified the importance of the University as both an intellectual and aesthetic centre when he described Oxford as 'Inspir'd like Athens and adorn'd like Rome'.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Oxoniensis, "On Seeing Miss B-Ts-y N-Ch-Les", *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXIX (1759): 31.

⁴⁸ [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: 1774), 454; "A Sentimental Journey", *The Lady's Magazine*, vol. 2 (August 1771): 1.

⁴⁹ "A Sentimental Journey", 1.

⁵⁰ [Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, 454; "A Sentimental Journey", 1; Montgomery, *Oxford: A Poem*, 15; A Poem Worman, *Landscape and the Spaces of Metaphor*, 166.

⁵¹ [Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, 454.

⁵² Richard Newton, *University Education* (London: 1733), 121-122.

⁵³ "A Sentimental Journey", 1.

⁵⁴ Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell*, 77.

Reverend James Dallaway, writing in *Observations of English Architecture*, continued to use the topographical concept that Oxford was England's Athens in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Dallaway consciously appropriated the phrase 'studious walks and shades' from John Milton's description of Athens in *Paradise Regained*.⁵⁶ For Dallaway, not only was Oxford a place of beauty, but the individual 'gardens and publick resorts' of the colleges rivalled the groves of Athens and Plato's Academy.⁵⁷ Earlier John Dry in *Merton Walks, or the Oxford Beauties, a Poem* (1717) had compared Merton College's Grove with both Alcinous' garden and the Idalian Grove, two well-known classical landscapes.⁵⁸ The poet used Alcinous' garden to emphasise the richness of the plant life in Merton's grove, while the Idalian Grove created an association with Aphrodite and love.⁵⁹ *The Beauties of Oxford*, a topographic poem published in 1811, continued to identify the Trinity College wilderness as a *locus amoenus* where it was possible to court the muses and raise a toast to Dionysus.⁶⁰

The *genius loci* of Oxford maintained a powerful effect in the way that the topography of the University and the colleges was represented, both pictorially and in literature. Two slightly different topographical responses to the University and college gardens emerged in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and they both continued to develop well into the nineteenth century. The topographic idea of the University was made up of its public buildings, collegiate landscapes and the surrounding countryside created the effect of Oxford as *urbs in rure* (the city or town in the

⁵⁵ James Dallaway, *Observations on English Architecture* (London: 1806), 166-167.

⁵⁶ Dallaway, 167; John Milton, *Paradise Regain'd* (London: 1752), 155.

⁵⁷ Dallaway, *Observations on English Architecture*, 167.

⁵⁸ [John Dry], *Merton Walks, or The Oxford Beauties, : A Poem* (Oxford: 1717), 29.

⁵⁹ [Dry], 29.

⁶⁰ Aubry, *The Beauties of Oxford: A Poetical Translation of a Latin Poem*, 34.

countryside). The overall effect was considered to be both diverting and grandiose. Thomas Quincey observed that the eastern prospect of the City 'with its numerous spires and domes etc. raises an idea of vast magnificence', and from the south-east, along the London road, the city was 'surrounded by woods and gardens'.⁶¹

Individual colleges consciously formed the narrower topographic concept of *rus in urbe* while continuing to acknowledge the wider idea of the University as *urbs in rure* as well. The idea that college gardens formed *loci amoeni*, within their own boundaries was developed in 1620 by John Earle in his poem *Hortus Mertonensis* (Merton Garden), which stylistically owed a debt to poetical works from Italy.⁶²

Earle's poem, in line 127, described both the garden at Merton and Oxford as places visited by dryads, Minerva and the muses.⁶³ In line 17, Earle specifically identified Merton's garden as performing the role of a *locus amoenus*, describing it as a 'pleasant garden and best retreat'.⁶⁴ These poetic images had already been used by Drayton in the *Poly-Olbion* in 1612 and later they were used in Warton's *On a new plantation of flowering shrubs* and Dry's *Merton Walks*.⁶⁵ In the nineteenth century the shady walks of Magdalen and New College's bowers were still identified by Daniel Cabanel in his poem 'British Scenery' (1814) as places to 'woo the Muse'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ [Quincey], Q-----, "A Tour of the Midland Counties of England, Performed in the Summer of 1772", 421.

⁶² Douglas Chambers, "'Hortus Mertonensis': John Earle's Garden Poem of 1620", *Journal of Garden History*, vol. 2, no.2 (1982): 123.

⁶³ Chambers, 129.

⁶⁴ Chambers, 125.

⁶⁵ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 180; Warton and Warton, *The Poems of T. Warton, and J. Warton*, 75-78; [Dry], *Merton Walks*, 11, 27.

⁶⁶ Daniel Cabanel, *Poems and Imitations* (London: 1814), 8.

2.3. The idea of the University conveyed through the prospects of Oxford

A Pocket Companion for Oxford (1766) described Oxford as three miles in circumference, while the city walls were approximately two miles in circumference.⁶⁷ The north and north-eastern parishes of Holywell, St Magdalen's and St Thomas's were outside the walls. The northern parishes of St Thomas's, St Ebb's and St Peter's in the Bailey had limited views of the landmarks belonging to the University and the northerly prospect of the city was not commonly published in print. The finer prospects of Oxford were from the south-east and the south-west. David Loggan published an engraving of two prospects, the south and east for his *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675), in which he placed an emphasis on pastoral farming in the fore and middle ground of the eastern prospect, and he used arable farming for the south prospect (Figure 2.3).⁶⁸ Loggan intended the two prospects to be viewed and compared with each other. It was used again, less successfully, by William Williams in *Oxonia Depicta*.⁶⁹ In the two scenes the city was represented by the buildings belonging to the University, its colleges and important churches. Trees were used as indicators for the collegiate green spaces and threaded themselves through the entire urban space in both prospects creating the vision of Oxford as a city of groves and gardens.

⁶⁷ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1766), 2.

⁶⁸ Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata*, un-numbered plate.

⁶⁹ Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 3.



Figure 2.3. David Loggan, “The Prospect of Oxford from the East near London Road/The Prospect of Oxford from the South near Abingdon Road”, in *Oxonia Illustrata*, 1675, engraving, hand coloured. Copyright: the author.

Johannes Kip’s *Oxoniae Prospectus* (1705) followed an already well-established tradition, started by David Loggan in 1675, of presenting the attractive southern prospect of Oxford in print. Again the gardens of the colleges along the city walls and Magdalen College formed the link between the Oxford and the countryside that surrounded it. The churches and University’s colleges were the points of major emphasis of Kip’s engraving. This was achieved by enlarging the height and scale of the buildings but the overall effect lessened the impact of the college gardens and walks.

Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published *The South West Prospect of the University, and the City of Oxford* (1731) which emphasised the fork in the Cherwell and the way

in which the gardens, groves and walks (Figure 2.4).⁷⁰ The City and University were depicted as being filled with green spaces that merged with the surrounding countryside. Oxford was *urbs in rure*. Thomas Warton's *Ode for Music*, written for performance during the 1751 *Enceania* week, described the Oxford's physical relationship with its rural setting as a 'rich gem in encircling gold enshrin'd'.⁷¹

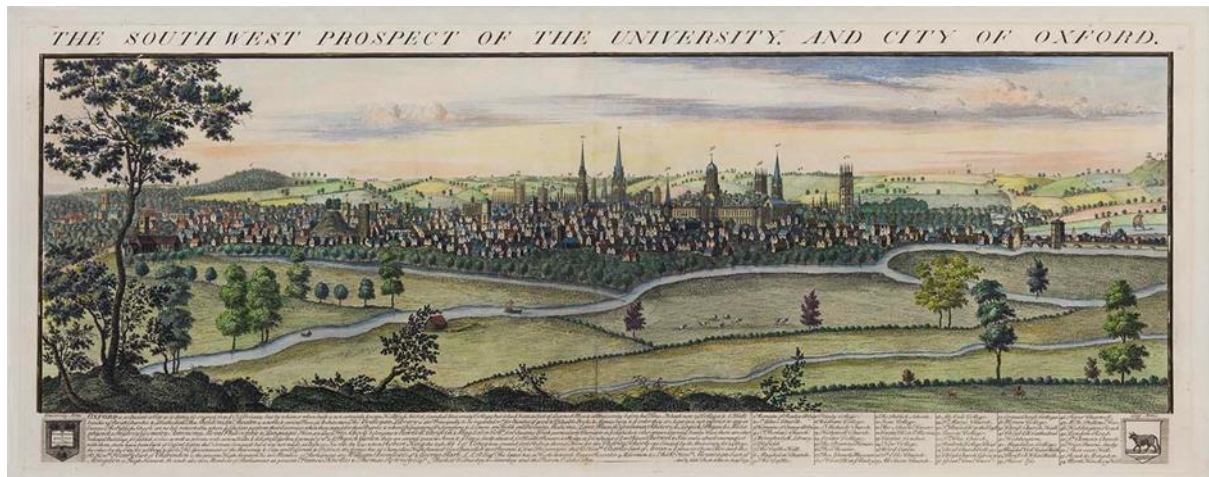


Figure 2.4. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, "The South West Prospect of the University and the City of Oxford", 1731, hand coloured engraving. Copyright: the author.

In 1751 John Boydall published three engravings of the prospects of Oxford from the east, west and south.⁷² Unlike earlier eighteenth century prospects of Oxford, Boydall filled the scene with agricultural labourers, members of the university and the leisured classes (Figure 2.5). These prospects were animated by bucolic compositions of the land as *duce et utile* (pleasant and profitable). Additionally, Boydall's work used seasonal agricultural work to give further interest to the engravings. The three prospects executed by Boydall emphasised the scale and richness of the some of the collegiate landscapes. Compositionally, he also created a flowing network of trees that linked the buildings and the wider landscape together,

⁷⁰ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.13.

⁷¹ Thomas Warton, *Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Warton*, vol. 2 (Oxford: 1802), 79.

⁷² British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.15. British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.16; British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34. 17.

placing the city in the country. Two years later Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published *The South East Prospect of the University, and the City of Oxford* (1753).⁷³ The 1753 Buck engraving of the Oxford and its surrounding landscape was elegantly composed, probably drawing on Boydall's prints (Figure 2.6). It made a bold visual claim for the idea of the University as both a city of gardens and a city in the country. Linking the wider countryside of Oxfordshire, via Christ Church Meadow and Merton Fields, these fields appeared to merge with the gardens of Merton, Pembroke, Corpus Christi and the Magdalen Grove. Trees were composed into strong horizontal and diagonal lines, encouraging the viewer to link the City with its rural neighbourhood from left to right in a flowing and natural manner. The engraving was peopled with elegantly dressed walkers; men wearing academic dress were depicted interacting with the rest of the company, joining the two populations of the City and University together in their appreciation of the prospect. Overall, the Buck engraving created a vision of taste and pleasure, an idea that the University at the time was keen to emphasise.⁷⁴

⁷³ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.14.

⁷⁴ "A particular account of the ceremony of the opening the Radcliffe Library", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 19 (1749): 165.



Figure 2.5. John Boydell, "A South Prospect of the City of Oxford", 1751, engraving. Copyright: the New York Public Library.



Figure 2.6. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, "The South East Prospect of the University and the City of Oxford", 1753, hand coloured engraving. Copyright: HM's Government Collection.

The integration of college gardens, the University's public buildings and ecclesiastical landmarks with the countryside confidently and successfully represented the vision of Oxford as *urbs in rure*. After the publication of the Buck south-east prospect in 1753, the representation of Oxford from the south continued to follow the same compositional devices. By adopting a composition that wove the

meadows together with trees, buildings and the college gardens, artists such as John Baptist Malchair developed a vision of Oxford which balanced the landscape with the built environment.⁷⁵

On the title page of *Marmora Oxoniensia* (1763) a catalogue of inscriptions from the Arundel Marbles, the engraving of the southern prospect of Oxford, included two figures in the form of male and female river gods, personifying the Thames and the Isis.⁷⁶ Such overt classical references were not common in the eighteenth century visual imagery of Oxford, while they regularly featured in the writing about the University. The engraving of the southern prospect for *Marmora Oxoniensia* emphasised both the classical and natural themes associated with the topographical representation of Oxford. The outward projection of Oxford in the visual and literary arts were dominated by the architecture and greenspaces owned by the University and its colleges. Its buildings were presented as being set amongst an Arcadian landscape of groves and gardens, blessed by the Muses.⁷⁷ In his poetry Thomas Warton used the idea of the Isis and the naiads to emphasise the pristine beauty of Oxford's rural position.⁷⁸ Combining pastoral and academic elements the University and its supporters were consciously fashioning a potent identity. The idea of the University was that it was a place of beauty and learning.

⁷⁵ Harrison, *John Malchair of Oxford: Artist and Musician*, 15.

⁷⁶ [Richard Chandler and John Miller], *Marmora Oxoniensia*, (Oxford: 1763), title page.

⁷⁷ Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell*, 74.

⁷⁸ [Thomas Warton], *The triumph of Isis* (London: 1749), 8.

2.4. Representing landmarks and sites of interest

A distinct space was allocated for the ceremonial life of the University in the form of the Sheldonian Theatre and the area immediately around it. In comparison, the Corporation's Guildhall was lost amongst the surrounding buildings. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Nicholas Hawksmoor had produced plans which would have created two civic spaces for Oxford. One space was for the University in what was to become Radcliffe Square and another for the City at Carfax.⁷⁹ These designs remained only a paper exercise but they did serve to show that Oxford was unusual in relation to other urban centres in Britain. It required two civic spaces and the accompanying appropriate symbolism.⁸⁰

The Guildhall on St Aldate's Street possessed no outward expression of its civic importance and the nearby Butter Market and the Penniless Bench were, by the eighteenth century, associated with disorderly behaviour rather than their architecture.⁸¹ Oxford's Corporation possessed no public buildings of any note in the first half of the eighteenth century until the Rowney family funded the building of a town hall (1751-53).⁸² In topographical images of the city the Corporation's public buildings and the High Street were not identified as landmarks until 1755.⁸³ Until the 1750s the favoured topographic representations of Oxford were the engraved prospects of the city. Representations of smaller areas of Oxford increased in popularity as tastes changed and on 23 November 1754 a proposal was advertised

⁷⁹ Vaughan Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2002); Petter, *The Oxford Almanacks*, 48, 49.

⁸⁰ Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor*, 194.

⁸¹ Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 100, 333.

⁸² Crossley, 332.

⁸³ John Hawkins, *Images of Oxford, 1191–1759* (University of Oxford, unpublished DPhil thesis, 2018), 27-28.

in the *Oxford Journal* for a series of eight engraved perspective views of the University, which were to be published by subscription.⁸⁴ The artist and architect John Donowell published the suite in February 1755 and all of the scenes, apart from one, were taken from view points on the City's major streets or urban spaces.⁸⁵

Starting at Magdalen College's Water Walks, Donowell's eight views cleverly took the viewer on a two dimensional paper journey, based on a viable four dimensional walk, around part of the City (Figure 2.7).⁸⁶ Travelling from Magdalen and onto the High Street, past The Queen's College, the walker then turned up onto Cat Street by St Mary's Church.⁸⁷ Greeted by the Radcliffe Square, the visitor was able to take in both the antiquity and elegance of Oxford.⁸⁸ From that point the viewer travelled onto Broad Street and ended their tour at the top of Fish Street.⁸⁹ Each of the identified views was annotated with a letter matching those corresponding ones in the inscription below. Most of the identified landmarks were important sights for visitors to see in Oxford at that time and were dominated by those belonging to the University until the final plate. The inclusion of the Magdalen Water Walks in Donowell's tour of the University and City indicates that the experience of visiting a college garden or walk formed a part of a day's larger excursion for visitors.

⁸⁴ *Oxford Journal*, 9 November 1774.

⁸⁵ Hawkins, *Images of Oxford*, 170.

⁸⁶ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.a.

⁸⁷ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.b; British Library Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.c.

⁸⁸ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.d.

⁸⁹ British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.e; British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.f; British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.g; British Library, Cartographic Items Maps K.Top.34.39.h.



Figure 2.7. John Donowell, “A View of Magdalen College in the University of Oxford”, 1755, engraving. The view was taken from the Magdalen College Water Walks, looking across the meadow. Copyright: the author.

Donowell was revolutionary in his topographic construction of Oxford, giving the viewer the sensation that they were following the city’s landmarks. A coherent tour of Oxford using its buildings as signposts to explore the city was an alternative to the printed guides. A unified, virtual experience provided another way to represent and understand the topography of Oxford and its colleges. Donowell presented the idea of Oxford as a space for perambulation, linking its public buildings, streets, vista and walks together as a series of stimulating experiences. His work was to set the benchmark for all other low-level views of the city and the colleges in which the foreground and the background provided clear topographical references.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Harrison, *John Malchair of Oxford*, 51.

2.5. Topographical representations of the college gardens

The boundaries of the colleges were, in part, defined by their gardens or walks and some of these spaces were included in the prints of the prospects of Oxford; helping to form the idea of *urbs in rure*. The representation of individual colleges and their landscapes employed a different type of topographical idea to that used by the University. Beginning with David Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrate* (1675) and continuing into the middle of the eighteenth century, bird's-eye perspectives were used to illustrate the colleges. The Oxford Almanack, between 1723 and 1744, produced 18 such engravings of the colleges.⁹¹ These urban sites possessed inward looking topographies based solely on the college buildings and their designed landscapes. Loggan and William Williams removed the surrounding landscape in the bird's-eye perspective engravings of the City in their depictions of the colleges.⁹² The empty spaces around the engravings of the colleges in the Oxford Almanack were regularly portrayed as desolate wastelands.

Gardens belonging to the colleges were consciously disconnected from the wider greenery of the City and University. Instead of supporting the concept of *urbs in rure* the gardens' relationship with the immediate college architecture was explored. William Williams' portrayal of the Fellows' gardens at Corpus Christi College in *Oxonia Depicta* removed its important relationship to the other surrounding landscapes of Merton and Christ Church (Figure 2.8).⁹³ The prospect of Merton Fields and the vistas of Merton's trees, which the Fellows' garden possessed, ceased to exist. *Rus in urbe* was suggested in the bird's-eye engravings through the

⁹¹ Petter, *The Oxford Almanacks*, 11, 12.

⁹² Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata*, un-numbered plates; Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate number 25, 32, 40, 48, 65.

⁹³ Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 40.

representation of elements of garden design rather than *urbs in rure* found in the engravings of the City's prospects.

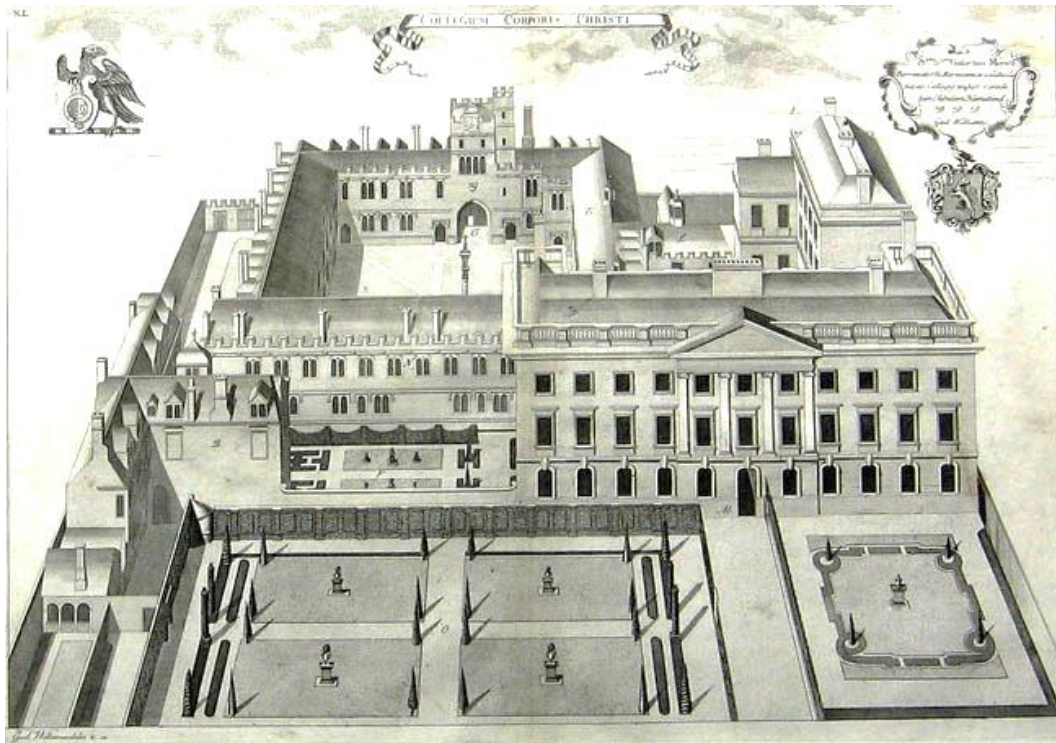


Figure 2.8. William Williams, Corpus Christi College, in *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 40. The Common Room Garden is on the left hand side of the print in the foreground. Copyright: the author.

The representation of the college and its immediate environment was one which represented Man's control over nature. Stylistically and conceptually the engravings of colleges resembled the bird's-eye perspective views in *Britannica Illustrata* (1707) by Leonard Knyff and Johannes Kip. Lincoln College's conscious retention of the title 'grove', to describe part of its small enclosed garden after its redesign in the late 1730s, emphasised the importance of maintaining the idea of a collegiate landscape with nature and its associations with the *locus amoenus*.⁹⁴ Balliol, St John's Merton and Magdalen retained 'grove' as a designation for all or part of their landscapes into the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond. James Heany stressed this

⁹⁴ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/34 1739.

point in his poem *Oxford, the Seat of Muses* (1738), in which he described colleges as playing their part to allow Man to search for the 'Source of Truth'.⁹⁵ Heany stated that while nature played its part, the collegiate spaces were augmented and improved by Man's art.⁹⁶ The gardens illustrated in Williams' *Oxonia Depicta* appear to reflect Heany's opinions that colleges should be both ornamental and useful.⁹⁷

Lord Kames (1762) believed that Oxford had succeeded in creating an exemplar for 'gardens' that could inspire a love of learning amongst a student body.⁹⁸

Architecture and horticulture created a balance between the idea of the 'second' and 'third' natures in the representation of the college sites.⁹⁹ The concept of the three natures had been developed in the sixteenth century by the Italian humanist scholars Jacopo Bonfado and Bartolomeo Taegio and then refined by later writers. 'Second' nature, was traditionally associated with agriculture, could also be applied to manmade developments, such as architecture. The 'third' nature was Man's interpretation of the natural world in the form of a garden.¹⁰⁰ In the eighteenth century an environment that managed to create an elegant balance between the two was considered by some writers to be conducive to learning and good order.¹⁰¹ Although the compositional representation of the University and the college gardens in the visual arts were different, their cultural claims were essentially the same. The images of colleges and the University were created as topographies of ownership. The main

⁹⁵ James Heany, *Oxford, the Seat of the Muses* (Oxford: 1738), 2.

⁹⁶ Heany, 2.

⁹⁷ Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plates 25, 40, 45, 48, 55.

⁹⁸ [Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2, 454.

⁹⁹ John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 58-73.

¹⁰⁰ Hunt, 62.

¹⁰¹ [Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2, 454.

difference was that the colleges needed to be represented alone to prevent them from being lost in the confusion of Oxford's crowded urban environment.

After the publication of Donowell's innovative *Perspective views of Oxford* (1755) gardens were depicted using a lower viewing point, drawing attention to certain local landmarks. This new approach allowed the college gardens on the boundaries of the city and the medieval walls to connect with the other green spaces, as had been the case in the Boydell and Buck prospects of the University and City. A change in aesthetics in the representation of the landscape took place in the 1750s.¹⁰²

Concepts of the picturesque entered into the compositions of drawings and prints of Oxford, capturing the variety and associations of the subject. The enclosed college gardens in the north of city, owned by St John's, Trinity and Wadham, were finally able to use each other as back drops. It also allowed the central college gardens, which might have been otherwise limited in their variety, to 'adopt' a gothic tower or a group of trees from another college garden and improve the dignity of their own outlook. *The Universal Magazine* observed in 1755 that the view of the end of New College's garden was enhanced by the effect of the tall elm (*Ulmus* sp.) trees in the Magdalen College Grove beyond its own horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).¹⁰³ Shared landmarks created associations that brought to mind wider historical or cultural references. Malchair's 1776 drawing of the mound in St John's Inner Grove achieved such a compositional success by recording the narrow vista maintained by the College's gardener Robert Penson of St Mary's (the University's church) and the Radcliffe Library (Figure 2.9).¹⁰⁴ The composition

¹⁰² Harrison, *John Malchair of Oxford*, 51.

¹⁰³ "An Account of Oxfordshire", *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, vol. 17 (1755): 199.

¹⁰⁴ Bodleian Library, MS Top OXM. B. 22. f.15.

married the neatly cut grass walk, dense planting and architecture together forming a vision of the academic and religious roles of the University and the intimacy of St John's Inner Grove. The use of signposting, via the wider landscape, created picturesque images of the college gardens while allowing the viewer to make connections between one part of the city and another. When Rowley Lascelles' *The University and City of Oxford* (1821) was published, 72 engravings were included to illustrate key views in the city.¹⁰⁵ One illustration from *The University and City of Oxford*, titled "Wadham College (from Trinity College Garden)", used elements from Trinity's public garden and wilderness in the foreground and middleground with Wadham's seventeenth century buildings in the background (Figure 2.10).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Rowley Lascelles, *The University and City of Oxford; Displayed in a Series of Seventy-Two Views* (London: 1821).

¹⁰⁶ Lascelles, plate between pages 38 and 39.



Figure 2.9. John Baptist Malchair, *The Mound, St John's College, Oxford, 1775*, pen and brown ink. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library.



Figure 2.10. J and H.S. Storer, "Wadham College (from Trinity College Garden)", in Rowley Lascelles, *The University and City of Oxford*, 1821, engraving. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.

The topographical content, in the representation of college gardens, expanded in the second part of the eighteenth century. Images of college gardens became stages on which the University could be viewed and its history be explained. This new topographic mode did not supersede the representation of University as a *locus amoenus*; instead they operated alongside each other.

2.5. A typology of college gardens

Identifying the types of college gardens is, by its nature, generalised, but it is important because it encourages understanding about how the form of a place can impact on function. The physical topography of Oxford and the urban developments over 700 years had a direct impact on the type of garden a college was able to create. Some gardens have moved, others have been enlarged, reduced but in all of

these cases they remain defined, and physically limited, by the boundaries of their colleges' landownership but not limited in their representation (figure 2.11). Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto has persuasively argued that the types of gardens can be identified once all of the individual characteristics are removed.¹⁰⁷ Her use of Quatremere de Quincy's definition of 'type' highlighted the differences between model and type.¹⁰⁸ To develop a garden model is fraught with problems as it suggests that it can be applied in the same way again and again. Such an approach in the study of designed landscapes is limited and only compromises the individual sites. On the other hand the reduction of the gardens to a core scheme is helpful when looking at the college gardens in Oxford, as their typology informs the ways in which they were operated, how they were used and written about. Small, enclosed, central college gardens consumed similar plants and incurred similar types of labour costs but they were generally not considered worthy of visiting by the guide writers. Gardens built along the city's walls explored the creation of prospects and vistas and they were regularly recommended to be visited as part of a tour of Oxford.

¹⁰⁷ Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto, "Types of Gardens", from *The Cultural History of Gardens*, ed. Elizabeth Hyde, vol.3 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 43-44.

¹⁰⁸ Fabiani Giannetto, 43.



Figure 2.11. Map of Oxford, 1808, engraved by John Roper. The colleges and their gardens are numbered in the key on the right hand side. Copyright: Antique Maps.

Typologies can change over time and the types of college gardens that existed between 1733 and 1837 was not the same as had existed in 1675. The changes in the sizes of the college gardens during the time period of the study and the lack of surveys and plans have made it impossible to record the area of each landscape. In Logan's plates for *Oxonia Illustrata* St John's, Trinity, Lincoln and Balliol maintained informally planted groves, which was no longer the case for all of the colleges by 1742, with the exception of Balliol. How and why the different garden types functioned in the 1730s or the 1820s is important to understand. Changes in society, aesthetics and technology meant that the college gardeners altered or modified their working practises to meet the limitations or needs of each garden type but this was not commonly a rapid process.

The central Oxford college gardens were characterised by their situation in built-up urban locations, within the medieval city walls. Their gardens were small regular walled plots with limited views and were accessed through the college. The gardens which fit into this type were Exeter, Balliol, Lincoln, Jesus, Oriel, University College, Brasenose, The Queen's and All Souls.

Contained within stone and rubble walled enclosures, the suburban college gardens were located outside of the medieval city. They were large, regular plots situated close to agricultural land. Some of these gardens were accessed through additional gates as well as through the colleges' main entrances. The college gardens of Trinity, St John's, Wadham and Worcester (pre 1817) characterised this garden type.

City wall college gardens were characterised by their long sites and the incorporation of elements of the medieval fortified wall into the physical boundary of the landscapes. The walls were incorporated into the garden designs to form terraces, allowing the viewing of prospects of the Oxfordshire countryside, and creating relationships with the wider landscape. The gardens of Pembroke, New College, Corpus Christi and Merton all conformed to this type of space.

Landscaped college gardens were characterised by large sites and shared landscapes. Magdalen Water Walks and Grove, Christ Church Meadow walks and the Broad Walk and Worcester (post 1817) possessed walks which explored the sites' rural associations and prospects of local scenery.

2.6. Summary

The analysis of how the college gardens were presented in the topologies of Oxford indicates that they were portrayed in images and text as spaces of inspiration. The application of the Horatian notion of both enjoying the garden and it being an instructor in virtuous behaviour was identified by Lord Kames as a particular success of the University and its colleges.¹⁰⁹ As spaces that were capable of stimulating the users to become *mousikos*, the gardens were understood to be successors to the Athenian groves and academies. Merton was associated with Alcinous' garden and the Idalian Grove, while Warton identified the Trinity wilderness as a site of inspiration for its members and an abode of dryads.¹¹⁰ They were also presented as social spaces to reflect the University's importance both nationally and in the city. The gardens were used in the prospects of the Buck and Boydell to create a greening of Oxford, emphasising the claims that it was the home of the muses and *urbs in rure*.

In the topographical representations of the University from the seventeenth century onwards college gardens were presented as place of importance. How these special landscapes needed to be organised and financed is dealt with in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ [Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2, 454.

¹¹⁰ [John Dry], *Merton Walks*, 29.

Chapter 3 Governance, administration and financing of collegiate gardens

College gardens were included in the administrative and financial responsibilities of the Bursar, while the college councils acted as final authorities for decision making. This chapter draws attention to the delegated roles that the garden contractors held in the organisation and administration of college gardens. The chapter analyses the ways in which the collegiate landscapes were paid for and highlights the importance of understanding the wider financial structures used to identify the true costs of maintaining the gardens.

3.1. The college officers

The organisation of the collegiate executive comprised the head of the house and a defined number of fellows. The governance and structure of the college administration were set by the statutes of each institution. Fellows took turns in acting as one of the officers responsible for the administration of the daily life of the college. The officers, who might include a Senior Bursar, Junior Bursar, the head of house's deputy and a dean, were generally provided with a salary by the eighteenth century, rather than entitled to fees collected individually from college members.

Each of the offices that formed the administrative body for college government was laid down in statutes or subsequent decrees. The head of the house (the only member of the college not required to be a celibate male) was responsible for the student body, held the right to nominate scholars, allocated rooms, admitted

servitors and commoners and distributed other forms of patronage.¹ As head he was able to control and influence the lives of those who were members of the institution but his direct power over the day to day financial administration of the college could be extremely limited. The control and responsibility for the day to day finances was the task of the bursars, while the decision making about the properties and the renewal of leases was vested in the college council.²

The college council was responsible for the decision making for the college. The duties of the council included agreeing to the sealing of leases and size of entry fines for copyhold tenants on their estates.³ While some of these responsibilities were not very onerous, they were of real importance to the fellows themselves. The size of a tenant's fine would dictate the size of each fellow's annual payment. These dividends paid by the college were additional payments that a fellow was entitled to receive on top of their stipend, although at Merton and Wadham the fellow had to witness the sealing of leases to receive the additional income.⁴ A supplementary dividend was also paid to the members of the college council which was derived from any surplus income from the endowment after all of the outgoing costs had been discharged. This payment augmented the basic stipend of a fellow. The dividends were shared out in a predictably hierarchical manner, with the head of house taking a double or triple share of the dividend, the *domus* (the college) receiving one part and the fellows were given one part each.⁵ At Lincoln College a resident fellow was entitled to receive four allowances, a dividend, a poundage payment, their commons and the

¹ I.G Doolittle, "College Administration", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. V, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 248.

² Doolittle, 250.

³ Doolittle, 236, 237.

⁴ Doolittle, 237.

⁵ Doolittle, 237.

proviso, which was a share of the estate income.⁶ Additionally, the fellows of Lincoln received £10 each from Lord Crewe's gift and a share from the income from the manors of Eckney and Petsoe.⁷ The Lincoln College system of allowances and gifts for fellows illustrates the complexity of college income streams and payments that had to be accounted for. It also indicates that a fellow's annual income was much greater than his stipend alone. Individual fellows who did not hold college offices might be given additional responsibilities such as a tutorship which offered another income on the top of their stipend.⁸

The office of bursar was an important and onerous role, demanding a fellow's full attention, since the role was responsible for not only the day to day administration of the financial affairs of the college but also the overseeing of the smooth running of the college operations. In 1765 Thomas Warton wrote from Trinity College to James Smith, informing him that he would be unable to attend the Christmas party in Salisbury owing to his engagement with 'the unclassical office of Bursar'.⁹ The job involved checking that the senior servants such as the butler, porter and cook were appropriately managing their responsibilities but, importantly for this study, it meant managing the contractors who operated the out-sourced services including carpenters and masons. Some colleges separated the roles of the bursar into two positions, the senior and junior bursar; others created the positions of estate bursar and domestic bursar.¹⁰ Wadham and Balliol appointed two bursars for one year but the role was essentially split into six months periods of duty each. Building projects

⁶ Vivian H.H. Green, *The Commonwealth of Lincoln College 1427-1977* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 387.

⁷ Green, *The Commonwealth of Lincoln College 1427-1977*, 387.

⁸ Doolittle, "College Administration", 241.

⁹ Clare Hopkins, *Trinity: 450 Years of an Oxford College Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 178.

¹⁰ Doolittle, "College Administration", 250.

and maintenance of the fabric were administered by the contractors and their clerks but the bursar was the college's overseer in these projects.¹¹ One of the most complex jobs undertaken by the bursar was to balance the accounts each year. He was required to accurately account for the receipt of the college's income and then show that it had been correctly used to discharge all charges and debts.

3.2. The foundation statutes and the garden

The college garden in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was treated as a 'Title' or area of the *domus* (the house) like the chapel, library or kitchen. Neither gardens nor the post of gardener were included in the foundation statutes of the colleges, with the exceptions of Corpus Christi and All Souls.¹² The foundation statutes of a college laid out the organisation and governance of the institution. These decrees stated the number of fellows and scholars who were funded by the endowment as well as setting out the senior college servants and their duties.

In the statutes of Lincoln College it was stated that the bursar, or treasurer (an earlier term for the office), was to oversee the manciple (responsible for the provisioning of the college) and the cook.¹³ At Corpus Christi the bursar was given the authority over the steward, as one of his deputies, as well as the power to oversee the servants in all of their jobs.¹⁴ At Merton one of the defined jobs of the bursar was to check on the

¹¹ Doolittle, "College Administration", 250.

¹² George Robert Michael Ward, *The Statutes of Corpus Christi College, All Souls College, and Magdalen College, Oxford* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1843), 92.

¹³ H.E Salter and Mary Lobe eds., *The Victoria County History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Institute of Historical Research, 1954), 166.

¹⁴ Ward, *The Statutes of Corpus Christi College, All Souls College, and Magdalen College, Oxford*, 92.

repair of the buildings with other officers.¹⁵ The Corpus Christi College statutes, laid down by Bishop Fox in 1517, decreed that the garden was to be tended by a suitable servant who would also act as the carrier of books belonging to the fellows and scholars.¹⁶ The inclusion of the names of the senior servants in many of the statutes acknowledged their importance in the administration and smooth running of the colleges. Many of the colleges, at the time of their foundations, did not possess large gardens, and their absence from the statutes may indicate the lack of importance of the gardens played in the administrative life of the early colleges. In some colleges, additional ordinances acknowledged the position of the gardener and secured funds for the gardens. Throughout the eighteenth century the New College gardener received an additional payment of 8s in the fourth quarter of the year under the heading *Solutio pro Liberara* (free payments), along with other servants.¹⁷ The office of *Hortulanus* (Gardener) at Brasenose College carried a stipend of £2 4s. and this was paid to one of its servants instead of the gardener, who was contracted to care for the garden.¹⁸ Brasenose's separation of the role of the garden contractor from the office and stipend of the *Hortulanus* may have been a pragmatic response. By employing a contractor in the garden, the College was able to allocate the *Hortulanus* stipend to another servant and increase, if needed, their pay. The authorised claim made by John Smith, the *Hortulanus* of Brasenose, to the bursar in 1749 indicates that a further stipend of £5 was due to him, in lieu of impositions (fines).¹⁹ At Wadham the fellows and Warden used one of their endowed offices to

¹⁵ Edward France Percival ed., *The Foundation Statutes of Merton College, Oxford, A.D. 1270* (London: W. Pickering, 1847), 95.

¹⁶ Ward, *The Statutes of Corpus Christi College, All Souls College, and Magdalen College, Oxford*, 93.

¹⁷ New College Archive, NCA 4326.

¹⁸ Brasenose College Archives, Tradesmen's Bills 61.

¹⁹ Brasenose College Archives, Tradesmen's Bills 61.

support the expense of a maintenance contract. At a College Convention it was agreed on 18 December 1777 to appoint John Foreman to the office of Manciple so he would be entitled to receive the 'Founderess allowance' as well as the gardener's stipend and increase the overall yearly payment to £40.²⁰ This system for funding their maintenance contract continued at Wadham until at least 1812.²¹

3.3. The college convention book

Resolutions made by the college council were recorded in the convention book. Until the end of the eighteenth century the main business that was recorded in these books were resolutions about property, the presentation of advowsons (the right to nominate a clergymen to a benefice), official allowances and other items which directly effected the fellowship and its financial security.

The lack of many resolutions in the convention books, relating to the development and maintenance of the gardens in the colleges, is additional evidence that the management of the gardens was the delegated responsibility of the bursar, unless large sums of money were to be outlaid. Wadham in 1753 and Merton in 1759 recorded that their conventions had given authority to lay out their gardens.²² St John's convention book in 1776 recorded the agreement of the fellows to take down the wall between the Inner and Outer Grove, another decision which carried a large financial implication for the College.²³

²⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

²¹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

²² Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3; Merton College Archive, MCR 1.4.

²³ St John's College Archive, SJA ADM 1.A 7.

It was suggested by C.S.L. Davies that the Wadham College Convention Book was a record of the College's legalist approach, rather than a record of the proceedings in the eighteenth century.²⁴ Davies' observation can also be applied to the nature of the records entered in the convention books of many other colleges during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The business transacted during these often infrequent and poorly attended meetings required a formal record of the fellows' interpretation or application of the college statutes. This type of record lent authority to the decisions made by a college council. Records of governing body's decisions were maintained to prevent accusations of misfeasance, nonfeasance or malfeasance being made under the founding college statutes or additional ordinances. Discussions about the day to day administration of the college did not require the same type of legal record keeping especially when these responsibilities for the site were already vested in the office of bursar.

Unusually, the gardens of Merton College were regularly mentioned in their Convention Book and this may have occurred because their care was the responsibility of the Garden Master, a post held by one of the fellows. Decisions about additional work undertaken by the gardener, such as the repair of an elm tree hedge recorded on 12 December 1740, had to be laid before the senior fellows in order for them to authorise a payment out of the College's funds.²⁵

Convention books were occasionally used as the formal registers of the fellows' agreement to increase existing fees or record additional ways to finance developments in the garden. Wadham, Pembroke, Merton and Balliol all used their

²⁴ C.S.L. Davies, "Problems of Reform in Eighteenth Century Oxford: The Case of George Wyndham, Warden of Wadham, 1744-77", *Oxonienisa*, LXXIX (2014): 74.

²⁵ Merton College Archive MCR 1.4.

convention books to make a permanent record of their decision to provide additional means of support for the remodelling of their gardens or to record the ways in which stipends were to be funded.²⁶

3.4. The administration of the college, the gardener and the gardens

The non-appearance of gardens or gardeners in most of the college statutes and the legalist approach taken in the convention books of most colleges placed the administration of the gardens in the hands of the bursar. As the financial administrator of the college, the bursar was responsible for more than the creation of the college's quarterly and annual accounts. Allowances and income streams were complex and often arcane in collegiate accounting systems. They were based as much on custom and convention as any specific rights. The college servant who was holder of the post of *Hortulanus* at Brasenose could receive stipends and allowances worth £7 4s. while the contractor who managed the garden received the smaller stipend of £3 3s. a year.²⁷

The employment of contractors to provide services for the maintenance of the colleges removed many of the operational responsibilities and expenses of employing additional servants to care for the college. Entrepreneurial carpenters and masons sub-contracted groups of tradesmen to provide the services on a scale that

²⁶ Wadham College Archive WCA 2/3; Pembroke College Archive, B/1/1; Merton College Archive, MCA. 3.8; Balliol College Archive, *The English Register*, 1794-1875.

²⁷ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 61.

the colleges required.²⁸ Gardeners also fitted into this category of tradesman-contractors.

While the college tradesmen were either paid by the measure (the total value of the job including all labour and materials costs), the task or the day, the gardener received a stipend or allowance to cover the agreed tasks in the garden. Whether the gardener received a stipend or submitted a quarterly bill, the work they agreed to undertake was defined through a contract or agreement with their employer.

Although no contract between a gardener and college has been found as yet, both parties would have needed to agree to the terms which defined the services the college was to receive from the contractor. In terms of accounting garden contractors who received a stipend did not need to produce a quarterly or annual bill for the work that was covered by the agreement. If the bursar was happy with the contractor's services the stipend was paid. Bills that were issued from a stipendiary contractor were records of the tasks and purchases that lay outside of the contract. Gardener's bills, which were submitted, in addition to Wadham's yearly stipend of £21, provide evidence for the tasks or items that were outside the contract.²⁹ In a bill dated 6 October 1766 the gardener at Wadham, John Moore, charged the College 5s. 6d. for cutting the lime (*Tilia* sp.) trees in the Fellows' Garden, in addition to the tasks covered by his stipend.³⁰ A later bill, submitted by Edward Knibbs and dated 22 August 1791, charged the College 3s. for the removal of box (*Buxus sempervirens*) edging.³¹

²⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4.

²⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/45.

³⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

³¹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

Work undertaken outside of the maintenance agreements would have either been recommended by the gardener or requested by the bursar. For the most part the contractor's responsibility for management of the garden within the terms of their contract would have removed the need for the bursar to have taken any day-to-day responsibility for that area of the college other than as an overseer. The contractor's employment was clearly defined and in matters horticultural they were free to employ other gardeners as sub-contractors. The weekly payments for labour and the financial outlay for some materials were covered by the contractor removing the day to day financial responsibility from the college until the quarter days when the garden accounts were settled.

The care of the summer houses, seating and ironwork that made up the rich material culture that existed in the college gardens during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained under the immediate care and direction of the bursar. College gardens were more than just areas looked after by the garden contractors, they were social spaces which expressed the aspirations of the colleges they belonged to. The expense of maintaining a collegiate garden in Oxford required the employment of carpenters, whitesmiths (tinsmith), painters, slaters, masons and ironmongers. Complex systems for funding these expenses and then accounting for them were required of the bursar if he was to meet all of his responsibilities for the care of the entire garden.

Occasionally the fellows' common rooms had a role to perform in the administration of the garden. At Corpus Christi College the Garden Master was responsible for the management of the gardener on behalf of the fellows (Figure 3.1).³² The garden

³² Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

buildings and their maintenance remained the sole responsibility of the College through the office of the bursar.³³ Only Merton and Corpus Christi have been identified as maintaining the post of Garden Master during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³⁴ It is possible that because much of the organisation of the garden was in the hands of the garden contractor an additional layer of management was considered unnecessary. Recording the fellows' of Merton agreement and authorisation for 20s. to be spent on shrubs on 10 March 1749 was an extremely unusual use of official record in a convention book.³⁵ The attention to such a small detail suggests that the Garden Master at Merton administered the garden but he had to receive the authorisation of his peers to spend additional money on it.

³³ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

³⁴ Merton College Archive, MCR 1.4; Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

³⁵ Merton College Archive, MCR 1.4.

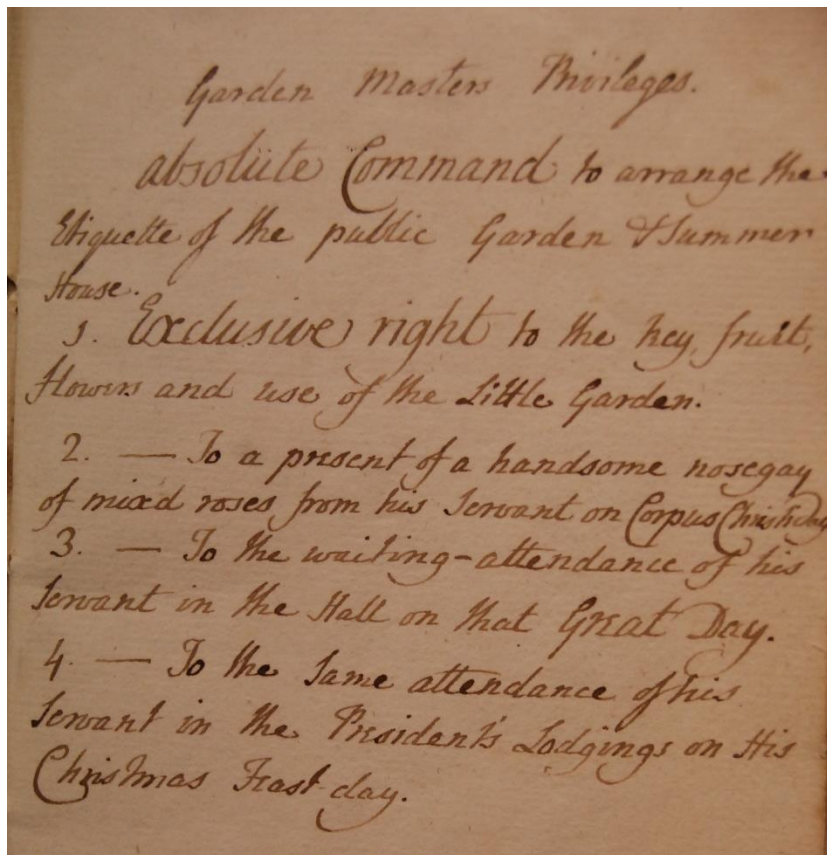


Figure 3.1. The Garden Master's Book, Corpus Christi College Archive. Courtesy of Corpus Christi College Archive

3.5. The costs of the gardener and the garden in the annual accounts

In the smaller sized colleges most bursars used a system of entering the quarterly expenses in the order the bills were received in. A day book, sometimes known as a cash book, was used to enter the date, the name of the individual to whom the bill was owed, the nature of the expense and the amount.³⁶ This approach to record keeping was designed to allow the bursar to keep a running total of the college's outgoings each quarter and allow them to be more easily transferred into the annual accounts. The meticulous entry of the bills in the bursar's books allowed for the costs

³⁶ William Blackstone, *Dissertation on the Accounts of All Souls College, Oxford*, ed. W.R Anson (London: Roxburghe Club, 1898), 43.

to be entered under the correct 'Title' or heading.³⁷ Detailed entries in the day book allowed the bursar to explain, if needed, what the expenses were when the accounts were scrutinised.³⁸ Comparisons between surviving bursars' day books and annual accounts from Magdalen College for 1743 show the process of simplification that took place when the records of expenses were transferred.³⁹ The simplified entries found in the annual accounts, consisting of the tradesman's name or trade, date and cost, make it more difficult to ascertain what the bill actually comprised of unless the tradesman's bill survives as well.

Wadham College's bursars entered the costs associated with their fellows' garden under a general heading known as *Particular Expenses* each quarter in their annual accounts. The stipend was entered first in that section, and then the bills for the gardener's additional tasks were entered each quarter. Supplementary bills for mould (compost) and plants were added on an *ad hoc* basis under *Particular Expenses*.⁴⁰ Larger colleges sometimes arranged the garden under its own 'Title' (account or heading) in the annual accounts. New College's *Computus bursariorum* (Bursar's accounts) and Magdalen College's *Liber computis* (Book of accounts) placed the garden expenses in the *Soluta* or payments section for their annual accounts. Their systems for entering accounts under a 'Title' appear to provide a slightly more detailed insight into identifying the wider expenses incurred in operating a college garden.

While the 'Title' system used by Magdalen and New College makes it possible to understand some of the wider expenses associated with the gardens, they do not

³⁷ Blackstone, *Dissertation on the Accounts of All Souls College*, 14.

³⁸ Blackstone, 44.

³⁹ Magdalen College Archive, DBJ/23 1743; Magdalen College Archive MC/LC E/39.

⁴⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/39.

provide a complete record of the entire amount of money expended. Magdalen's expenses for the gardens and walks were placed under the 'Title' *Impensa Arbusta Ambulaer: et Prati* (Grove, Walks and Meadow Expenses).⁴¹ The *Liber computis* of Magdalen recorded the labour costs involved in the maintenance of the Water Walks, the Grove and the deer paddocks as well as additional costs involved in looking after the deer.⁴² The names of some tradesmen were entered under the *Arbusta* heading but no details from the bills were added.⁴³ Nurserymen's bills were also added under the *Impensa Arbusta*.⁴⁴ The annual stipend for the 'care of the grove and work around the college' paid to the gardener, amounting to £2 9s. 8d., was entered first in the 'Title' each year.⁴⁵

Some of the garden expenses entered in the New College annual accounts were regularly absorbed by the *Custus Domorum* (Costs of Diverse Places) rather than the *Custus Horti* (Costs of the Garden). The bursar made additional calculations on the bills to work out the costs for each 'Title', allocating a percentage of the expenses to be charged under the *Custus Domorum* from the bills. Thomas Earle, the College ironmonger, submitted a bill in 1805 which included a charge of £4 1s. 6d. for work in the garden.⁴⁶ These costs were entered not in the *Custus Horti* but under *Custus Domorum*, hiding the true maintenance costs of the garden from the accounts. It was only possible to identify these expenses in the accounts by comparing them with the original items found on the bills. A bill containing the annual charges for work undertaken by the building contractor and carpenter Charles Gee amounted to £324

⁴¹ Magdalen College Archive, MC/LC E/38.

⁴² Magdalen College Archive, MC/LC E/38.

⁴³ Magdalen College Archive, MC/LC E/39.

⁴⁴ Magdalen College Archive, MC/LC E/40.

⁴⁵ Magdalen College Archive, MC/LC E/52.

⁴⁶ New College Archive, NCA 4345.

9½d. and charges amounting to £293 11½d., belonging to specific 'Titles' were instead entered by *Custus Domorum*.⁴⁷ The absorption of some of the garden expense under *Custus Domorum* was a pragmatic one on the part of New College's bursars. Funds were available to be used under that 'Title' and so expenses incurred in the running of the garden, kitchen and hall were brought across from their own department and paid for by the *Custus Domorum*.

At St John's College, the bursars developed a strict series of conventions for entering various charges for the garden and any additional expenses in the annual accounts. Under the heading *Pro expens: extrins and Intrins* (For external and internal expenditure), the *Imposita* (Payments) were entered. The *Arbusta imposit* (Grove payment) was a charge on the College's income providing a quarterly allowance for the garden on Lady Day (25 March), Midsummer (24 June), Michaelmas (29 September), and Christmas (25 December). In the *Computus annuus* the payments for the *Arbusta imposit* varied each quarter. It is possible that the allowance was worked out by calculating the number of working days between each quarter day. If this supposition is correct, the College's *Arbusta imposit* provided a daily allowance of 2s. for work in its two groves, the same daily rate as charged for the employment of a garden contractor.⁴⁸

The conventions for accounting in St John's *Computus annuus* (annual accounts) dictated that the *Arbusta* payment was entered after the President's and fellows' stipends. These charges were treated as the inalienable costs of maintaining the College and met its statutory responsibilities. The *Imposita* included salaries and

⁴⁷ New College Archive, NCA 4345.

⁴⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

allowances for the servants, and the *Arbusta* charge. The gardener's bill, which itemised the maintenance cost was entered separately under the heading *Solut pro Expens: inter Fest St Michaelis & Gen: com* (for singular expenses for the feast of St Michael and generally). Under the 'Title' *Solut pro Expens* the contractor's bill was entered as a yearly cost and then the total *Arbusta imposit* for the year was subtracted from the total sum of the bill. This reconciliation of the contractor's bills and the *Arbusta* payment created a final figure which was the outstanding sum the College owed for the maintenance of the garden. The surviving gardener's bills for 1772-1773 and 1773-1774 support the entries in the *Computus annuus* and confirm that these bills were submitted and settled only once a year under *Solut pro Expens*.⁴⁹

In 1764 the quarterly *Arbusta* payments at St John's were £7 on Lady Day, £7 at Midsummer, £7 2s. 6d. at Michaelmas and £7 7s. 6d. at Christmas.⁵⁰ The gardener's bill submitted at Michaelmas amounted to £51 11s. 10d.⁵¹ The system of accounting and disbursements used at St John's meant that a payment of £23 1s. 10d. was due to the contractor.⁵² This shortfall indicates that by the middle of the eighteenth century the *Arbusta* charge was never enough to cover the annual maintenance costs of the two groves. In reality, the *Arbusta imposit* was a customary payment which had long outlived its usefulness for the management of the garden. The College continued to pay part of the contractor's expenses using an outmoded system of payments because it was an allowance system, specifically allocated for garden out of the annual income, according to College custom and convention.

⁴⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC 1A 117.

⁵¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC 1A 117.

⁵² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC 1A 117.

Bursars were generally loathe to innovate in their accounting methods until the nineteenth century reforms of the University.⁵³ Increasing costs for labour and plants in the eighteenth century meant that St John's bursars needed to maintain dedicated income streams to support the groves as well as funding them from the College's surplus money each year.

Extra bills, for the purchase of trees and shrubs or specialist tasks, such as shrouding (lopping) elm branches in 1755, and which were not covered in the contractor's agreement, were instead entered after the gardener's bill under *Solut pro Expens*.⁵⁴ At St John's the recorded costs of the garden were in fact the financial commitments made by the College to the contractor. However, the entries in the St John's *Computus annuus* rarely indicated the costs associated with maintaining the garden outside of the garden contractor's costs for plants, trees and horticultural labour submitted in their annual bills. The cost of purchasing furniture and commissioning buildings in a garden and the maintenance of them were not entered as expenses associated with the gardens at St John's College and the other colleges. These costs were absorbed in the general expenses of the *domus* (the house) and can now only be identified through tradesman's bills, if they survive.

Tradesmen would separate their bills into different 'Titles' so that the costs to each of the departments were not mixed up and they could be identified by the bursar.

James Thomson's bill for work at St John's in 1778 recorded his individual charges for the garden under the heading 'To the Garden & [Grove]' and recorded costs amounting to £7 18s.⁵⁵ The survival of collections of bills in a number of the college

⁵³ J.P.D. Dunbabin, "College estates and wealth 1660-1815", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. V, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 271.

⁵⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC 1. A 108.

⁵⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

archives illustrates that this approach used by the contractor was a fairly common system, allowing charges to be allocated according to their 'Title' and then be entered separately in the bursar's day book.⁵⁶ This level of detail in the bursar's accounting was removed in the presentation of the final accounts, but where bills do survive they allow the contractors' charges for the garden to be identified.

3.6. Funding college gardens from additional income sources

University College, a small centrally based site, paid their gardener an annual stipend of £2 15s. in the 1760s but this appears to have only covered tasks and not materials.⁵⁷ The stipend and bills were funded partly out of the annual surplus and augmented by an additional contribution of the fellows. In the *Billae Bursarii* (Bursar's bills), a system of accounting devised to record where the extra money belonging to the College was spent, £5 was taken from the 'remains to be divided' account and the residual £2 was contributed by the fellows.⁵⁸ This system of funding was an extremely clever one on the part of the Bursar. In drawing down money from the 'remains to be divided' account to pay for the gardener's stipend he was using money that would have been paid out in the form of a dividend to the fellows rather than adding to the liabilities of the College.

The fellows' direct contribution of £2 was entered separately in the *Billae Bursarii* under the 'Common Room' account and this payment did not appear in the annual

⁵⁶ Magdalen College Archive, MC/DBJ/23.

⁵⁷ University College Archive, UC BU3/F3/2; University College Archive, UC BU3/F3/3.

⁵⁸ University College Archive, UC BU3/F2/1.

accounts.⁵⁹ These annual accounts were only a record of College's income from its properties and its outgoing expenses.

At University College it was also agreed that any further expenses that exceeded the gardener's stipend were to be entered under the 'Common Room' account and the fellows billed at the end of the fourth quarter.⁶⁰ This system appears to have been adopted by the College between c.1740 and 1797, as no records for the payment of the contractors were entered in the College's General Accounts during that time, with the exception of 1759 when William Stockford was paid £2 5s. 4½d. for a bill.⁶¹

Garden expenses were only entered again in the University College's General Accounts from 1798 when Robert Penson was employed to lay out the garden.⁶²

A similar system of fellows' payments was adopted by the bursar of Balliol in 1801 to increase of the gardener's stipend from 13 guineas to 18 guineas.⁶³ At a meeting of the College Council on 9 May 1801 the fellows agreed to raise the stipend to reflect the enlargement of the garden and for the Common Room to pay a charge of 8 guineas a year.⁶⁴ The remaining 10 guineas was to be charged, in the College annual accounts, under the heading *Reditas et Stipendia* (Revenue and Stipends).

Additional garden expenses were entered under the Title *Soluta pro Domo* (Expenses of the House).⁶⁵ In April 1797 Balliol's gardener Thomas Knibbs' received payment for two bills and half a year's salary.⁶⁶ The smaller bill, for 4s., was charged to the Common Room, despite the fact that the College still payed for the additional

⁵⁹ University College Archive, UC BU3/F3/3; University College Archive UC BU5/F2/2.

⁶⁰ University College Archive, UC BU3/F3/3.

⁶¹ University College Archive, UC BU2/F1/4.

⁶² University College Archive, UC BU2/F1/5.

⁶³ Balliol College Archive, *The English Register*, 1794-1875.

⁶⁴ Balliol College Archive, *The English Register*, 1794-1875.

⁶⁵ Balliol College Archive, *Bursars' Book (Computi)*, 1787-1817.

⁶⁶ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.9.

costs of the garden.⁶⁷ Although it was a small sum of money, the Knibbs receipt serves as evidence for the fact that the college fellows played an additional role in financing the contractor, and any necessary garden expenses.

On 7 April 1796, a convention was held at Wadham, at which it was agreed by the attending fellows that the alterations to the garden, recommended by James Shipley, Blenheim's head gardener, should be adopted.⁶⁸ Furthermore, it was agreed that in order to recover some of the expenses associated with the scheme, the trees identified for removal, as well as the remaining stones from the walls and structures that had been taken down in 1795, should be sold.⁶⁹ The determination of the fellows to find additional ways to fund the work of the contractors indicates their aspirations to be able to afford gardens which presented their colleges in an elegant manner.

3.7. The use fees and fines to subsidise the garden

The gardens, like the fabric of the colleges, were funded primarily through surplus receipt money. For richer colleges, like St John's and New College, this meant that it was possible to expend more money on the maintenance of the gardens while smaller, poorer institutions were limited because of the demands made on them by other costs. The additional funding of the gardens was provided by members of colleges through fines and fees and highlights the way in which amenities were funded especially in the case of the less wealthy colleges such as Pembroke and University College.

⁶⁷ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.9.

⁶⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁶⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

The accounts of Pembroke offer up two examples of the alternative ways in which a college garden was supported. Outside of the annual surpluses, members of the college, who were not foundationers (recipients of the foundation's charity), were another potential income source. In the Pembroke College *1712-1784 Convention Book* an account titled 'money expended from the Gent.n Com.rs Stock Since 1703 Being a Continuation of Bishop Halls acco.nt Ending at that time' was transcribed into the volume.⁷⁰ The Gentleman Commoners Stock account recorded the £10 donations made by the gentleman commoners (an undergraduate with extra privileges) of the College and how they were spent.⁷¹ Expenditure covered by the account included subsidising the costs associated with the garden, and purchases of silver for the College. In 1748, £45 13s. was paid from the account to settle bills for the Common Room and the garden.⁷² A further contribution from the fund of £12 was made in 1753 to settle the bills from the carpenter and plumber for repairs to the alcove in the garden.⁷³

A further funding mechanism, to recover the costs of operating the gardens at Pembroke College, was provided by the 'Degree Money Account'.⁷⁴ This was the account in which money was accrued by the College from fines paid by students when taking their Bachelors or Masters degrees. In 1739, after the College Chapel was built, the garden account was in arrears and the bursar, John Collins, used the 'Degree Money Account' to clear the outstanding debt of £5 5s.⁷⁵ While the sums from the 'Gentleman Commoners Stock' and 'Degree Money Account' did not form a

⁷⁰ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

⁷¹ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

⁷² Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

⁷³ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

⁷⁴ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/2/1.

⁷⁵ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/2/1.

regular way to provide financial support for the maintenance of the garden, Pembroke's bursars were willing and able to draw upon the funds to support specific needs or repairs.

At Wadham College, on 6 December 1745, it was recorded in the College Convention Book that the fellows had agreed that they would pay an increased garden fee from 2s. to 2s. 6d. each quarter, after they had voted for £5 of the College's money to be used in the repair of the Fellows' Garden.⁷⁶ In 1745 the garden fees paid by the fellows raised the additional sum of £7 10s. for the maintenance of the garden.⁷⁷ As an additional contribution, outside the College's rent roll, this money did not appear in the annual accounts. In the case of Pembroke's Common Room the fellows paid a yearly rent of 10s. to the College for the use of their garden and as such that transaction was recorded in the Bursar's Account Book.⁷⁸

As a temporary measure to cover the costs of taking down the wall which divided the Wadham's two fellows' gardens it was agreed at the convention held on 8 April 1795 that all fellows, gentleman commoners, Bachelors of Law and Masters of Arts would pay 2 guineas each (Figure 3.2).⁷⁹ Additionally, every quarter they would pay 5s., apart from the gentleman commoners who would contribute 10s.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁷⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁷⁸ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/6.

⁷⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁸⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.



Figure 3.2. C. Wilde, *Wadham College from the Fellows' Garden*, after 1796, watercolour. The garden after the removal of the walls and unification of the Fellows' Garden and the Private Fellows' Garden. Courtesy of the Wadham College Library.

Apart from in the Common Room accounts found in University College's *Billae Bursarii*, the contributions made by the fellows are difficult to trace. The financial papers of bursars were treated as the personal property of each office holder.⁸¹ The common room accounts formed part of a group of expenses which were outside the formal accounting of a college. They were treated not as a 'Title', like the chapel or kitchen but rather as a club or society.

Wadham was not alone in operating a system of fees, fines or contributions. Other colleges collected money from its members as a means of providing extra financial support to the gardens outside of the annual accounts. One of the responsibilities of the Garden Master at Corpus Christi College was to collect and keep an account of the garden entrance fees.⁸² The size of the garden fees for Corpus were set depending on the position of the student within the hierarchy of the College in the

⁸¹ Blackstone, *Dissertation on the Accounts of All Souls College*, 43.

⁸² Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

Garden Master's Book.⁸³ From the 1760s a student entered the College as a nobleman paid £4 4s. to the Garden Master in Garden Entrance fees while a gentleman commoner paid £1 1s.⁸⁴ A student who had taken the degree of Master of Arts paid an entry fee of £2 2s. and on 7 December 1824 the entrance fees for gentleman commoners were increased to £2 2s. by the fellows.⁸⁵ The fees collected by the Garden Master were treated as an income source to pay for specific tasks in the College's public garden.⁸⁶ As a representative of the fellows the Garden Master's responsibilities were to pay for the gardener's stipend, annual flowers and what were described as 'all accidental trifling expenses'.⁸⁷ The College's own responsibilities for the garden were for 'cutting' (pruning) trees, the purchase of gravel and mould, carrying away old mould and rubbish, repairs to the summer house and tool house, cleaning the dung pen, cleaning the gravel, the maintenance of the gravel paths in Merton Fields and the purchase of baskets, brooms and nails.⁸⁸

Money collected by Trinity College from its members in the form of fees and entered in the *Computus bursariorum* (Bursar's accounts), included a charge for the garden, as well as a contribution towards the lighting of the College.⁸⁹ The income from the garden payments in the 1730s varied between 7s. 6d. to £18 a year.⁹⁰ New College operated a more unified system of recording the donations and fees. In the *Recepta Alibi* (monies received elsewhere) section of the *Computus bursariorum*, the bursars' made the entries for the 'Gentleman Commoners allowance to the garden' and the

⁸³ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁴ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁵ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁶ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁷ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁸ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁸⁹ Trinity College Archive, TCA 1 A/5.

⁹⁰ Trinity College Archive, TCA 1 A/4.

'gentlemans entry money for the garden'.⁹¹ The payment of these two allowances into the treasury at New College allowed it to be used to fund the *Custus Horti* (garden costs), providing an integrated accounting system where, unusually, the additional revenue stream was treated as an integral part of the college's finances.

The additional income generated through the application of fines or payments prevented some of the gardens from relying on the colleges' annual surpluses but they were not necessarily stable methods for raising money. A sharp drop in the number of gentlemen commoners and commoners entering the University in the eighteenth century depleted the extra funding for the colleges.⁹² Between 1741 and 1770, on average only nine students matriculated each year at Trinity College, while New College saw the less than six fellow commoners join the College from 1750 until 1759.⁹³

3.8. Redirection of funds and loans for the gardens

A less common method of subsidising the maintenance of the gardens was through the allocation or diversion of some trust funds that were treated as separate from the annual college accounts. Until the mid-nineteenth century reforms of the University and colleges the heads of houses had a considerable amount of freedom to redistribute money from funds given to the colleges.⁹⁴ As long as the capital of the

⁹¹ Trinity College Archive, TCA 1 A/4.

⁹² V.H.H. Green, "The University and social life", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. V, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 311.

⁹³ Joseph Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses 1715-1800*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1881); New College Archive, NCA 3058.

⁹⁴ J.P.D. Dunbabin, "Finance and property", in *The History of Oxford University, Nineteenth Century Oxford*, vol. VI, part 1, eds. M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 376.

fund was not diminished, it was possible to use the money accrued to support other projects.

Jesus College used one of its funds to cover the expenses incurred by the purchase of land for the extension of their garden. The Meyrick Trust had been set up after the death of Edmund Meyrick in 1713 and Jesus College received the bulk of his estates in North Wales. Meyrick's benefaction was intended to support scholarships and exhibitions for students from North Wales.⁹⁵ The surplus income from the estates was to be used to purchase livings but the College only purchased one, leaving the Trust's money to accrue.⁹⁶ At a meeting of the fellows on 4 February 1735/36, it was agreed that £580 would be paid for the property that would extend the College and allow for the enlargement of the Common Room garden.⁹⁷ The sum of £350 was put towards the purchase from the College Chest and the Principal agreed to lend a further £260 from the Meyrick Trust.⁹⁸ The sum borrowed from the Trust was paid back but the flexibility of the loan allowed the College to settle the debt without any great pressure on its annual income and expenses. Warden Wills, sometime in 1795, made a loan to Wadham for the alterations of the Fellows' gardens but in this case the bursar organised a way to repay the loan quickly through a system of tiered garden entry fees for members of the College.⁹⁹

A slightly more unusual redirection of charitable funds was made on 23 December 1816 at Lincoln. It was entered in the *College Order Book* that fellows of Lincoln had agreed to allocate £15 a year from the Dr Huchins' Fund to pay the gardener for the

⁹⁵ Dunbabin, "Finance and property", 298.

⁹⁶ Dunbabin, 298.

⁹⁷ Jesus College Archive, JCA RE. 6.

⁹⁸ Jesus College Archive, JCA BU AC GEN. 6; Jesus College Archive, JCA BU AC CUI.

⁹⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/92.

care of the Fellows' Garden and the Grove.¹⁰⁰ Reverend Richard Hutchins, a former Rector of Lincoln, had left money and property to the College for scholarships but surplus money each year from the trust could be spent as the Rector saw fit.¹⁰¹

3.9. Donations and bequests

From the beginning of the eighteenth century donations to the colleges from their alumni were used to improve their gardens but they appeared infrequently. Trinity College received a donation of £200 for the embellishment of their public garden from The Reverend William Bouchier in 1709 (Figure 3.3).¹⁰² In 1713 sixty-five gentlemen subscribed a total of £224 12s. 6d. which was spent on the iron gates or *clairvoie* in the 'new garden' and elm and lime avenues at Trinity.¹⁰³ Another generous benefaction was made in the will of Thomas, Lord Wyndham to Wadham College in 1747.¹⁰⁴ Wyndham left £500 for the adornment of the College and at the Convention held on 6th April 1753 it was decided that part of the benefaction would be used to pay for the new layout the Fellows' Garden.¹⁰⁵ All of these three donations and bequests were used for the ornamentation or improvement of the garden rather than augmenting stipends and settling debts.

¹⁰⁰ Lincoln College Archive, LC/G/M/1.

¹⁰¹ Salter and Lobe eds., *The Victoria County History of the County of Oxford*, 166.

¹⁰² Trinity College Archive, H. *Liber Albus Benefactum*, 1650-1815.

¹⁰³ Trinity College Archive, Misc. Vol. f104v-178. [1713].

¹⁰⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹⁰⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.



Figure 3.3. Entry for the Reverend William Bouchier's donation of £200 for the ornamentation of the Public Garden, recently the Grove: Trinity College Benefactors Book, Trinity College Archive. Courtesy of Trinity College Library.

3.10. Summary

The gardens were governed by the college councils and they were administered by the bursars but the employment of contractors lessened the need for the institution to be involved in the day to day management of the horticultural operation. Financial support for the gardens in many colleges was achieved though the allocation of money from the annual surplus but often the costs involved required further funding streams. The willingness to find additional sources of funding to meet the costs associated with the gardens indicates the importance the colleges placed on their green spaces.

Responsibility for the non-horticultural elements in the garden remained with the Bursar and other tradesmen. College gardens contained more than just plants which needed to be maintained and financed. The next chapter will consider the material

culture of the buildings, ornaments and furniture as well as highlighting the network of tradesmen who were responsible for their creation and maintenance.

Chapter 4 Material culture: buildings, ornaments and furniture

Assumptions about the costs associated with the gardens and their operation in garden history have largely been made based on identifying the horticultural expenses. While historians have assessed the overall expenditure on the creation or redevelopment of the spaces, the day to day costs of maintaining a garden have been little explored.¹ This chapter emphasises the network of trades that worked in the garden and the variety of buildings, ornaments and furniture that they provided. The employment of trades offers only one perspective to the study of the material culture of the garden. This chapter identifies the buildings, ornaments and furniture found in the designed landscapes and assesses their roles. Material culture in the garden has been a neglected area of study and has principally remained the province of archaeologists.² Through an analysis of surviving bills and accounts it is possible to ascertain where objects were placed and understand their significance.

4.1. Picturing the garden

What is missing from the majority of the printed images of the gardens is the diversity and scale of material culture that existed in, or was used, in the gardens to support their design. In the prints produced in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the artists adopted schemas for representing the gardens. Some artists

¹ David Coombs, "The Garden at Carlton House of Frederick Prince of Wales and Augusta Princess Dowager of Wales. Bills in Their Household Accounts 1728 to 1772," *Garden History* vol. 25, no. 2 (Winter, 1997): 153–177.

² Craig Cessford, "The archaeology of garden-related material culture: A case study from Grand Arcade, Cambridge, 1760-1940", *Garden History* 42, no. 2 (Winter, 2014): 257–65; C. K. Currie, "The Archaeology of the Flowerpot in England and Wales, circa 1650-1950," *Garden History* vol. 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1993): 227–246.

chose to people the landscapes with gardeners and their users but the activities portrayed were often generic (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1. Detail from Edward Dayes, *A View of Wadham College, from the Garden*, 1794, watercolour. The sub-contracted gardener or labourer working. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.

There appear to be no images that reflect the diverse trades that operated in the gardens or the seasonal changes in the garden. It is the tradesmen's bills and college accounts that provide the evidence for garden buildings, furniture, tools and other items which have not physically survived. Through the study of the surviving bills in the college archives it is possible to plot a network of links between the tradesmen and the objects found in the gardens. The analysis of the networks

highlights the important role that tradesmen in Oxford, other than gardeners, played in the creation and maintenance of the gardens.

An analysis of objects in the garden, such as summer houses, seats and tables, suggests that they were acquired because of their function to facilitate social engagement.³ Additionally, the spatial proximity of the separate items of garden furniture to each other created groups of items which formed specific roles. A summer house without any furniture was in reality nothing more than a shelter. Once a summer house possessed the appropriate furniture it became a space for social interaction and the enjoyment of a garden's sights and smells. The consideration of how and why relationships existed and evolved between objects is important because it strengthens the understanding of their roles in the garden.

Relationships between the trades working in Oxford evolved over time as specialist skills and materials were required in the garden. Non-horticultural trades were enterprising enough to offer material solutions or services to gardeners or their employers for a price. The increasingly technical and professional demands that were placed on the gardeners developed, in part, out of the wider variety of plants that were available. The fashion for the planting of yews and other evergreens in the second half of the seventeenth century influenced the adoption of new techniques, tools and other supporting materials by gardeners. By the 1730s the management and care of the 'greens' involved the employment of a number of trades to support the gardeners' work at certain times of the year. Ironmongers in Oxford provided college contractors with hooks for them to train the yews on wooden frames against

³ Robert F. Parrott, "Forrest chairs, the first portable garden seats, and the probable origin of the Windsor chair", *Regional Furniture*, vol. 24 (2010): 9.

the stone rubble garden walls.⁴ The 1750/51 bill for the 'Garden and Grove', issued by the ironmonger Francis King to St John's College amounted to £2 16s. and the costs of buying the wall hooks in July 1751 amounted to £1 13s. alone, over half of the total amount of the account.⁵ Without the support of trades, such as ironmongers, it would have been impossible for the gardeners to produce the level and quality of 'art' that they were required to practise upon nature for their employers.

Studying the material culture found in the college gardens offers another way to 'thicken' the understanding of the organisation of the spaces and allows for a more nuanced interpretation of them. Until recently the figures standing in the shadows of garden history have been the gardeners and the weeding women but a third, and equally important person can also be found there, the tradesman who supplied the gardeners and gardens.⁶ The diversity of tradesmen supporting and working with those directly involved in horticulture has not previously been fully acknowledged as an integral part of understanding the whole operation involved in maintaining the college gardens.

4.2. The consumption of materials

Small college gardens, which were specifically laid out for the use of the fellows, consumed materials as keenly as larger gardens. Jesus College, owner of the smallest college garden, planted it with vines and fruit trees, providing a 'natural',

⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC B1; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC B1.

⁶ Sally O'Halloran, *The Serviceable Ghost: The Forgotten role of the Gardener in England from 1630-1730* (University of Sheffield: unpublished PhD thesis, 2013).

secondary enclosure masking the stone walls.⁷ The trees and vines at Jesus were trained against the wall requiring a large amount of cloth listing or shreds (scraps of woollen cloth) and nails each year to anchor the branches to the wall to train them.⁸ Fruit trees were trained to restrict growth, to improve the quality and quantity of fruiting and so that plants benefited from the warmth of the wall.⁹

According to Abercrombie's *Every Man His Own Gardener* gardeners required pruning knives, a whetstone, hammers, syringes, soap, a ladder, a rake and a water barrow or watering engine to care for the vines.¹⁰ The large number of tools and other equipment recommended for the care and management of a vine in gardening treatises in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century may explain why the consumption of goods in college gardens was so high. In *The book of English trades and library of useful arts*, the author acknowledged that the 'conveniences and luxuries' for the garden were a relatively modern invention.¹¹ Equipment that was used to care for the vines and other horticultural jobs was produced to meet the growing demands of the gardeners. The consumption of the equipment was required in order to meet the growing horticultural expectations of their employers. The number and variety of the tools and other implements that developed around good horticultural practise illustrates the importance of assessing what groups of objects were formed for each task. Tools and other equipment were recommended in connected groups by the writers of gardening calendars when providing advice for

⁷ Jesus College Archive, JCA BU AC GEN 9.

⁸ Jesus College Archive, JCA BU AC GEN 9.

⁹ John Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener* (London: 1829), 25, 27.

¹⁰ Abercrombie, 96, 97, 223-225, 447-8, 485.

¹¹ *The book of English trades and library of useful arts* (London: 1818), 58.

the undertaking of specific tasks. *Every Man His Own Gardener* advised the reader about the care of carnations in January and recommended:

These pots should be plunged in a raised bed of dry compost in the beginning of winter, the bed arched over low with pliant rods or hoops; this will be of great advantage to the plants, if you draw mats over the arches when the weather is severe. But if the pots were to be placed in frames it would be better, if you put the glasses over them in rigorous weather'.¹²

Six different items were mentioned in the advice given about the wintering and care of specimen carnations in January: pots, rods, hoops, mats, frames and glasses (Figure 4.2).¹³ Mats and hoops were used to cover beds containing hyacinths (*Hyacinthus* cvs.), tulips (*Tulipa* cvs.) and auriculas (*Primula auricula*) in the winter.¹⁴ Larger college gardens would have required a sizable number of these items for the care of some of their flowers, while smaller spaces still needed to consume the same materials if the quality of care in their gardens was to be maintained, as was the case at Brasenose.¹⁵

¹² Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 46.

¹³ Abercrombie, 46.

¹⁴ Abercrombie, 46.

¹⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 95.

PLATE 5.

Fig. 1.

R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R
W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W
R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R
W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W
R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R
W	R	B	W	R	B	W	R	B	W

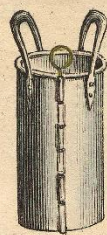


Fig. 5.

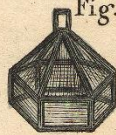


Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.

Fig. 2.

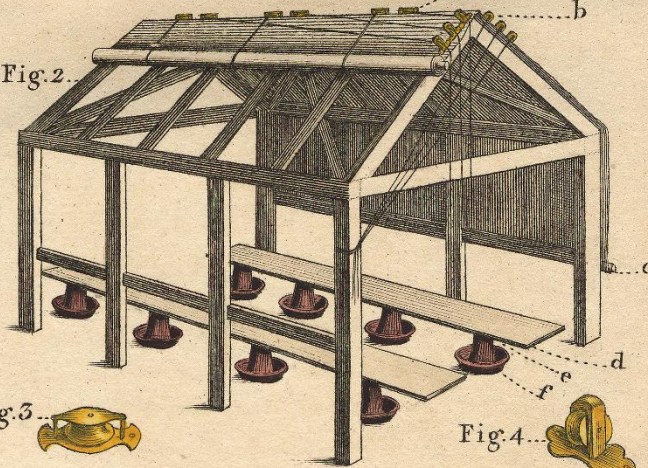


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Published as the Act directs by Ja^s Maddock, Walworth 1st June 1792.

Figure 4.2. James Maddock, *The Florist's Directory*, 1792, plate 5, engraving, hand coloured. Figure 2 in the plate shows a frame to protect flowers from the weather, Figure 6 illustrates a hand glass. Figure 7 is the rose from a water pot. Figure 8 is a watering pot for auriculas. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

4.3. The use of the college gardens and material culture

The way each garden was used had a direct impact on the type of objects that appeared in them. The practical needs of each space had at least as much effect on the material culture of the garden as the cultural and social aspirations of the colleges. The appearance of specialist equipment, such as hotbed frames and glasses, within some of the gardens, indicates that the gardeners were expected by the colleges to grow plants which demanded greater care and attention, or for earlier displays.¹⁶ By commissioning summer houses, temples, chairs and tables in the gardens the college authorities were consciously providing support for the creation of social spaces. The gardens' roles were in reality different from the claim that they were purely meditative spaces for scholars to reflect and exercise in, which Richard Newton, Principal of Hart Hall advocated.¹⁷

Many of the objects were produced to service the gardeners' needs, but others were acquired by the colleges for the use of their members and visitors. New College's garden was one such consumer; it was devoted to the entertainment of its members and their guests. The College possessed a temple, or summer house, from 1741 but in order for it to function appropriately furniture was required to facilitate its use as an effective social space.¹⁸ Reverend James Woodford, writing in his diary, explained how he and another fellow used the temple for socialising on 23 August 1761.

Woodford recorded that he had 'Spent afternoon in the Temple in the Bowling Green

¹⁶ St John's College Archive, ACC V. B1; Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 104-6.

¹⁷ Richard Newton, *University Education* (London: 1733), 119.

¹⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

with Whitmore, and two strangers of his from Cambridge and George Prince, Nicholls, Captain Hall a Guest of Mr Prince's and Boteler'.¹⁹

The evidence for the use of the summer house as a place for entertainment is further increased through the identification of items of furniture or decorative elements within it. Recording and analysing the objects, which existed in these designed landscapes is as important to the history of the garden as documenting the physical space. Without investigating the material culture of the garden, the interpretation of the organisation and use of the garden is limited.

4.4. Material improvements in the garden

John Loudon, in Part III of his *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822), divided his discussion of 'The Art and the Practice of Gardening' into four parts.²⁰ He then separated the garden structures, edifices and implements into sub-groups based on the roles they performed, with a further chapter on 'Of the Improvement of the Mechanical Agents of Gardening'.²¹

Loudon identified edifices as buildings for pleasure and use by humans. Moreover, he declared that chairs, tables and other garden furniture classified as 'convenient decorations...agreeable to the eye and convenient for the purposes of recreation and culture' under the heading of 'Decorative Buildings'.²² Structures differed from

¹⁹ James Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, ed. W.N Hargreaves-Mawdsley, Oxford Historical Society New Series, vol. XXI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 53.

²⁰ John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening: Comprising the Theory and Practice of Horticulture, Floriculture, Arboriculture, and Landscape-Gardening* (London: 1822), 315-406.

²¹ Loudon, 405-6.

²² Loudon, 401, 399, 393.

edifices/buildings, in Loudon's definition because these were solely for the use of plants.²³ Finally, implements allowed the gardener to work in the garden in such a way as to perform his tasks in a skilful and appropriate manner or control pests.²⁴

Loudon's system provides a useful taxonomy for studying the material culture of a garden in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Figure 4.3). The arrangement of the classifications- starting with 'implements', then 'structures' and ending with 'edifices'- was devised to address the gardeners role in caring for the culture of the garden, the beautification of the landscape, the structures required by horticultural practices and buildings for decorative or practical purposes.²⁵ Loudon's order has been reversed in this and the next chapter. This has meant that the analysis of the material culture found in the garden was assessed in a hierarchy beginning with human usage, to the care of plants and ending with the objects to support the horticultural tasks.

²³ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 342.

²⁴ Loudon, 315.

²⁵ Loudon, 305.

Tools	-	-	Lever	Planter's trowel	Turf-raser				
			Pick	Planter's pickaxe	Turf-beetle				
			Spade	Garden trowel	Turf-scraper				
			Shovel	Transplanter	Weeder				
			Fork	Hoe	Besom				
			Dibber	Rake	Implement-cleaner				
			Planter's hack						
Instruments	-	Of operation	Garden-knife	Averruncator	Hammer				
			Garden-chisel	Shears	Pincers				
			Pruning-bill	Scythe	Fruit-gatherers				
			Forest-axe	Scarifiers	Climbing-spurs				
			Pruning-saw	Barking-irons					
			Of direction	Garden-line	Ground-compasses	Staff			
				Ground-measure	Borning-piece	Straight-edge			
				Timber-measure	Level	Stake			
			Of designation	Notch numbering-stick	Name-stick	Label			
				Written number-stick					
Utensils	-	Of preparation and deportation	Screens	Mould-scuttle	Basket				
			Sieves	Pot-carrier	Packing-case				
			Of culture	Pots	Plant-box	Watering-pot			
				Water-saucers	Plant-tub	Syringe			
			Of protection or modification	Cover	Blancher	Bell-glass			
				Shade	Hand-glass				
			For vermin	Birdtrap-cage	Beetle-trap	Wasp and fly trp			
			Machines	-	Of labour	Barrow	Ladder	Tree transplanter	
						Watering engine	Platform	Seed separator	
			For vermin	-	Engines of destruction	Engines of alarm or snares	Living vermin-killers		
Registering thermometer	Alarum thermometer	Regulating thermometer							
Articles	-	Of adaptation	Temporary coping	Garden-hurdle	Protecting bag				
			Horizontal shelter	Movable edging	Shoe-scraper				
			Netting screen						
			Of manufacture	Canvass	Netting	Wall-tree lists			
				Gauze	Wall-tree nails				
			Of preparation	Props	Covering materials	Various articles			
				Ties	Planks				
			Structures	-	-	The flower-stage	Glazed frame or sash	Hotbed-frame	
						Opaque covering-frame	Glass case		
						Pit	Adapted frame		
Fixed	Wall	Espalier rail							
	Hotthouse	Mushroom-house				Cold-house			
Permanent	Head-gardener's dwelling	Seed-room				Entrance-ledge and gate			
	Official or administrative apartment	Fruit-room				Building for raising water			
Edifices	-	-				Ice-house	Apiary	Aviary	
						Useful	Cottage	Boat	Gate
							Bridge	Sepulchre	Fence
			Decorative	Convenient	Prospect-tower	Cavern	Waterfall		
					Temple	Grotto	Cascade		
			Characteristic	-	Portico	Roofed seat	Jet or spout		
					Arbour	Exposed seat	Sundial		
			Cave	Swing	Vane				
			Rocks	Rarities	Vegetable sculptures				
			Ruins	Monuments	Inscriptions				
Antiquities	Statues	Eye-traps.							

Figure 4.3. Taxonomic table for mechanical agents employed in the garden, John Claudius Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 1832, page 512. Copyright: the author.

Few of the garden buildings that existed between 1733 and 1837 have survived in the college gardens and little visual evidence for them remains. In many cases the only record of the structures in the garden exists in the surviving financial papers. The use of wood and other materials, prone to the effects of the weather and time, meant that many of the structures had a limited lifespan. In the existing histories of the gardens there has been little attention given these buildings despite the fact they help provide evidence to develop an understanding of social role of the landscapes.

4.5. Summer houses and other buildings

The appearance of summer houses in the gardens are recorded in the bills and annual accounts but they rarely feature in the drawings and prints of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. At New College two bills survive in connection with building and decorating the summer house in 1741.²⁶ For the most part evidence suggests that the structures appeared to have been largely constructed out of wood requiring the employment of carpenters and painters.²⁷ Both St John's and New College possessed summer houses which were described as temples but there are no full descriptions of their structures.²⁸ The St John's and New College temples were not situated in the most public parts of their respective gardens, indicating that they were not primarily for the tourists who visited them. New College's temple was built next to the Bowling Green and St John's temple was a feature in the Inner Grove.²⁹ For the most part, however, it is difficult to locate where the summer houses were placed.

There were a large number of tradesmen employed in the fitting out and maintenance of the buildings and edifices. The bill for the painting of the inside and outside of the new Lincoln College summer house in August 1793 amounted to £1 8s. 2d.³⁰ The interior was wainscoted, interior walls were stuccoed and Venetian shades were made for the two windows, at the cost £2 2s. each.³¹ In the same month a slater was employed to create a roof on the summerhouse, at a cost of £1

²⁶ New College Archive, NCA, 11380.

²⁷ New College Archive, NCA, 11380.

²⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 39, 53.

²⁹ New College Archive, NCA 11380; St John's College, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁰ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

³¹ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

11s. 7d.³² The three surviving bills at Lincoln College indicate that the additional costs associated with the construction and maintenance of the summer house was a relatively large expense for a building devoted to pleasure. In 1792/3 tradesmen's bills amounted to £5 1s. 8d. for expenditure on the Lincoln summer house, whilst the total expenses of Edward Knibbs, the garden contractor, amounted to £10 12s. 8d.³³ The survival of the 1792/3 bills for the Lincoln summer house from Williams the painter, Robinson the upholsterer and Hownslow the slater correspond to the names and sums entered in the 1794 annual accounts.³⁴ These entries in the accounts indicate that the College, rather than the fellows, were paying for the summer house expenses. An expenditure, equivalent to at least half of the costs of the contractors' annual maintenance expenses, for the creation of a summer house is further evidenced by the willingness of the college authorities to provide a venue for the social amusement of the fellows.

William Teeghe's bills for the plasterwork for the interior of the New College summer house in 1741 provide further evidence of the desire of the colleges to create elegant buildings in the garden.³⁵ Teeghe's bill included costs for ribbon mouldings on the ceiling, panel work for the walls, moulding work at the 'bottom of the ceiling' and the creation of a flower at the centre of the ceiling.³⁶ The bill for the plaster work amounted to £11 6s. 2d.³⁷ New College's construction of a summer house was no doubt instigated to coincide with the improvements being undertaken at the Bowling Green landscape by the College's contractor Thomas Nethercliffe in 1740 and

³² Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

³³ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

³⁴ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/41, 1794.

³⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³⁶ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

1741.³⁸ Features for comfort as well as for elegance were provided in some of the summer houses. In 1789 the summer house in Wadham College's Fellows' Garden contained a hearth suggesting that the building could also be used in inclement weather.³⁹

In the 1760s the fellows of Pembroke College replaced their summer house, which had existed since c.1701, at the cost of £99 19s. 1d.⁴⁰ A carpenter was employed to make the wooden frame of the building and a mason, joiner, slater and painter were engaged to complete it. Out of the final sum, £3 18s. was used for the purchase of twelve chairs for the summerhouse.⁴¹ The purchase of the chairs for the room by the College may also provide evidence of it being used as the fellows' Common Room during the summer. In the entry, recording the costs of the building, the structure was described as the 'Common Room or Summer house', indicating that at Pembroke it acted as a formal venue for the social life of the fellows in the summer.⁴² Similarly, in 1801 Humphry Repton proposed to erect a summer house for Magdalen College, at the end of Addison's Walk, to allow a group of people to socialise in the garden and as a room for the sole use of the fellows.⁴³ It was Repton's vision that the space be used as the common room during the summer months.

The Pembroke summer house was a large and expensive addition to the Fellows' Garden. It was mentioned on 13 November 1766 in the College's Convention Book, with the entry recording that the fellows had agreed to give £37 11s. towards building

³⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁴⁰ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/3.

⁴¹ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/3.

⁴² Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/3.

⁴³ Magdalen College Archive, FA16/4/1AD/1.

a 'room in the garden' out of the fines collected from the gentleman commoners.⁴⁴

The summer houses at New College and Pembroke were large enough constructions to accommodate a number of individuals within them. They were designed for a group of people to socialise in the garden as an extension of the spaces allocated to support the entertainments provided by the colleges.

Repairs and painting were chiefly undertaken in the spring months before the summer and the beginning of Oxford's season. Wadham's summer house was repaired by John Grammer's carpenters in 1785 and 1786 during the month of April.⁴⁵ In the same month St John's summer house, or temple, had its exterior paintwork and sash squares repainted or 'improved' by the employees of Mary Wittington in 1749. Some parts of the building received two coats of paint while others only needed one layer, depending on the level of maintenance it required.⁴⁶

The cost of painting the outside of St John's College summer house amounted to 8s. 7½d., the same cost charged by a contractor of the labour of one gardener over four days.⁴⁷

In Corpus Christi College's 'Garden Book' a memorandum was entered in the front, stating that the responsibility for the repairs to the summerhouse rested with the College, while the obligation for the painting of it belonged to the fellows.⁴⁸ According to the bills and accounts for Pembroke, Merton, New College, St John's, Lincoln and

⁴⁴ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/3; Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

⁴⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁴⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁸ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

Wadham Colleges it was money from the 'house' or college funds that was used to maintain the fabric of their summer houses as well as the gardens.⁴⁹

The number of summer houses found in college gardens indicates that there was an appetite to create discrete social spaces in the landscape. The costs of building and maintaining these spaces were largely borne out of the college's funds in much the same way improvements to the senior common rooms were. As such the garden buildings were an important part of the collegiate landscapes. These buildings were part of the social spaces required by the colleges to convey their social and cultural positions.

The Inner Grove of St John's was described in 1744 as possessing 'well-contrived arbours' and Merton was described as having arbours in its garden.⁵⁰ In the surviving contractor's bills of St John's, in 1751 and 1760, Henry Moore recorded the purchase of arbour rods.⁵¹ Although there is no record of the existence of arbours in the gardens of Wadham in the guides to eighteenth century Oxford, their garden contractor, John Foreman, recorded the purchase of 12 bundles of arbour rods at 16s. for the College in 1771.⁵² No descriptions for the design of the arbours appear to exist in the entries for colleges in the contemporary tour guides, but the consumption of these rods indicates that the gardeners were creating them as part of the variety of structures offered in the gardens. The construction of the arbours was a specialist skill associated with the creating of garden structures using *treillage*.

⁴⁹ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/3/3; Merton College Archive, MCR 1.4; New College Archive, NCA 11380; St John's College Archive, SJA, SJA ACC V. B1; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/41, 1794; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁵⁰ Thomas Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities* (London: 1744), 78, 83.

⁵¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵² Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

Tool houses were a practical example of garden edifices, constructed for the storage of the gardeners' equipment. They were maintained and equipped to allow the sub-contractors to collect the equipment they needed to work efficiently. Loudon wrote that tool houses were usually small spaces attached to the back of hothouses but in the college gardens some were built adjoining the garden walls.⁵³ St John's College's pre-1778 tool house was described as being situated in the garden or Inner Grove but its exact location was not mentioned.⁵⁴ In 1778 a new tool house was constructed for the College by James Thompson when the groves were combined. The carpenter's bill for the work amounted to £6 13s. 6d. for daily labour and materials and included in the final account was a charge of 2s. 6d. for ten 'holders', or as Loudon described them 'projecting pins', for the storage of ladders inside the building.⁵⁵ The large amount of equipment owned by the College and used by the sub-contracted gardeners at St John's necessitated such a building. Corpus Christi College possessed a tool house, despite the small size of its garden, and New College's was mentioned in a bill dated 1753.⁵⁶ Wadham's tool house, which existed before 1795, was constructed close to the wall that divided the Fellows' Garden from the Private Fellow's Garden.⁵⁷ Other colleges would have required a tool house for hand tools, ladders, rolls (rollers) and grind stones but they do not appear in their surviving records.

In 1787 Worcester College commissioned, a mason, George Godfrey, to build a cold bath in what appears to have been their gardens.⁵⁸ This may be the only cold bath in

⁵³ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 378.

⁵⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 378-79.

⁵⁶ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA, C/23/2/1; New College Archive, NCA 11387.

⁵⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁵⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/2.

the college gardens to have been constructed. No references to a cold bath appear in the histories of any of the colleges or in their financial records between 1733 and 1837 other than Worcester. In Godfrey's bill for July and August 1789, a grotto house was mentioned which may have covered the bath.⁵⁹

While none of the Oxford colleges appear to have a cold bath in their gardens, six Cambridge colleges did.⁶⁰ Emmanuel College created a cold bath which was in use by 1747 but its construction was different from Worcester's. While Emmanuel's bath floor was made from timber, the cold bath at Worcester was constructed out of stone. Additionally the Worcester bath was constructed with steps, to allow the user to make their descent into the pool.⁶¹ Godfrey's bill for the creation of the cold bath in 1787 does not mention the construction of a bath house or any other similar building for changing. It is possible that the grotto house mentioned in 1789 was built next to, or over the bath, but no hard evidence exists to corroborate this assumption.⁶²

The siting of the bath in one of the gardens at Worcester suggests that it was for the use of the fellows and possibly the students. It again demonstrated the cultural aspirations of the institution to possess both a useful and decorative feature.

Commissioning a cold bath was clearly an expensive undertaking, like the building of summer houses. George Godfrey's bill for the bath in 1789 amounted to just over £70.⁶³

⁵⁹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/2.

⁶⁰ Emma Bradbury, *The Bathing Pool at Emmanuel College, Statement of Significance* (unpublished, n.d.), 2.

⁶¹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/2.

⁶² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/2.

⁶³ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/2.

Apart from summer houses, and a singular cold bath, there were relatively few descriptions of decorative structures in the gardens made by masons. In the St John's College archive there is a record for the decorative gate piers that formed part of a connecting gateway between the Outer and Inner Groves. St John's employed John Townesend IV in 1758 to design and build piers which would support a new ironwork gate. The piers, with moulded bases, caps and plinths were topped with carved Bibury stone representing pots with flowers.⁶⁴ St John's had commissioned this work in order to replace an old door way that allowed people to move between the Outer and Inner Grove and create an appropriate and more elegant marker for the two spaces. The total cost of John Townesend IV's work was £23 17s. and not £4 10s. as recorded by Roscoe.⁶⁵ It appears that Townesend built an imposing gate for Queen's College in their bowling green but no date is known for its construction.⁶⁶ A desire to create an elegant and eye-catching connecting gate was displayed earlier by New College. Richard Piddington, the mason employed by New College in 1742, recorded the existence of ornamented piers for the gate between the Fellows' Garden and the Bowling Green when he issued a bill for their cleaning.⁶⁷ The piers supported a decorative iron gate which was further ornamented with a painted and gilded iron overthrow consisting of a mitre, coat of arms, and scrolls.⁶⁸ In the gardens at New College and St John's the use of decorative gates and piers acted as a punctuation mark between two separate garden spaces, drawing the eye from one sensory experience to another.

⁶⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁶⁵ Ingrid Roscoe, *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain 1660-1851* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 1281.

⁶⁶ Roscoe, 1281.

⁶⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

⁶⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

4.6. Seats, chairs and stools

Loudon defined chairs as decorative and convenient constructions or edifices that functioned in the same manner as alcoves, grottoes and prospect-towers.⁶⁹ Gardens that were used as public walks needed to fulfil the expectations of the wider sociocultural groups that used them. Providing ample seating, as well as offering a variety of features in the garden, was expected as part of the experience of visiting the garden space for recreation and a cultural experience. Seats formed part of the polite equipage that allowed gardens to function as social spaces.

The diversity of garden seats and chairs that existed from the 1730s is recorded in the financial records for the college gardens. Between 1748 and 1836 the St John's bills from painters, joiners and carpenters recorded over ten different terms used to describe the seats and chairs used in the gardens.⁷⁰ From the list a number of these descriptions can be identified as the same pieces of furniture. Elbow seats, forest chairs and garden chairs were all likely to be descriptions of design variations for the Windsor chair. Furniture historians believe that the labels 'forest' and 'Windsor' chairs represented the same general design.⁷¹ The assertion that the 'elbow' and 'garden' chairs were names given to a type of furniture also called the Windsor chair is supported by the description of the repair work undertaken by joiners and carpenters in the college gardens. These repairs included the replacement of elements such as spars, stumps and rails, all components needed to make a Windsor chair or a variation of it.⁷²

⁶⁹ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 399-401.

⁷⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁷¹ Parrott, "Forrest chairs, the first portable garden seats, and the probable origin of the Windsor chair", 3.

⁷² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

In the surviving bills, for the most part, a separation was made between the terms 'seat', 'chair' and 'stool' in the garden. William Partridge's advertisement in the *Oxford Journal* on 13 July 1754 for the sale of 'Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest chairs and Stools' also used the same categorisation (Figure 4.4).⁷³ In the inventory for Chevening House, after the death of the Countess Stanhope in 1722, the compiler separated the seats and chairs in the garden from each other.⁷⁴ Parrott has drawn attention to Gilbert White's entry in his journal on 15 May 1761 in which he recorded his 'forest chair on the bastion' and a 'plain seat under the great oak'. There was a conscious and careful use of distinct language by White to classify his garden furniture.⁷⁵ The term 'chair' appears principally to be applied to an easily moveable piece of furniture, while seats were left in position. The diversity of seats offered to a consumer in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century helped to provide the garden with a variety of visual experiences. John James's translation of *The theory and practice of gardening* offered advice to the reader on the location of seats or benches for 'principal Walks or Vista's, and in the Halls and Galleries of Groves'.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Oxford Journal*, 13 July 1754.

⁷⁴ Parrott, "Forrest chairs, the first portable garden seats, and the probable origin of the Windsor chair", 1.

⁷⁵ Parrott, 4.

⁷⁶ [A.J. Dezallier D'Argenville], *The theory and practice of gardening*, trans. John James (London: 1728), 96.

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Carvings ; viz. Brackets, Umbrello's, Temples, Pavilions,
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Taste; and all other Things made in Wood that are not
to be had in this Part of the Country of any Person but
himself.

Figure 4.4. William Partridge's advertisement for Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest Chairs and stools: *Oxford Journal*, 13 July 1754. Copyright: the author.

The seats used in the colleges' gardens were deployed around the site in a number of different ways. Some were deployed to allow social interaction within summer houses and others were sited to offer a seat in a shaded walk or grove, providing a viewing point for a vista.⁷⁷ Through the study of the bills issued by the painters it is, at times, possible to identify where some of the seats were located. Large seats and double/triple seats were placed in situations that offered prospects for the enjoyment of the garden users or where larger groups of people congregated, as illustrated in Paul and Thomas Sandby's *Seat Near Terrace with a view to the north east*, c.1765

⁷⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; New College Archive NCA 11387; New College Archive NCA, 11389; Merton College Archives MCR 1.4; Kate Felus, *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden* (London and New York: C.B Tauris, 2016), 178.

in Windsor Great Park.⁷⁸ Large seats and elbow chairs were both placed on top of the mound at St John's College and seats were provided on the top of the New College Mound.⁷⁹ A chair and the seat in the garden provided a signpost for the visitor to take in a prospect or vista.

Windsor and elbow chairs were recorded in the bills as having been located in the more intimate areas of the gardens including the New College summer house and walks.⁸⁰ At New College, two from the four forest chairs ordered from James Chadwell in 1754, were intended, according to the carpenter's annotation, to be placed along the serpentine path in the garden.⁸¹ In 1748 St John's had purchased two dozen chairs from Mr Hobday of Tetsworth (in the Thames Valley, the centre of Windsor chair making) via Catherine Franklyn, the contracting carpenter.⁸² Double Windsor seats were purchased by New College and one of this type of seat survives, unpainted, at Jesus (Figure 4.5).⁸³ The purchase of four Chinese chairs at St John's College in 1778 at £6, or £1 10s. a piece, was a considerable expense and it may have indicated a desire of the College to provide fashionable furniture for the garden.⁸⁴ In June 1780 the carpenter James Thomson charged St John's £4 10s. for a dozen 'single garden seats' at 7s. 6d. each, 22s. 6d. less than the Chinese chairs.⁸⁵ Eleven years later St John's bought another dozen garden chairs, described as being 'made very strong', emphasising their utility and durability, at 14s. each.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), 200.

⁷⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; New College Archive NCA 11387; New College Archive NCA, 11389.

⁸⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11387.

⁸¹ New College Archive, NCA 11388.

⁸² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁸³ New College Archive, NCA 11387; Nancy Goyne Evans, "A History and Background of English Windsor Furniture", *Furniture History*, vol. 15 (1979): 37.

⁸⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁸⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁸⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

Differences between the costs of chairs bought in 1780, 1791 and the purchase of Chinese chairs in 1778 indicate that there was a hierarchy of styles and qualities of furniture deployed in the different parts of the garden.⁸⁷ Additionally the variety of the styles of chairs and seats and their deployment in the garden at St John's suggest that some of them were used to make statements about the College's taste as much as providing conveniences for rest or socialise.



Figure 4.5. Double Windsor chair, Jesus College, Oxford, c.1740-55, wood. Copyright: Bob Yates.

Overall, the remaining carpenters' bills indicate that the cost of purchasing and then maintaining seating in the garden was a relatively expensive undertaking. Regular charges for the repair of chairs in the garden belonging to St John's College indicate

⁸⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

that seating was heavily used and damaged in the summer months.⁸⁸ The cost of purchasing a dozen, unpainted, 'neat Gardin seats made strong', provided by James Pears in 1791, at a cost of £8 8s., represented the equivalent of one quarter of the annual *Arbusta* payments, the customary college allocation of money, for the St John's garden.⁸⁹

Contemporary written evidence suggests that the public walks were not used heavily by the inhabitants of the University as social spaces outside of the summer season.⁹⁰

St John's Outer Grove, a public walk used by the citizens of Oxford and members of the University, was generally prepared in March and April after the winter months.⁹¹

James Thomson billed St John's for 'putting up & mend[in]g ye garden seats' during the week beginning 14 April 1771 and he performed the same service again in

1772.⁹² Late spring and early summer were suitable for the whole collection of garden furniture to appear in the college garden before the lively social interactions that took place during the City's and University's social season in June and July.

Thomas Salmon observed the seasonal nature of St John's Outer Grove in the 1740's. He noted that the walk 'become the general rendezvous of gentlemen and ladies every Sunday evening' during the summer months.⁹³

Wadham College's garden, which was regularly used by the wider University community as a social venue, moved its chairs and seats inside during the autumn.

On 3 April 1784 the contracting carpenter, John Grammer, was employed to bring

⁸⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁸⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁰ Thomas Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and the Adjacent Counties* (London: 1748), 78.

⁹¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B.1; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹³ Thomas Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities*, 78.

the chairs out of the chapel and for the seats to be put together in the College's garden.⁹⁴ Grammer was commissioned to put the garden chairs away on 17 October 1789 and engaged two men to take 'the Seats to Pieces in the garden and carry them into the Chapple' at the cost of 1s. 4d.⁹⁵ The importance of John Grammer's bills for the 1780s is that they provide the dates for the chairs and seats entering and leaving the garden. Additionally, the carpenter's bill provides evidence for the months of the year when the garden was set out as a fully social space.

Grammer's bill for the putting away and taking out of Wadham's furniture, and James Thomson's bill for St John's in 1770-1771, show that the colleges were laying out their furniture in the garden at a similar time of the year, in readiness for the summer.⁹⁶ During the months of April and May St John's and Wadham also employed carpenters to make the necessary repairs to the seating before the start of the social season. In April 1789 two carpenters were employed for five days to repair the garden chairs in readiness for the summer at a cost to Wadham of £1 6d. plus materials costing 14s. 4d.⁹⁷

The movement of the chairs in and out of storage, depending on the seasons of the year, and the regular repairs that were necessary suggests that the chairs were significant features in the gardens during the summer. They required routine care because of the effects of the elements on them and the gardens' visitors. The regular employment of sub-contracted carpenters by the college authorities in the late spring and summer months indicates the importance of the preparation of the garden for the social season. In rhythm with the colleges' horticultural calendars repairs by the

⁹⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁹⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁹⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; St John's College, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

carpenters were undertaken prior to the employment of the painters, with missing or broken pieces replaced in deal, oak or elm if required. The smaller colleges did not maintain public walks and so they did not need to employ the services of carpenters as regularly in their gardens. Larger colleges committed considerable sums of money to the purchase and care of the chairs as part of the gardens' role, providing Oxford's outdoor social spaces for the University and City, when compared with the scale of their financial outgoings for the horticultural services.

The other tradesmen employed to undertake regular work on the edifices in the garden were painters. Surviving bills for painters at New College, Trinity and St John's Colleges indicate that the majority of the work in the gardens was undertaken between April and September.⁹⁸ The cleaning and painting of the seats took place in the late spring at the same time as the employment of the carpenters. During the week beginning 29 May 1772 the painter William Rought was employed to scrape and clean all of the chairs in the Inner Grove of St John's ready for use.⁹⁹

The painters supplied the carpenters with the putty they needed to fill the cracks and gaps in the garden seats. Mary Withington's bill for New College for 1752 and 1753 specifically mentioned the supply of putty to 'stop ye craks & holes' by the carpenters for the chairs.¹⁰⁰ The cost of the putty used by the carpenters was charged directly to the colleges' accounts by the painter. It is likely that the employment of the two trades to work on the seats was a necessary annual task, as part of preparation of the garden for the summer and the City's and University's social season. In March 1748 Mary Withington, the owner of a painting business, provided the carpenters

⁹⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380; New College Archive, NCA 11387; Trinity College Archive, TCA/IF/2; St John's College, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11387.

with 41 lbs. of putty to repair the posts and rails outside St John's and the garden seats.¹⁰¹ In the bills for New College and St John's there is also evidence that the painters provided white lead, used to make their paint, for the use of the carpenters. The colleges were again charged directly for this purchase. On 12 September 1760 Thomas Williams billed New College for 'white colour' that was intended for the use of the carpenters working there.¹⁰² In 1772 the painter William Rought supplied the joiner James Thomson with white lead in June and July for use at St John's.¹⁰³ The furniture historian Robert F. Parrot has observed the occurrence of a white layer underneath green paint on early Windsor chairs.¹⁰⁴ He has suggested that this may be an initial coating for the chairs that acted as a grain filler.¹⁰⁵ The seats, Parrot believes, were rubbed with a white lead paste or gesso to create a fine surface by the carpenters to make the application of the oil paint by the painters to be as smooth possible.¹⁰⁶ It is also possible that the white lead acted as a sealant, preventing the absorbent nature of the wood from requiring additional expensive coats of oil paint.

New College and St John's possess bills which indicate that new seats were regularly painted with three layers of oil paint while older ones were repainted with one or two layers of paint when necessary.¹⁰⁷ It was recommended in *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening* that all new wooden structures should be painted

¹⁰¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰² New College Archive, NCA 11390.

¹⁰³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁴ Robert F Parrot, "Observations on the earliest known English Windsor chairs", *Regional Furniture*, vol. 19 (2005): 8.

¹⁰⁵ Parrot, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Parrot, 8.

¹⁰⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11380; New College Archive, NCA 11387; New College Archive, NCA 11397.

with three layers of oil based paint.¹⁰⁸ Such advice appears to have been the norm, whether it was chairs, seats, ladders or hotbed frames, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The true cost of a new garden chair or seat required combining the expenses of purchasing the furniture with the cost of painting them. Cost of painting the furniture varied depending on the number of layers painted and type of paint used. In 1778 four Chinese chairs were purchased by St John's at a cost of £6 and a further cost of 7s. 6d. to paint them. Mary Withington's bill for 1748 and 1749 for St John's charged 4s. a piece for painting six large seats twice over and 3s. each for two new double Windsor chairs painted with three coats of paint.¹⁰⁹ In the same bill Withington charged the huge sum of £1 13s. 4d. a piece for the painting of the two 'great seats on the mount'.¹¹⁰ The 'great seats' were billed, using a measured price, for 80 yards of paint each, compared to the 16 yards paint used on a 'large seat' which only cost 6s. 6d.¹¹¹ It is possible that the 'great seats' were covered or roofed seats, providing a resting place to look out across the Parks.

Painting garden chairs, stools and seats was a further large expense for the colleges associated with the maintenance of the landscape. Although they did not appear to be needed every year, the employment of a careful painter and good quality paint was necessary in order to prevent expensive furniture from rotting and maintaining a refined effect in the garden. The skills of the painter were particularly important for the college gardens which acted as public walks and popular tourist venues.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening* (London: 1807), Garden frames.

¹⁰⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

4.7. Ironwork screens, gates and palisades

Although the main iron gates that formed the entrance from the Parks into St John's Outer Grove were probably installed in the 1690s, much of the imposing ironwork for the college gardens was commissioned in the first half of the eighteenth century.¹¹² The care of the ironwork remained an important part of the maintenance costs of the garden after it was installed. The iron screens and gates at New College (c.1711) and Trinity College (1713) gardens by the London based smith Thomas Robinson were the single most expensive items in the gardens to paint (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).¹¹³ Although not painted every year, the fine ironwork did require regular care. Not only were there large expanses of metal to clean, scrape and paint but they required the additional skills of gilding and heraldic painting. Painting Robinson's gates at New College with the screen and railings cost £6 12s. for painting and gilding in 1753.¹¹⁴ The screen and railings at New College were painted again in 1758, in a 'light lead colour' and, embellished with the appropriate heraldic colours, and details such as William of Wykham's mitre were then gilded.¹¹⁵ Trinity's Robinson ironwork screen and railings cost £5 5s., a similar sum to New College's for labour, paint and gilding in 1783.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Howard Colvin, "Architecture" in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. V, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 831-853.

¹¹³ New College Archive, NCA 11387; Trinity College Archive, TCA/IF/2.

¹¹⁴ New College Archive, NCA 11387.

¹¹⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

¹¹⁶ Trinity College Archive, TCA/IF/2.



Figure 4.6. Iron gate and palisade, New College, Oxford, by Thomas Robinson, 1711, in J. Starkie Gardener, *English Ironwork of the XVII and XVIII Centuries*, 1911, plate XXV. Copyright: the author.



Figure 4.7. Decorated initial letter of Thomas Robinson's clairvoie for Trinity College, Oxford, in Trinity College Benefactors' Book, Trinity College Archive, ink on vellum. Courtesy of Trinity College Archive.

All of the ironwork in the garden appears to have been painted to protect the metal.

The white paint used on the simple ironwork rails on the steps on St John's mount in 1749 must have created a contrast with the green paint used for the chairs and seats that were on top of it and the surrounding verdure, making a crisp visual effect.¹¹⁷

The light lead paint colour (now a stale black) was used in 1758 during the repainting

¹¹⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

of New College's screen, provided another example of creating a contrast with the green background of the garden as well as the gilding and heraldic colours.¹¹⁸

The wear and tear of regular use, and the weather, had an effect on the ironwork, requiring repairs to be undertaken in addition to maintaining the paintwork. St John's College's iron gate between the two groves appears to have required regular care and painting; having been painted by William Rought in 1772 and again in 1774 at the cost of 7s. 6d. each time.¹¹⁹ Lincoln's iron palisade, in front of the New Building (1739) which enclosed the garden within the area known as The Grove, was damaged in 1750/51 and cost the College £10 2s. 9d. to repair, before the further expense of being repainted by Mary Whittington's men.¹²⁰ In May 1787 the cleaning of the New College rails was undertaken by two men employed by Francis King, the ironmonger, over four days and costing £1 before they were painted by William Rought.¹²¹ After they were cleaned, necessary repairs were undertaken to the armorial decoration and the hinges. Missing screws, staples and caps belonging to the gate were then replaced by King's men. The total bill for the maintenance of the screen and railings amounted to £3 13s. 8d. before the painters submitted their costs.¹²²

Both decorative and practical ironwork required the employment of additional labour in the garden. Ornamental ironwork designs commissioned by New College, St John's, Trinity and Lincoln for their gardens required a significant financial

¹¹⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

¹¹⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁰ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1751.

¹²¹ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

¹²² New College Archive, NCA 11399.

commitment to employ smiths, ironmongers and painters to repair, maintain and colour the metal so that it retained both its practical and decorative qualities.

4.8. Summary

The material culture recorded in the bills and accounts provides a way to place the gardens into a framework to understand the operation of the spaces, their design and arrangement and the variety of items used by the gardeners and the garden visitors. Through the detailed assessment of types of seats and chairs used and their locations it has been possible to identify that the carpenters undertook the seasonally based arrangement of furniture in the garden in preparation for Oxford's social season during the summer months. A variety of buildings and edifices in the gardens has emerged which do not appear in the prints and plans of the colleges, but material culture in the garden was more than buildings and seats. In the next chapter the material culture used by the gardeners is assessed to reveal their horticultural skills and the tasks they undertook to maintain the collegiate landscapes.

Chapter 5 Material culture: Structures and implements in the garden

Using John Loudon's system for assessing the material culture in the gardens this chapter emphasises the importance of identifying the structures, implements and materials that were used in the gardens. Structures in the garden were defined by Loudon as a class of building specifically for the housing and support of plants while implements were defined as 'mechanical agents employed in gardening'.¹ The chapter critically examines how the management and care of the horticultural elements of the gardens required overlapping relationships with the work of different tradesmen. Through the identification of the items that were used in the college gardens it is possible to ascertain some of the tasks that are not recorded in the gardeners' bills. The study and critical analysis of the material culture in the gardens emphasises the level of training and skills of the gardeners who worked in them.

5.1. Flower stages, frames and hotbeds

The presence of a flower stage or auricula stand and flower sheds in the gardens at St John's College and New College demonstrate that the colleges must have had some interest in floristry.² The flower shed at New College was unlikely to have been portable; one of Richard Piddington's masons in 1750 was employed to wall in one of its beams.³ At St John's the existence of an auricula stand was recorded in William Rought's bill for work in 1772.⁴ The record of an auricula stand provides evidence that when these plants were 'blowing' an effort was made to create an

¹ John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London: 1822), 342, 315.

² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³ New College Archive, NCA 11385.

⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

appropriate display in one of the College's groves (Figure 5.1). The stand's shelves were painted at the end of May at the cost of 5s. to the College but its location was not recorded.⁵ The fact that the College was paying for the painting of the shelves of the stand indicates that it was the institution's property rather than belonging to an interested fellow. In the surviving nurseryman bills for the College there are no records of the purchase of auriculas but only a few of the nurseryman bills have survived. The appearance of the stand provides evidence that floristry had a place in collegiate landscapes of St John's. A flower shed was mentioned in the same 1772 painter's bill but the location was not given.⁶ Earlier in 1762, James Thomson's bill mentioned the existence of a shed in the Grove/Outer Grove but its role is not recorded.⁷

⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

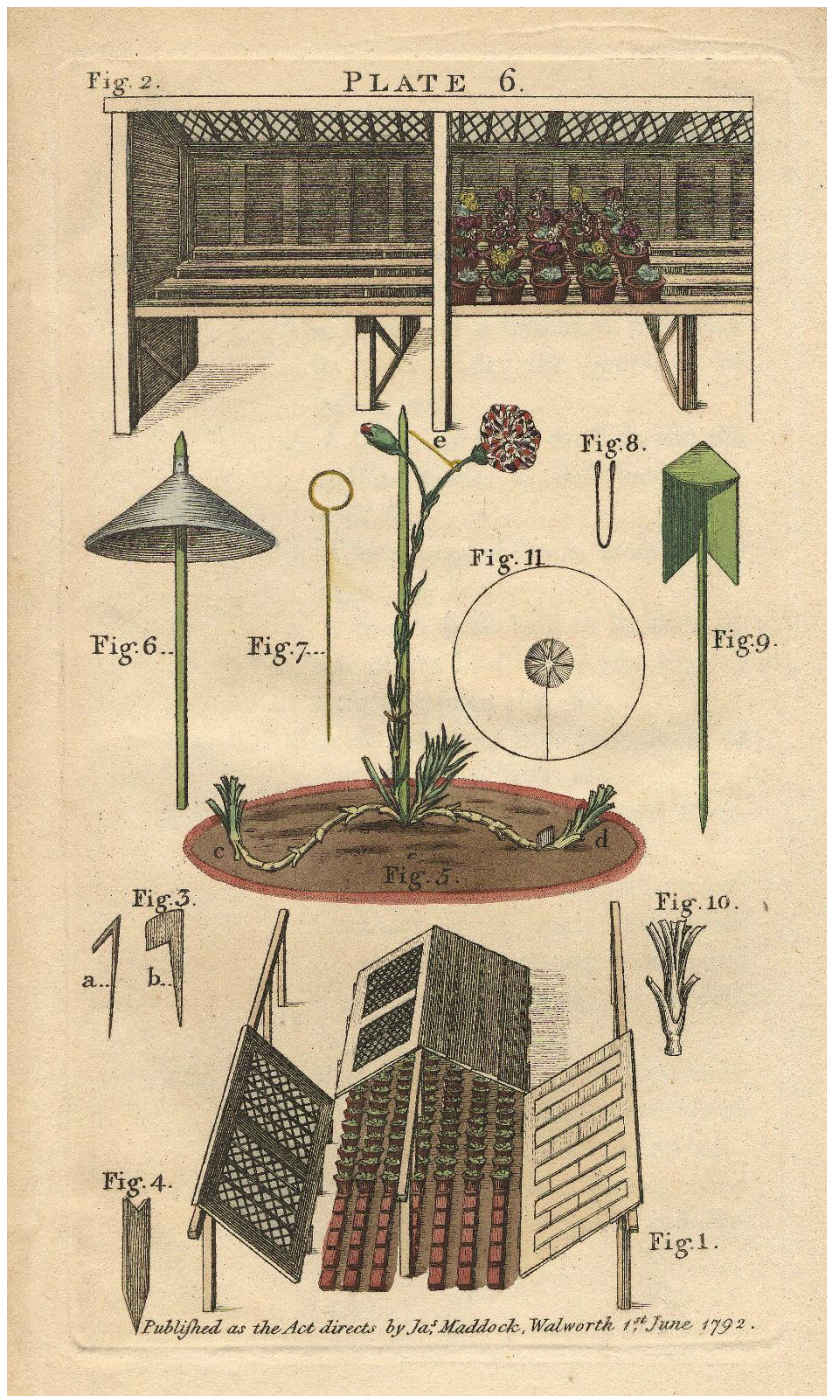


Figure 5.1. James Maddock, *The Florist's Directory*, 1792, engraving, hand coloured, plate 6. Figure 2 illustrates an auricula stage. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

References in bills to hot bed frames in the gardens of St John's and New College indicate that the contractors were expected to grow plants for earlier displays. At New College, during the week beginning 20 February 1742, the hotbed frames were

painted three times at the cost of 11s. 8d. and six lights were also painted for a further 6s.⁸ In *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, it was recommended that new garden frames were painted with three layers.⁹ Importantly, the New College entry recorded that the frames were from the garden, providing a specific location for a temporary garden structure.¹⁰ In March 1763 hotbed frames in the Inner Grove at St John's were repaired and the joiner James Thomson charged the College 7s. 3¼d. for materials and one day's labour.¹¹ An additional reference to the use of hotbeds was made in a bill for St John's, on 30 January 1772, for the building of three new lights for the large hot frames.¹² Constructed out of yellow deal, the lights were charged at £1 7s.¹³ The entry described the lights, made by Thomson's men, as 'the large hotbed frames', indicating that smaller frames were also used by the College.¹⁴ Together the evidence from St John's bills in 1763 and 1772 suggests that there were a number of hotbeds used in the garden.¹⁵ Further portable structures, associated with the use of hotbeds, were used at the same college. In June 1763 two cucumber frames were painted at St John's groves at the cost of 3s.¹⁶

The existence of hotbeds and cucumber frames in the gardens of St John's and New College provides an alternative image of the collegiate landscapes. Together with the presence of tool houses and flower sheds there is strong evidence that college gardens were not purely ornamental spaces, as William Williams's engravings for

⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

⁹ Alexander McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, vol. 1 (London: 1807), Garden frames.

¹⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

¹¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

treillage serve to illustrate the high level of skills possessed by the contractors and sub-contractors in college gardens and, more generally, in an English provincial town.

Espalier hedges appear in the gardens of Wadham, Lincoln, Worcester and St John's.¹⁸ The construction of the wooden trellis rails was a task that was undertaken at Wadham and Worcester by the gardener but the methods and materials used in their construction differed.¹⁹ The regular repairs to the *espalier* frames at Worcester suggest that the construction used by Penson was a trellis design made up of stakes and poles/rails.²⁰ This type of *treillage* was a cheaper option, using less expensive materials, and the construction was considered as less suitable for formal parts of the garden.²¹ One of Robert Penson's men in April 1815 was employed to work in the South Garden at Worcester and used 12 stakes to repair supports for the *espaliers* there.²² In the following year a man was employed again by Penson to repair the *espalier* frames and replace poles and stakes.²³

At Lincoln in 1750 James Hall, the College gardener, was paid to make a new 'espalier' in the garden or grove.²⁴ Hall's bill for the work amounted to £1 1s. and the timber posts and rails provided by the carpenter for the job cost the College a further £1 10s. 9d.²⁵ The posts and rails were described as being used to form 'the frame' for the *espalier* and the expense of the materials suggests that they were pieces of

¹⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/5; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/3; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/5; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/3.

²⁰ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/3.

²¹ Thomas Mawe and John Abercrombie, *The Universal Gardener and Botanist* (London: 1778), Treillage.

²² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/3.

²³ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/3.

²⁴ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750.

²⁵ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750.

seasoned and cut timber.²⁶ Included in the entry for the creation of the *espalier* at Lincoln was a bill for fruit trees from Mathew Cooke, an Oxford contractor and nurseryman (Figure 5.3).²⁷



Figure 5.3. Detail from garden at Doornsberg, in Matthaëus Brouerius van Nidek, *De Zegapraalande Vecht*, 1719, engraved by Daniel Stopendael, plate 12. The portrayal of *espaliered* trees trained against wooden frames. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

In 1785 Edward Knibbs, working as the gardener at Wadham, submitted an additional bill amounting to £1 11s. 2d. for the time he and a labourer had spent

²⁶ Mawe and Abercrombie, *The Universal Gardener and Botanist*, Treillage.

²⁷ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750.

making a frame over 11 days, with a further sum of 2s. 8d. for nails.²⁸ Knibbs' bill was careful to describe the *treillage* work as a frame for *espaliered* apple (*Malus domestica*) trees, indicating a different construction method from the stake and pole technique used by Penson in the South garden at Worcester. The description of the *espalier* rail for the College's apple trees as a 'frame' indicates that at Wadham they were using the more expensive construction method, using square cut pieces of seasoned timber.²⁹ While Worcester's South Garden was a productive space the fellows' garden at Wadham was used for entertainment and growing fruit. The decision to use the more expensive cut timber frames was likely to be based on the need for a neater construction and a possibly more robust construction.

St John's appears to have used timber frames in their gardens for the '*espalier* hedges', a contemporary description of a fence composed of an *espalier* trained against a post and rail construction.³⁰ These pieces of *treillage* work were certainly more elaborate than the frames used for the *espaliers* at Worcester and Wadham, according to the painter's bill in 1764, and included arches in their design.³¹ William Rought's bill recorded that his men undertook 'scrapeing, stopeing and painting' of the '*espalier* hedges and arches' at the cost of £1 1s. 1d.³² The employment of Rought's painters to clean and repair the surface of the wood is evidence for St John's using hard wood timber frames instead of ash poles. In 1772 the cost of cleaning and painting the *espalier* hedges was £3 3s., the single most expensive

²⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

²⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

³⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

individual task that Rought undertook for the College between October 1771 and October 1772.³³

Surviving bills for items bought for the gardens from the ironmongers indicate, part from building *espalier* frames and arches, that further *treillage* work was undertaken by the gardeners. Wire and wall hooks were used to create trellises for fruit trees and yews in the college gardens were purchased from the ironmonger. In 1772 a gardener's bill for Wadham recorded the purchase of hooks for the yew trees and in 1792 the College ordered 12 'hooks to fasten trees in the garden' at 2d. a piece.³⁴ Robert Penson recorded the purchase of wall hooks for pear (*Pyrus communis* cvs.) trees in Brasenose's Common Room Garden.³⁵

Wall hooks were described in the English translation of Jean de la Quintinie's *The Complete Gard'ner* as half a foot long, a quarter of an inch thick and with forked ends on the hooks to provide a greater grip once they were driven into the wall.³⁶ St John's smith's bill for 1745 indicates that some wall hooks were nine inches in length rather than half a foot (six inches) long.³⁷ The head of the hook was turned straight up (90°), a design feature devised to hold batons or poles in place which formed the frames to tie the trees branches. *The Complete Gard'ner* included instructions to make both wood and wire wall trellises for the growing and training of fruit trees.³⁸ Francois Gentil's *Solitary Gardener* gave detailed descriptions for making both of these frames for growing fruit.³⁹ In English gardening manuals for much of the

³³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4.

³⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 95.

³⁶ Jean de la Quintinie, *The Complete Gard'ner*, trans. George London and Henry Wise (London: 1704), 171.

³⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁸ Quintinie, *The Complete Gard'ner*, 171.

³⁹ Francois Gentil, *The Solitary Gardener or Carthusian Gardener* (London: 1706), 12-14.

eighteenth century the use of wall frames for trees was not considered appropriate or necessary, unless conditions demanded their use.⁴⁰ Trellises were however suggested in horticultural manuals to be used in gardens with stone walls.⁴¹ The lack of bricks used in the boundary walls for the college gardens would have provided a good reason for the adoption of the use of *espalier* frames or 'lattices'.⁴²

Both the Wadham gardener's and St John's ironmonger's bills provide evidence for using *espaliered* yews and other trees trained using wall frames.⁴³ This form of wall trellis required different sizes of hooks from those for fruit trees (Figure 5.4).⁴⁴ The existence of *palissades* of laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*) and yew at St John's and Trinity indicate that systems for securing and training them were required (Figure 5.5).⁴⁵ In 1753 the Outer Grove walls at St John's were described as being covered with evergreens forming a *palissade*.⁴⁶ In 1794 William Robinson, the ironmonger, billed Lincoln 5s. 6d. for wire and hooks to fasten the trees in their grove to form a *palissade*.⁴⁷ Gentil observed that the creation of the *palissades* provided the eye with a feature of interest rather than a bare wall.⁴⁸ For the largely walled collegiate landscapes in Oxford such an elegant and visually rewarding solution was a popular one even though the costs of maintaining them involved considerable extra expense.

⁴⁰ Quintinie, *The Complete Gard'ner*, 172.

⁴¹ Gentil, *The Solitary Gardener or Carthusian Gardener*, 27.

⁴² Quintinie, 172.

⁴³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, 23/3; Wadham College Archive, 23/4; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, 23/3; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; "An account of Oxfordshire", *The Universal Magazine*, no. CXIX, vol. XVII (December, 1755): 262.

⁴⁶ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1753), 86.

⁴⁷ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12.

⁴⁸ Gentil, *The Solitary Gardener or Carthusian Gardener*, 478.

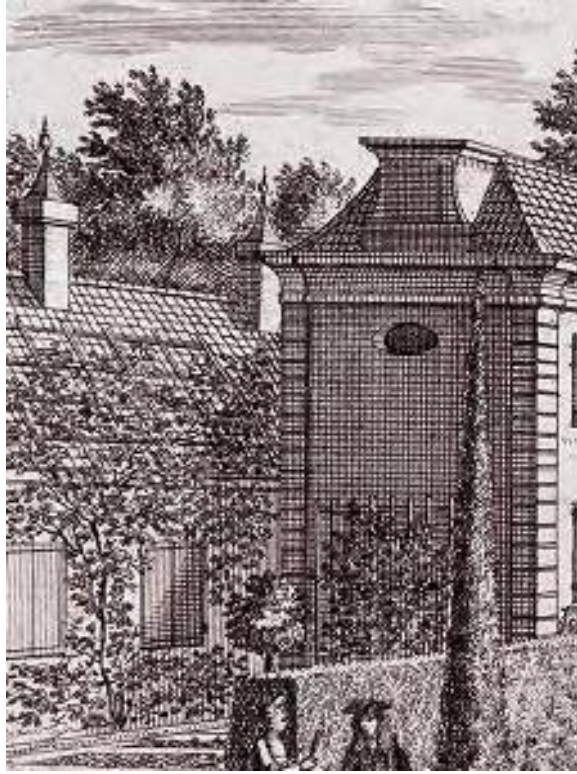


Figure 5.4. Detail from the garden at Middelhoek, Matthaeus Brouerius van Nidek's *De Zegapraalande Vecht*, 1719, engraved by Daniel Stopendael, plate 55. Wooden frame trellis use to train plant against the wall of building. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

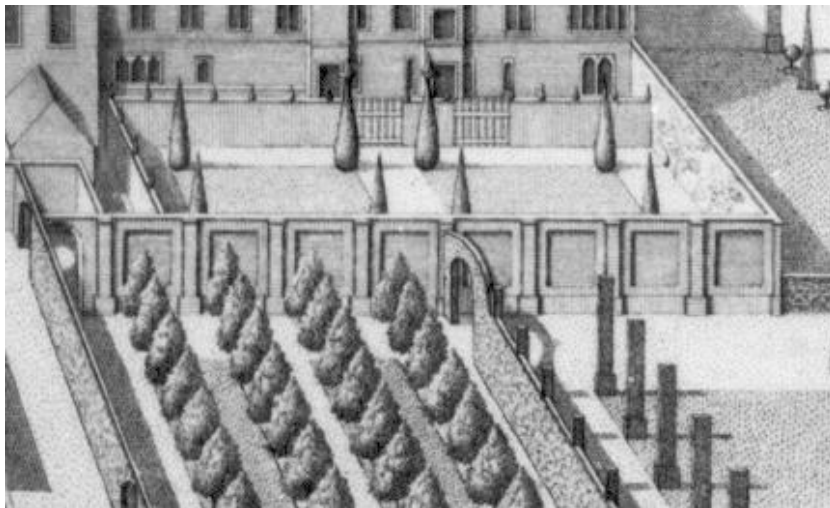


Figure 5.5. Detail of Trinity College Garden, from William Williams' *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 45. The *palissades* or panelled hedges are enhanced by topiary pilasters. Copyright: the author.

While most of the construction work in the gardens was undertaken by contracting carpenters, the production of the *treillage* work was the responsibility of the gardeners. The construction of frames for 'espalier hedges' and other *treillage* work was an occasion when gardeners were employed by the college to erect structures, rather than being contracted out to another trade. *Treillage* work was a skill required by a number of the colleges but it fell outside of the basic contract for the maintenance of the gardens. Lincoln's accounts record the construction of a new *espalier* frame in 1750 but it was separately entered in the annual accounts, under a sub-heading for extraordinary repairs connected with the New Building. The assignment of the costs to the expenses associated with the New Building avoided it being entered in the college accounts as generic entry, 'The Gardener's Bill', and prevented the loss of important evidence for the role of the gardener in the production of *treillage* work.⁴⁹

In the case of Wadham the expenses of creating an *espalier* frame were added to Edward Knibbs' bill for additional work to Wadham that he had incurred in February 1785.⁵⁰ It is possible to trace the processing of Knibbs' bill in the half yearly accounts of the College and identify the entry. The bill was entered under 'particular expenses' on 3 May 1785, as 'Paid the Gardener's Bill as pr. Receipt'.⁵¹ The importance of the survival of the Hall entry in Lincoln's accounts and Knibbs' bill is that they provide evidence for the specialist work that took place outside the maintenance contracts. The construction of the various forms of *treillage* work and its maintenance was certainly both expensive and time consuming. In 1771 John Foreman charged

⁴⁹ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750.

⁵⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁵¹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/79.

Wadham £3 for using the labour of two men over a three week period to construct an *espalier* frame and making an arbour, with materials costing a further £2 12s. 4d.

5.3. Implements of labour

Loudon described 'tools' as implements that were adapted for physical labour in the garden. There is evidence in the bills and accounts of the colleges to show that many of them purchased their own tools and implements and built tool houses for them to be stored in. Although the care of the gardens was contracted out, the provision of appropriate tools for the sub-contractors was provided by a large number of colleges. This allowed the specific needs of each garden to be efficiently met. In smaller gardens, such as Brasenose College, there is evidence to suggest that the colleges were purchasing tools, despite the expense of buying and maintaining them.⁵² The supply of tools at smaller colleges to contractors is perhaps surprising; it cost Brasenose £3 3s. a year to care for its garden between 1757 and 1766, while it could cost upwards of £1 to purchase and maintain tools and other equipment each year, based on the surviving tool bills for the colleges.⁵³

The day to day care of the largely iron, steel and wooden tools was the responsibility of the contractors but the preparation of them for seasonal use or repair was contracted out to the relevant tradesmen, such as an ironmonger or whitesmith rather than committing any further time of the gardener than was strictly necessary. While labour in the garden was charged at a daily rate, jobs undertaken by a carpenter, such as the task of replacing a handle of a pick axe at the cost of 1s.,

⁵² Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 43.

⁵³ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 69-78; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

were billed by task, making it cheaper than employing the gardeners at 1s. 6d. a day.⁵⁴

Tools used in the operation of a college garden were made and sold by whitesmiths, smiths, ironmongers and carpenters.⁵⁵ At Wadham, New College and St John's, the basic tools in the tool house consisted of spades, forks, Dutch hoes, iron and wooden rakes, trowels, garden beaters, turf beaters, turf knives, turf irons and dock irons (Figures 5.6).⁵⁶ Spades and dock irons cost c.3s. 6d., the equivalent of two days daily charges for the services of a gardener in 1774.⁵⁷ Wooden rakes, which cost 6d. each, were replaced with new ones as needed, while the iron rakes were repaired; even individual teeth could be replaced.⁵⁸ According to the bills from the ironmongers, smiths and carpenters, these tools were repaired regularly suggesting that they received a great deal of hard use.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵⁵ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 315.

⁵⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; New College Archive, NCA 11380; New College Archive, NCA 11381.

⁵⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; New College Archive, NCA 11380; New College Archive, NCA 11381; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/3; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/4.

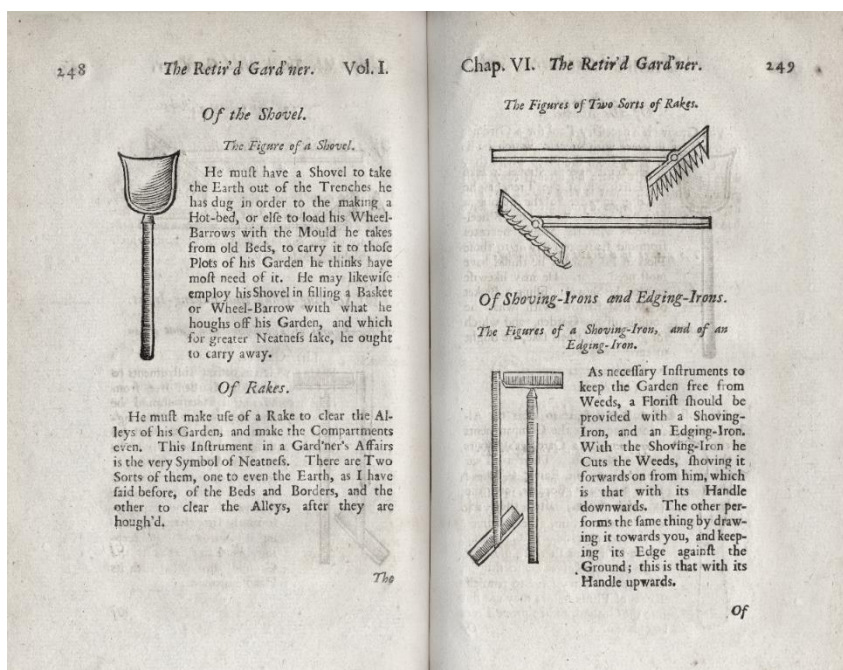


Figure 5.6. George London and Henry Wise, *The Retir'd Gard'ner*, 1706. Illustrations and descriptions of tools. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks.

5.4. Instruments of operation

Unlike tools, instruments of operation were considered by Loudon pieces of garden equipment which required more skill than simple physical force.⁶⁰ The appearance of these items in the financial records of the college provide evidence for the skilled tasks that took place in the garden such as grafting, mowing, nailing and pruning. Equipment was maintained and prepared by ironmongers in the same manner as the garden tools. Pruning knives, strippers (bark scalers) grape gatherers/scissors, garden hammers, hedge shears and chisels were all items that had specialist tasks associated with hand operation.⁶¹

The scythe was one such instrument of operation maintained by the gardener and other tradesmen. The seasonal use of some tools, such as the scythe, add to an

⁶⁰ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 318.

⁶¹ Loudon, 318, 319, 320.

understanding of the operation of the garden and the material limitations of the tools. Scythes were vital tools for maintaining the correct length of the grass but for them to cut well they required a great deal of attention from both the gardener and the smith or ironmonger. Surviving bills from William Robinson, the ironmonger used by Wadham, record that the grinding of scythes to create a new, sharp, cutting edge for the gardener started in March after the long seasonal break.⁶² The scythes were then ground at regular intervals until the late autumn.⁶³ Mowing, according to the surviving gardeners' bills for New College and St John's, started from late March or April suggesting they also employed ironmongers at the beginning of spring to re-grind the scythe blades.⁶⁴ The task of grinding the blade was then regularly repeated during the period of mowing.⁶⁵ During the winter months the scythe blades would have needed to be well oiled, wrapped in cloth and carefully put away in the tool house to limit the damaging effects of rusting on the iron and steel blade during its dormancy.

The replacement of a scythe required the purchase of several different components, consisting of the blade (more correctly the scythe), sneath (wooden shaft), knobbs/nibbs (handles), a knowle ring (the attachment that joined the sneath to the blade) and wedges to alter the angle of the blade. Each scythe was adjusted or 'hung' by the ironmonger according to the size and frame the individual who was to use it.⁶⁶ The bill from the ironmonger Stephen Pittaway, dated 30 September 1746, for New College included a charge for the hanging of a new scythe, as well as the

⁶² Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; John Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer* (London: 1789), 503, 505.

⁶³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

⁶⁴ New College Archive, NCA 11389; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁶⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11389; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁶⁶ New College Archive, NCA 11386.

additional components that made up the instrument.⁶⁷ Pittaway's overall charges for a new scythe comprising of the 'Scythe [blade] & Sneath & Knibbs & Knowle Ring & Wedges & hanging' amounted to 4s. 6d.⁶⁸ Thirty one years later the smith was continuing to charge New College 4d. or 6d. for hanging a scythe.⁶⁹ Compared to some other hand instruments the total cost of the scythe, and charge for hanging made it an expensive item in a gardener's tool house. Scythe blades purchased by the colleges varied in costs between 2s. and 3s. 6d. but the individual cost of sharpening the blade remained at either 3d. or 4d.⁷⁰

The majority of scythe blades in the eighteenth century were still manufactured around Sheffield and Birmingham by scythe-smiths and then sold to ironmongers around the country.⁷¹ Technically the scythe did not develop greatly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, although the quality of the steel improved with the invention of crucible steel by Benjamin Huntsman in 1740 which increased the potential sharpness of the blades.⁷² Scythe blades were constructed out of three pieces of metal; one piece of hard steel was sheathed between two softer pieces of steel or iron which were then forge welded together. For a gardener or his labourers to use a scythe effectively the integrity of the central piece of hard steel had to be maintained to retain the blade's edge. Whetstones and rubbers were used by the gardeners to hone or retain the straightness of edge of the blade while the grass was being cut.⁷³ In order to maintain the quality and ease in cutting the grass, the honing

⁶⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11381.

⁶⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11381.

⁶⁹ New College Archive, NCA 11386.

⁷⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/3.

⁷¹ Clyde Binfield and David Hay eds., *Mesters to Masters: A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

⁷² Binfield and Hay, 70.

⁷³ Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 508.

process had to be repeated regularly, with the action taking place every few minutes, to maintain a good, straight working edge. In the contemporary depictions of mowing in gardens, for example Balthasar Nebot's *The Allees and Arcades behind Hartwell House* and *Gardeners Scything the in the North-West Woodlands, Hartwell House*, c.1738, and Peter Rysbrack's *View of Tottenham Park, Wiltshire*, c.1737, the separate actions of mowing and honing the blade, with a whetstone or rubber, were depicted together (Figures 5.7a, 5.7b and 5.8). It is interesting to note that the two activities, honing and mowing, during the eighteenth century appear to have been generally portrayed within the visual arts as actions that were not separated from each other.



Figure 5.7a. Balthasar Nebot, *The Allees and Arcades behind Hartwell House*, oil on canvas, c.1738. Copyright: Buckinghamshire County Museum.



Figure 5.7b. Detail from Balthasar Nebot, *The Northwest Woodlands with Gardeners Scything Hartwell House*, oil on canvas, c. 1738. Copyright: Buckinghamshire County Museum



Figure 5.8. Detail from Pieter Andreas Rysbrack, *View of Tottenham Park, Wiltshire*, c.1737, oil on canvas. Private Collection. Mowing and honing the scythe blade. Copyright: Christies.

In the bills that the gardeners submitted to the college bursars the consumption of whetstones and rubbers was recognised as a necessary, regular expense associated with the task of mowing. Bills from Edward and Thomas Knibbs recorded that while working at Wadham they purchased six whetstones and six rubbers at

least twice during the summer months each year.⁷⁴ While honing took place while the scythe was in use, grinding was undertaken in the tool house and was a vital part of the care of the scythes required. It was necessary to grind the scythe to reveal the harder tool steel and create a sharp blade again, something that the process of honing was unable to achieve. Once the edge was formed, the scythe was able to cut the grass to a short and, vitally, an even level.⁷⁵ In the case of the scythes used by Edward Knibbs' men in Fellows' Garden at Wadham, the blades in 1786 were ground at least once a month and this job was billed by William Robinson at the cost of 3d. each and directly charged to the College as part of his regular duties as the patronised 'college' ironmonger.⁷⁶

In the contractor's bill for April-September 1758 for work in the New College garden, Henry Sansom charged a rate of 1s. for mowing the Bowling Green while the labour charge for William Loxley for rolling the green over two days was only charged at 6d.⁷⁷ Between 1757-8 all of the mowing at New College was undertaken by Jeremiah Dix and no other workman.⁷⁸ For another man to use Jeremiah Dix's scythe it would have needed to be altered and would have required the additional expenditure of employing an ironmonger to re-hang it. The cost of maintaining an impressive bowling green and grass plats in Oxford were high, requiring skilled labour, scythes and the employment of additional labour to grind the blades and hang them.

The employment of one specific man throughout the mowing season to cut the bowling green grass at New College, when various other men were sub-contracted

⁷⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

⁷⁵ Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 505.

⁷⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4.

⁷⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

⁷⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

to work in the garden during the same period, offers an insight into the allocation of roles in the garden for workmen. Detailed listings of seasonal tasks do not usually appear in the gardeners' bills in the Oxford colleges and the naming of those who undertook the tasks appears even less frequently. The requirement of hanging a scythe for its user and the individual ability to keep the blade well-honed and operate of the scythe appropriately on a lawn all required a level of skill not associated with an unskilled labourer. Henry Sansom's employment of Jeremiah Dix indicates that specific tasks undertaken by workmen were allocated to those best suited to the task rather than being treated as a general activity undertaken by anyone. Loudon provided additional evidence for this claim writing 'There are certain tools, of which each workman appropriates one to himself, as spades, scythes, &c', demonstrating that some equipment in the garden was treated as specifically for the use of one gardener or labourer.⁷⁹

John Loudon's system for classifying the implements of gardening can help in understanding the hierarchies of tasks that existed.⁸⁰ Understanding the different 'unskilled' tasks undertaken by the labourers, rather than the trained gardeners, offers additional insight into how people were deployed to work in the garden. The daily rate for activities such as pruning, nailing and mowing was charged at higher rates than digging and cleaning in the bills of Robert Penson.⁸¹ Through the study of these tasks and the different rates of pay that existed for them, it has been possible to create a more detailed understanding of levels of operations managed by a contracting gardener.

⁷⁹ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 378.

⁸⁰ Loudon, 315.

⁸¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC. V. B1.

5.5. Instruments of direction

The instruments of direction were used in the preparation or support of horticultural tasks. Most of the instruments of direction found in the collegiate gardens were not cutting edge pieces of technology but they did require trained gardeners to use them and, for the most part, they were only deployed in the gardens for short periods of time and for specific tasks.

The carpenters and painters supplied the gardeners of St John's with levels, plumb rules, levelling stakes, garden lines, patterns, guides and strips and marked rods to aid their care of gardens.⁸² The purchase of these pieces of equipment indicates the level of professionalism, training and education that were needed in the management of the gardens. Additionally the acquisition of these items shows a willingness on the part of the College to own suitable equipment for the laying out and improvements of its groves.

The purchase of garden lines and stakes for laying out and levelling the garden indicates that the college gardeners were using them to improve, or lay out, new elements instead of the colleges employing additional contractors.⁸³ The relative cheapness of items such as garden lines masks the importance of acknowledging their role in shaping the college landscapes in Oxford. Contractors' purchases of garden lines are further proof of the regular alterations or additions made to the design of the landscape. Some of the implements of direction were more expensive purchases and these were not absorbed by the colleges. In 1793 Balliol was charged by their garden contractor, Edward Knibbs, 1s. for the use of a level (Figure 5.9).⁸⁴

⁸² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC. V. B1.

⁸³ Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 502-3.

⁸⁴ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8. f.41.

This entry was a rare but not unique example of the hiring out of specialist tools for specific tasks.

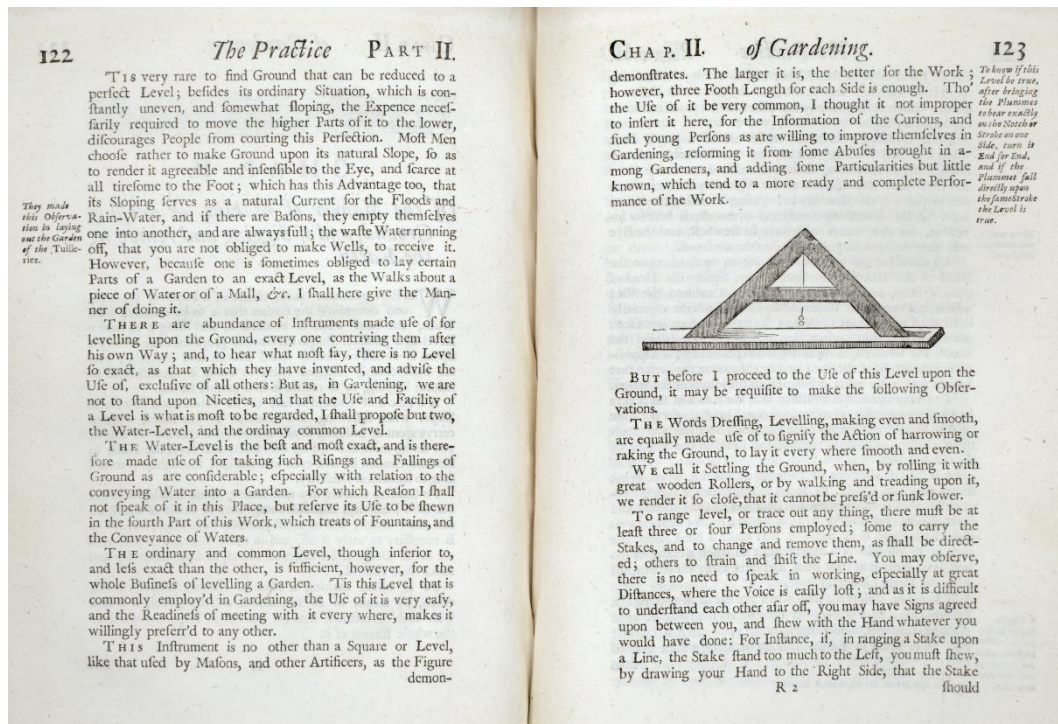


Figure 5.9. [A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville], *The theory and practice of gardening*, translated by John James, 1728, engraving. Description on the use of the level. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

5.6. Utensils, machines and articles

The sub-groups of utensils, machines and articles were made up of diverse objects of which many were made and sold by the smith, ironmonger and carpenter. These items were the most numerous in the gardens. Unlike the tools and implements, their costs ranged hugely from string used for tying the flowers to supports, costing 3d., to wooden stands needed for cutting trees and 'hedges' which cost upwards of £2.⁸⁵ The appearance of the utensils, machines and articles, in the bills is important because their existence in the gardens was perhaps the most ethereal, and these

⁸⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesman's Bills 109; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC.V. B1.

items allows for the identification of the other tasks undertaken in the care of the collegiate gardens.

5.6.1. Utensils

The appearance of different types and sizes of ceramic pots in some of the gardens does not provide much information on their design but the employment of painters to decorate them does provide evidence that they were placed on display. Painters' bills at St John's indicate that their largest pots, described as 'great pots', were painted and were likely to have been used to display the plants in the garden during the summer months.⁸⁶ Ceramic vessels at Lincoln were entered as flower or garden pots purchased at either 2d. (1756) or 2½d. (1772) each.⁸⁷ The supplier was not recorded in the College accounts and these form part of only a small number entries found relating to the purchase of flower pots by a gardener or any of the colleges.

St John's auricula stand would have needed pots for the display of auriculas but the bills have not survived.⁸⁸ The cheapness of pots and their vulnerability to damage means that there is very little trace of them in the college records. Additionally, during the second half of the eighteenth century it was unusual for college annual accounts to record such detailed information for every entry. In terms of developing an overall understanding of the material culture of the garden, the purchase and use of pots by gardeners it is still something of a blind spot.

Other containers used by the gardeners were tubs, water tubs and various vessels for watering. At Lincoln, in 1795, John Williams was employed to paint the College's

⁸⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC.V. B1.

⁸⁷ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1756; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/39 1772.

⁸⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC.V. B1.

tubs, water tubs and their stands in lead colour, while chairs were painted in the usual green.⁸⁹ The same effect can be seen in Peter Rysbrack's *Chiswick. View of the Orange Tree Garden*, which shows the wooden tubs containing the orange (*Citrus sinensis*) trees painted in what appears to be a uniform light lead colour while the nearby seats were painted green (Figure 5.10). This same colour scheme was used by Lincoln over sixty years later in its garden and grove.



Figure 5.10. Detail from Peter Andreas Rysbrack, *Chiswick. View of the Orange Tree Garden*, c.1728-32, oil on canvas. Copyright: The Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

The appearance of watering-pots and watering engines in the gardens introduces an additional tradesman and although water-pots were often purchased from a smith or ironmonger, the repairs were often carried out by braziers or whitesmiths. A long spouted water-pot cost Worcester 2s. 9d. and some of the college gardens appear to have spent more on watering apparatus.⁹⁰ Robert Penson purchased from Thomas Brash at least two double spouted watering pots at the cost of 5s. each, as well as a

⁸⁹ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

⁹⁰ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/2; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; New College Archive NCA 11382.

tin pipe and funnel at 3s., all bought for the Common Room Garden at Worcester.⁹¹ Lincoln, with a small garden, acquired a watering engine from an un-named tradesman in 1764 for the large sum of 7s. 6d.⁹² Overall, when compared to other garden apparatus there are relatively few references to watering equipment. This is in part due to the reduced number of surviving bills for ironmongers and smiths in some of the college collections. What little survives does, however, indicate that there was a diversity of watering utensils sold by the smiths and braziers for gardeners and that the colleges were prepared to purchase them to support the work of their gardeners.

Baskets were used by the gardeners as the utensils for collecting leaves and grass cuttings, rather than into barrows. Known as scuttle baskets, they were very tightly woven containers which were deemed extremely hardwearing, a fact borne out by the fact that replacements were not ordered very regularly. Scuttle work had the reputation for creating items of a robust construction, using a basketry technique that tightly wove willow rods around wooden slats. The scuttle baskets design prevented the contents collected by the gardeners from escaping even if it was fine.⁹³ The gardeners were responsible for buying these items and they recouped the costs when they submitted their own bills to the colleges. For much of the second half of the eighteenth century the baskets cost between 6d. and 9d. each but from the 1790s the cost had increased to 1s.⁹⁴ The frontispiece to volume 1 of William Hanbury's *A Complete Book of Planting and Gardening* included a scuttle basket in the engraving and the 1773 satirical print *Why a GARDENER is the most*

⁹¹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/20/2.

⁹² Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/36 1764.

⁹³ Maurice Bichard, *Baskets in Europe* (Abingdon: Fyfield Wick, 2008), 45-6.

⁹⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

extraordinary Man in the World also included one with a rake and spade as the symbols of his trade (Figure 5.11).⁹⁵ A scuttle basket provided the gardeners and labourers with a strong and easily transportable container which would, if carefully used, not leave a trace of the grass or other clippings after sweeping or cleaning in the garden.



Figure 5.11. William Hanbury, *A Complete Book of Planting and Gardening*, vol. 1, frontispiece, 1770, engraving. The scuttle basket was included amongst the key items of equipment for the gardener. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

⁹⁵ William Hanbury, *A Complete Book of Planting and Gardening*, vol. 1 (London: 1770), frontispiece.

5.6.2. Machines

In the college gardens there were relatively few 'machines' but they were the most expensive items used in terms of their cost and maintenance. One of the most important and well used of the 'machines' in a tool house was the grindstone.

Loudon declared the grindstone to be a vital element in any garden as it allowed the tools to be regularly sharpened.⁹⁶ The sharpening of tools was a job that was devolved by the college garden contractor to the smith or ironmonger. Although it was the ironmonger and smith who used the grindstone, the carpenter was the tradesman who was hired to construct the stand and often provided the stone itself.⁹⁷

A smith's employment for care for the garden tools and their use of a garden grindstone to sharpen specific bladed items forms a calendar of sorts for the horticultural jobs during the year. While the scythes were regularly sharpened between spring and autumn, the grinding and care of the pruning knives, hatchets and other bladed implements used in the cutting and pruning of trees, vines and hedges were primarily undertaken in the winter, when they were needed.⁹⁸

Wheeled barrows appeared regularly in the carpenters' bills for the colleges. The larger gardens owned a variety of barrows, allowing different types of work to be undertaken. Garden barrows, weed barrows, crib barrows and water barrows were all made by the contracting carpenters at considerable expense to the colleges (Figure 5.12). In 1763, 1771 and 1779 a new large wheel or garden barrow cost 12s., while smaller wheel barrows cost 9s., and in 1779 a water barrow cost 7s. 6d. but the cost of the accompanying water tub was listed as an additional expense.⁹⁹ By

⁹⁶ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 385.

⁹⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁸ Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 506.

⁹⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

1806 two new wheels, painted and with 'good ironwork' for a water barrow were charged to Wadham at the sum of £2 10s.¹⁰⁰

Loads of loam, dung and gravel were delivered by nurserymen or scavengers, and had to be moved around the garden and this clearly took a toll on the timber built structures.¹⁰¹ Lighter items, such as grass clippings, were carried in scuttle baskets. The most common repair noted in the bills was the replacement of the sides of a barrow, followed by the mending, or the replacement, of wheels. A wooden wheel would cost the college authorities between 3s. and 4s. every time it was replaced.¹⁰² Once constructed, the wheels could then be given iron or leather tyres.¹⁰³ The use of two different materials for tyres for a wheelbarrow suggests that there were areas of the garden that were suited to the use of leather as an appropriate material rather than iron and *vice versa*. While the materials themselves were not sophisticated, the application of them to meet the gardeners' needs was. Leather could not have been regularly used on an abrasive surface like gravel. Wheelbarrows with leather tyres must have been for use on softer surfaces such as grass. The application of simple materials produced a sophisticated technological response in the garden to meet the individual needs of the environment it was used in.

¹⁰⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/6.

¹⁰¹ Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 459.

¹⁰² Abercrombie, 475.

¹⁰³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Abercrombie, *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hotbed Forcer*, 475.

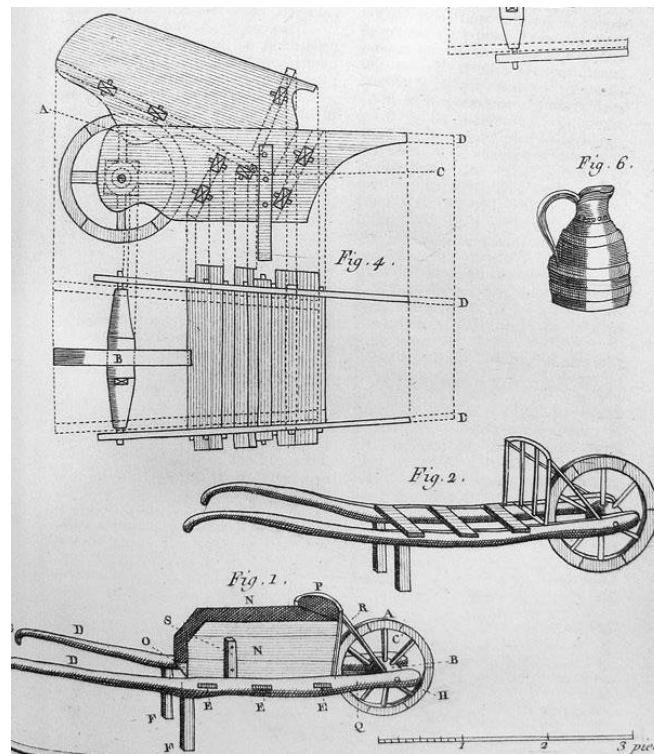


Figure 5.12. Detail from Abbe Rozier, *Cours complet d'agriculture*, volume II, 1783, engraving, plate xvii. Designs for different types of barrows. Copyright: Lindley Library RHS.

Ladders were placed under the sub-heading of machines in Loudon's system because they aided the tasks of pruning and nailing trees and vines as well as other tasks.¹⁰⁴ They were not priced by their length but by the number of 'rounds' (rungs) they possessed.¹⁰⁵ Purchased from the carpenter, like so many other wooden items in the garden, the customer, in the eighteenth century, bore the additional expense of having to have them painted separately.¹⁰⁶ In 1806 Wadham was able to purchase a ladder, already painted from the carpenter Litchfield for 11s. 3d., during a period of time when contractors were beginning to move into what became known as the building trade and provided more diverse services.¹⁰⁷ At St John's there were ladders of 8, 15 and 24 rounds used by the gardeners and these were constantly

¹⁰⁴ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 332.

¹⁰⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/6.

repaired by the carpenters.¹⁰⁸ The regularity of the repairs might indicate that there was heavy use of them. In gardens such as St John's and Wadham the large number of wall trees and vines needing various types of seasonal care meant that ladders were in regular use for these tasks.

One technological response to the management of the trees and hedges maintained by some of the colleges was the building and use of stands that allowed the gardeners to work more easily at height. In the gardens of Wadham, Trinity and St John's the employment of carpenters and painters was required to build and maintain specialist equipment. Guides to Oxford noted the complexity and scale of some of the 'hedges' found in the gardens of the three colleges.¹⁰⁹ In order to manage trees and hedges, garden stands were required, rather than the gardeners needing to rely on ladders, which had their limitations. Garden stands were used seasonally and appeared in the surviving bills for the first time in January and February or February and March.¹¹⁰ Billing for the construction, the taking down of the stands and their storage appeared again in July or August and they made their final appearances in the gardens in September and October.¹¹¹

Carpenters were employed to build and maintain the stands or platforms for the colleges, constructing them out of elm, oak and deal.¹¹² James Thomson was engaged by St John's in February 1761 to make a replacement for an earlier garden stand.¹¹³ The stand, including labour, cost the College £2 3s. 9d., having taken a

¹⁰⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁹ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1764), 76; *The New Oxford Guide* (Oxford: 1765), 44, 50.

¹¹⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

carpenter seven and a half days to build it.¹¹⁴ In 1773 Thomson was again engaged to use two carpenters to reconstruct the large garden stand ‘part new’ at a total cost of £1 18s. 2½d.¹¹⁵

Garden stands, like the one used at Trinity, had wheels added to the frame, allowing them to be moved around rather than simply being static (Figure 5.13).¹¹⁶ A new stand, constructed in 1761 for St John’s, appears to have needed two wheels in its design according to the bill.¹¹⁷ This design must have required the gardeners to lift it at the back, like a barrow, in order to move it. James Thomson’s 1760 carpentry bill for St John’s, indicated that at least one of the College’s stands operated on a one-inch-thick board.¹¹⁸ The role of the board was described in the bill ‘for the stand to run on’.¹¹⁹ This description suggests that the stands needed an even surface to allow them to move easily. The mobility of the stands was probably quite limited. Bills for St John’s record that stands had to be taken down and put up again by carpenters several times during their seasonal use in order for them to be moved to where the gardeners needed to work.¹²⁰ In *The Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening* a description for a ‘Hedge-Clipping Machine’ was given as a ‘machine-scaffolding, or stage, ten, twenty, or thirty feet high, or more, with platforms at different heights, to stand on...a platform or stage fix at every seven or eight feet height’.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹⁵ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹⁶ Trinity College Archive, TCA/IF/2.

¹¹⁷ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹⁸ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹¹⁹ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁰ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²¹ McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, Hedge-Clipping Machine.

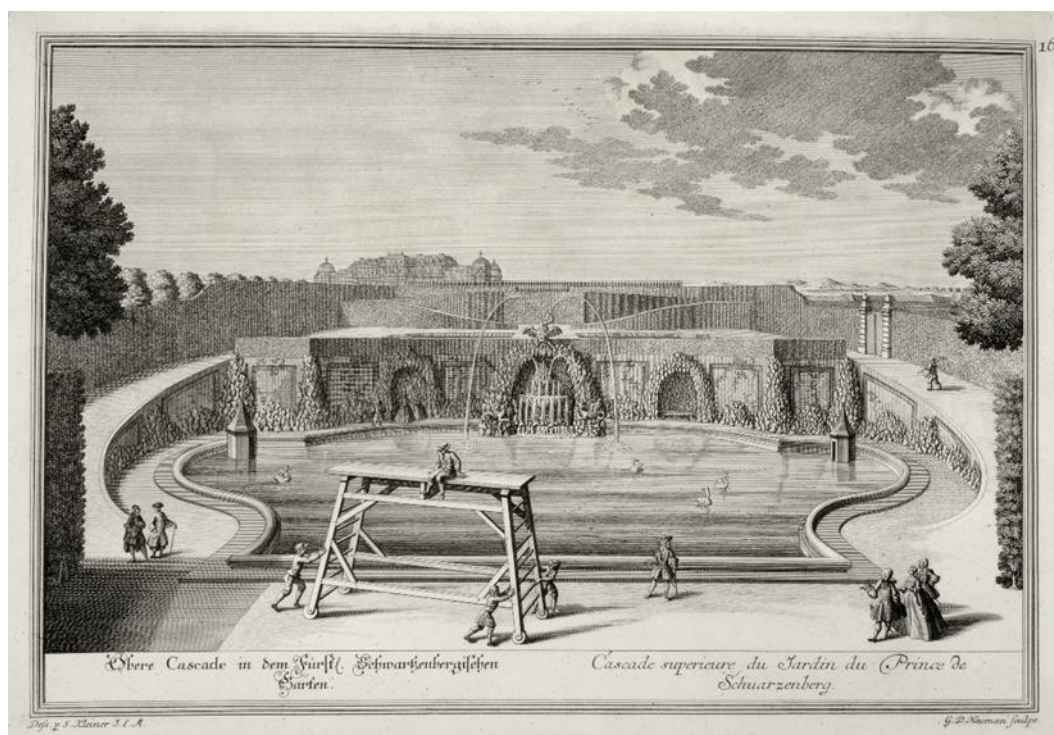


Figure 5.13. “The exceptional cascade in the garden of Prince Schwarzenberg” in Salomon Kleiner, *Viererley Vorstellungen*, c. 1730, engraving, plate 16. A stand for cutting hedges recorded as a mobile platform on wheels. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

The ‘great stand’ at St John’s was certainly put together in a similar way to the machine described in *The Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening* so that it could be adjusted to the height required by the gardeners.¹²² In 1770 the College was charged for ‘putting up part of the Large Stand To cut ye Ewe Hedge’ using four men, with James Thomson charging 2s. rather than the usual 4s. for the job.¹²³ The Thomson carpentry bill for 1773 again recorded the partial putting up and taking down of the great stand to cut the yew hedge and the cost had risen to 2s. 6d. each time.¹²⁴ The flexibility of the design and construction of the garden stands would have allowed the gardeners to work on the trees and hedges in a more stable and safer way than simply using ladders. McDonald’s *The Complete Dictionary of*

¹²² St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, Hedge-Clipping Machine.

¹²³ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁴ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

Practical Gardening noted that in large pleasure grounds the use of a stand or hedge-clipping machine was a necessity.¹²⁵

The construction of the stands, their taking down and their subsequent movement and reconstruction required a reasonable number of men who could be called on by the carpenter to be used by the gardeners on a day to day basis. The large or great stand used at St John's required four men, while the large stand belonging to Trinity required the labour of only three men.¹²⁶ At the end of the cutting or trimming of the yew hedges and trees the carpenter was employed to provide men for the stands to be taken down and stored for the season. In the case of St John's they were stored 'in house', although the location meant by that description is unknown.¹²⁷

Garden stands were painted, even though they were only used for short periods of time each year to cut evergreens and trees. A bill from William Rought recorded that on 15 May 1774 St John's was charged 7s. 6d. for 'Painting Part of ye Garden Stand'.¹²⁸ This stand may have been the one which was partly made anew in February 1774 and recorded in James Thomson's bill to the College.¹²⁹ Although the colour of the paint for the stands was not stated in the bills for St John's, Wadham, New College and Trinity, it is reasonable to suppose that they were painted green so that they did not stand out in the garden while they were set up.

The stands had to be put up and dismantled either each day or week when they were required to be moved. This activity appears to have taken its toll on their structure. Carpenters were regularly engaged in their repair; in 1770 the 'great stand'

¹²⁵ McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, Garden frame.

¹²⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

at St John's was mended on 2 February and again on 26 July, while it was being used in the garden.¹³⁰ In January 1771 St John's used the services of four men employed by James Thomson on three occasions to put up and take down the stands for the gardeners and he was required to employ labour again for a further two occasions in February.¹³¹ The total expense of putting up and mending the garden stands for those two months amounted to 17s. 6d. and in August the expenses associated with the stands were a further 6s. 6d.¹³² In 1771 the overall cost for maintenance and construction of the St John's stands, used for the care of the trees and hedges in the two groves, was at least £1 4s.¹³³

After the formation of a single garden from the two groves at St John's was completed in 1778, elements such as the tall yew hedges were removed. The surviving carpenters' and joiners' bills for the College after 1778 do not include charges for mending or putting up the stands, strongly suggesting that they were not required in the redesigned garden. Trinity continued to retain its impressive panelled yews into the early nineteenth century, as a drawing of the public garden by Dawson Warren in 1801 reveals (Figure 5.14).¹³⁴ A surviving bill for 1789 confirms that Trinity continued to use the stands after its neighbour St John's had stopped using them.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹³¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹³² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹³³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹³⁴ Clare Hopkins, *Trinity: 450 Years of an Oxford College Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 135.

¹³⁵ Trinity College Archive, TCA.IF/2.



Figure 5.14. Dawson Warren, *View of Trinity College from the Garden*, 1801, pen and ink. The complex panels of the *palissades* remained at Trinity College longer than many other colleges. Copyright: Trinity College.

In Wadham's Fellows' Garden a stand ladder or small portable platform was used in the 1770s rather than a garden stand. In size it stood between a ladder and a garden stand.¹³⁶ They were smaller and slightly more portable than the garden stands described above. The problem with the stand ladder was that it still required a carpenter to erect it rather than simply being operated by a gardener, like a ladder. The employment of a carpenter meant that the college, in operating a smaller system, was still incurring annual expenses in its assembly as well as general maintenance.

Regular sessional expenses incurred by St John's for the making, maintenance and putting up/taking down of their stands as a result of the tasks required in the upkeep of the specific features in the groves. When the College changed the design and planting through the unification of the garden, the use of the stands became

¹³⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

redundant. Such large and relatively regular expenses expended by colleges on the maintenance of large *palissades* or panelled hedges for a large part of the eighteenth century indicates the status of these features. Complex horticultural designs and techniques involving large numbers of skilled tradesmen were highly visible forms of conspicuous consumption.

5.6.3. Articles

In the 1835 edition of the *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* Loudon added a further section to his typology for implements titled 'articles' which was sub-divided in three further groups: articles of adaption, articles of manufacture and articles of preparation.¹³⁷ Loudon defined articles as objects that did not fit into the definitions for machines or implements.¹³⁸ Rather articles were items which supported specific tasks and other implements in the garden. The majority of these items were brought directly by the gardeners. It is likely that they were responsibility of the gardeners as they were used in the activities covered in the maintenance agreement with the college. Articles such as nails were used in the care of the vines and wall trees and flower sticks were required in support and order of growing plants.¹³⁹

The appearance of paper or muslin bags in the bills of gardeners at Lincoln, University College and Worcester draws attention to the importance of the gardener's role in the protection of the annual fruit crops.¹⁴⁰ These bags were purchased in the summer and autumn for covering bunches of grapes to provide protection from birds and insects; Loudon suggested they could be used for the care

¹³⁷ John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London: 1835), 515-6.

¹³⁸ Loudon, 558.

¹³⁹ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 296, 313-314.

¹⁴⁰ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12; University College Archive, UC 1F/2L2; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

of stone-fruit as well.¹⁴¹ The survival of gardeners' bills recording the acquisition of the bags provides small but vital evidence for the importance of fruit production in the college landscapes. There would have been no need to protect the fruit if the colleges and their fellows did not expect to retain the annual crop. Bags were used when the grape bunches were ripe so that they could be protected until they were cut and sent into the house when required.¹⁴² To be able to serve table grapes and soft stoned-fruit as part of dessert in the colleges was a sign of their social status and the skill of the gardeners they employed via the contractor.¹⁴³ In 1815 Robert Penson directed one of his sub-contractors to collect the fruit in Worcester's South Garden over three days, charging 2s. 6d. a day for their labour.¹⁴⁴ Other articles were used to preserve the fruit crop in the gardens. The gardener of Lincoln purchased netting for the trees in 1782 at a cost of £1 1s. 8d. in order to preserve the fruit from the birds.¹⁴⁵ Wadham's gardener, Edward Knibbs, purchased strong netting at 1s. a yard in June 1788 and he brought a net for a cherry tree at Balliol for 4s. in June 1794.¹⁴⁶

To preserve or care for the fruit once it was picked, the college gardeners used additional items which allowed it to reach the table in an appropriate condition. Edward Knibbs, at Wadham, brought straw so that the apples could be stored appropriately through the winter months, ensuring they were available for consumption out of season.¹⁴⁷ At St John's the gardeners Henry Moore and Robert

¹⁴¹ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 485; Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1835), 560.

¹⁴² Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 485.

¹⁴³ Liz Bellamy, *The Language of Fruit: Literature and Horticulture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019), 74-75.

¹⁴⁴ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹⁴⁵ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/41 1783.

¹⁴⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; Balliol College Archive, MBP 28.a.

¹⁴⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 448, 525.

Penson purchased small fruit or mulberry baskets in which the fruit could be sent to the table after it had been safely collected (Figure 5.15).¹⁴⁸ The connection between the garden and the fellows' common room provides an example of an additional role that the collegiate garden could fulfil. Gardener's bills hint at the skills needed in the husbandry of fruit, all so that the colleges were able to offer a luxurious dessert as an additional element of the dining experience for guests.¹⁴⁹ The records for the purchase of articles used in the care of fruit production provide the necessary hard evidence to prove the role that some of the gardens played in supporting the dining and entertainment in the colleges. In some gardens, such as those of Lincoln, Worcester, Wadham and St John's, fine home grown wall fruit added status to the institutions as producers of favoured delicacies, as well as being owners of elegant gardens.¹⁵⁰



Figure 5.15. Thomas Rowlandson, *Picking Mulberries*, n.d., watercolour, Yale Center for British Art. The mulberries and soft fruit were picked and placed in shallow baskets and then placed in long, narrow, handled baskets known as pottles for transportation. Copyright: Yale Center for British Art.

¹⁴⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁴⁹ Liz Bellamy, *The Language of Fruit*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Bellamy, 7.

Bills for flower sticks, stakes, props, hoops and arbour rods show that the materials were supplied by gardeners or delivered by the carpenters. Flower sticks and arbour rods were provided by the bundle, dozen and 'half hundred' while stakes were often charged for individually.¹⁵¹ Robert Penson, regularly provided stakes for his clients. In 1801 he billed Worcester for 56 stakes for the apple trees at the cost of 4s. 8d.¹⁵² The needs of Edward Knibbs, the gardener at Wadham, were at times met directly by the college carpenters, but many gardeners provided their own sticks and stakes, such as William Hickman at New College and Robert Penson at Worcester; although it is not entirely clear where they purchased them from.¹⁵³ A bill submitted to the Wadham bursar for settlement, by Edward Knibbs in February 1792, was for the purchase of 80 stakes and two bundles of arbour rods which came from John Hughes, a cooper based in the parish of St Mary Magdalene.¹⁵⁴ That bill, and a further one submitted to Balliol by Knibbs in 1794 for 130 stakes and 98 hoops from Hughes, provide clues as to who were the small scale suppliers of wooden materials for gardeners.¹⁵⁵ In 1794 stakes and rods were supplied and used by Edward Knibbs in the creation of a 'mound' or island bed in the garden at Lincoln at the cost of 3s.¹⁵⁶ The cost of the stakes were worked out at each 1½.d and Knibbs required 24 stakes to create the support he needed for planting a 'mound'.¹⁵⁷

While the size of the sticks was not usually recorded in the bills, in May 1806 three dozen flower sticks were cut into four foot lengths for use in the Wadham garden at

¹⁵¹ Brasenose College Archives, Tradesmen's Bills 76.

¹⁵² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/3.

¹⁵³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; New College Archive, NCA 11389; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/3.

¹⁵⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4.

¹⁵⁵ Balliol College Archives, MBP 28.A.

¹⁵⁶ Lincoln College Archive, LC/ B/B/12.

¹⁵⁷ Lincoln College Archive, LC/ B/B/12.

the cost of 6s by John Lichfield's men.¹⁵⁸ The existence of two small flower gardens at Brasenose meant that the College consumed a large number of flower sticks.

Thomas Mason, the College gardener, provided bundles of 25 and 50 sticks and in 1760 he charged the College for 100 flower sticks with a total cost of £1 6s.¹⁵⁹

Once purchased the stakes and sticks were often passed on to the painters who painted them green. Smith was employed to paint flower sticks at Corpus Christi in May 1762 at a total cost of 6s. to the College.¹⁶⁰ In order to tie the plants to the flower sticks at Brasenose, and elsewhere, quantities of string or packthread were purchased and used each year.¹⁶¹ Robert Penson carefully noted in his 1780 bill that the purchase of packthread was for the plants in the garden at Brasenose.¹⁶² In 1787 Penson purchased string and packthread for tying the plants, suggesting that he required the option to choose the most suitable material depending on the size or delicacy of the task.¹⁶³ Tar twine, being thicker and stronger than packthread, was used for tying shrubs and trees to more substantial supports in the form of stakes. Robert Penson entered the cost of stakes and twine together in his bills for Worcester.¹⁶⁴ Like his entries for nails and listing the gardener was pairing materials in his bills that were used together in the execution of their tasks.¹⁶⁵

Through investigating the supply and use of flower sticks and stakes in surviving bills it is possible to see the large numbers that were required annually to support the work of the gardeners. The clump and island beds of the second half of the

¹⁵⁸ Lincoln College Archive, LC/ B/B/12.

¹⁵⁹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 74.

¹⁶⁰ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/2/1.

¹⁶¹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 84.

¹⁶² Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 98.

¹⁶³ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 107.

¹⁶⁴ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

¹⁶⁵ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

eighteenth century would have required large numbers of stakes and sticks to allow the gardener to maintain the desired effects.¹⁶⁶ The bills from the cooper, John Hughes, to Edward Knibbs provide a valuable insight into who supplied materials to the gardeners, apart from the large contracting carpenters working for the colleges.¹⁶⁷ A cooper, whose trade required the cutting of wooden staves for barrels, would be a logical supplier of sticks and would have been more interested in such a small commission than large scale contractors. Additionally a cooper would have had the knowledge and skill to heat and bend wood into the hoops required by the gardeners like Knibbs to use.

5.6.4. Shreds and listing: by-products of tailors and the cloth industry

People worked in the gardens used materials until they became obsolete either because of changing fashion or innovation. Leather strips, used in Lincoln's garden in 1729, were employed to tie wall trees to the nails.¹⁶⁸ Strips of leather were a popular material used by gardeners in the nailing of trees until it was recommended to gardeners that listing, or shreds, were better for the health of the trees.¹⁶⁹ Batty Langley in his *New Principles of Gardening* warned gardeners not to use leather strips as ties and instead recommended the use of listing or cloth scraps.¹⁷⁰ There are no surviving gardener's bill or entries in the *Annual Accounts* from 1733 at Lincoln, or any other colleges, that included charges for leather strips. Instead cloth

¹⁶⁶ Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 335.

¹⁶⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4; Balliol College Archive, MBP 28.a.

¹⁶⁸ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/34 1729.

¹⁶⁹ Batty Langley, *New Principles of Gardening* (London: 1728), 82; Richard Bradley, *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening: Both Philosophical and Practical* (London: 1739), 207.

¹⁷⁰ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, 82.

shreds, listing or tacking stuff appeared to have been used by the gardeners to tie the trees to the nails, replacing leather as the preferred material.

A shred was a description for a strip of cloth, approximately three inches in length with its width cut to suit the thickness of branches or the vine cordons and canes.¹⁷¹ John Loudon noted, a century later and after Langley's advice, that some gardeners had returned to the use of leather shreds rather than cloth but this trend did not appear to have been taken up by the college gardeners at Oxford.¹⁷² Recommended cloths for use as shreds were woollen scraps which could be purchased directly from tailors or piece and rag sellers.¹⁷³ These pieces of cloth were commonly known as tailors' shreds and Oxford in the eighteenth century had a large number of tailors working in the City to meet the demand of the University population. It was no doubt fairly easy for gardeners to acquire the necessary scraps for their needs. Another type of fabric scrap, recommended for use in the garden, was listing, which was the partly finished edge of woven cloth, also known as selvage, designed to prevent the cloth from fraying.¹⁷⁴ Left over broadcloth was also sold as textile scraps and could be used as for shreds. Broadcloth was popular with gardeners because it did not fray when it was cut up.¹⁷⁵

The charges for shreds, also known as tackin or tackage, were added to the gardeners' bills for their contracted work at the colleges. On occasion the cost of the shreds was entered alone in the bills and at other times it was combined with the purchase of nails suitable for using on the walls; the gardeners paid for the cloth

¹⁷¹ John Abercrombie, *Gardener's Kalender and System of Practical Gardening* (London: 1789), 478.

¹⁷² Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1835), 563.

¹⁷³ Charles Harrison, *A Treatise on the Culture and Management of Fruit Trees* (London: 1825), 79; John Abercrombie, *The Complete Wall-Tree Pruner* (London: 1783), 20.

¹⁷⁴ Abercrombie, 20.

¹⁷⁵ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1835), 563.

scraps with their own money. Unlike turf, plants and other items the gardeners did not submit additional bills for shreds as proof of the cost, suggesting that they were charging for the shreds as an item manufactured by the gardener and the cost of buying the tailors scraps formed only part of the final price. Although Loudon defined shreds as an 'article of manufacture', this was not wholly correct as they had to be altered by the gardener before use, making it an item of adaptation, like gauze bags for grapes.¹⁷⁶ The preparation of shreds was recommended as a winter activity for full time gardeners in contemporary gardening calendars, during the quiet months of December and January.¹⁷⁷ However the colleges appear to have purchased their shreds throughout the year from their contractors rather than buying them in bulk. The variations in the expenditure on shreds, found in the numerous bills of Edward and Thomas Knibbs, successive gardeners at Wadham and Robert Penson at St John's, suggest that they only bought the materials as and when it was needed.¹⁷⁸

According to various eighteenth and nineteenth century gardening manuals, it was possible to reuse shreds if they were taken down and boiled with soap suds to destroy the possibility of any insect eggs hatching, but the use of new cloth was preferable.¹⁷⁹ The regular purchases of new nails and shreds each year at Wadham and St John's provides strong evidence to suggest that gardeners responsible for these gardens did not recycle the fabric, so as to prevent any insect damage to the trees they cared for, or damage to their reputations. It is highly likely that the contracting gardeners also used new nails and listing to limit the amount of time they

¹⁷⁶ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1835), 563.

¹⁷⁷ Phillip Miller, *The gardeners kalender* (London: 1765), 3.

¹⁷⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/4; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/5; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁷⁹ Joshua Major, *A Treatise on the insects most prevalent on fruit trees and garden produce* (London: 1829), 282; McDonald, *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening*, Insect disease.

might have spent re-preparing the shreds and recycling old nails, something which would have been economically unsound for a contractor.

The value of studying the purchasing trends of shreds, listing or tackage is that it can be used as an indicator of the colleges whose gardens contained wall trees, vines and *espaliere*d fruit trees. Wadham's garden used enormous quantities of fabric and nails, indicating that the Fellows' Garden possessed many such trees while the relatively small sums spent on shreds at New College point to a lesser emphasis on wall and *espaliere*d fruit trees in the planting for that college.¹⁸⁰

Over time college gardens changed their patterns of consumption, adopting new materials and relationships with tradesman. The purchase of materials such as shreds, rather than leather strips, by the garden contractors indicates that the gardeners were aware of new approaches in horticultural practice during the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁸¹ Additionally the purchase of shreds only when they were required shows how a highly commercial operation, such a garden contracting, did not waste its time preparing materials when it was not being paid to undertake the work. The bills reveal that the contracting gardeners working for the colleges operated a system of purchasing material that did not commit them to any more advanced financial outlay than was entirely necessary. Nor did the contractors alienate their clients by attempting to charge them for materials and services that did not provide them with value for money.

¹⁸⁰ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/4; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/5; New College Archive NCA 11389.

¹⁸¹ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, 82.

5.7. Summary

The maintenance of college gardens required the skills and services of more than just the horticultural trade. Evidence in the tradesmen's bills, demonstrates the close and efficient partnerships that existed between the various trades that worked in the gardens. The contractors from the building trades operated efficient commercial organisations that allocated sub-contractors to the tasks that needed to be carried out to support the operational needs of the college gardener.

The identification of auricula stands, hot beds and flower sheds has allowed the college gardens to be associated with a great emphasis on the horticultural practises and technologies. Through the gardeners' and tradesmen's bills it is possible to acknowledge the care they took in looking after the fruit which would be served in the colleges. In addition the surviving bills indicate the importance of the skills needed by the gardeners to meet the needs of their employers. By identifying the creation and use of *espalier* hedges and other *treillage* work it has also been possible to form a more detailed picture of elements of the gardens' designs and the gardeners' involvement in their maintenance.

Studying the specific technologies available to the gardeners, such as scythes, allows for a deeper understanding of the ways in which a gardener or labourer would work and the importance of trades and technology in the shaping of the garden.¹⁸²

The creation of stands, designed to allow the trees and hedges to be cut, was a

¹⁸² Michael G. Lee and Kenneth I. Helphand, *Technology and the Garden* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), 1, 5.

product of the ingenuity of the carpenters. Without these stands the large palisades hiding the stone rubble walls would not have been possible to maintain.

Michael Lee and Kenneth Helphand were correct in observing that gardens are a product of different technologies and the college gardens of Oxford bear out this fact.¹⁸³ Diversities in materials, skills and tools shaped and refined the garden. Most college gardens were designed for sociability, status and productivity, demanding differing approaches to their design, organisation and care. The demands made of the gardeners to create and maintain garden features required them to use multiple appropriate technologies. Maintenance of the gardens required the employment of skilled gardeners to understand how to use the technologies appropriately. The training, employment and seasonal tasks that were undertaken by college contractors and sub-contractors will be explored in the following chapter.

¹⁸³ Lee and Helphand, *Technology and the Garden*, 5.

Chapter 6 Gardeners in the collegiate gardens

The figure of the college gardener, as a loyal, long serving servant, cut off from the realities of the city of Oxford, developed during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in part out of romanticism and myth-making about the University.¹ Robert Günther noted in 1912 that the colleges used their own gardeners and that if they were organised together, the care for the gardens would be better. Little did Günther know that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there had already been groups of gardens cared for by the same contractors.² College gardeners between 1733 and 1837 operated as contractors rather than being directly employed by the institutions.

The college garden contractor in Oxford, between 1733 and 1837, was a business man rather than a private servant. The system of contracting meant that the gardeners could operate in more than one college garden at any time. Through the localised study of the working life and practices of the college gardeners in Oxford this chapter identifies and assesses the systems of contraction and sub-contraction. This chapter critically examines the relationship between the daily rates charged by contractors and 'real' pay received by the gardeners and labourers. By doing so it questions the existing understanding of the employment and remuneration systems of garden contracting.

¹ John Dougall, *Oxford in English Literature* (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2010), 160, 192, 272.

² R.T. Günther, *Oxford Gardens Based upon Daubeny's Popular Guide to the Physic Garden of Oxford: With Notes on the Gardens of the Colleges and on the University Park* (Oxford: Parker and Son, 1912), 201.

6.1. The typology of gardeners

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the terminology used to identify specific types of gardeners was complex and often confusing. In 1701, the Company of Gardeners of the City of London described their craft as containing seven categories, while their 1605 charter had included 16 different types of tradesmen.³ In 1728 Batty Langley reduced the categories of horticultural trades to six: kitchen, fruit, flower, market, nursery and physic.⁴ In 1822 J.C. Loudon created 12 categories for 'Tradesmen-Gardeners' alone, however he acknowledged that a nurseryman might also operate as a seedsman or florist.⁵

The wills of men operating their own independent horticultural businesses in Oxford indicate that members of the trade did not use such a complex typology when they applied their own designations. In the wills written by members of the trade most of them used the term 'gardener' rather than the many categories devised by contemporary writers on horticultural subjects.⁶ For the most part, at least in Oxford, the categorisation of the types of horticultural worker was a paper exercise undertaken by writers on horticultural subjects.

To rely on a detailed categorisation in order to understand the businesses and careers of tradesmen-gardeners in a localised study is limiting and ultimately confusing. The contemporary directories that included Oxford's tradesmen gave very little information about the true number or types of gardeners operating in the City and University. In the *Universal Directory of Britain* (1794) only four gardeners were

³ Richard Bradley, *A General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening*, vol. 1 (London: 1723), 347.

⁴ Batty Langley, *New Principles of Gardening* (London: 1728), 26.

⁵ John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London: 1822), 1200-1.

⁶ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 165/1/30; Oxfordshire History Centre, 156/5/37; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 138/4/52; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 271/4/14.

listed as tradesmen: James Cook, Robert Penson, John Penson and William West.⁷ James Tagg also operated as a nurseryman but he was included in a separate list as a member of the City's Corporation as he had previously served as the Bailiff.⁸ From the five men recorded in the *Universal Directory*, only Tagg and both Pensons held college garden contracts at any time.⁹ Only five of the principal tradesmen-gardeners of the City were included, obscuring the large number of gardeners who also operated in Oxford.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries college garden contractors operated diverse business interests. Nurseries, market gardens, seed shops and leasehold farms, or small holdings, were run to provide their owners with a diversity of income and potentially greater financial security.¹⁰ The wealthier and more established gardeners such as the Taggs and Pensons also invested in property and land.¹¹ Moreover the college contractors were almost inevitably maintaining and laying out the gardens belonging to townfolk living in Oxford; the businesses of the tradesmen-gardeners were both complex and multi-layered.

6.2. Gardeners, civic status and protectionism

The job of the contracting gardener could be a tough one, relying on a buoyant local economy and employers settling their bills on time. Their viability as businesses were

⁷ *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce, and Manufacture*, vol. 4 (London: 1794), 151, 154.

⁸ *The Universal British Directory of Trade*, 148.

⁹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR1/20/1; St John's College, SJA ACC V. B1; Jesus College Archive, JCA BU AC GEN 8.

¹⁰ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 156/5/37; Oxfordshire History Centre Will 211.280; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 6 March 1830; Oxford History Centre, Will 152/3/15.

¹¹ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1841/367; The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1582/439; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 103.144.

dependent on a market that was not flooded with other contractors undercutting their own prices, and labour costs remaining cheap. Some colleges formally recorded the appointment of their gardener in their convention books but on the whole the gardeners' bills and their names in the college accounts are the only record of their employment that survives.¹² The contractor's submission of monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or yearly accounts illustrates the size and the types of contracts the gardeners were employed under by the colleges.¹³

A number of the gardeners operating in Oxford between 1733 and 1837 were freemen of the City. Officially all tradesmen operating within the City were required to possess the freedom of the City as a system to licence and control trade.¹⁴ The protectionism that operated in Oxford during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in theory, stopped outsiders from offering cheaper goods and services from elsewhere and prevented the undercutting of the existing labour charges set by the freemen. The 1802 list of freemen, who voted in the election of the City's Members of Parliament, revealed that only eight gardeners held the freedom and were resident in Oxford.¹⁵ The 1841 list for the City elections recorded three tradesmen-gardeners as freeman but revealed a further 27 were listed as householders entitled to vote.¹⁶

The University offered its own form of protection for tradesmen in the form of privileged person status or *privilegiatus*.¹⁷ University privileges were popular with the

¹² Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹³ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8.

¹⁴ Alan Crossley, ed., *A History of Oxfordshire. vol. 4. The City of Oxford* (Oxford: For the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1979), 225, 226.

¹⁵ *The poll of the freemen of the City of Oxford* (Oxford: 1802), 14, 26, 35, 62.

¹⁶ *The poll of freemen and electors of the City of Oxford* (Oxford: 1841), 12, 21, 31, 32, 43, 45, 46, 47, 49, 55, 56, 57, 58, 65, 67, 72, 74, 75.

¹⁷ Mary D. Lobel and H. E. Salter, eds., *A History of Oxfordshire. vol. 3. The University of Oxford* (London: For the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1954), 17, 18, 19, 24, 206, 221.

city's cooks, booksellers and barbers but less so with gardeners.¹⁸ The University's stance against the civic power of the City was likely to have made the status of *privilegiatus* a limiting and unattractive one for gardeners. Additionally the contractors' clients were the colleges and not individual spendthrift students.

During the first half of the eighteenth century a number of gardeners held multiple college contracts without taking up *privilegiatus* status. In the 1720s and 1730s Simon Stubbs maintained the contracts for Pembroke, University College and Exeter and William Stockford managed the gardens at Merton and University College.¹⁹ Neither of these individuals, according to Foster's registers, took up the protection that the University offered tradesmen as a *privilegiatus*.²⁰ John Foreman of Wadham, and later the Physic Garden, was matriculated as a privileged tradesman on 19 May 1778. Unusually Foreman's employment as a gardener appears to have rested solely within the University.²¹ In 1830 St John's contractor Thomas Fairbairn took up the status of *privilegiatus* but this form of civic protectionism did not stop him from slipping into debt.²² Gardeners operating in Oxford needed to be able to work under both jurisdictions. The University refused to allow its own members, including privileged persons, to hold the freedom of the City at the same time.²³ Both Fairbairn and Foreman, as gardeners, were unusual in taking up the protection of the University. Between 1733 and 1836 there were only four cases of gardeners matriculating with the University as privileged persons.²⁴ The incompatibility of

¹⁸ Joseph Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses 1715-1800*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Parker and Company, 1881).

¹⁹ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/D/1/2/1; University College Archive UC/BUR2/F1/3; Exeter College Archive, ECA A.II; Merton College Archive MCA 3.8; University College Archive UC: BU2/F1/4.

²⁰ Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses 1715-1800*, vols. 1,2,3,4.

²¹ Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 477.

²² Foster, vol. 2, 444.

²³ W.R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 189.

²⁴ Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses*, vol. 1, 314; Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 534.

holding the status of freeman and *privilegiatus* meant that the University's special status for its servants and tradesmen was not an appealing one for gardeners.

6.3. The status of the contractor within the horticultural trade

The responsibility for the maintenance of the college gardens and walks must have enhanced the professional reputation and prestige of the contractors. Visitors to the colleges and the users of the public walks were able to view the effects of the gardeners' skills and in some cases assess the quality of the trees, shrubs and flowers from their nurseries. Announcements in the *Oxford Journal* and the *Oxford University and City Herald* applied the names of college gardens, as a designation of their employment, after the surnames of the gardeners to indicate the patronage of a college and emphasise their relationship with the University.²⁵

Defining who was a master gardener in Oxford in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century is a difficult task. One of the few direct indicators for identifying master gardeners comes from the City's apprentice enrolments.²⁶ Additionally a tradesman gardener holding a college contract could also be defined as a master gardener even if they employed little additional labour.²⁷

Thomas Burton, sometime contractor at Worcester, was a small-scale tradesman-gardener. His employment patterns, when assessed in isolation through the bills he

²⁵ *Oxford Journal*, 5 August 1775; *Oxford Journal*, 12 December 1794; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 14 November 1807; *Oxford Journal*, 15 May 1830.

²⁶ Malcolm Graham ed., *Oxford City Apprentices 1697-1800*, Oxford Historical Society New Series, vol. 31 (Oxford: Clarendon Press for the Oxford Historical Society, 1987), 122, 133, 135, 161, 169, 183, 187, 195, 238, 240, 243.

²⁷ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 1200.

submitted, make it difficult to identify his position within the horticultural hierarchy.²⁸ Although Burton billed the authorities for just over 40 working days, between February and June 1778, only 15 of these were charged to cover the labour rate for his 'man'.²⁹ Out of these 15 days, six and a half of them were used to help build a road with the additional help of his son; this job was outside of the usual tasks in the horticultural year for maintenance contractors and was added as an additional expense.³⁰ Burton's position, according to his 1778 bill, appears to indicate that his position was that of a jobbing gardener, a position usually held to be at the bottom of the tradesmen-gardener hierarchy.³¹ However by virtue of his holding the contract for the maintenance of Worcester's garden Burton was afforded the title of the College gardener and treated as a master or head gardener.

Edward and Thomas Knibbs operated a business that employed large numbers of sub-contractors for their college maintenance and new work contracts but they never formally had an apprentice bound to them. As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, the college contractors regularly had the name of the college garden or gardens added as a label of identification in the press. This system of designation operated in the same way that head gardeners, or important individuals, were identified.³² Jobbing gardeners and labourers, such as Edmund Godfree, who were occasionally mentioned in the Oxford press, were not accorded a similar designation system.³³ The custom indicates that college garden contractors, in print at least within the Oxford area, were treated as senior figures in both the local horticultural

²⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

²⁹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

³⁰ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

³¹ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 1200.

³² *Morning Post*, 4 August 1834.

³³ *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 13 October 1836.

and commercial spheres. Thomas Burton's case illustrates that the study of bills, without any form of cultural contextualisation, can lead to a false understanding of a gardener's professional standing in their local area.

The status of master gardener did not have a single, absolute definition in the trade. Loudon noted that if a master gardener was obliged to take a place where he was employed as a journeyman he continued to retain the senior designation.³⁴ Thomas Nethercliffe, a gardener who held both maintenance and 'new work' (the laying out of gardens or work outside of a maintenance agreements) contracts with the colleges, provides an example of a trained, experienced gardener needing to accept work of varying importance and remuneration depending on what work was available to him.³⁵ In 1746 Nethercliffe held the maintenance contract for Lincoln garden but in 1748 he was re-employed by New College with a contract of lesser responsibility, overseeing the weeding of the garden at £2 *per anum*.³⁶ The limited number of college garden contracts and a competitive environment for employment in Oxford indicates that trained and established master gardeners had to accept that there was a degree of fluidity in the type and status of work they would undertake.

6.4. Sub-contracting

Contractors' operations varied in their size and scale. Henry Moore held the contract for two gardens at Wadham and St John's concurrently during the 1750s, with both gardens requiring the employment of a number of sub-contracted gardeners and

³⁴ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, (1822), 1200.

³⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³⁶ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1746; New College Archive, NCA 4288.

labourers to service the seasonal needs of both spaces.³⁷ Moore provided employment for up to four gardeners in the groves of St John's during any one week.³⁸ Additionally at certain times of the year he hired as many as seven labourers and three weeding women to honour his contract.³⁹

St John's and Wadham possessed two of the largest college gardens in Oxford but smaller gardens did not require such large numbers of gardeners. The typology of the centrally located college gardens meant that for much of the year, and for many of the tasks, much smaller labour forces were required. Surviving bills from Robert Penson and other contractors show that the smaller gardens required a different pattern of labour. In these smaller gardens, such as Brasenose, Penson regularly sub-contracted only one gardener for the days on which the garden was serviced.⁴⁰ Brasenose's Fellows' Garden and Chapel Quadrangle spaces were primarily flower gardens and they did not require the employment of gardeners for the equivalent of almost three months of the year.⁴¹

The employment of sub-contracted labour, also known as day-men, and setting a fixed daily rate charged to the employer were the only viable ways for contractors to operate in a financially secure manner in the college gardens.⁴² A notice placed by the nurseryman and seedsman E.B. Hewlett in *The Oxford University and City Herald* reminded the readers that the system of sub-contraction only used experienced gardeners for 'jobbing'. The sub-contracted gardeners represented the

³⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/73; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁰ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 95.

⁴¹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 53; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 70; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 95.

⁴² *Oxford University and City Herald*, 3 October 1807.

name and reputation of the contractor who employed them.⁴³ Hewlett promised his patrons that they would continue to be well served under the system of sub-contracting according to the principles of taste and economy.⁴⁴ The system of sub-contracting gave the garden contractors huge power over the horticultural labour market and patronage over the trade.

The survival of John Birch's *University College Garden Account* provides some indication as to how the contractors kept a record of their expenses.⁴⁵ Names of the sub-contracted gardeners and the appropriate daily rates were entered along with meticulous entries for the many miscellaneous garden expenses.⁴⁶ At the end of each quarter the gardener's stipend was added to the outstanding garden charges and when the College settled its bill, Birch signed off the account.⁴⁷ The *University College Garden Account (1832-1858)* is a unique and important record because it was never part of the College's bursarial papers. Instead the brown, soft bound book was part of the business accounting system used by a garden contractor, which has largely not survived. What the *University College Garden Account* does not record is the actual wages of the men who were sub-contracted to work and a further account book must have been maintained by Birch to document their wages.⁴⁸ There was a clear separation between the accounts for the College authorities and the contractor's own business accounts that would have documented the real wages paid to the sub-contractors.

⁴³ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 August 1834.

⁴⁴ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 August 1834.

⁴⁵ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

⁴⁶ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

⁴⁷ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

⁴⁸ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

6.5. Apprenticeships and horticultural skills required by contractors

The types of horticultural employee working for a contractor were varied. They may have been master gardeners, journeymen, apprentices, skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled labour. This diverse group of men and women has traditionally been even harder to discuss than privately employed master gardeners because of a lack of detail in the surviving garden accounts. It is almost impossible to identify and trace the training routes for the gardeners with any certainty except through the official apprenticeship rolls. These records themselves are problematic because of the low numbers of young men who entered horticulture via this formal route. In Oxford between 1732 and 1800 only 15 apprenticeship enrolments, to train as gardeners, were sanctioned by the Corporation.⁴⁹ Henry Moore, the gardener at Wadham and St John's, formally acted as master to his son John during his apprenticeship.⁵⁰ John was bound to Henry Moore on April 19 1757, but his father does not appear to have been formally bound as an apprentice in Oxford.⁵¹

In 1728 Batty Langley emphasised the importance of a good understanding of geometry, a discipline requiring formal education or literacy, for a gardener. Stephen Switzer was at pains to emphasise the importance of employing a well experienced workman.⁵² In his preface to *Inchographia Rustica* Switzer warned the reader of:

Persons amongst others, are some who call themselves Gardeners, who having wrought a little while at some or other of the great Works of this Kingdom, immediately put on an Apron, get a rule and a pair of Compasses, with other things that belong to this Work; thus equipped, what Wonders are we

⁴⁹ Graham, *Oxford City Apprentices 1697-1800*, 122, 133, 135, 137, 161, 169, 183, 187, 195, 200, 207, 238, 240, 243.

⁵⁰ Graham, 161.

⁵¹ Graham, 161.

⁵² Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, 1; Stephen Switzer, *Ichographia Rustica or The Nobleman, Gentleman and Gardener's Recreation* (London: 1717), XXXI.

*not to expect from so profound a Set of Mathematicians and Designers.*⁵³

Switzer's emphasis on the importance of experience over following fashion for the recruitment and retention of gardeners was strongly worded but he admitted that the 'honest, industrious' gardener may have lost out to the elegant language and claims used by the well-educated, but not necessarily skilled, garden designer.⁵⁴ In the case of Henry Moore, the contractor for St John's and Wadham, he was illiterate but this did not prevent him from having the responsibility for the care of two large college gardens in Oxford during the middle of the eighteenth century. On 6 April 1753 the Warden and fellows of Wadham agreed that:

*the expenses of all of these alterations with the new laying out of the fellows garden, removing the mount (the statute of Atlas being blown down by the high wind and broke into pieces)...should be... part of the money bequeathed by the Right Hon Thomas Lord Wyndham for adorning the college.*⁵⁵

The Wadham 1753 account book confirms that Henry Moore was given the job for the laying out of the Fellows' Garden and that he was the only person paid for the remodelling work.⁵⁶ The lack of payments for a designer or additional contractor indicate that Moore's skill as a gardener were considered good enough for him to be allowed to have control over part of the improvements of the College, using the Wyndham bequest.⁵⁷ Illiteracy during the middle of the eighteenth century was clearly not an indicator of a lack of competency, or a reason to be passed over for the post of college gardener in Oxford. Henry Moore's son, John, was literate and

⁵³ Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, XXII.

⁵⁴ Switzer, XXV.

⁵⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁵⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/28.

⁵⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/28.

completed his apprenticeship but he only succeeded his father as garden contractor at Wadham.⁵⁸

John Foreman, who was for a time Wadham's gardener as well as superintendent or head gardener at the Physic Garden at Oxford, appears to have been well trained. Foreman never had a formal apprenticeship enrolled with the City's Corporation but it is likely that he was trained by his father, also a sometime superintendent of the Physic Garden.⁵⁹ An advertisement dated 16 March 1776 published in the *Oxford Journal*, and placed by a gardener looking for a position, set out his skills for potential employers.⁶⁰ All enquiries were to be sent to 'I.F', possibly John Foreman, at 'Mr Foreman's, Physick Garden, Oxford'.⁶¹ The advertisement stated that the individual was:

*A GARDENER, that has been regularly bred to that Business, wants a Place. He understands the different Parts of the Art perfectly well, particularly in the laying out, planting, and decorating new Improvements: likewise the newest and best Method of cultivating and improving the Kitchen, Fruit and Flower Garden; and the Management of the Hot House, Green-House, Hot Walls, Grape-House, Melons &c. He flatters himself his Method is inferior to none: and can be well recommended.*⁶²

The horticultural skills offered in the advertisement reveal the high level of training offered by gardeners in Oxford. In an advertisement for a place for an apprentice in the *Oxford University and City Herald* it was stated that opportunities to understand all of the branches of the trade would be offered but a premium would be expected to

⁵⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 18/46.

⁵⁹ Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 477.

⁶⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 16 March 1776.

⁶¹ *Oxford Journal*, 16 March 1776.

⁶² *Oxford Journal*, 16 March 1776.

be paid.⁶³ College contracts were much more demanding than the work available to jobbing gardeners in small private urban residences.⁶⁴ It was not simply the use of basic skills such as cultivation, weeding and watering. Evidence for the level of skills required by some college gardens can be found in surviving records relating to the gardens' material culture. At St John's the complexity of the panelled evergreen *palissades*, required the services of carpenters to cut strips or patterns for the use of the gardeners when they were cutting them (Figure 6.1).⁶⁵ In 1763 a 'frame' to cut the yew trees at St John's was commissioned from Thomson, the contracting carpenter, at the cost of 4s. 6d.⁶⁶ These patterns were made to aid the gardeners in their maintenance of the complex hedge panelling portrayed in the engraving from William Williams' *Oxonia Depicta* and described in the Oxford tour guides.⁶⁷ In the 1770's Robert Penson charged a higher daily rate for 'trimming' the hedges than some of the other tasks in the groves of St John's.⁶⁸ The hedges at St John's Outer Grove were portrayed by William Williams (1733) as having been trained and cut in the Italian manner but by the 1740's they were recorded as having been cut into a more complex system of arches (Figure 6.2).⁶⁹ In the creation and maintenance of both designs the gardeners needed to be able to use a system of poles, wires and hoops, to train the horse chestnuts and lime trees into the shapes required.⁷⁰ The level of technical skills needed to achieve this level of artistry further emphasises the horticultural ability of the gardeners employed in Oxford.

⁶³ *Oxford and University and City Herald*, 2 March 1822.

⁶⁴ Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), 151, 152.

⁶⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1; [A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville], *The theory and practice of gardening*, trans. John James (London: 1728), 187.

⁶⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

⁶⁷ Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 48; *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1764), 76.

⁶⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

⁶⁹ Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 48; [A.J. Dezallier D'Argenville], *The theory and practice of gardening*, 59.

⁷⁰ [A.J. Dezallier D'Argenville], 186, 187.



Figure 6.1. A wooden pattern used by modern gardeners at Versailles. Patterns, frames and strips were made by carpenters to help the gardeners cut the evergreens in St John's College. Copyright: EPV/Thomas Garnier.

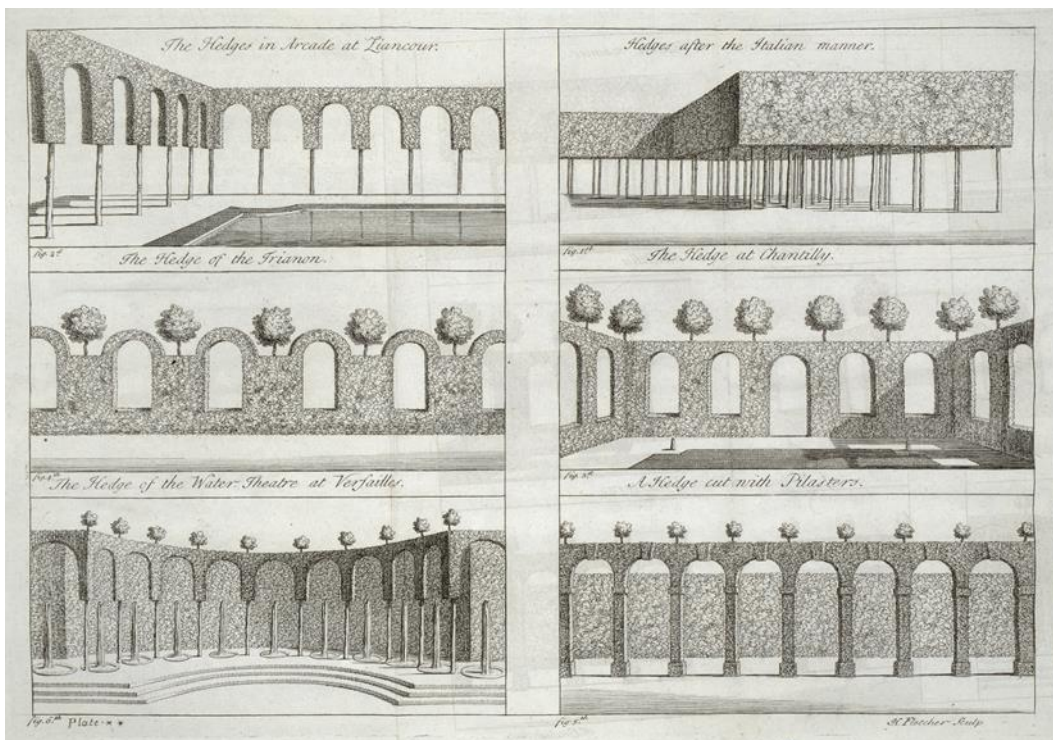


Figure 6.2. [A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville], *The theory and practice of gardening*, translated by John James, 1728, engraving. Examples of hedge designs. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

The appearance of auricula stands, hotbeds and flower sheds in the gardens of St John's and New College indicate that a detailed knowledge of floristry was required of at least some of the gardeners who worked in them.⁷¹ A number of the college contractors, including Thomas Mason, John Birch and Thomas Fairbairn, specialised as florists as well as being garden contractors.⁷² Piping and layering were additional tasks required of and undertaken by the sub-contractors as well as caring for the annual flowering plants (Figure 6.3).⁷³ Many of the college gardens demanded skills in grafting, *treillage* work and the care of soft, cane and high fruit.⁷⁴ The jobs undertaken by the sub-contractors in the gardens were not simply basic maintenance or labouring tasks but technically skilled work. Contractors and sub-contractors required the skills to correctly use the available technology to lay out and maintain the gardens. Edward Knibbs and Robert Penson, as well as the men they employed, had the necessary skills to use levels and levelling pegs to facilitate the conversion of their plans for the gardens into reality.⁷⁵ The gardeners were trained in the process of constructing gravel paths, suitable for the heavy use by members of the public, and island beds for theatrical planting.⁷⁶

⁷¹ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1; New College Archive, NCA 11385.

⁷² Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 67; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 September 1837; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 17 October, 1829.

⁷³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

⁷⁴ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

⁷⁵ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28 a 8; New College Archive, NCA 11399; William Hanbury, *A complete body of planting and gardening*, vol. 1 (London: 1770), 283.

⁷⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1; Lincoln College Archives, LC/B/B/12.

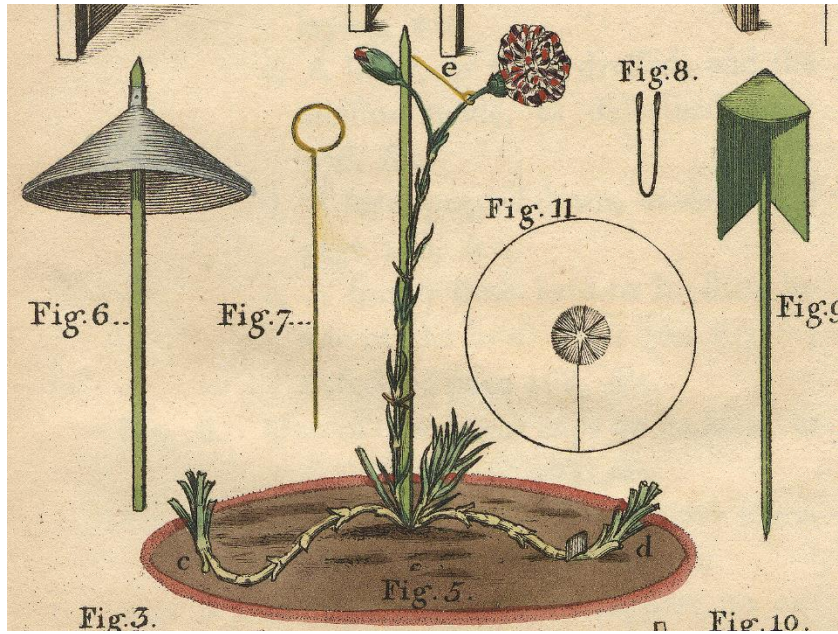


Figure 6.3. Detail from James Maddock, *The Florist's Directory*, 1792, engraving, hand coloured, plate 6. Figure 5 shows the technique of layering a carnation. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Identifying the training for the semi-skilled labourers, who worked in the gardens is more difficult. Additionally ascertaining an individual gardener's position within the hierarchy of a contracting business also presents problems because they were rarely mentioned in the documentation. Daily rates paid for the mowing of grass plats and bowling greens in Oxford suggest that the task was considered to be a skilled one. Henry Sansom charged 1s. (12d.) for the service of cutting New College's Bowling Green in 1758.⁷⁷ Robert Penson's rate for mowing was 10d. for a morning's work in 1772, making it a more expensive rate than either the tasks of 'nailing' and 'cleaning' in the garden.⁷⁸ Differences in the daily rates paid by Sansom (24d.) and Penson (20d.) are likely to reflect the existence of a further sub-division in the levels of skill needed in different mowing tasks. A bowling green's grass needed to be cut shorter than the plats in the gardens to allow the bowls to move without obstacles. Labour

⁷⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11385.

⁷⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

rates charged by both Sansom and Penson indicate that a supposedly menial task required a level of expertise, which could not simply be picked up by what Loudon called 'casual observation', and the men employed for this task were, in fact, trained to a high level of skill in their use of the scythe.⁷⁹

6.6. Skills for maintaining a productive landscape

The college gardens were social spaces, used and visited by a number of different social groups but they were also used for the production of food. During the eighteenth century no kitchen gardens appear to have been managed by the college garden contractors. Instead the college gardens provided a location for the production of soft, cane and top fruit. The consumption of fruit by the fellows at high table and in the common room was a social and cultural ritual that created an association with the leisured classes.

The planting of fruit trees and vines within ornamental gardens was not unusual at the end of the seventeenth century and into the first half of the eighteenth century, especially when there was a limitation in the amount of land available. In the 1699 plans for the garden at Herriard House, Hampshire, George London placed fruit trees, asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) and 'kitchen stuff' in the garden.⁸⁰ However there are very few identified descriptions of the appearance of fruit in the collegiate gardens and none of the tour guides record its occurrence. The production of fruit for consumption within the colleges has remained part of the silent history of the use of collegiate gardens. James Woodforde recorded a visit to Wadham's Fellows' garden,

⁷⁹ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 1199.

⁸⁰ Hampshire Record Office, HRO 44M 69/P1/61; Hampshire Record Office, HRO E8/3/2/3.

on August 1761, during which he and two friends consumed 'a great deal of fruit'.⁸¹ The entry is not clear whether the fruit came from Wadham's garden but the gardener's bills from the 1770s and 1780s record the purchase of apple and cherry (*Prunus avium*) trees as well as raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*).⁸² In 1776 Robert Penson sold a large Muscadine vine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) to Wadham and the College's gardens bills reveal that there was a large expenditure on the materials for the care of wall trees.⁸³ In 1809 St John's garden was recorded as possessing a number of fruit trees that has been damaged by high winds on 2 June by the *Oxford Journal*.⁸⁴

Production of fruit in the gardens, particularly in the smaller college gardens, took up a large part of the gardener's time. Jesus's contractor, John Penson, recorded in his bill that three and a half days labour was spent pruning and training the vines in June 1813.⁸⁵ The total cost of this work, combining the daily rates for this task and the additional purchase of nails and listing (cloth strips), amounted to 14s. 1½d. and a further two days pruning at 5s. 6d. took place in August.⁸⁶ While Jesus did not have the expense of maintaining large gravel walks, it was willing to spend money for the gardener to produce and supply fruit for the fellows' consumption. There was a great variety of edible fruit produced in the gardens and the surviving bills illustrate the demand from the colleges for diversity in their gardens. Brasenose's Fellows' Garden produced peaches (*Prunus persica*), nectarines (*Prunus persica* var. *nucipersica*), Breda apricots (*Prunus armeniaca* 'Breda'), plums (*Prunus domestica*), pears (*Pyrus communis* cvs.), Morello cherries (*Prunus cerasus* 'Morello'), grapes

⁸¹ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 50.

⁸² Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

⁸³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

⁸⁴ *Oxford Journal*, 3 June 1809.

⁸⁵ Jesus College Archive, JCA B1.1.GA.

⁸⁶ Jesus College Archive, JCA B1.1.GA.

(*Vitis* spp.) and currants (*Ribes rubrum*) in the 1770s and 1780s.⁸⁷ In the early nineteenth century the demand from the colleges to integrate fruit production with ornamental plants remained a strong one. University College's new Fellows' garden, completed in 1810, produced grapes, gooseberries (*Ribes uva-crispa*), strawberries (*Fragaria x ananassa*), plums, cherries, peaches, pears and medlars (*Mespilus germanica*).⁸⁸

The engraving for the 1786 Oxford Almanack depicts two men carefully harvesting bunches of grapes from a vine in Exeter College's garden and placing them in a neat, shallow basket to prevent any damage to them (Figure 6.4).⁸⁹ Picking fruit was not the sole responsibility of the garden contractor, college servants were also required to undertake this task because the gardeners were not employed to work full time. In 1788 John Hedges, a servant of Trinity, fell from one of its trees in the college garden while gathering mulberries (*Morus nigra*) and died as a result of his injuries a fortnight later.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 94, 95, 101.

⁸⁸ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

⁸⁹ Thomas Mawe and John Abercrombie, *The Universal Gardener and Botanist* (London: 1778), Baskets.

⁹⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 6 September 1788; *Oxford Journal*, 20 September 1788.



Figure 6.4. Exeter College Garden: detail from Michael Angelo Rooker, “The Libraries and Schools, From Exeter College Gardens”, 1786, engraving. Two male figures harvesting grapes from the vines using a shallow basket to prevent damage the fruit. Courtesy of Exeter College Archive.

The variety of fruit grown in the garden suggests it was produced for different types of consumption. Ripe grapes, wall fruit and soft fruit were consumed as table fruit, as a seasonal luxury for dessert.⁹¹ A newspaper report in 1834 recorded a second crop of ‘fine ripe’ figs being produced by a fig (*Ficus carica*) tree in St John’s garden.⁹² The account detailed that a dishful had been gathered the previous week and more were ‘fit for eating’.⁹³ Filberts (*Corylus maxima*), grown in the fellows’ gardens of University College and Worcester, would also have been served with the table fruit.⁹⁴ Lincoln maintained a codling hedge, while University College grew medlars and Worcester had quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) trees.⁹⁵ These fruits were used in receipts

⁹¹ Graham Midgley, *University Life in Eighteenth-Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 44; Liz Bellany, *The Language of Fruit* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 57.

⁹² *Oxford University and City Herald*, 25 October 1834.

⁹³ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 25 October 1834.

⁹⁴ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

⁹⁵ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/34 1739; University College Archives UC 1F/2 L2.

(recipes) for codling pies or puddings and preserved medlars and quinces were produced for the fellows' dinners. Unripe (green) or overripe fruit, not fit for consumption as table fruit, could be used in tarts, or sugared and served as a sweetmeat, adding further diversity to the fellows' table.⁹⁶

Greater variety in the production of food, compared to the other colleges, was to be found in the South Garden at Worcester in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Vegetables were grown there as well as fruit, including asparagus, endive (*Cichorium intybus*), early peas (*Pisum sativum*) and spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*).⁹⁷ At Magdalen paddocks were created for the care of a herd of fallow deer. Two bucks or does from the herd were killed to meet the demand for College dinners each year.⁹⁸ The deer were introduced sometime before 1710 when they were mentioned in Zacharias von Uffenbach's account of Oxford.⁹⁹ As the herd grew in size, the paddocks extended into the Grove and the effect started to resemble a small deer park (Figure 6.5).¹⁰⁰ There were occasional incidents of poaching deer from Magdalen. In 1810 David Cooper was sentenced at the Oxford Assizes to be transported for 7 years for having 'feloniously stolen and carried away' a doe from the College's Grove.¹⁰¹ The gardeners at Magdalen were charged with mowing the grass for hay, to supplement the diet of the deer during the winter months, and they held some responsibility for caring for the herd.¹⁰² Magdalen's ability to provide its own kitchen with venison was an important sign of its unique status over all of the

⁹⁶ John Abercrombie, *The British Fruit-gardener* (London: 1781), 58-59.

⁹⁷ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

⁹⁸ John Buckler, *Observations on the Original Architecture of Saint Mary Magdalen College, Oxford* (Oxford: 1823), 15.

⁹⁹ W.H Quarell and W.J.C. Quarell, eds., *Oxford in 1710: From the Travels of Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1928), 39.

¹⁰⁰ Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Some Account of English Deer Parks* (London: John Murray, 1867), 136; *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* (London: 1747), 18.

¹⁰¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 10 March 1810.

¹⁰² Magdalen College Archive, MCA. LC E/45.

other colleges. The ownership of deer was a symbol of social exclusivity and the serving of venison at dinners was a reminder of this fact.



Figure 6.5. Fallow deer in the Magdalen College Grove: Michael Angelo Rooker, “The New Building, Magdalen College from the Grove”, 1787, engraving. Copyright: the author.

The luxury of producing diverse fruit, which took up the contractor’s time and consumed a considerable amount of materials, was a further use of the college gardens. Growing fruit for the fellows’ tables was a practical way in which the colleges used their gardens to support their claims to gentility during their dinners.¹⁰³ The horticultural skills of the contractors and those who worked under them produced strawberries, peaches and grapes to be ritually and conspicuously displayed and then consumed by the senior members of the colleges and their guests.

¹⁰³ Bellany, *The Language of Fruit*, 5, 63.

6.7. Robert Penson as college garden contractor

From the late 1760s Robert Penson dominated the contracting business within the University. Penson, according to the published poll books for Oxford, was a freeman of the City but he never entered into a formal apprenticeship enrolled with the Oxford Corporation.¹⁰⁴ For at least forty-four years of his career Robert Penson was a college garden contractor. When John Loudon visited Oxford in 1834 he noted that Penson was aged 92 years old and that he was still involved in the horticultural business.¹⁰⁵ His first identified appearance in college records was as the gardener contractor working for Christ Church in 1766 and by 1775 he was also contractor at St John's and Merton.¹⁰⁶ Over his long career Penson held the garden contracts at Christ Church, St John's, Merton, Brasenose, University College, Corpus Christi, Exeter and Worcester.¹⁰⁷

The earliest surviving bill issued by Robert Penson dates from 1772 at St John's, before the unification of the two groves in 1777-8.¹⁰⁸ It records that Penson was working between two and four days a week in the College groves. Mark Laird noted in his *Natural History of English Gardeners* that in the John Malchair drawing of the mount and terrace at St John's, dated 1774, the visible part of the garden appeared 'slightly unkempt'.¹⁰⁹ Penson's bills suggest otherwise; the gardens in 1772-3 were

¹⁰⁴ *The Poll of the Freemen of the City of Oxford for Two Representatives in Parliament, 6th- 9th July 1802* (Oxford: 1802), 35.

¹⁰⁵ John Claudius Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats" *The Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 10 (1834): 108.

¹⁰⁶ Christ Church Archive, Ch.Ch MS XII. C205; St John's College Archive, ACC 1A 124; Merton College Archive, MCA 3.8.

¹⁰⁷ Christ Church Archive, CH. CH. MS XII. C.209; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Merton College Archive, MCR 1.4.; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 100; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2; Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1; Exeter College Archive, ECA A.II.11; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/3/37.

¹⁰⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Laird, *A Natural History of English Gardening 1650-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2015), 220; Bodleian Library, 220.MS TOP OXM. B.232 f.15.

still well looked after but the spaces were treated a little less formally than the earlier pictorial depiction of the College in William Williams' engraving (1733).¹¹⁰ Instead the scene captured by Malchair, recorded an informal quality entering into the groves of St John's.¹¹¹ The crowns of the trees appear to have been allowed to grow, forming a natural arbour on top of the mound. Additionally Penson maintained a vista looking towards the Radcliffe Library and St Mary's Church, linking the College with the civic and religious heart of the University.¹¹² Malchair's drawing indicates that Penson was creating, or at least maintaining, a softer design in the Inner Grove as a response to the changing fashions in garden design before his large scale improvements.

Once Penson established himself as an important contractor, his own work in the gardens lessened. The University College bills show that for the years 1787-1788 and 1789 Robert Penson only attended the garden twice.¹¹³ On both occasions Penson charged the College for pruning the trees in the garden, a task traditionally undertaken by master gardeners.¹¹⁴ A similar pattern emerges from Penson's bills at Worcester during the 1790s.¹¹⁵ During the periods 3 December 1814 to 25 November 1815 and 3 December 1815 until 3 June 1816 Penson's bills indicate that he did no practical work at all in the garden.¹¹⁶ Non-attendance in Worcester's gardens is perhaps unsurprising as Robert Penson was over 70 years old by 1814. Instead Penson was sub-contracting all of the Worcester work while receiving the gardener's stipend.¹¹⁷ Penson's last contract appears to have been Worcester,

¹¹⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 48.

¹¹¹ Bodleian Library, 220 MS TOP OXM. B.232 f.15.

¹¹² Bodleian Library, 220 MS TOP OXM. B.232 f.15.

¹¹³ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

¹¹⁴ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

¹¹⁵ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/3/14.

¹¹⁶ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹¹⁷ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/15/1.

ending in 1816, the year before the fellows of the College undertook a major project for the remodelling of the gardens and the creation of a lake.¹¹⁸

Penson's influence on the development of the collegiate gardens was a powerful one. His bills show that he developed a series of different tariffs for daily labour based on the type of tasks rather than setting one basic rate. The system may have made Penson a better value contractor to employ than other gardeners. Richard Haywood, Brasenose's contractor in 1776, was charging a fixed daily labour charge of 1s. 6d. for all of his men, while during the same period Penson was operating two rates for his sub-contractors.¹¹⁹ Skilled work under Penson, such as 'clipping' (cutting hedges), was charged at 1s. 6d., while tasks such as cultivating the soil were billed at the lesser rate of 1s. 4d.¹²⁰

6.8. Maintenance contracts

College gardeners operated using two identifiable types of maintenance agreements. The difference between the two forms of contract was in the ways in which the college gardeners were paid. The first type of contract used was a stipendiary payment system, in which a quarterly sum was provided to cover the cost of the work in the garden as set out in the agreement. Any work outside of the contract, or schedule resulted in the stipendiary contractor issuing additional itemised bills for those extra tasks or purchases. Surviving gardeners' bills and annual accounts books at Balliol, Worcester and Magdalen provide evidence that they all used

¹¹⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹¹⁹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 93; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹²⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

stipendiary maintenance contracts for their gardeners at various times.¹²¹ On occasion the stipendiary system was formally augmented to cover the costs borne by the contractor. At University College the contractor in the 1830s received a stipend of £21 but it was agreed that any of the additional quarterly costs undertaken while executing the maintenance contract would be met by the fellows.¹²²

The second type of payment system for maintenance contracts was a quarterly, half yearly or yearly submission for all of the costs of maintaining the garden. No additional bills were submitted by the contractor unless it was assessed to be 'new work', or supplementary services/goods were provided by another supplier providing items such as turf, gravel, etc. The non-stipendiary maintenance agreements were used in a number of smaller colleges including Brasenose, Lincoln and Jesus. This type of contract allowed the contractor to charge the 'true' costs for the maintenance of the garden rather than agree a single sum to cover the year's costs.¹²³ This type of payment system allowed the college authorities to regularly monitor the costs associated with the employment of a contractor in the garden. Robert Penson, while working for Worcester in 1815-1816, was paid using both systems.¹²⁴ He was paid a stipend for work in the quadrangles and little gardens and he submitted a separate bill for all of the work undertaken in the College's South Garden.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Balliol College Archive, MBP, 28.a.9; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2; Magdalen College Archive, LCE/43.

¹²² University College Archive, UC: BUS/F2/2.

¹²³ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 101; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12; Jesus College Archive JCA B1.GA.

¹²⁴ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹²⁵ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

The Wadham Convention Book usefully contains the record of appointment for John Foreman as gardener in December 1772 with the terms for his employment.¹²⁶

Foreman's contractual duties were:

*that the Gardens, Quadrangle, Back Courts and all of the walks and parts of the College (both without as well as within walls) be by the persons whom he shall employ under him kept thoroughly clean and in perfect order.*¹²⁷

Foreman's appointment in the Wadham Convention Book is the closest thing to a contract or agreement between a college and a gardener that has so far been found in the college archives. Wadham's fellows expected their contractor to maintain the garden and additional areas of the College.¹²⁸ The lack of additional entries for mowing, digging and other basic tasks in the three surviving bills from Foreman between 1771 and 1772 suggests that that the maintenance tasks at Wadham were similar to those included in contracts used for private gardens and by the Royal Household.¹²⁹ In the 1727 scheme for the care of St James's and Kensington Charles Bridgeman agreed that the maintenance of gardens would include:

*All which to be kept in good
Order by the Grass to being Mowed,
Rolled & Swept. The Gravell
Rolled & Weeded the Borders
Earthed Dunged, digged, Hoed,
raked & weeded the Quarters
Digged the Hedge Line Clipped
The several hard ever Greens
& other plants Staked Tyed up
Pruned Clipped the Fruit trees
Pruned & nailed...*¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹²⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹²⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹²⁹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

¹³⁰ Peter Willis, *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Elysium Press, 2002), 154.

The 1772 agreement between Wadham and John Foreman was explicit that the employment of all of the labour to work in the garden and costs associated with the maintenance of the garden was a responsibility to be borne by the gardener and met out of the stipend that he received from the College.¹³¹ Through an analysis of the surviving bills submitted by Foreman it is possible to discern some of the exceptions that existed in the contractor's scheme for the maintenance of the garden.¹³² The separately billed work was for extra tasks, including bringing gravel onto the College site, or additional watering, and specialist tasks such as arboriculture or small scale 'new work'.¹³³ At Wadham 'new work' was defined to include filling in the existing holes in the grass plats.¹³⁴ These were acceptable, additional charges to be made by the gardener as they were outside of maintenance agreement. John Foreman's entitlement to claim back the costs of purchasing tools, nails and tackage/listing from the College, rather than having to pay for them out of his stipend, is also evidenced in the surviving bills.¹³⁵

It is possible to put together a conjectural maintenance agreement that was used by Wadham based on the wording used in the Convention Book and what did, and did not, appear in the additional bills submitted by the gardeners. The surviving bills and entries in the Convention Book at Wadham between 1765 and 1812 indicate that similar agreements were in place for the contractors working at the College during the period.¹³⁶ The maintenance contracts for Wadham between 1765 and 1812

¹³¹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹³² Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

¹³³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

¹³⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

¹³⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

¹³⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, WCA23/3; Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

included the grass being rolled, mowed and swept, gravel turned and rolled, gardens cleaned, fruit trees and vines pruned and nailed and the hedges clipped.¹³⁷

Robert Penson's maintenance contract at Worcester in 1801 was for 'cleaning the quadrangles and gardens' as well as mowing the grass plats, for which he was paid the annual sum of £18.¹³⁸ The term 'clean' in eighteenth and early nineteenth century horticultural terms meant putting or keeping the garden in 'the best order'.¹³⁹ Thomas Tagg, an important tradesmen-gardener in Oxford, described a maintenance contract as one that 'kept in Order' pleasure grounds and gardens.¹⁴⁰ In 1815-16 the Worcester maintenance contract for pruning, nailing and cleaning of the quadrangles and little gardens was set at £25.¹⁴¹ The turning of the gravel was not included in 1815-16 contract and instead these costs were itemised by Penson as additional tasks outside the agreement.¹⁴²

In some cases it is clear that the type of maintenance contract could change from gardener to gardener. At New College Henry Blackstone junior was paid a stipend of £20 for the upkeep of the garden in between 1746 and 1750, while Henry Samson and Richard Guest submitted bills for the work in the garden.¹⁴³ Brasenose's contract system changed during the period that Richard Haywood was gardener. Until 1773 Haywood received a yearly payment of £3 3s. for 'looking after the garden' and after that date he entered daily charges instead.¹⁴⁴ The gardener at St John's received an

¹³⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

¹³⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/3.

¹³⁹ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 187.

¹⁴⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 5 October 1805.

¹⁴¹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹⁴² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹⁴³ New College Archive, NCA, 4286; New College Archive, NCA, 42891; New College Archive, NCA 11389; New College Archive, NCA 11401.

¹⁴⁴ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 89; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 90.

allowance or payment on a quarterly basis but it was not a regular payment system. The traditional *Arbusta* allowance was insufficient to cover the yearly maintenance costs and so a detailed annual bill was submitted, itemising all of the charges for labour and materials as proof of the total costs borne by the contractor.¹⁴⁵ The outstanding amount of the bill, after subtracting the *Arbusta* payments, was then paid to the contractor.

Failure by a contractor to meet the required level of commitment expected by a college might result in the termination of their employment. This sanction was applied in the case of John Foreman at Wadham College, who was also employed as the head gardener/superintendent at the University's Physic Garden.¹⁴⁶ In 1779 Foreman was accused of deserting his post at Wadham and on 20 June 1779 the Warden and fellows of the College agreed to remove him from the post of gardener immediately.¹⁴⁷ A record of this decision was made in the College's Convention Book allowing the Fellows to use it as a citable precedent for any other similar cases in the future.¹⁴⁸

6.9. Daily rates and real wages

In order to understand the organisation of a contractor's operation with one or more of the colleges, it is necessary to appreciate the ways in which they charged for the labour they employed as sub-contractors. The precarious nature of the jobbing gardener has been written about but the economic viability of work undertaken by

¹⁴⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC 1A. 117; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁴⁶ Stephen A. Harris, *Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2017), 115.

¹⁴⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

¹⁴⁸ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

contractors has not been sufficiently studied.¹⁴⁹ This is particularly true when assessing the contracts which were sub-contracted out.

Master gardeners, as contractors, needed to sub-contract the labour of other gardeners and labourers to fulfil the agreements they had made with the colleges and to operate a business that was able to take on additional work elsewhere. In some cases the contractor might not do any practical work themselves in a garden.¹⁵⁰ Robert Penson's bill for University College between March 1787 and January 1788 amounted to £2 12s. 9d.¹⁵¹ Out of that final sum only 3s. 6d. was charged to the College for his own labour.¹⁵² For a contractor to profit from holding a contract they needed to charge a daily rate of labour that was higher than the gardeners' and labourers' real wage. Penson and other garden contractors needed to take an appropriate percentage from the daily labour rates that they charged to the colleges. The percentage taken from the daily labour rate needed to cover the costs of having access to credit, to factor in the expenses associated with running their business, as well as making a profit.

The contractor and sub-contractor required a degree of financial liquidity to employ and pay the labour they needed. Men and women engaged to work by the gardeners were paid on a weekly basis, while the contractors themselves were often paid on a quarterly basis by the colleges. Mary Freeman, who operated her family's nursery and gardening business after her husband's death, made sure that when she made

¹⁴⁹ Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 158. 159-60; Fiona Davison, *The Hidden Horticulturalists* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019), 73-4; Margret Willes, *The Gardens of the British Working Class* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 188-191.

¹⁵⁰ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 August 1834.

¹⁵¹ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

¹⁵² University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

her will in 1747 her son was entitled to receive one week's wages in order to pay all employees, in ready money, immediately after her death.¹⁵³ Such foresight of planning indicates the importance in maintaining a level of cash liquidity in the business to be able to pay for labour during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

Judy Z. Stephenson's calculations for a building contractor's operational margins in London include 6-9% to service access to credit, 5% for measurement, estimation, agency and overseeing, 2% for rent, 2% for accountancy and 1% for tools.¹⁵⁴ In Stephenson's own calculations she included the discounting of bills at 3.5-7%.¹⁵⁵ There are only two identified records relating to the discounting of gardeners bills and these were for 'new work' contracts.¹⁵⁶ It is possible that the discounting of work and goods was not necessary in Oxford because of the nature of stipendiary and non-stipendiary contracts for gardeners. A stipendiary contract automatically made the replacement of any inferior materials, or work, the responsibility of the contractor without the need for a client to discount the bill. Colleges finding poor quality workmanship and materials were able to terminate their contracts with their gardeners, just as the fellows of Wadham had done to John Foreman at Wadham in 1779.¹⁵⁷

Using Stephenson's calculations for a contractor's operating margins, as a conjectural scheme to understand the operating margin of the garden contractor, it is possible to propose the percentage that a contractor would need to take for

¹⁵³ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will, 96. 430.

¹⁵⁴ Judy Z. Stephenson, "'Real' Wages? Contractors, workers and pay in London building trades, 1650-1800", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 71, no.1 (2018):118.

¹⁵⁵ Stephenson, 118.

¹⁵⁶ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

¹⁵⁷ Wadham College, WCA 2/3.

themselves from the daily labour rate.¹⁵⁸ If the total outlay of maintaining credit, overseeing work and book keeping are calculated together, a contractor might need to take 15-18% out of the daily rate to meet the cost of their operations.¹⁵⁹ The addition of a 10% profit margin would mean that the overall percentage of the daily rate taken by the contractor to operate profitably was between 25-28%.¹⁶⁰ If the estimated percentage costs are roughly correct, sub-contractors in the 1770s and 1780s would have received approximately 1s. 2d. per day out of the 1s. 6d. daily labour rate charged to the colleges.

The role of the sub-contractor as employer also requires consideration. Mary Smith was sub-contracted by Henry Moore to provide the weeding women to work in the groves of St John's in 1747. Moore charged the College a daily rate of 8d. for a weeder's labour.¹⁶¹ Reconciling the contractor's daily rate with the wages that were paid to labour employed by sub-contractors is problematic because none of their bills have been found. In the case of Mary Smith, however, there is clear evidence that a sub-contractor did, on occasion, act as an employer. Out of the 8d. labour charged by Moore, both he and Smith had to make a profit as well as providing a wage for the woman.¹⁶² The real wage for a weeding woman was likely to be considerably smaller than the original day rate charged to the College in Moore's bill.

In 1759 Henry Moore employed gardeners whose labour he charged at 1s. 8d. a day and for a labourer he charged 1s. 2d. for maintaining the groves at St John's.¹⁶³ Just

¹⁵⁸ Stephenson, "Real' Wages?' Contractors, workers and pay in London building trades, 1650-1800", 118.

¹⁵⁹ Stephenson, 118.

¹⁶⁰ Stephenson, 118.

¹⁶¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

over a decade later, in 1772, Robert Penson charged 1s. 4d. for most of the tasks his workmen undertook in the College gardens.¹⁶⁴ Individual daily labour rates for the gardeners working in the groves in 1772 were reduced on average by 4d. a head when compared to the rates levied by Henry Moore.¹⁶⁵ During the first week of August 1769 Richard Haywood entered two men's labour for one day at 3s. 6d. for a bill of extra work at Brasenose.¹⁶⁶ The charge for one day's work for each man was 1s. 9d., a similar daily labour charge to the one applied by Henry Moore at St John's in 1759 (1s. 8d.).¹⁶⁷ In 1773, when Haywood was stopped being paid as a stipendiary contractor, the daily labour rates he levied were reduced by 3d.¹⁶⁸ The daily labour rate charged was lowered to 1s. 6d. while his own rate, as the College's gardener, remained at 2s.¹⁶⁹ New Colleges and Wadham's contractors, Henry Sansom in 1757 and John Forman in January 1772, both applied a daily rate of 1s. 8d. for gardeners.¹⁷⁰ The uniformity found in the daily rate charged between 1757 and 1769 for sub-contractors working in New College, Wadham, Brasenose and St John's suggests that the contractors followed a local rate for charging.

The reduction in the labour rates at both St John's and Brasenose in 1772/3 indicates there was a significant change in the organisation of the trade. Surviving gardeners' bills for a number of colleges between 1747 and 1789 indicate that the daily labour charges for work in the garden had dropped by 1772 (see Table 6.1).

¹⁶⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶⁶ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 81.

¹⁶⁷ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 81; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁶⁸ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 89.

¹⁶⁹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 89.

¹⁷⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11389; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

Table 6.1. Day rates for gardeners working in colleges between 1747 and 1789

Date	College	Contractor	Basic daily labour rate charged to the college
1747	Brasenose	Henry Watts	2s.
1753	St John's	Henry Moore	1s. 8d.
1769	Brasenose	Richard Haywood	1s. 9d.
1771	Wadham	John Foreman	1s. 8d.
1772-1774	St John's	Robert Penson	1s. 4s.
1773	Brasenose	Richard Haywood	1s. 6d.
1783	Worcester	John Oliver	1s. 6d.
1787	University College	Robert Penson	1s. 6d.
1789	Lincoln	Edward Knibbs	1s. 6d.

Sources: Brasenose College Archive, Tradesman's Bills 58; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesman's Bills 81; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; St John's College Archive SJA ACC V. B1; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesman's Bills 81; Worcester College Archive WOR/BUR 1/20/1; University College Archive UC 1F/2 L2; Lincoln College Archive LC/ B/B/12.

Comparing the sums charged by the contractors for the gardeners' daily rate with the daily rate for carpenters levied in the 1760s, it is possible to see a stability in the pricing of day labour for both trades. Between 1753 and 1769 St John's and Brasenose were being charged at a rate of 1s. 8d. and 1s. 9d. per day for a gardener. In 1753 Bull, a building contractor operating at New College, charged 2s. as his daily rate for the carpenters he employed.¹⁷¹ Throughout the 1760s and 1770s James Thomson, a contracting joiner, charged 2s. as the daily rate for carpenters he employed.¹⁷² The stability of the daily rates for the two trades is revealing and illustrates that standardized daily rates for journeyman and master craftsmen were being applied across the Oxford trades in the eighteenth century. Only the garden

¹⁷¹ New College, NCA 11387.

¹⁷² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 89; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

contractors themselves, such as Richard Haywood and Robert Penson continued to charge the 2s. rate for their own labour.¹⁷³

There is no direct evidence in the college archives as to why there was such a significant drop in the daily rate for the sub-contractors. The other trades' daily rates in Oxford, such as the carpenters, did not fall at the same time, making it unlikely that the drop in the daily rate in garden contracting was a result of wider negative economic conditions. It is likely the tiered system of labour charges adopted by Robert Penson, was a stronger contributing factor for the 4d. reduction in the average gardeners' day rate for college contracts.¹⁷⁴ The fall in the Oxford horticultural daily labour rates must have been passed directly onto the sub-contractors, causing real wages to drop. A 25% (4d.) share from Penson's lowest daily labour rate of 1s. 4d. to cover his operational costs and profit margin would have meant that real wages were likely to be no more than 1s. a day.¹⁷⁵ Penson's bills indicate that he did away with the classifications of 'gardener' and 'labourer' day rates used previously by Henry Moore.¹⁷⁶ Instead Penson applied differing daily labour rates based on the skills required for the tasks undertaken by gardeners. Between 1772 and 1774 'cleaning', digging, 'nailing' and turning gravel were charged at 1s. 4d., while arboriculture and 'clipping' were charged at 1s. 6d. and mowing was entered as a charge of 9d. *per* morning.¹⁷⁷

Penson's bills for University College for 1787 and 1789 show that he was charging 1s. 6d., a daily rate he used for skilled jobs, and mowing was charged at 1s. 8d.

¹⁷³ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 89; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

¹⁷⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁷⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁷⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁷⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

(20d).¹⁷⁸ The lack of a higher daily rate for a foreman or undergardener in the College's bills indicates that the work was sub-contracted to trained individuals, such as journeymen or master gardeners, who did not require a supervisory figure in the garden. Hewlett's promise in 1834 to existing and potential clients, that the sub-contracted gardeners he used were experienced gardeners and not unskilled labourers, supports this claim.¹⁷⁹ Thomas Tagg and John Bates operated as contractors in the City during the early nineteenth century. They too guaranteed their customers that the gardeners 'supplied' were all experienced tradesmen.¹⁸⁰ To be 'sent to jobbing' for a day or a week was a term used to describe sub-contraction in Oxford and it appears to have carried no shame.¹⁸¹

The bills that Penson submitted to Brasenose used the same day rate (1s. 6d.) as University College and, unlike the larger college gardens, there were no variations in the charges for different types of work.¹⁸² In adopting a flat day rate Robert Penson, as a contractor running small collegiate gardens, was able to make a steady, projected profit and leave the necessary adaptations to rhythms of the horticultural year to the sub-contractor.

In 1791 at Worcester Robert Penson applied three daily rates in the garden (1s. 4d., 1s. 6d. and 1s. 8d.) for specific levels of garden maintenance tasks.¹⁸³ Penson, according to the identified bills, maintained the daily rate of 1s. 6d. for the majority of the garden tasks until the winter of 1794/5 when he increased the basic rate to 1s.

¹⁷⁸ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

¹⁷⁹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 August 1834.

¹⁸⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 5 October 1805; *Oxford Journal*, 25 October 1834.

¹⁸¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 August 1834.

¹⁸² Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bill 101; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

¹⁸³ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

10d.¹⁸⁴ In 1795 Penson's tariff system at Worcester levied a rate of 1s. 10d. for basic tasks such as 'nailing' and cleaning and a higher charge of 2s. was added for skilled tasks such as 'clipping'.¹⁸⁵ The identification of three rates that Penson charged the College in 1795, which would, in theory, reward skilled gardeners in their own real wages, was not such a generous a system as it first suggests. An analysis of the opportunities for gardeners to receive a higher real wage based on the 2s. labour charge at Worcester reveals that Penson only levied that rate for 21½ working days in the year.¹⁸⁶ For the rest of the year a well-trained and experienced sub-contractor would have to accept a lesser wage if they were to work under Penson. In 1814 maintenance tasks were charged at a single day rate of 2s. 6d., and Penson's tiered system was no longer used.¹⁸⁷

In 1793 Edward Knibbs charged Balliol 1s. 6d. as his basic daily rate for work in the garden but he employed a gardener named Cook whose services he charged at a rate of 2s. a day.¹⁸⁸ Cook was paid the same rate as Knibbs and this approach to sub-contraction differed from Robert Penson's.¹⁸⁹ Edward Knibbs was charging for two men's work at 4s. a day. The same amount of money could have paid for two and a half days labour under Penson's operation.¹⁹⁰ The tiered system used by Penson was certainly an economical one and because of the size of his business it must have had an impact on the employment of horticultural labour in Oxford. By the second decade of the nineteenth century other garden contractors applied the same day rate as Robert Penson. Thomas Knibbs, who was the contractor for Wadham,

¹⁸⁴ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

¹⁸⁵ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

¹⁸⁶ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/2.

¹⁸⁷ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

¹⁸⁸ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28 a.8.

¹⁸⁹ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28 a.8.

¹⁹⁰ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28 a.8.

used a single daily rate of 2s. 6d. in 1811 for his contracts, as did John Millin of Jesus College in 1819.¹⁹¹

In 1826 I.P. Burnard's letter in the *Gardener's Magazine* drew the readers' attention to the plight of the journeyman.¹⁹² He wrote that while a journeyman gardener working in a good nursery, having trained in botany, surveying and geometry received between 2s. and 2s. 6d. a day, whereas an illiterate bricklayer might receive between 5s. and 7s.¹⁹³ In his letter Burnard may have been referring to the wage of a London journeyman gardener but in Oxford the real daily wage would have been considerably less than 2s. or 2s. 6d. Burnard's letter has regularly been used by historians as evidence for the daily wage for gardeners in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹⁴ At a provincial level, while the sentiment of the letter is helpful to understand the plight of a gardener, the figures provided by Burnard may not be particularly useful. The systems of contraction and sub-contraction did not guarantee regular employment for gardeners. In 1826 the Oxford daily rate was 2s. 6d. and the real wage may have been 25% less, leaving a gardener to receive 1s. 10½d.

Estimating the costs of maintaining a garden was different from assessing the price to make a specific item. Oxford building contractors, employing carpenters in the garden, regularly charged a single daily rate for the work but their regular system of charging for work was by the measure.¹⁹⁵ Stephenson observed that the day rate allowed contractors to price difficult tasks and cover their costs.¹⁹⁶ Penson's use of a

¹⁹¹ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/6; Jesus College Archive JCA B1.1.GA.

¹⁹² I.P. Burnard, *The Gardener's Magazine*, vol. 1 (1826): 141-44.

¹⁹³ I.P. Burnard, 141.

¹⁹⁴ Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden 1700-1840*, 158; Davison, *The Hidden Horticulturalists*, 17; Willes, *The Gardens of the British Working Class*, 179.

¹⁹⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11387; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

¹⁹⁶ Judy Z. Stephenson, *Contracts and Pay Work in London Construction 1660-1785* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 103.

tiered system of day rates allowed him to service larger and more demanding contracts. His single rate for smaller gardens, requiring less labour, offered a stable and regular profit and shows an astute understanding of the need to operate different systems to apply labour charges in order to make a profit.

6.10. The profitability of the businesses of tradesmen-gardeners

The amount of profit made from a single college garden was unlikely to have been large. Only a small profit could be made out of the daily rate system, requiring both large and small contractors to operate in a diverse manner. For a contractor to make a good living they could not have relied solely on the business provided by the nineteen constituent colleges of the University. Contractors were likely to have been taking on the maintenance contracts for the gardens in the City and looking for other commercial opportunities. For example William Foy, sometime contractor of Lincoln, was also a successful market gardener.¹⁹⁷ The wills of gardeners and nurserymen in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicate that a number of them lived in the manner of a comfortable and respectable middle class tradesman.¹⁹⁸

A bill from Henry Sansom to New College, for work undertaken between October 30 and 19 December 1757, records that work was carried out in the garden six days a week at the daily rate of 1s. 8d.¹⁹⁹ It does not appear that Sansom was retained by any of the other colleges as garden contractor in Oxford but he must have been a successful garden tradesman. Sansom was receiving an income of £24 from New

¹⁹⁷ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 6 March 1830.

¹⁹⁸ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 271/4/14; Oxford History Centre, Will 128/3/20; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 128/2/39; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 152/3/15.

¹⁹⁹ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

College for the care of the garden and a further £2 for the care of the Bowling Green.²⁰⁰ Compared to the one shilling a day pay, or £15 12s. a year, that John Morris received as head gardener at Dunster Castle in Somerset during the same period of time, Sansom was well paid as the gardener of New College.²⁰¹

When Sansom made his will on 10 April 1763, he left property, sums of money and personal belongings that marked him out, within his own community, as a respectable tradesman.²⁰² Sansom settled two messuages (house with land and outbuildings) in New Woodstock and a further two copyhold properties, including a farm in Bladone, on members of his family.²⁰³ His son William was left a suit of cloth with silver buttons and a set of silver shoe buckles, indicating Sansom's personal pretensions to 'politeness'.²⁰⁴ The second son, also named Henry, was given his father's cane. Sums of money were distributed amongst his wife, children and nieces, and the overall contents of the will suggest middle class respectability and prosperity. Henry Sansom's earnings from New College alone were not enough to make him a wealthy man. The farm at Bladone would have provided an additional income stream for the family outside of Sansom's garden contracting. Other income streams may have been available to Sansom as well but not from the colleges.

Financial liquidity was important for a garden contractor if they were to undertake the tasks required of a college gardener. On 24 December 1757 Sansom was paid, in full, the sum of £19 1s. 3d. as the quarterly settlement owed by New College for the sums of money he had advanced while caring for garden, as well as paying for extra

²⁰⁰ L.G. Doolittle, "College Administration", in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. V, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 257.

²⁰¹ Toby Musgrave, *The Head Gardeners* (London: Aurum Press, 2014), 41.

²⁰² Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 152/3/15.

²⁰³ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 152/3/15.

²⁰⁴ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 152/3/15.

labour.²⁰⁵ Sansom had the contract to care for the New College Bowling Green, which generated a small additional income for himself, but this role required him to employ seasonal labour and pay them in advance of his stipend.²⁰⁶ Labour costs and the need to settle the wages at the end of each week would have put some gardeners under heavy financial pressure if they did not have access to credit or cash reserves. The maintenance contract of the garden removed the responsibility for organising the garden wage bill from the colleges and their bursars.

6.11. The contractor as a diverse consumer of goods

Garden contractors were, by necessity, large and diverse consumers of materials in order to maintain the spaces they cared for. Regular consumption of bundles of brooms, tools, nails, twine, flower sticks, stakes and baskets was inherent for the maintenance of gardens. These acquisitions were excluded from the colleges' immediate financial responsibilities when either stipendiary or non-stipendiary contracts were agreed. They were bought by the contractor, again requiring a degree of financial liquidity or access to generous system of credit to cope with the delay in any money that was reimbursed.²⁰⁷ The purchases made by a contractor were not conspicuous in the garden but they were vital for its care and maintenance.

There were two main categories of purchase made by the contractors. The first type was for items and materials such as gravel, or specific trees, shrubs and flowers that were required for the maintenance or laying out of a garden. The sale of dung, mould, gravel and loam were carefully measured and charged by the cart or barrow

²⁰⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

²⁰⁶ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

²⁰⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Wadham College, WCA, 23/2; Wadham College, WCA, 26/6.

load.²⁰⁸ Gravel was either dug by the labour employed by the contractor or ordered by the cart load. Contractors were able to offer patronage to carters and scavengers (removers of rubbish) to transport waste out of the site and bring in suitable rubble and grades of gravel for the repair and construction of new walks.²⁰⁹

The second type of purchases were those that supported or facilitated the operation and care of the garden by the contractors. John Birch, who held the University College contract from at least 1832, purchased the sulphur and soft soap he needed to control the threat of insects from Oxford's Covered Market.²¹⁰ Powdered tobacco and gunpowder were other items regularly bought by the gardeners to prevent insect and other pest damage.²¹¹ Both of these forms of consumption directly linked the contractors' businesses to a network of other tradesmen in the City.

6.12. Nurserymen

Oxford was an established centre for market gardening by the second half of the seventeenth century and in the last quarter of the century fruit growing was also important. Some of these operations began to diversify and nurseries were created for the sale of ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers. From at least the beginning of the eighteenth century the Wrenchs of Paradise Gardens had established the nursery side of their business to operate in tandem with their market garden.²¹²

Loudon wrote in *The Gardener's Magazine* (1834) that when he visited Oxford in 1803, there were only two nurseries in the City, one belonging to the Thomas Tagg

²⁰⁸ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8.

²⁰⁹ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8.

²¹⁰ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²¹¹ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²¹² Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

(incorrectly spelled Tegg in the article) and other owned by Robert Penson.²¹³ These observations made by Loudon are both misleading and unhelpful in understanding the role of the nurseryman in supporting the work of the college contractors. The article in *The Gardener's Magazine* suggested that Oxford was only just undergoing an improvement in the provision of nurseries and nurserymen.²¹⁴ Instead documentary evidence demonstrates the number of nurseries operating in Oxford, and the diversity of the plants that they supplied, over a hundred years before Loudon wrote his article.

In the parish of St Thomas's in the early 1740s John Freeman operated both a market garden and nursery.²¹⁵ The Freemans were well connected members of Oxford's horticultural establishment, related by marriage to the Wrenchs of Paradise Gardens and the Tredwells of St Aldate.²¹⁶ The family's businesses, after John Freeman senior's death, were run by Mary, his wife, and her will records the investment in large 'glasses' and 'frames' that she had made for the improvement of the business.²¹⁷ Mary Freeman left these items in trust to her son, demanding that he maintain them, like heirlooms, and replace them when necessary, like for like.²¹⁸ John Freeman junior, her son, named the three men in his will dated 1756 who were employed to work in the market garden and nursery.²¹⁹ The family were tenants of Christ Church in the parish of St Peter's but appear to have maintained plots elsewhere in the City.²²⁰

²¹³ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 107-110.

²¹⁴ Loudon, 107-110.

²¹⁵ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 211. 280.

²¹⁶ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 211. 280.

²¹⁷ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 211. 280.

²¹⁸ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 24/2/18.

²¹⁹ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 214. 94.

²²⁰ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 214. 94.

Thomas Keates, a successful college contractor for Trinity, Jesus and Pembroke, maintained a small nursery and market garden.²²¹ Trinity's *Computus Bursariorum* for 1733 records bills for plants purchased from Keates.²²² The Jacksons, another dynasty of gardeners, had growing grounds in St Peter's-in-the-Bailey, containing plants and fruit trees, and further land in the parish of St Nicholas'.²²³ Two generations of the family acted as masters to apprentice gardeners in the first half of the eighteenth century including the said Thomas Keates.²²⁴ During the 1720s there were three generations of the Jackson family operating as gardeners and nurserymen.²²⁵ In 1741 James Jackson was recorded as the contractor for St John's.²²⁶ No bills from the Keates, Freemans or Jacksons have as yet been found to identify what their nursery stocks comprised of.

Thomas Mason, a college contractor and nurseryman, supplied Lincoln and Brasenose with flowers, roots and bulbs from 1755.²²⁷ Mason specialised as a florist in Oxford and he also offered a small stock of trees and fruit trees.²²⁸ The surviving garden bills for Brasenose provide evidence for the types of flowers he sold, including double hyacinth roots, polyanthus roots (*Primula x polyanthus*), gillyflowers (*Dianthus* spp.), carnations (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) and nasturtiums (*Tropaelum* sp.).²²⁹ A bill issued by Sarah Mason for garden work and materials provided

²²¹ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 215. 48.

²²² Trinity College Archive, TCA 1A-4.

²²³ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 137/2/3.

²²⁴ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 137/2/3; Graham, *Oxford City Apprentices, 1697-1800*, 133, 137.

²²⁵ Oxfordshire History Centre, Will.137/2/3.

²²⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

²²⁷ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1755; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 67.

²²⁸ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1756; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 68.

²²⁹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 69, 74, 77.

between December 1767 and March 1768 to Brasenose suggests that Thomas Mason may have died in March or April of that year.²³⁰

One of Trinity's contractors, William Haynes, supplied a variety of flowers and laid out either the fellows' garden or the Chapel Cloister garden for Brasenose in 1739.²³¹

Another nurseryman-gardener operating in the middle of the eighteenth century was Matthew Cooke (also spelled Cook). He was employed to work in the groves at Magdalen under William Walton, the College's contractor, during the 1750s and supplied a number of colleges from his nursery.²³² Like Thomas Mason, Cooke

appears to have operated a specialised nursery business. Cooke supplied Magdalen, Wadham, St John's, Lincoln, Brasenose, New College and Trinity with trees and shrubs.²³³ In 1757 at Lincoln he was employed to prune the trees in the grove and garden.²³⁴ There are two identified bills from 1760 and 1762 for Cooke's nursery, which both recorded that he supplied North American plants to Brasenose and St John's (Figure 6.6).²³⁵ Cooke's nursery may have been located on, or close to, Headington Hill, an area popular with market gardeners. A bill from James Smith, dated 1747, recorded that plants had been sent from London and that they were then carted to St John's from 'Mr Cooks on the Hill'.²³⁶ The papers relevant to the creation of the first shrubberies at Ditchley includes a bill from Matthew Cooke, dated 1756, for 12 plane (*Platanus* sp.) trees, 24 'pines asters' (*Pinus pinaster?*) and two

²³⁰ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 80.

²³¹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 53.

²³² Magdalen College Archive LCE/47; Magdalen College Archive LCE/48, LCE/49; Magdalen College Archive LCE/50; Magdalen College Archive LCE/51; Magdalen College Archive LCE/52; Magdalen College Archive LCE/53; Magdalen College Archive LCE/54.

²³³ Magdalen College Archive; LCE/48; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Lincoln College Archive, Annual Accounts LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1750, 1751, 1755; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 75; New College Archive, NCA 4303; Trinity College Archive, TCA 1A-5.

²³⁴ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1757.

²³⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 75; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

²³⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

gale frulex (Myrica gale).²³⁷ A further undated list referring to the gardens at Ditchley noted that two allspice (*Pimenta dioica*) trees were 'from Mr Cooks by Oxford'.²³⁸ Mathew Cooke, operating as a nurseryman and contractor, appears to have had a discerning client base that extended beyond the bounds of the University.

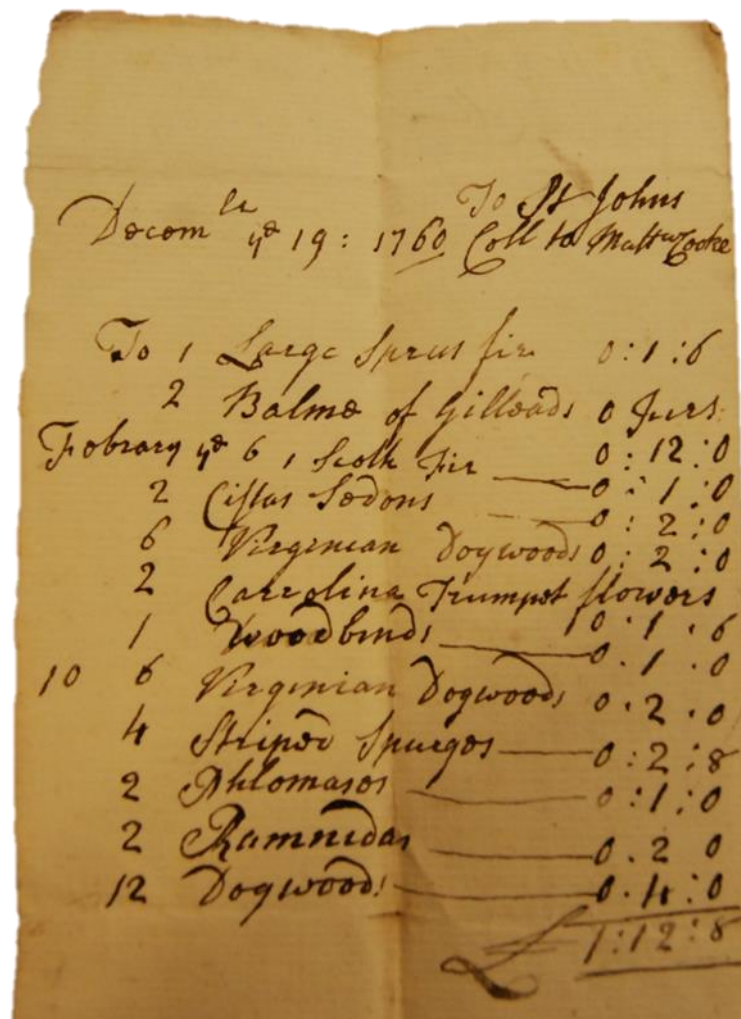


Figure 6.6. Bill for St John's College for trees, shrubs and plants from Matthew Cooke, December 19 1760. Courtesy of St John's College Archive.

The identification of a number of nurseries in the first half of the eighteenth century shifts the paradigm away from the established position that Paradise Gardens, under

²³⁷ Michael Cousins, "Dichley Park- Pioneering Planting", *Garden History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Summer, 2012): 132.

²³⁸ Cousins, 135.

the management of the Wrenchs/Taggs, was the dominant supplier of plants in Oxford for that period.²³⁹ Instead evidence now suggests that Oxford was able to support a number of nurseries and offer a diversity in the varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers for sale. The trade was in part supported by the colleges' desire to maintain gardens that represented their status as important public institutions. What has not emerged from the college archives, earlier than 1739, are any detailed bills indicating the variety of plants that were available to the contractors during the first four decades of the century. The horticultural aspirations of the colleges in the first forty years of the eighteenth century can, in part, be understood by the variety of fruit trees that were to be provided by Jacob Wrench for the Master's garden at University College on the recommendation of Tilleman Bobart in 1717.²⁴⁰

The Wrench family maintained a large nursery operation, centred on Paradise Gardens in St Ebbe's, and further grounds at the Golden Anchor in the parish of St Nicholas and St Thomas.²⁴¹ According to the description of the Paradise Gardens by Zacharias von Uffenbach in 1710 the grounds were largely devoted to market gardening.²⁴² The supplying of trees, by the nursery, to the colleges had already started by 1702 at least under the management of Jacob Wrench.²⁴³

In his *Early Nurserymen* (1974) John Harvey confused Jacob Wrench, who died in 1718, with his father Thomas, who predeceased him in 1714.²⁴⁴ While Thomas Wrench ran the Paradise Gardens, his son Jacob managed the nursery side of the

²³⁹ Harvey, *Early Nurseryman*, 61.

²⁴⁰ University College Archive, UC 1F/ 2L2.

²⁴¹ Harvey, *Early Nurseryman*, 61; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will.156/5/37.

²⁴² Quarell and Quarell, *Oxford in 1710*, 58.

²⁴³ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

²⁴⁴ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 62; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will.156/5/37.

business, issuing bills in his own name from 1702.²⁴⁵ Thomas Tagg, a gardener employed at Paradise Gardens, married Anne, the widow of Jacob Wrench. From c.1720 the nursery passed out of the Wrenchs' control and was run by Tagg, while the freehold of Golden Anchor, with its growing grounds, remained the property of Jacob Wrench's heir, Thomas Wrench, an inn-holder living in Kingston upon Thames.²⁴⁶

Following the death of his first wife, Anne, in 1724, Thomas Tagg married Elizabeth Hundson.²⁴⁷ After Tagg's death in 1741 Paradise Gardens slowly increased its influence, becoming the largest supplier of trees and shrubs to colleges in Oxford under the stewardship of his widow, Elizabeth, until Robert Penson opened his nursery sometime before 1776.²⁴⁸ Harvey noted that the nursery had already reached a level of importance when Thomas Tagg was patronised by the Earl of Litchfield in 1736.²⁴⁹ Cousins' work on Ditchley drew attention to the fact that Tagg was patronised by Lord Litchfield from as early as 1728, although both he and Kathleen Clark indicated that the Tagg stock was fairly basic.²⁵⁰

Elizabeth Tagg, like Mary Freeman, ran the nursery business as an independent tradeswoman, only handing over the operation to her son James, shortly before she died in 1779 at the age of 83.²⁵¹ James then took full control over the nursery business, having been apprenticed as a gardener in 1743 with Jacob Trench as his

²⁴⁵ Pembroke College Archive, PMB/B/1/1.

²⁴⁶ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 62; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will 156/5/37.

²⁴⁷ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 62.

²⁴⁸ New College, NCA 11384; Lincoln College Archives, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1745; Trinity College Archive, TCA 1A-5; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/40 1776.

²⁴⁹ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 62.

²⁵⁰ Michael Cousins, "Dichley Park- A follower of fashion", *Garden History*, vol.39, no. 2 (Winter, 2011), 172-3; Kathleen Clark, "What the nurserymen did for us: The role and influences of the nursery trade on the landscape and gardens of the eighteenth century", *Garden History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Summer, 2012): 26, 28.

²⁵¹ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 62; The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1050/276.

master.²⁵² James Tagg, who was an active member of the City's Corporation, appears to have been responsible for developing the diversity of the plant stock further at Paradise Gardens and he was, for a short time, Worcester's contractor.²⁵³

Between 1805 and 1816 there were two nursery businesses operated by members of the Tagg family in Oxford.²⁵⁴ James Tagg ran Paradise Gardens, with additional growing grounds bordering the site of Worcester, while his nephew Thomas maintained his own shop and grounds.²⁵⁵ It is possible that James Tagg provided his nephew Thomas Tagg with an apprenticeship at Paradise Gardens before setting up on his own. In the archive of Wadham College is a unique record in the form of a bill for the sum of £5 10s. 6d., dated 14 July 1796 and issued under the joint names of Thomas and James Tagg.²⁵⁶ This document indicates that the uncle and nephew had a partnership for a short period of time. In 1804 Thomas Tagg advertised his services and stock in the *Oxford Journal*. Tagg described himself as a nursery and seedsman based at Paradise Gardens, as well as advertising his ability to supply green house plants.²⁵⁷

From 1805 Thomas developed his trade as an independent nurseryman, seedsman, and florist by opening a shop on the High Street and in 1810 he moved to the Cornmarket opposite Carfax Church.²⁵⁸ Tagg was still able to rear exotics for sale after leaving Paradise Gardens.²⁵⁹ An advertisement, placed in the *Oxford Journal* in 1810, recorded his green houses as sited at Tagg's nursery in St Giles',

²⁵² Graham, *Oxford City Apprentices 1697-1800*, 135.

²⁵³ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/20/1.

²⁵⁴ *Oxford Journal*, 28 September 1805; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/5.

²⁵⁵ *Oxford Journal*, 26 September 1807; *Oxford Journal*, 29 December 1816.

²⁵⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

²⁵⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 6 October 1804.

²⁵⁸ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 20 October 1810.

²⁵⁹ *Oxford Journal*, 5 October 1805.

near the Observatory, also known as Tagg's Garden. Before 1816 Thomas Tagg operated two nursery sites in the parish of St Giles and another one at Yarnton.²⁶⁰ In 1816, on inheriting Paradise Gardens, all of the nursery stock, equipment and £2000 from his uncle, James Tagg, Thomas sold the shop he had established at the Cornmarket and moved his operations there.²⁶¹

Tagg's Garden was originally a parcel of 20 enclosed acres sub-leased from Henry Hunt, a tenant of St John's, and it was operated from at least 1810 as a nursery by Thomas Tagg.²⁶² In 1821 Tagg entered into a formal lease for 20 years with St John's for 10 acres comprising of Tagg's Garden and other allotments.²⁶³ The variety of the stock owned by Tagg was large and he produced two catalogues of the stock after he had inherited Paradise Gardens. One, published in 1817, listed fruit and forest trees and flowering shrubs from Tagg's nurseries.²⁶⁴ The second catalogue is undated and consists of 28 pages providing a very detailed record of the stock that was available for purchase (Figure 6.7).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 24 November 1810; *Oxford Journal*, 30 December 1815.

²⁶¹ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1582/439; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 5 October 1816.

²⁶² St John's College Archive, SJA EST.1A.II. A2.7.

²⁶³ St John's College Archive, SJA EST.1A.II. A2.7.

²⁶⁴ Worcester College Library Stack: XZA.2.19 (4).

²⁶⁵ Worcester College Library Stack: XZA.2.19 (4).

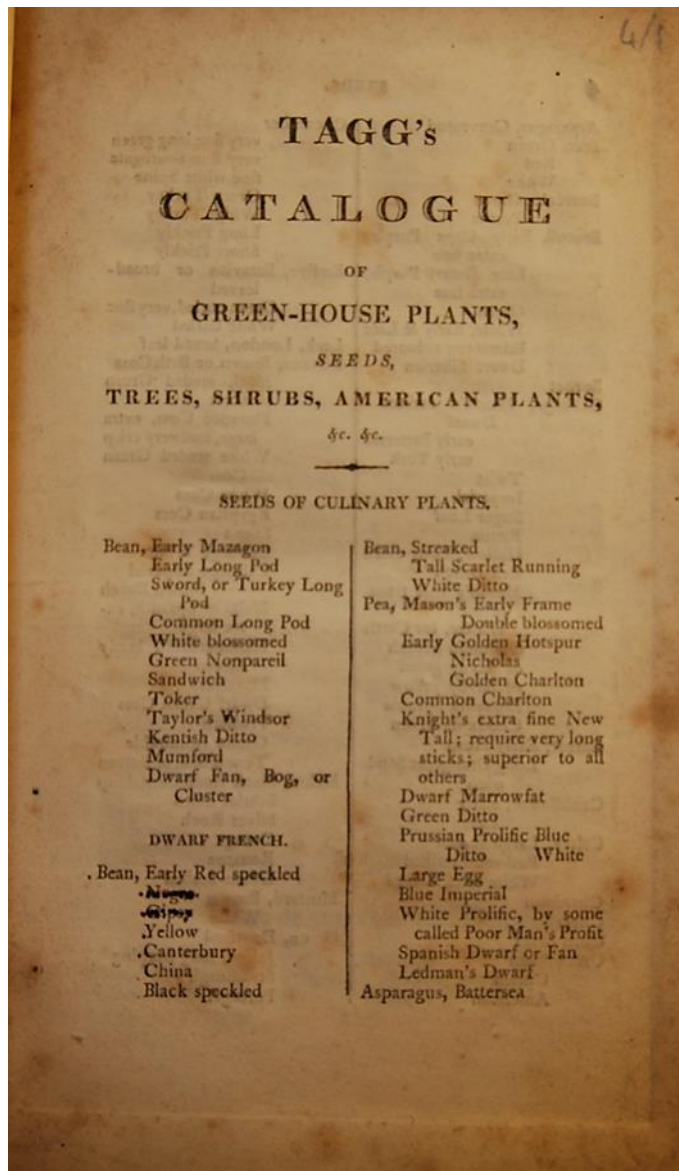


Figure 6.7. "Tagg's Catalogue of Green-House Plants, etc.", n.d. Thomas Tagg was the owner of Tagg's Garden and later Paradise Gardens. Courtesy of Worcester College Library.

In 1818 Thomas Tagg went into business with John Dreweatt, another nurseryman based in the Oxford area.²⁶⁶ The business was known as 'Tagg and Dreweatt, Nurserymen, Seedsmen and Florists' but the partnership was dissolved in February 1820.²⁶⁷ Thomas Tagg operated at least three sites; the Observatory (Tagg's Garden), Jericho and Paradise Gardens nurseries in 1820 and in 1834 John

²⁶⁶ *Windsor and Eton Express*, 13 September 1818.

²⁶⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 28 October 1818; *Oxford Journal*, 5 February 1820.

Loudon described the stock in Paradise Gardens as 'the most valuable...in Oxford'.²⁶⁸ John McKenzie, 'planter' to Thomas Tagg, was acknowledged in an advertisement in the *Oxford Journal* in 14 October 1820 as the inventor of a new planting spade.²⁶⁹ It was claimed by Tagg and McKenzie that the spade allowed labour to be saved and they offered to instruct the gentry's gardeners in its use for £1 1s., if they were within 20 miles of Oxford.²⁷⁰ Thomas Tagg clearly ran a diverse horticultural business that encompassed the role of seedsman, nurseryman, contractor and inventor/improver. James Tagg and his nephew developed their nurseries to meet the developments in the consumption of plants from their Oxfordshire clientele. The colleges regularly used the Taggs, in conjunction with other suppliers, suggesting that their prices were competitive with the other nursery businesses and that there was a diversity in the stock sold by each of the nurseries.

During the management of Elizabeth Tagg, St John's, Magdalen, Exeter, Lincoln, New College, Wadham, Trinity and Christ Church were all supplied by Paradise Gardens.²⁷¹ Under her son, James, and grandson, Thomas Tagg, Worcester, Corpus Christi, Balliol and University College were all supplied by the same family, making the Taggs suppliers to over 80% the college gardens in 1818.²⁷² In 1836 the Paradise Gardens nursery was taken over by John Dunbar, as a tenant of the Tagg

²⁶⁸ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 107.

²⁶⁹ *Oxford Journal*, 14 October 1820.

²⁷⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 14 October 1820.

²⁷¹ St John's College Archive, ACC V. B1; Magdalen College Archive, LC E/53; Exeter College Archive. ECA A.II. 11; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/AA/CAL/35 1751; New College Archive, NCA 4303; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2; Trinity College Archive, TCA 1A/5; Christ Church Archive CH. CH. MS. XII. C. 218.

²⁷² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR/1/3/42; Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/24/C1; Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8. f.2; University College Archive, UC 1F/L2.

family. After the death of Thomas Tagg in December 1836 the Jericho nursery stock was sold by auction and Paradise Gardens was sold as building plots.²⁷³

In addition to being an important contracting gardener, Robert Penson ran a nursery business that almost rivalled the Tagg family in the variety of its trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. His nursery business maintained a monopoly over the sale of plants to the colleges where he held a maintenance contract. One exception to this rule occurred at Corpus Christi College, where small purchases were made from an amateur florist.²⁷⁴ Penson also supplied the gardens of Jesus, Balliol, New College, Lincoln and Wadham with trees, shrubs, and seeds.²⁷⁵ The nursery run by Penson, like the Taggs at Paradise Gardens, was patronised by over 80% of the colleges by 1818.

The main growing ground for Robert Penson's nursery business was sited along the London Road and leased from the Warden and fellows of Merton College.²⁷⁶

Additional nursery grounds were maintained by Penson in the parish of St Clements, and in Cowley Fields.²⁷⁷ By June 1819 Robert Penson had been joined in the nursery business by his son. Nathaniel Penson had operated independently from his father, as both a nurseryman and seedsman, maintaining a shop on the High Street.²⁷⁸ In the 1820s Robert and Nathaniel Penson were diversifying their nursery business, after the college contracting ended in 1816, by providing a plant

²⁷³ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 24 December 1836; *Oxford Journal*, 4 February 1837; *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 11 February 1837; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 28 April 1838.

²⁷⁴ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

²⁷⁵ Jesus College Archive, JCA B1.1.GA; Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a 8. f.4; New College Archive, NCA 11403; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12; Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

²⁷⁶ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1841/367.

²⁷⁷ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1841/367.

²⁷⁸ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

contracting service.²⁷⁹ Plant contracting allowed large nurseries, who had abundant stocks of plants, to lease them to clients rather than concerning themselves with the need to sell all of the stock, thus supplementing their income and cutting down on wastage.²⁸⁰ A bill issued by the Pensons in 1820 to Worcester College included an entry for '5 dozen pots of geraniums &c on hire £1=0=0'.²⁸¹ The bill for the hire of the five dozen pots of geraniums for Worcester is interesting for two reasons. Firstly it shows an additional dimension to Robert Penson's horticultural enterprise and secondly it suggests that the type or size of gardening operations working for the colleges as contractors were starting to change. In 1820 the contractor at Worcester was James Griffin, a much smaller figure in Oxford's horticultural society, who was unlikely to have been able to provide a nursery service with glass house facilities like the Pensons.²⁸²

At the end of Penson's contract in 1816, Worcester began to employ contractors who did not own a large, multi-faceted, horticultural business nor operate a monopoly over the sale of nursery stock. This meant that the College authorities and their contractors were required to use a wider group of independent horticultural tradesmen in order to provide the same service that Robert Penson had provided. After Penson ended as contractor, Worcester used Thomas Tagg, Robert and Nathaniel Penson, Adam Couldrey, an Abingdon based nurseryman with premises in Oxford's Covered Market, and Joseph Cooper, a college servant, as suppliers for its plants.²⁸³ Records of plant purchases in the Corpus Christi *Garden Master's*

²⁷⁹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

²⁸⁰ Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden*, 161.

²⁸¹ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1.

²⁸² Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/3/44.

²⁸³ Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; Worcester College Archive, WOR/BUR 1/22/1; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 29 September 1838.

Book provide further evidence for the greater number of nurseries that colleges could buy from in the 1830s.²⁸⁴ The garden masters of Corpus had traditionally patronised the Tagg and the Penson nurseries for their purchases of plants but in the 1830s they used a much wider group of nurserymen, including William Day of the Victoria Nursery, Thomas Fairburn, John Dunbar of Paradise Gardens, Nathaniel Penson, John Batts and the Leamington Nursery owned by John Cullis.²⁸⁵ Once Robert Penson's contracted end at University College they too were also able to patronise a variety of nurserymen including Joseph Bates, Thomas Tagg and the gardener James Elkerton.²⁸⁶

Robert Penson's monopoly over the supply of plants for the college gardens, where he was contractor, must have been a profitable one. In his will Penson left his freehold property in St Peter's-in-the-East and St Clements and all of the garden stock to his son Nathaniel.²⁸⁷ Further freehold property, items of furniture and sums of money were bequeathed to the rest of his family.²⁸⁸ After Robert Penson's death in 1834 the family nursery business continued for another eight years until Nathaniel died in 1843.²⁸⁹ After the death of Nathaniel Penson, the nursery along the London Road was wound up and its stock and greenhouses were sold off on the instructions of his widow.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

²⁸⁵ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

²⁸⁶ University College Archive, UC BU2/F1/6; University College Archive UC BU 5/F2/3; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²⁸⁷ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1841/367.

²⁸⁸ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1841/367.

²⁸⁹ The National Archives, TNA Prob 11/1983/55.

²⁹⁰ *Oxford Journal*, 27 May 1843; *Oxford Journal*, 18 November 1843; *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 14 October 1843.

John Birch, University College's contractor, ran a nursery in the parish of St Giles, described as 'next to Mr [William] Day's', another nurseryman specialising in floristry, and maintained a further site on Rose Lane, near the Botanical Garden.²⁹¹ From these two locations he provided the University College with flowering perennials.²⁹² Like Griffin, Worcester's contractor, Birch needed to use other nurseries to provide University College with a wide selection of plants. According to John Birch's account book for University College he used five different Oxford nurseries and suppliers between May and June in 1832 for his plant purchases.²⁹³ At the first show of the Oxford, Oxfordshire and Neighbouring Counties' Horticultural Society in May 1837 he won numerous prizes for his entries, with particular success for his auriculas.²⁹⁴ In the same year Birch's debts for outstanding rent caused his entire stock in St Giles to be put up for private sale, while his collection of foreign and British plant specimens along with the Rose Lane stock, were publically auctioned.²⁹⁵ Despite his precarious financial position and the loss of his stock, Birch was still able to retain the maintenance contract with the College.²⁹⁶

In the first three decades of nineteenth century other nurseries were established in Oxford. Joseph Bates founded the Summer Town Nursery, also known as Bate's, and he was a successful exhibitor of pinks (*Dianthus cvs.*) and ranunculuses (*Ranunculus cvs.*).²⁹⁷ Loudon noted that Bates specialised as a florist but he also maintained a common stock of trees and shrubs.²⁹⁸ In addition to his nursery

²⁹¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 September 1837; *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 18 May 1844.

²⁹² University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²⁹³ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²⁹⁴ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 6 May 1837.

²⁹⁵ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 23 September 1837; *Oxford Journal*, 7 September 1837.

²⁹⁶ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

²⁹⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 24 June 1826.

²⁹⁸ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 108.

business Bates ran a contracting operation in the City.²⁹⁹ He had lost part of a nursery ground in Chipping Wycombe to a building speculation in 1822 and he moved to Summer Town, where he set up a new business and in 1834 he took a lease on Park Corner in St Giles's.³⁰⁰ The nursery grounds at Summer Town were approximately two acres in size and contained both glass and hot houses.³⁰¹ Bates was listed as insolvent in 1829 but he continued to trade as a nurseryman until 1847, when a sheriff's sale sold all of the stock in his Summer Town and Park Corner nurseries.³⁰² Stephen Jeffery and Joseph Humphrey were also nurserymen patronised by college contractors. They were both based in the parish of St Giles, supplying colleges with their stock during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century.³⁰³ Jeffery owned the Globe Nursery and between 1829 and 1831 he also held the maintenance contract for Jesus' garden.³⁰⁴ Joseph Humphrey was a florist, operating his nursery by 1831 but he had quit the business and became a publican by 1836.³⁰⁵ Another nurseryman based in the parish of St Giles was William Day who had taken over the Victoria Nursery from Joseph Humphrey.³⁰⁶ Day opened the nursery in 1835, selling flower roots, fruit trees and green house plants, and from 1837 he was patronised by Oxford's colleges.³⁰⁷

Thomas Fairburn, formerly gardener of Sir Joseph Banks and later Princess Charlotte, took a lease on a plot in the Parks, adjoining St John's within the parish

²⁹⁹ *Oxford Journal*, 25 October 1834.

³⁰⁰ *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 30 October 1822; *Oxford Journal*, 25 October 1834.

³⁰¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 19 March 1836.

³⁰² *Oxford University and City Herald*, 31 January 1829; *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 30 October 1847; *Oxford Journal*, 11 December 1847.

³⁰³ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 108; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 13 October 1832.

³⁰⁴ *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 4 October 1845.

³⁰⁵ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 109; *Oxford Journal*, 23 July 1836.

³⁰⁶ *Oxford Journal*, 19 September 1835.

³⁰⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 17 September 1836; Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

of St Giles.³⁰⁸ In addition he opened a shop on Broad Street opposite Balliol and took a lease on the walled garden belonging to the Radcliffe Infirmary.³⁰⁹ Fairburn had become the garden contractor for St John's garden by 1834 and he was praised for his work there by John Loudon.³¹⁰ Like Bates, Jeffery and Humphrey, Fairburn made his reputation in Oxford principally as a florist.³¹¹ By the middle of the 1840s, Fairburn found himself in financial difficulties, like other nurserymen, and his nursery, its stock of shrubs and flowers were auctioned in 1848 to clear his debts.³¹²

Many of those who set up their nurseries in the 1820s-30s, were involved in the founding of the Oxford, Oxfordshire and Neighbouring Counties Horticultural Society in 1830.³¹³ Thomas Tagg, Joseph Bates, Thomas Fairburn, John Robinson, the contractor for Wadham and Richard Chaundy, a seedsman, were elected to the original committee.³¹⁴ The Society was founded to increase the knowledge and professionalism amongst gardeners and nurserymen in the region but also to act as a foil to the scandalous mismanagement of the Horticultural Society.³¹⁵ A lack of horticultural knowledge and professionalism in the administration of the Horticultural Society was used as the justification for the need to create the Oxfordshire and Neighbouring Counties Horticultural Society.³¹⁶ From the very beginning the Oxford horticultural society was dominated by the tradesmen-gardeners, who exhibited their plants at the annual show and won the majority of the prizes offered at those

³⁰⁸ Ray Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), 239.

³⁰⁹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 17 October 1829; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 12 December 1835.

³¹⁰ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 104, 108-9.

³¹¹ Loudon, 108-9.

³¹² *Oxford Journal*, 14 October 1848.

³¹³ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 13 March 1830.

³¹⁴ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 13 March 1830.

³¹⁵ Davison, *The Hidden Horticulturalists*, 304-305.

³¹⁶ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 28 November 1829; *Oxford University and City Herald*, 24 April 1830.

events.³¹⁷ The Oxford Horticultural Society was quickly joined by the Oxford Botanical and Natural History Society, founded in 1831.³¹⁸ Both of the societies were committed to education and improvements of horticulture. The improvements in the horticultural trade in the 1830s through formal education were advocated by both of the societies and began to alter the social and cultural structures of Oxford's tradesmen-gardeners. Loudon noted, with a slight sense of contempt, that 'the taste at Oxford is more for the sensual, than the intellectual part of gardening'.³¹⁹ The power of Oxford's eighteenth and nineteenth century gardening oligarchy, represented by the Tagg and Penson families, did not receive fulsome praise from Loudon either.³²⁰ Instead in 1834 Loudon had high hopes for a standardised professional approach from the new breed of contractors and nurserymen on Oxford, like Thomas Fairburn, whose approaches to horticultural management mirrored Loudon's own ideas and publications.³²¹

6.13. New work contracts

New work contracting was another form of employment available for the tradesman gardener. In Oxford these opportunities were usually undertaken by the maintenance contractor to alter or redesign parts of the gardens. Like maintenance contracting, the work was seasonal and by its nature, of an even more temporary nature.

The early eighteenth century new work contracts at Trinity (1714) and University College (1717) were undertaken by Jacob Wrench of Paradise Gardens.³²² After the

³¹⁷ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 26 June 1830; *Berkshire Chronicle*, 10 July 1830.

³¹⁸ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 15 October 1831.

³¹⁹ Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats", 107.

³²⁰ Loudon, 107-108.

³²¹ Loudon, 104, 108-9, 113.

³²² Trinity College Archive, TCA Misc Vol f104v-178.; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

completion of these projects the Wrench and Tagg families do not appear to have carried out any further new work contracts for the colleges at Oxford. Thomas Tagg in 1820 did however offer to undertake new ground work in the 'modern taste' in his notices in the *Oxford Journal*.³²³ William Haynes, the Trinity contractor, was employed to lay out a garden at Brasenose in November 1739.³²⁴ To be able to execute the commission, two men were employed to create gravel paths over a total of 12 days, at a rate of 1s. 8d., and a further 18 days were charged for one man's labour to 'make the garden' at the same daily rate.³²⁵ Haynes levied a single fee of 10s for his own labour and charged a further £1 4s. 2d. for flowers.³²⁶ The work for the Brasenose garden applied, under Haynes' supervision, the same labour rate for all of the tasks, while in November 1741 Thomas Nethercliffe, working at New College, charged four different day rates.³²⁷ In the first three weeks of the contract Nethercliffe was applying the daily rates of 1s. 8d., 1s. 6d., 1s. 4d. or 1s. 2d. a day.³²⁸ These included the same two rates (1s. 8d. and 1s. 2d.) used in 1758 by Henry Moore to pay his gardeners and labourers. Unlike the anonymity of the St John's bills issued by Moore, Nethercliffe listed the names of the men he employed.³²⁹ The work at New College involved making a new walk, wheeling in gravel, cutting turf, making borders and removing yews.³³⁰ In the second, third and fourth week of the contract John English was employed on a rate of 1s. 4d.³³¹

³²³ *Oxford Journal*, 14 December 1820.

³²⁴ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 50.

³²⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 50.

³²⁶ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 50.

³²⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³²⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³²⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³³⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

³³¹ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

English's will was dated 1742 and identified him to be a respectable Oxford tradesman who designated himself as a 'gardener'.³³²

The bill for the new work in the New College Bowling Green in 1741 indicates that experienced gardeners were employed to undertake day labour at a lesser rate during the winter months. New work contracting regularly took place in the winter, a time of the year when the college maintenance contracts and gardens generally required a much smaller labour force of sub-contractors.³³³ The limited employment opportunities available to gardeners in Oxford during that season meant that lower paid daily tasks were taken on by trained tradesmen.

If trained gardeners services were charged at the 1s. 2d. or 1s. 4d. rates in the winter, an additional question needs to be asked about the employment of sub-contractors at St John's and Oxford more generally. Who was working for Henry Moore and other contractors under the designation of 'labourer'?³³⁴ Nethercliffe's bill suggests that the label 'labourer' should not be understood as a term to describe an unskilled individual as Loudon did.³³⁵ Instead the label of 'labourer', and the accompanying daily rate, should be understood to reflect the tasks that the individual was required to perform, rather than the level of their training and experience. Nethercliffe and Henry Moore's method of billing may be an earlier version of the sliding system used by Robert Penson, identifying daily rates with specific tasks.³³⁶

³³² New College Archive, NCA 11380; Oxfordshire History Centre, Will, 165/1/30.

³³³ New College Archive, NCA 11380; Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 591-592, 621.

³³⁴ New College Archive, NCA 11380; St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

³³⁵ Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822), 1199.

³³⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

In 1789 Robert Penson was contracted by New College to level, lay new gravel paths and turf for the Front or Great Quadrangle.³³⁷ In his bill there were two day rates for the tasks, at either 1s. 6d. or 1s. 4d. The commission was a large one, taking over four months to complete and costing the College £219 17s. 11d.³³⁸ New work contracts, which involved large sums of money, meant the gardener needed to send an interim bill in order to receive a partial settlement from the bursar. This allowed the contractor to access enough ready money for them to settle the remaining labour and material charges, while it gave the college power to withhold money if the workmanship was not good enough. At New College the bursar received a bill for work completed up until 24 October 1789 for £179 19s. 6d. and it was settled in part on 18 January 1790 with payment of £130, leaving £49 19s. 6d. outstanding.³³⁹ Penson's final bill for the work in the Front Quadrangle at New College was discounted by 17s. 6d. for 5 loads of gravel that were not used.³⁴⁰ Unlike the maintenance contracts for the colleges the new work was carefully measured and appraised for the materials it consumed. The payments were for specific tasks and materials and discounting was an appropriate way for the bursars to monitor and control the costs. The bursar at University College paid Penson in three parts in 1809-1810 for his laying out of the College's newly relocated Fellows' Garden.³⁴¹ Penson received an advance in July 1809, an interim payment of £100 on 25 July 1810 and the settlement of the remaining account of £101 17s. 4d. two days later.³⁴²

³³⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

³³⁸ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

³³⁹ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

³⁴⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11399.

³⁴¹ University College Archive, UC BU5/F3/6.

³⁴² University College Archive, UC BU5/F3/6.

In c.1777 John Foreman was employed to design and layout the Private Fellows' Garden at Wadham. Robert Penson was commissioned to design and lay out the gardens for University College (1798/1800 and 1809/10), Brasenose (1778/79) and St John's (1777-9). Other Oxford contractors worked in conjunction with an external advisor.³⁴³ At University College in 1717 Jacob Wrench worked with Tilleman Bobart who was employed as the designer of the Master's Garden.³⁴⁴ In the cases of Balliol and Wadham, the gardener Edward Knibbs followed the recommendations that were made by James Shipley, the Head Gardener at Blenheim Palace.³⁴⁵ At Balliol James Shipley had been paid £5 5s. for advising the College on unifying their grove with the Fellows' Garden.³⁴⁶ Shipley, working at Wadham in c.1796, drew up a scheme for the newly enlarged Warden's garden and unification of the Fellows' Garden with the Private Fellow's Garden.³⁴⁷

The total cost of merging the grove and garden spaces at Balliol in 1794 was meticulously accounted for and the total cost amounted to £108 7s. 8½d.³⁴⁸ The cost of the labour, used to undertake Shipley's recommendations, amounted to £48 2s. 3d., just under 50% of the cost of the overall project.³⁴⁹ Shipley's own fee for advising the College made up almost 5% of the total cost on the project.³⁵⁰ If the figure of 25% for costs of operating the business and making a profit is used, Edward Knibbs made c.£12 from the day rates charged during the laying out of the

³⁴³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3; University College Archive, UC BU5/F3/6; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 96; St John's College, SJA ADM 1A. 7.

³⁴⁴ University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

³⁴⁵ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.8; Wadham College Archive WCA 23/3; Wadham College Archive 2/3.

³⁴⁶ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3; Balliol College Archive, *Bursars' Book (Computi)*, 1787-1817.

³⁴⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

³⁴⁸ Balliol College Archive, *Bursars' Book (Computi)*, 1787-1817.

³⁴⁹ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.8.

³⁵⁰ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.8.

garden.³⁵¹ The bills from the nurseries and other purchases were sent to the College directly and do not need to be taken into account. The figures recorded above, when combined together, indicate that the contractor's cut from the overall costs of Balliol new work contract in 1794 amounted to just over 11% of the total cost of the project and illustrates the type of income that contractors were able to make for laying out gardens.

The size of profit that a new work contractor could make was not enormous, if they were to be competitive. In the case of Balliol the gardener's stipend for the maintenance contract in 1797 was £13, providing £3 5s. to cover the operational costs and profit of the contractor.³⁵² New work contracts were likely to have been welcome additional jobs for college contractors in Oxford, especially during the winter months.

6.14. The contractors' calendar

At St John's the financial year for the contractor started in October while Lincoln's began in November or December.³⁵³ The separation between the cycle of the calendar year and the gardener's financial year highlights the large periods of dormancy in the gardeners' work. December and January were months when the number of people sub-contracted to work in the college gardens dropped to their lowest. Larger gardens like St John's still required labour to undertake tasks, but on a much reduced scale.³⁵⁴ Robert Penson, operating Brasenose's gardens, did not

³⁵¹ Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.8.

³⁵² Balliol College Archive, MBP 28a.9.

³⁵³ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12; Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/13.

³⁵⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA, ACC V. B1.

employ any labour between the beginning of December 1780 and the end of January 1781.³⁵⁵ Edward Knibbs, the contractor for Lincoln, did not employ anyone to work in the College's grove and garden for three weeks of January 1794 and for the whole of January and February in 1795.³⁵⁶ During the winter months in Oxford there were limited opportunities for sub-contracted labour to find work in the college gardens.

In November and December the major work undertaken in the gardens was the pruning and tying of the fruit trees and shrubs during which time large quantities of shreds and nails were consumed. Thomas Knibbs purchased 1000 nails in November 1797 for use in Wadham's Fellows' garden, indicating that the gardeners were 'nailing' or training wall trees during that month.³⁵⁷ Fruit trees such as peach, apricot, plum (*Prunus armeniaca*) and nectarine were recommended to be neatly pruned and 'nailed up' by John Abercrombie during the winter months.³⁵⁸ Vines, which were often planted between fruit trees, were also pruned and trained so that they would be ready to produce grapes for the college's table in the summer and autumn. It was advised that as soon as they were pruned they should also be nailed up as neatly as possible.³⁵⁹ The planting of shrubs and trees was also recommended during the winter.³⁶⁰ Although the common jasmine varieties (*Jasminum* spp.) planted in the garden were hardy, they required support and nailing to prevent damage to them. At St John's and Brasenose this was another winter task completed in either December or January.³⁶¹ Many of the winter tasks in the

³⁵⁵ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 100.

³⁵⁶ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12.

³⁵⁷ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/4.

³⁵⁸ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*. 578.

³⁵⁹ Abercrombie, 37.

³⁶⁰ Abercrombie, 591.

³⁶¹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bill 98; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

collegiate gardens were focused on the care of vines, *espaliers* and wall trees.³⁶²

The bills for Lincoln and University College indicate that the husbandry of fruit formed an important part of the gardeners' duties.³⁶³

Cultivation of the borders was another winter job to be undertaken while most of the garden was dormant. In 1782 at Brasenose cultivation described as 'digging' in the bills and combined with other tasks, took place over 5 days. St John's gardener's bill in 1772 recorded that it took 18 days to complete the task of cultivation.³⁶⁴ The elm and lime trees were cut annually at St John's during January or February with the help of contracted carpenters.³⁶⁵

March and April were months when the contractors began to start employing labour for more sustained periods of time in the gardens. The gardeners' bills indicate that March was a month largely devoted to the task of 'cleaning' the garden. These tasks included, any cultivation, hoeing, raking, edging, sweeping and rolling that was necessary in order to control the garden.³⁶⁶ The maintenance contracts for the gardens were formed around the idea of a 'clean' garden. Mowing and rolling began in gardens in April with groups of men employed to work in the morning.³⁶⁷ Rolling was recommended to take place one or two days before the grass was mown but the bills suggest that that this was a piece of advice that went unheeded.³⁶⁸ The groups of mowers operated on a fortnightly rotation at St John's and Worcester, while at New College only Jeremiah Dix mowed the grass in the New College Bowling Green

³⁶² Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 572, 577.

³⁶³ Lincoln College Archive, LC/B/B/12; University College Archive, UC 1F/2 L2.

³⁶⁴ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bill 100; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁶⁵ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁶⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁶⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

³⁶⁸ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 365, 245.

on a weekly basis in 1757.³⁶⁹ The other important task in the garden in April was turning the gravel, a labour intensive task. 'Turning the gravel' was a task undertaken in spring to remove the weeds and moss that had grown on the gravel walks; after digging out problematic areas with a spade, fresh gravel was replaced on top of the path at an angle to create a clean surface and the crown of the walk was maintained for drainage purposes, and to kill off the weeds.³⁷⁰ The maintenance and preparation of the gravel walks signalled that the gardens were being prepared for Oxford's summer season when many of them were used by the members of the University and the City. At St John's during March 1773 the cleaning of gravel walks in the groves required 60 days labour compared to 34 days labour for all of the remaining tasks for that month.³⁷¹ The large expenditure spent on the turning the gravel was important for the good order of St John's Outer Grove which was acknowledged as one of the most popular public walks in Oxford.³⁷²

During March and April the gardeners started to sow their hardy seeds and the purchase of the seed papers was recorded in the contractors' bills.³⁷³ The stipendiary maintenance contracts appear to have included the costs of seed papers in their agreements and these were charged as an additional expense to the colleges.³⁷⁴ In the majority of the surviving bills there is no record for which type of flowers seeds were included in the papers. A bill for Wadham from Thomas Knibbs, dated February 1808, did however record purchases of larkspur (*Delphinium ajacis*)

³⁶⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; Worcester College, WOR/BUR1/20/2; New College Archive, NCA 11389.

³⁷⁰ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 188-189.

³⁷¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁷² St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁷³ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bill 100.

³⁷⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/2.

and sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*) seeds for 8d.³⁷⁵ Thomas Tagg's undated plant and seed catalogue offered his customers 25 different species and a large number of varieties of hardy annual seeds.³⁷⁶

From April until November the weeding women were regularly employed to work in some of the gardens for either five or six days a week. At St John's the organisation of the weeding was sub-contracted out to Mary Smith in 1747 and it is likely that this was the case in other years.³⁷⁷ In 1750 costs of weeding women were entered under a separate heading, 'The Weeding womans Bill', on the gardener's bill and in 1751 this list of costs was titled 'The Womans Work'.³⁷⁸ In the 1759 the weeders' bill was still entered separately but it was no longer given a separate heading.³⁷⁹ Henry Sansom, who operated the contract for New College garden, also employed women to work in the garden during the spring, summer and autumn seasons.³⁸⁰ Elizabeth and Mary Harris, Bridget Silversides and Frances Hands were all paid directly by Sansom for their work in 1757-1758.³⁸¹ Penson's smaller college contracts did not record the hired weeding women to undertake any tasks but the gardeners he sub-contracted may have done so.³⁸² However he continued to employ them for his larger contracts at Worcester and St John's.³⁸³ It is interesting to note that Mary Smith, working for Henry Moore in 1747, is one of the few maintenance sub-contractors working in a college garden who can be identified.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁵ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/5.

³⁷⁶ Worcester College Library, Stack: XZA.2.19 (4).

³⁷⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁷⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁷⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁸⁰ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

³⁸¹ New College Archive, NCA 11389.

³⁸² University College Archive, UC 1F/2 I2; Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bill 102.

³⁸³ Worcester College, WOR/BUR1/20/2; St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁸⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

During May and into June one of the tasks in many of the gardens was to prune and train the vines, *espaliers* and wall trees again. The control of irregular growth was an important task for the gardeners, preventing too much shade and allowing the circulation of rain and air.³⁸⁵ The pruning at this time of year was considered extremely important as it had an impact on the crop yield and the symmetry or balance of the tree growth.³⁸⁶ During June additional thinning out of the fruit took place and further nailing had to be undertaken to control the amount of shade from leaf growth falling on the fruit.³⁸⁷ There were also smaller additional tasks to complete, including the clipping of box edgings around the borders that needed work and the transporting of annual flowers into their beds.³⁸⁸ At St John's the 'nailing' of *laurustinus* in the Outer Grove took place in June.³⁸⁹ At the end of the month hedge clipping was recommended and the three gardeners at St John's were employed to cut the thorn hedges in the Inner Grove for three days in 1774.³⁹⁰ The appearance of packthread and flower sticks in the garden bills towards the end of June indicates that the gardeners were also involved in tidying up the flowering plants and climbers.³⁹¹ This task required the removal of dead plant matter and making sure the flowering plants were neatly tied to flower sticks and standing upright.³⁹²

In the months of July, August and September there were limited employment opportunities for the sub-contractors in the smaller colleges. The clipping and repair of box edging continued in these months, evidenced in the charge for removing part

³⁸⁵ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 289.

³⁸⁶ Abercrombie, 347-8.

³⁸⁷ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 98.

³⁸⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁸⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹¹ Brasenose College Archive, Tradesmen's Bills 98.

³⁹² Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 365.

of a box border at Wadham in August 1791.³⁹³ Other tradesmen were also vital in the smooth running of the seasonal operation of the gardens. At Wadham, towards the end of July, pairs of shears were ground by William Robinson, the ironmonger, to enable the gardeners to cut the hedges and edges precisely.³⁹⁴ John Abercrombie took care to remind his readers of the importance of using shears that worked well so that the work could be as neatly executed as possible.³⁹⁵ In August and September 1773 and 1774 the yews in the Outer Grove at St John's were cut.³⁹⁶ James Thomason, who had the carpentry contract with the College, recorded in his bill that the large stand was taken out of storage and part of it was put up using the labour of three men on 4 September 1773.³⁹⁷ Work on the yews began on the same day according to Penson's own bill.³⁹⁸ Cutting the yews required the stand to be put up and taken down twice in the week, demonstrating the gardeners need to move the stand in order to complete the task (Figure 6.8).³⁹⁹ At an operational level the work on the yews required the gardeners and the carpenters to work extremely closely together in communicating their needs to each other. During the week of 4 September 1773 three carpenters and three gardeners were sub-contracted by Thomason and Penson to perform the work that was needed for the care of St John's yews.⁴⁰⁰ At the end of October the mowing of the grass ended and most of the tasks were categorised under the heading 'cleaning the garden'.⁴⁰¹ November

³⁹³ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

³⁹⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 23/3.

³⁹⁵ Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener*, 494.

³⁹⁶ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹⁷ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹⁸ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

³⁹⁹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁰⁰ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁴⁰¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

was used to prepare for winter, involving further cleaning of the gardens, and, in some cases, cultivating the soil for the new growing year.



Figure 6.8. Detail from Salomon Kleiner, “Avenue of chestnut trees from the so-called “garden of the former favourite”, planted during the reign of Emperor Joseph I” in *Viererley Vorstellungen*, Augsburg, c. 1730, engraving, plate 8. A small wheeled stand used to trim the hedges. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

The contracting cycle at Oxford closely followed the monthly tasks in the gardening calendars but it was also effected by contractual and financial realities. There were generally a number of months in the jobbing gardener or sub-contractor’s year when the gardens yielded very limited or almost no employment in the college gardens. This lack of regular employment also meant that during the same periods of time non-stipendiary contractors were not able make any profit from daily labour charges. Larger gardens like St John’s provided steadier income for the contractors and sub-

contractors because of their size and the diverse range of tasks that needed to be undertaken. The contracting calendar was further limited by the agreement between the gardener and the college authorities. As maintenance contracts, they were limited to the tasks that kept the garden in good order. Additional tasks such as planting, the creation of gravel paths and alterations of the lay out of the garden were charged as extra tasks and provided additional income.

6.15. Summary

The complex typologies of gardeners created by horticultural writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have formed a false sense of clarity when compared to the realities of the trade in Oxford. Garden contracting was often one part of a wider portfolio of business interests for gardeners operating within the University and City. The employment of labour in the gardens also indicates that there was a fluidity in the employment and remuneration of gardeners making titles such as master gardener and journeymen, within the hierarchy of the trade, at times unhelpful. The fluidity in the employment of gardeners and others related workers in the garden makes the modelling of an organisational or hierarchical nature of contracting and subcontracting an unhelpful device. Securing employment and making a profit were the key objectives of sub-contractors and contractors.

Daily rates were not the wages that were paid to the sub-contractors but the agreed cost of labour per day between the contractor and the college. Out of this labour charge contractors needed to cover their business costs and make a profit. The analysis of the daily rates charged by garden contractors in large gardens indicates that from at least the 1770s the type of task informed the price charged to the client,

rather than the skills of the sub-contractor. The sophistication of the contracting system operated by Robert Penson allowed him to dominate the business for at least thirty years.

The number of nurseries operating in City in the eighteenth century identified in the chapter indicates that there was a flourishing trade at times. The influence of the Tagg family and Robert Penson had over the nursery trade in Oxford, between 1775 and 1820, allowed them to form an oligopoly. As suppliers to the college gardens during that period there were no other tradesmen in serious competition with them. As the power of these two family nurseries waned, other nurserymen and florists with smaller businesses were able to enter the market but many of them got into serious financial difficulties and failed by the 1840s.

Oxford's horticultural trade serviced and supported the college contracts, providing skills and services that responded to the needs of the client. The contractors' flexibility in providing labour and the high technical level of the sub-contractors' horticultural skills were both required to meet the various demands on the use of a college garden. The requirements of the users were complex and the next chapter identifies these and the values placed on the garden spaces.

Chapter 7 Uses and Users of the gardens

Identifying the uses of the college gardens provides the context for how the gardens were operated and who used them. The use of Reception theory and thick description moves the study of the uses and users away from a chronological structure based on clear changes, beginnings and ends that took place between 1733 and 1837. Research for this study has not provided any evidence to support this approach. Instead, this chapter identifies the behaviours, uses, language and beliefs associated with the collegiate landscapes. While it is impossible to identify and discuss the uses and users for all nineteen college gardens, it is possible to recognise some of their key purposes; from public walks to temporary shooting grounds for archery. This chapter highlights the civic roles that the gardens played, both for the University and the City, between 1733 and 1837. It identifies and assesses the tensions caused by the use of the college gardens by members of the University and some of the female inhabitants of the City. Understanding the multiplicity of uses of the gardens provides a greater insight into the need for flexible management by the contractors.

7.1. The garden as social space used by the members of the college and their guests

Collegiate gardens provided fellows and students with spaces where they could entertain themselves and their guests. Most of the colleges had summer houses in their gardens and some, such as Queen's, Magdalen and New College, maintained bowling greens for the use of their members. Gardens provided additional spaces in which colleges were able to express their social aspirations.

The Fellows' Garden at New College was described by *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* (1747) as 'a very desirable spot of ground'.¹ James Woodforde, a member of New College, used the garden as a social space during both his periods of residence there.² The use of the Fellows' Garden and the Bowling Green required members of the College to make payments to support their maintenance.³ The evidence for the provision of spaces and buildings designed for socialising in the gardens indicates that they were not simply places devoted to exercise or contemplation.

Woodforde recorded his experiences of socialising in the College Bowling Green summer house in his diaries.⁴ Built in 1741 the summer house was large enough to accommodate at least eight people and the interior was simply but elegantly decorated by the plasterer William Teeghe.⁵ A new walk and borders of flowering shrubs were added in the same year as part of the improvements to the Bowling Green.⁶ When the new shrubberies and walk were formed in 1741, jasmines and woodbines (honeysuckles) were planted in the space.⁷ In the summer the scent of these two climbing plants would have provided additional sensory experiences, particularly at night. In his description of Philip Southcote's Woburn Farm, Surrey, Thomas Whatley explained that the use of woodbines and jasmine in the hedgerow of part of the walk was able to 'replenish the air with their perfumes'.⁸ The sights,

¹ *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* (London: 1747), 27.

² James Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, ed. W.N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, vol. XXI, Oxford Historical Society New Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 39, 53, 130.

³ New College Archive, NCA 4297.

⁴ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 53, 130.

⁵ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

⁶ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

⁷ New College Archive, NCA 11380.

⁸ Mark Laird, "Lilac and Nightingale: The Heritage of Scent and Sound at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill", in *Sound and Scent in the Garden*, ed. D.Fairchild Ruggles, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 38 (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2017), 198.

sounds and tastes associated with socialising in the college gardens would have been augmented by the pleasing effects of nature.⁹

Woodforde ordered wine from the College's cellar and consumed it in the summer house either alone or with company.¹⁰ On 23 August 1761 his diary recorded that he spent the afternoon with seven other men drinking and socialising in the summer house; the party consisted of four members of the College, two members of Cambridge University and an army officer.¹¹ The summer house was suitably furnished for social events and provided with a large mahogany table purchased from the carpenter James Chadwell in 1754, at a cost of £4 4s., and at least four painted double seat Windsor chairs. More seats, painted in white, were purchased to provide additional furniture in the Bowling Green.¹² In the 1740s and 1750s New College spent money on creating an elegant space for recreation and entertainment in their gardens.

During the evening of 24 May 1763 James Woodforde was drinking wine in the summer house at the Bowling Green with his friend Hooke. Woodforde wrote:

two Gentlemanlike Persons (whose names were Messrs Mercer and Loyd) pushed themselves into the Temple in our Garden, while Hooke and myself were drinking there, drank two Bottles of Wine with us. Mercer's wife and 2 more Ladies were with us. Mercer (who wore a gold-laced Hat) was very drunk and very abusive to us and Mr Loyd; Loyd is a schoolmaster at Abingdon and Mercer's son went to school to him. Mercer went away about ten o'clock this

⁹ Laird, "Lilac and Nightingale", 199.

¹⁰ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 39.

¹¹ Woodforde, 39.

¹² New College Archive, NCA 11388.

*evening, and made a great noise going through College Mr Mercer behaved very much unlike a Gentleman.*¹³

Woodforde's description of Mercer and his companion Loyd, as 'Gentleman like' and Mercer's wife's companion as 'ladies' suggests that he had assessed their social position by the quality of their dress.¹⁴ Mercer's display of poor manners that evening were not solely based on the way that he made his entry into the summer house but also on his abuse of the rules of propriety, by failing to conform to the expected polite behaviour whilst being entertained by Woodforde and Hooke. New College's gardens and the summer house were perceived, according to the diary entries of Woodforde, to be both a place of retirement and entertainment.¹⁵ All of the users of the garden were bound by the conventions of 'public' or polite behaviour. Part of the civility of a gentleman was to acknowledge that a private interaction was taking place and to walk away instead of pushing himself forward.¹⁶ While Woodforde recorded his enjoyment in consuming wine and cider in the summer house, he was clearly extremely uncomfortable with the space being used as a venue for excessive and uncivilised behaviour.¹⁷

The collegiate gardens required policing either through the user's self-restraint or the institutions' delegated figures of authority. In the 1760s the Garden Master at Corpus Christi College was given full authority over the 'public garden' by the fellows.¹⁸

Additionally the Garden Master was required by the College authorities to 'arrange

¹³ James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson*, ed. John Beresford, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 25.

¹⁴ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 130.

¹⁵ Woodforde, 39, 130.

¹⁶ Hannah Greig, "'All Together and All Distinct': Public Sociability and Social Exclusivity in London Pleasure Gardens, ca. 1740-1800", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1 (January, 2012): 50.

¹⁷ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 130.

¹⁸ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

the etiquette' of the garden and summer house.¹⁹ New College's Bowling Green and summerhouse, as a polite and public space, was threatened on 24 May 1761 when Mr Mercer withdrew from the accepted codes of genteel behaviour.

7.2. Elite cultural activities in college gardens

The use of the garden at New College for polite entertainments represented the desire of Oxford colleges to present themselves as centres of civilised culture amid appropriately tasteful surroundings. In the 1820s and 1830s members of New College, St John's, Christ Church and Worcester used their landscapes for archery.²⁰ An article published on 21 March 1827, and then reprinted in a number of the English provincial newspapers, reported to their readers that the 'masculine' pastime was taking place in the gardens at New College.²¹

The New College Archers was founded in 1825 in emulation of other archery clubs set up by the English upper class as statements of cultural exclusivity and the growing interest in medievalism.²² The St John's Archers was founded in 1830 and the society doubled as an exclusive dining club for members of the College.²³ During the spring months the New College Archers practised and in the summer they competed against other colleges.²⁴ Descriptions record that the targets were set 60-

¹⁹ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

²⁰ *Berkshire Chronicle*, 27 June 1829; E Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery* (York: 1845), 182; Thomas Waring, *A Treatise on Archery: Or The Art of Shooting with the Long Bow* (London: 1830), 62.

²¹ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1827; *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 22 March 1827; *Morning Post*, 14 April 1827; *Nottingham Journal*, 21 April 1827; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 26 March 1827; Martin Johnes, "Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales c.1780-1840", *History*, vol. 89, no. 2 (April, 2004): 203.

²² E Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery* (York: 1845), 101, 180; Johnes, "Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales c.1780-1840", 202.

²³ Mark Curthoys, "The Oxford of Mr Verdant Green", in *The History of Oxford, Nineteenth Century Oxford, Part 1*, vol. VI, eds. M.G. Brock and Mark Curthoys (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 284.

²⁴ E. Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 181.

100 yards apart from each other and the need for space required that the activity took place in the part of New College garden known as the Bowling Green.²⁵

Thomas Waring recommended that the archery ground grass should be kept continually low and even.²⁶ The archers met on the bowling green on Mondays to practise; shooting their arrows from one direction, retrieving them from the first target and then shooting back from the opposite side.²⁷ The health giving nature of archery, as a form of exercise, was considered to be a proper activity for students and its ability to be held in the larger college gardens meant that it was approved of by the college authorities as a controllable pastime.²⁸

The archery societies of New College, St John's and Worcester had their own distinct uniforms designed to demonstrate the exclusivity of each society from other members of their colleges and the visitors to the gardens (Figure 7.1).²⁹ New College's Archers wore green coats with frosted silver buttons, decorated with the society's badge picked out in gilt, a light buff waistcoat with smaller silver club buttons, white trousers, a black hat, neck cloth and boots.³⁰ The membership of the societies was limited to members of the colleges and they required their members to make a payment of an annual subscription and a larger entrance fee.³¹ When the members of the clubs used the gardens for their activities the landscapes became a place of social and cultural ritual. The exclusivity of the societies and the rules of archery temporarily altered the idea of the gardens, from academic landscapes into

²⁵ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery* 180; *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1827.

²⁶ Waring, *A Treatise on Archery*, 56.

²⁷ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 181; *The Oxford University and City Guide, on a new plan* (Oxford: 1837), 82.

²⁸ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 181, 257, 295; Thomas Roberts, *The English Bowman, Or Tracts on Archery* (1801: London), 88.

²⁹ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 256; Johnes, "Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales c.1780-1840", 202.

³⁰ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 181.

³¹ Hargrove, 181, 257, 296.

back drops for revivalist fantasies. During the summer month's competitions, known as 'Grand Days', were held between college archery societies and they were watched by the crowds of visitors who stayed in Oxford during the *Encaenia* week.³² The most established of these competitions was the annual match between the St John's and New College archers.³³ Other competitions also took place in the summer in which members of the individual societies competed from amongst themselves.³⁴

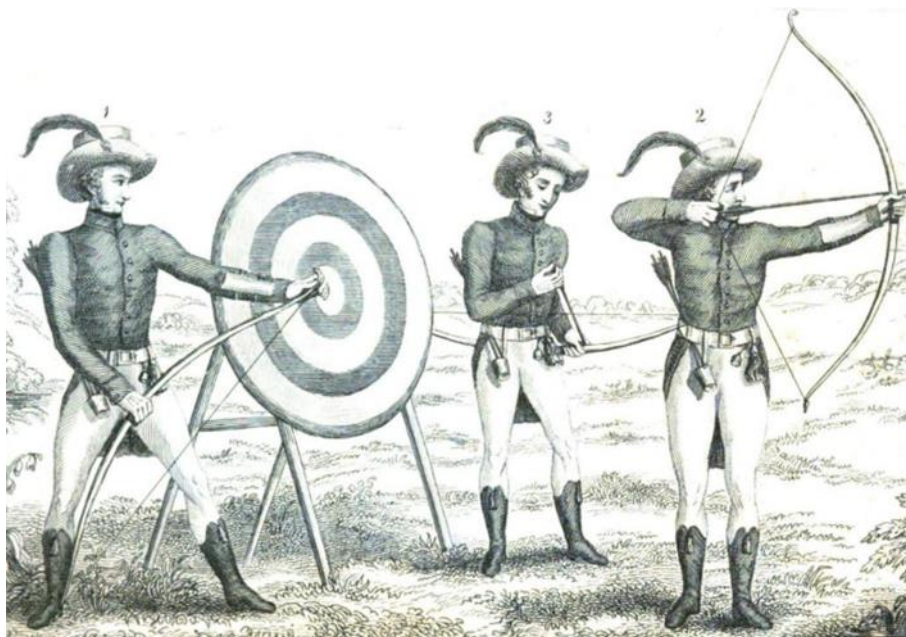


Figure 7.1. Attitude in Shooting: Thomas Waring, *A Treatise on Archery or the Art of Shooting with a Long Bow*, 1830, engraving, frontispiece. Copyright: the author.

The scene of a group of rich young men in uniforms competing for trophies, in the form of silver stars or quivers, must have stimulated the imaginations of the summer visitors to the college gardens.³⁵ A growing interest in medievalism, the athleticism of

³² *Berkshire Chronicle*, 27 June 1829; *Bells Weekly Messenger*, 24 June 1844; Waring, *A Treatise on Archery*, 57.

³³ Hargrove, *Anecdotes of Archery*, 180, 256.

³⁴ Hargrove, 181; *Berkshire Chronicle*, 27 June 1829.

³⁵ Hargrove, *Anecdote of Archery*, 81.

participants, elegant uniforms and the social exclusivity of the archers identified the college gardens as spaces of history and privilege.³⁶ The Bowling Green at New College, used by the archery club, was a space particularly redolent with romantic or medieval associations. Reminiscent of scenes from Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) the space was surrounded by the historic walls of the City, creating a backdrop for the archery events that no other college could compete with (Figure 7.2).³⁷



Figure 7.2. The city walls of Oxford surrounding New College Garden: Decorated letter in Exeter College Benefactors' Book. Courtesy of Exeter College Library.

An edition of the *Oxford Journal* contained a list of the major activities that comprised the summer season in the City, including the spectacle of the college archery competitions.³⁸ During the archery competitions the gardens of St John's, Worcester

³⁶ Johnes, "Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales c.1780-1840", 200, 202.

³⁷ Johnes, 206; Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: 1821), 274-5.

³⁸ *Oxford Journal*, 24 August, 1834.

and New College became spaces in which the public were able to observe the college's social elite exhibit their status by playing out a ritualised activity. The summer archery competitions created two separate experiences of the gardens. The archers used the gardens as a space to lend an authenticity to their displays of privilege and exclusivity. For the spectators the gardens were reminders that the colleges were bastions of England's heritage, in which the archers became living *fabriques* in the landscapes.

7.3. The college gardens as public spaces

Samuel Molyneux, writing in 1712-13, described the colleges as private places and defined the University buildings as public spaces.³⁹ The publication of *Oxonia Depicta* in 1733 was the first time that the physical improvements of the colleges had been presented together since David Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675).⁴⁰ The buildings and gardens belonging to the colleges in *Oxonia Depicta* were expressions of the University's claim that it was one of the nation's intellectual and cultural centres.⁴¹ Williams, in his bird's-eye perspective engravings for the publication, carefully recorded the provision of public gardens and walks at Corpus Christi, Trinity and St John's.⁴²

Civic taste in a town or a city could be, in part, expressed through the maintenance of public walks.⁴³ A public body was expected to create spaces in which the

³⁹ Samuel Molyneux, *The London Letters of Samuel Molyneux, 1712-13*, London Topographical Society, no. 172 (London: Topographical Society, 2011), 107, 114.

⁴⁰ David Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata* (Oxford: 1675).

⁴¹ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 101, 102.

⁴² William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta* (Oxford: 1733), plates 40, 45, 48.

⁴³ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, 162-3.

mechanics of its authority were able to be played out.⁴⁴ Some private institutional gardens of London allowed polite company to visit and use their walks, including Kensington Gardens and Gray's Inn.⁴⁵ In the case of the city of Oxford it was the University and its constituent colleges that undertook the civic responsibility to provide public walks.

After the restoration of Charles II civic institutions started to make significant displays designed for both the collective good and social control.⁴⁶ The provision of public buildings and walks communicated to the urban population the importance of moral virtue and civic responsibility. The University commissioned the Sheldonian Theatre (1669), the Ashmolean Museum (1683), Clarendon Building (1715) and the Radcliffe Library (1749), creating a civic centre where the public life of the University could be played out at the centre of the city.⁴⁷ The moral and civic messages were directly connected with polite behaviour. Colleges in Oxford allowed their gardens and walks to be used for controlled recreation.

Trinity College's Benefactors' Book provides the earliest identified piece of evidence for a garden being described as a public space.⁴⁸ The entry for Reverend William Bouchier's donation, made in 1709, used the term *Horto publico* (public garden) to describe the garden created in front of the Garden Quadrangle.⁴⁹ After 1718 the use

⁴⁴ Joyce M. Ellis, "For the honour of the town: comparison, competition and civic identity in eighteenth century England", *Urban History*, vol. 30, no. 3 (December, 2003): 333.

⁴⁵ David Jacques, "'The Chief Ornament' of Gray's Inn: The Walks from Bacon to Brown", *Garden History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1989): 52.

⁴⁶ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, 16; Vaughan Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2002), 192.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Sherwood, *Oxfordshire*, Buildings of England (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), 255, 254-263-4, 256.

⁴⁸ Trinity College Archive, TCA H. *Liber Albus Benefactum*, 1650-1815.

⁴⁹ Trinity College Archive, TCA H. *Liber Albus Benefactum*, 1650-1815.

of the term 'public walk' was used to describe other collegiate gardens, including Merton's.⁵⁰

The label 'public walk' did not describe the entirety of the collegiate gardens. St John's public walk was defined as comprising the Outer Grove, while the College's Inner Grove was described as 'the Garden'.⁵¹ Trinity's public walk did not include the wilderness or the lime and elm tree groves, these being defined as two further divisions of the garden.⁵² Later in the eighteenth century both Corpus Christi and Merton used the term 'public garden' to describe their fellows' gardens. The adoption of the term 'public' by both Merton in 1779 and Corpus Christi in c.1761 to describe their gardens defined the social role that these spaces played in Oxford society.⁵³ At Wadham an additional garden closer to the Fellows' Common Room was formed in 1777 for the exclusive use of the fellows, while the original Fellows' Garden remained open to visitors (Figure 7.3).⁵⁴ The canons of Christ Church who had their own private gardens allowed the Broad Walk and the Christ Church Meadow Walks to be used as pleasure grounds and public walks for their students and the inhabitants of the City (Figures 7.4 and 7.5).⁵⁵

⁵⁰ [Nicholas Amhurst], *Strephon's Revenge: A Satire on the Oxford Toasts. Inscib'd to the Author of Merton Walks* (London: 1718) 29; [John Cleland], *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* (London: 1756), 75; [Nicholas Amhurst], *Terrae-Filius, or, The Secret History of the University of Oxford (1721-1726)*, ed. William E. Rivers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 233.

⁵¹ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁵² Thomas Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities, and of the five adjacent Counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Bedford, Buckingham, and Oxford*, vol. 1 (London: 1744), 73.

⁵³ Merton College Archives, MCR 1.4; Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁵⁴ Wadham College Archive, WCA 2/3.

⁵⁵ *Oxford University and City Guide* (Oxford: 1824), 153.



Figure 7.3. Edward Dayes, *A View of Wadham College, from the Garden*, 1794, watercolour. This garden was known as the Private Fellows' Garden was laid out by John Foreman in 1777. It was intended to be for the exclusive use of the fellows while the Fellows' Garden was for the use of all of the members of the College. Courtesy of Wadham College Library.



Figure 7.4. "Plan of Christ Church Meadow Merton Fields etc.", surveyed by J. Bennett, 1799. The Broad Walk and the Christ Church Meadow walks are marked on the plan. Courtesy of Christ Church Archive.



Figure 7.5. T. Taylor, "Christ Church Walk, Oxford", 1803, etching, aquatint, hand coloured. Copyright: the author.

An uneasy relationship had existed between the University and City for much of Oxford's post-medieval history until the reforms of the Mileways Act (1770). Regular disputes arose between the City and University authorities over precedence but ultimately the power of the University was upheld by the Privy Council.⁵⁶ Two separate systems of government existed within the City; the University was governed

⁵⁶ Alan Crossley, ed., *A History of Oxfordshire*. vol. 4. *The City of Oxford* (Oxford: For the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1979), 156.

by the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor while the City was administered by the Mayor and the Corporation. Tensions naturally emerged between the two institutions through the historic lack of clear boundaries between their jurisdictions. In 1523 Thomas Wolsey secured a royal charter placing much of Oxford under the authority of the Chancellor.⁵⁷ In 1604 James I granted the University the right to return two burgesses to the House of Commons, equalling its parliamentary importance with the City.⁵⁸ The usual civic authority vested in a town or city corporation was not available to freemen of Oxford. Charles I's ratification of the Laudian Code of Statutes in 1636 further increased the power of the University.⁵⁹ The Laudian Code invested the Chancellor of the University with the control of the City's markets, the licensing of all vintners and the erection of cottages.⁶⁰ Most importantly the Code bound the townsmen to the authority of the Chancellor in all matters that affected the University.⁶¹ This last privilege allowed the University to extend its power into all areas of the City's life, if it chose to invoke it.

Some town councils in England financed urban walks and other amenities but Oxford's did not.⁶² York's Lord Mayor's walk was in part funded by their corporation from 1719 and in Bath a number of walks were financed by the council.⁶³ The provision of green spaces for social and recreational activities by the Corporation was limited, especially when compared with similar sized towns.⁶⁴ While the Corporation owned Port Meadow and Broken Hayes, green sites used for recreation,

⁵⁷ Crossley, *A History of Oxfordshire*, 156.

⁵⁸ Crossley, 157.

⁵⁹ Crossley, 158.

⁶⁰ Crossley, 158.

⁶¹ Crossley, 158.

⁶² Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, 352, 353.

⁶³ Borsay, 163, 165.

⁶⁴ Borsay, 350-354.

little money was expended on providing civic amenities for its citizens.⁶⁵ In short Oxford's Corporation was in debt and it did not have the available funds to support the improvement of its amenities.

The University maintained the Parks Walk and another at Headington Hill.⁶⁶ The best known of the two was the Parks Walk, occasionally known as the Parks Terrace, situated at the North East of the City and a popular morning walk.⁶⁷ A wood cut of the walk and prospect of the University and City was used as the header for the Oxford Journal between 1753 and 1755 (Figure 7.6).⁶⁸ Part of the walk's attraction was its proximity to the gardens and groves of St John's and Trinity which could be added to the circuit. Headington Hill, like the Parks Walk, had a terraced walk providing impressive views of the City and the University.⁶⁹ The prospects of the City from both of these walks were included in Isaac Taylor's map of Oxford (1751). The University raised a general subscription for the repair of the public walk to Headington Hill in 1740 and undertook a similar subscription for the repair of the Parks' Walk in 1755.⁷⁰



Figure 7.6. Prospect of Oxford from the Parks: Wood engraving used on front page of the Oxford Journal between 1753 and 1755. Copyright: the author.

⁶⁵ M.G Hobson, *Oxford Council Acts, 1752-1801*, Oxford Historical Society, New Series 15 (Oxford: Clarendon Press for the Oxford Historical Society, 1962), 65, 119, 162, 145, 327.

⁶⁶ Anthony Wood and John Peshall, *Ancient and Present State of the City of Oxford* (London: 1773), 286, 253.

⁶⁷ *The Oxford Toast's Answer to the Terrae Filius's Speech* (London: 1733), 13.

⁶⁸ *Oxford Journal*, 22 May 1753; *Oxford Journal*, 23 June 1755.

⁶⁹ Graham Midgley, *University Life in Eighteenth-Century Oxford* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 105.

⁷⁰ Wood and Peshall, *Ancient and Present State of the City of Oxford*, 286, 254.

Other walks within the University were owned and administered by colleges. The designation 'public walk' indicated that it was not limited just to the college's own society. Users were however expected to collectively conform to the codes or etiquette set out by the colleges.⁷¹ On the public walks belonging to the colleges there was an element of inclusivity that did not exist in the private tours taken by tourists.

Trinity's public garden was designed as a setting for the Garden Quadrangle which had begun to be built in 1706.⁷² In 1709 a bequest of £200 was made to the College for the ornamentation of the public garden and for it to be laid out in a new design.⁷³ A painting of the layout of the public garden was included in the Trinity Benefactors' Book in 1717 and differs slightly from the William Williams' engraving published in 1733 by including evergreen *palissades* on the central path instead of individual topiaried trees (Figures 7.7 and 7.8).⁷⁴ The 1747 edition of the *Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* described the public garden as consisting of 'fine gravel walks and Grass-plats, adorned with evergreens'.⁷⁵ It was accessed by visitors from the Garden Quadrangle and the walk terminated at Thomas Robinson's elegant *clairevoie*. A 'second division' was laid out in the garden in 1713 consisting of a grove of elm trees and a grove of limes trees (Figure 7.9) and sometime before 1732/33 the wilderness was added to form a third division to the garden.⁷⁶ Neither the groves nor the wilderness were described as forming part of the public garden but the 1768 *New Oxford Guide* noted that the wilderness was 'much frequented' by

⁷¹ Corpus Christi College Archive, CCCA C/23/C1.

⁷² Clare Hopkins, *Trinity: 450 Years of an Oxford College Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168.

⁷³ Trinity College Archive, TCA H. *Liber Albus Benefactum*, 1650-1815.

⁷⁴ Trinity College Archive, TCA H. *Liber Albus Benefactum*, 1650-1815.

⁷⁵ *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* (London: 1747), 41.

⁷⁶ Trinity College Archive, TCA Misc. Vol. f104v-178. [1713]; Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, plate 45.

visitors.⁷⁷ Trinity's garden offered members of the public a diversity of experiences through the maintenance of a formal public walk, the intimacy of the wilderness and the shade provided by the groves.



Figure 7.7. Bird's-eye view of Trinity College Garden and Garden Quadrangle: Illuminated letter in the Trinity College Benefactors' Book, 1717, body colour on vellum. The female figure maybe a representation of Minerva with her spear. Courtesy of Trinity College Archive.

⁷⁷ *The New Oxford Guide* (Oxford: 1768), 51.

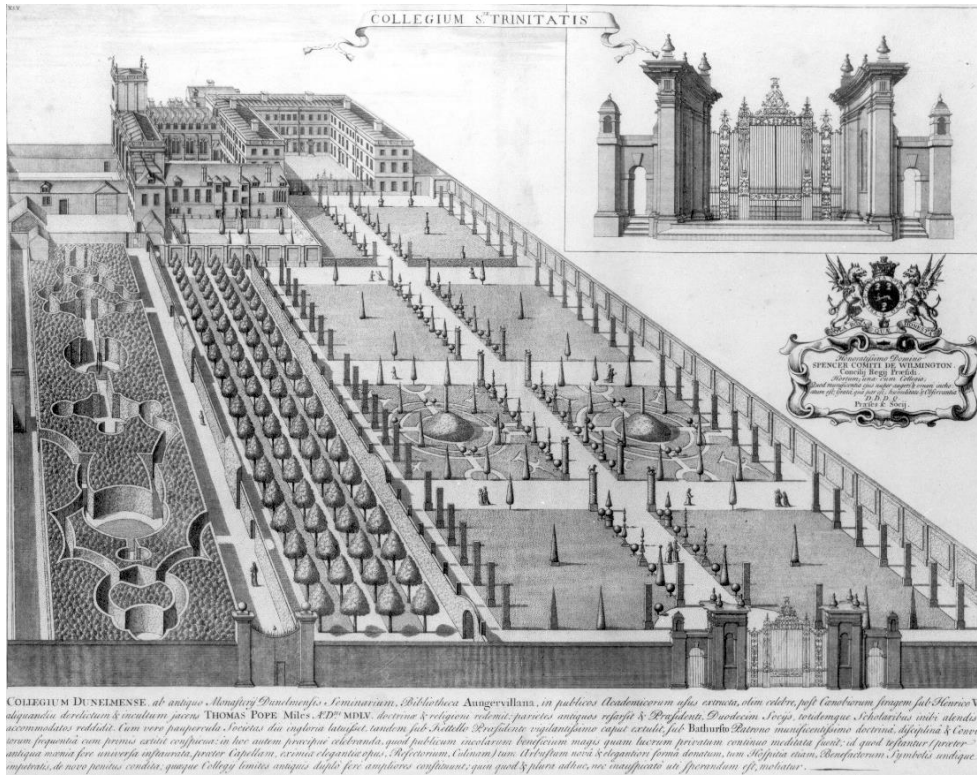


Figure 7.8. Trinity College in William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.

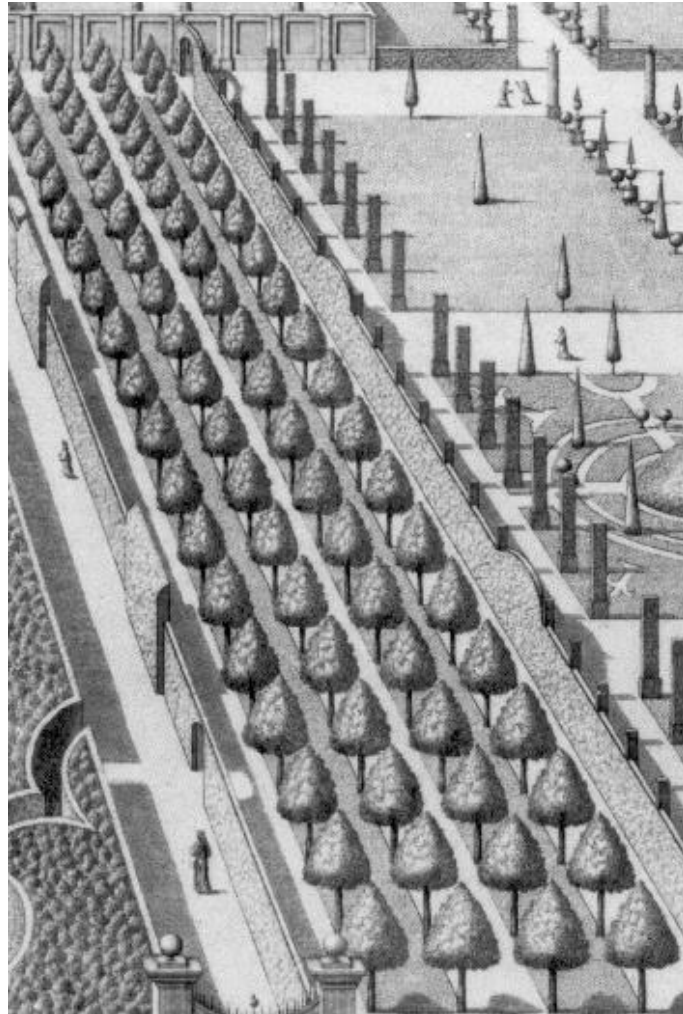


Figure 7.9. The two groves in the second division of Trinity College Garden: Detail from William Williams *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.

The gardens and walks which existed between 1733 and 1837 were not laid out solely for the use of an enclosed, celibate and male academic community. John Dixon Hunt observed that for visitors to London's public gardens the appellations 'walks' and 'groves' indicated places of pleasure.⁷⁸ This attitude was also true for many of the garden users in Oxford. The walks and groves that formed the public

⁷⁸ John Dixon Hunt, "Theaters of Hospitality: The Forms and Uses of Private Landscapes and Public Gardens" in *The Pleasure Garden, from Vauxhall to Coney Island*, ed. Jonathan Conlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 38.

walks in the college gardens were popular spaces, colonised with people from the City and elsewhere.⁷⁹

St John's gardens provided a popular social space for members of the City and University. The Grove, or Outer Grove was described by Thomas Salmon in 1744 as 'the general rendezvous of gentlemen and ladies every Sunday evening in the summer'.⁸⁰ Salmon also observed that the townspeople who used the walks were of 'the better sort', indicating that they belonged to the City's polite society.⁸¹ During the 1740s and 1750s St John's groves appear to have remained a favourite resort of both the University and City.⁸² In the novel *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* (1756) the narrator described how he escorted Chloe and her chaperone to the public walk at St John's so she could 'take a Turn or two'.⁸³ St John's walk during the evening was described by as possessing 'the Gay and Young of both Sexes parading it'.⁸⁴

The Outer Grove at St John's was portrayed during the middle of the eighteenth century as a fashionable space inhabited by both sexes (Figure 7.10). The overall effect of the scene at St John's in *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* was one of leisure. Through the use of description of men and women as 'parading' on the walks, the author indicated that both sexes, dressed in their finery, were conspicuously displaying themselves to the assembled company, especially to the opposite sex.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 237, 243, 290, 291, 292, 295.

⁸⁰ Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities*, 78.

⁸¹ Salmon, 78.

⁸² Salmon, 78; *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 46; Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and the Adjacent Counties* (London: 1748), 67; [Cleland], *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*, 75.

⁸³ [Cleland], 75.

⁸⁴ [Cleland], 75.

⁸⁵ [Cleland], 75.

The Outer Grove of St John's was presented in *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* as an area in which politeness and fashion were displayed to create a lively social space.

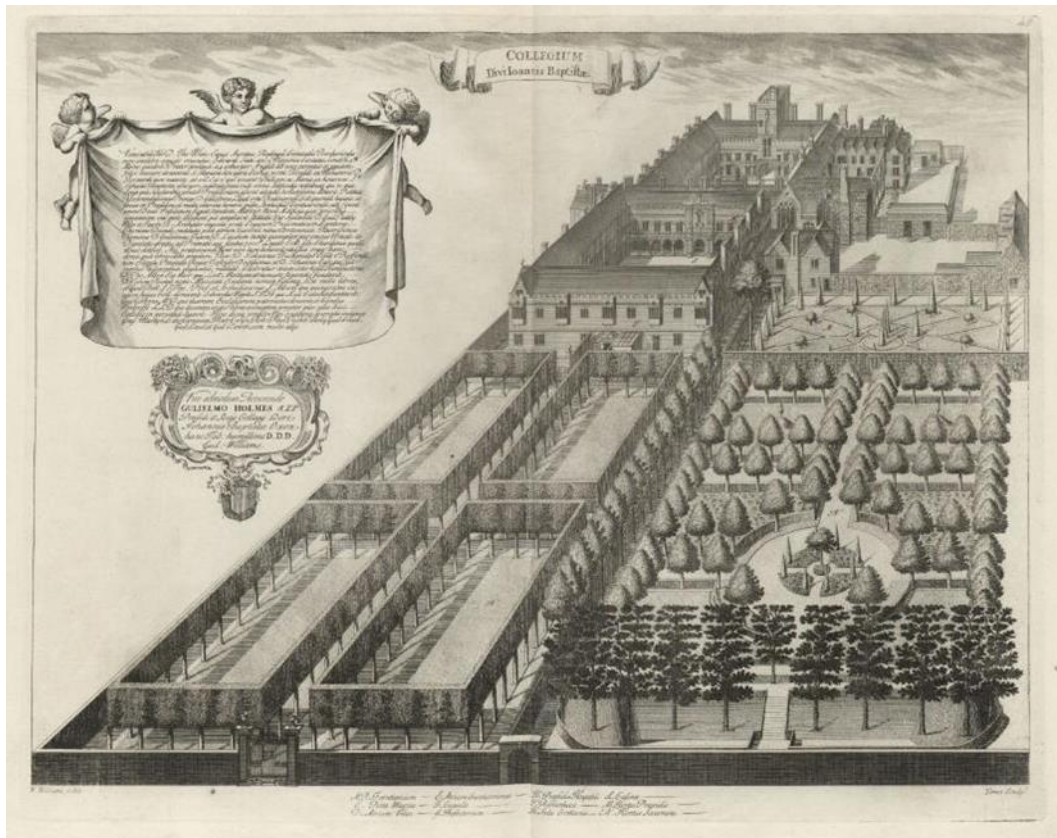


Figure 7.10. St John's College in William William, *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 48. The Outer Grove is depicted on the right hand side of the print. Copyright: Harvard University, Houghton Library.

While the popularity of specific college walks waxed and waned over time the importance of the public walks as a civic amenity remained. *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* made the interesting observation that the 'Beau Monde have different Places for different Times of the Year.'⁸⁶ Shepilinda's *Memoirs of the City and University of Oxford*, a manuscript guide, provides an insider's view of colleges and their gardens.⁸⁷ Shepilinda, the pen name of Elizabeth Sheppard, wrote

⁸⁶ *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 46.

⁸⁷ Geoffrey Neate ed., *Memoirs of the City and University of Oxford in 1738: Together with Poems, Odd Lines, Fragments and Small Scraps*, by Shepilinda, Oxford Historical Society. New Series, vol. 47 (Oxford: The Boydell Press for the Oxford Historical Society, 2018).

in 1738 of her preference for St John's Grove over Christ Church's Broad Walk.⁸⁸ Salmon and the author of *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* claimed St John's walk to be a centre of sociability.⁸⁹ P. Sherwin writing to Sir John St Aubyn of Clowance in 1759 observed that 'the garden there [Merton College] is quite new-modelled and hither alone (having forsaken all walks) each trim-tight Belle and gay-dressed Beau resorts'.⁹⁰ The 6th edition of *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1761) informed its readers that the walks of Christ Church were a popular venue on Sunday nights.⁹¹ Admiration for the Christ Church walks, from amongst the City and University populations, remained strong into the 1770s. During two Sunday evenings in late June and early July 1775 James Woodforde promenaded on the walks at Christ Church and he recorded in his diary that he found them filled with polite company.⁹²

In order to maintain order in the gardens and on the walks the colleges and civil authorities took steps to control the behaviour of welcome and unwelcome visitors. In 1752 and 1757 the mason John Townesend IV billed St John's for coping its walls with glass.⁹³ The 1757 bill stated that the work had been executed on 19 March to 'keep ye boys from getting over ye walls'.⁹⁴ In 1822 the City's Magistrates threatened to use the powers of the Vagrancy Act (1822) to enforce public order around the Magdalen Water Walk and Christ Church Meadow walk.⁹⁵ The authorities announced that they were willing to punish individuals who bathed close to the public

⁸⁸ Neate, *Memoirs of the City and University of Oxford in 1738*, 50.

⁸⁹ Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford*, 67; [Cleland], *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*, 75.

⁹⁰ "Letter from P Sherwin to Sir John St Aubyn of Clowance Co. Cornwall", *The Pelican Record*, XIX, (6 June, 1930): 124.

⁹¹ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, vol. 2 (London: 1761), 243.

⁹² Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 291, 295.

⁹³ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁴ St John's College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

⁹⁵ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 13 July 1822.

walks if complaints continued to be made by members of the public.⁹⁶ One correspondent in the *Oxford University and City Herald* described the bathing near the walks as a public nuisance.⁹⁷ The protection and control of the gardens and walks was important in order to maintain their reputation as respectable spaces. On 23 March 1836 New College's Warden and Thirteen (the college council) authorised the bursar to 'employ a person to let respectable people into the Garden' on Sundays after Evensong.⁹⁸ The inference of the order being that a person was to be employed to keep the less desirable residents of Oxford out of the garden as well.

Surviving evidence demonstrates that the gardens were used as polite social spaces by both members of the colleges and the townspeople. *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* drew specific attention to its readers that St John's Outer Grove was 'the fittest Place in the Town for assembling'.⁹⁹ Furthermore the scene from *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar* and other eighteenth century sources indicate that the people who used the walks at St John's and Merton performed the rituals of sociability and courtship on them according to the conventions of civil, urban culture.¹⁰⁰

7.4. The gardens and tourists

Access to the colleges and their gardens had been available to the public since at least the latter part of the seventeenth century. In Alicia D'Anvers' *Academia or The*

⁹⁶ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 13 July 1822.

⁹⁷ *Oxford University and City Herald*. 20 July 1822.

⁹⁸ New College Archive, NCA 9637.

⁹⁹ *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ [Cleland], *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*, 75; Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, vol. 2, 243; "Letter from P Sherwin to Sir John St Aubyn of Clowence Co. Cornwall", 124.

Humours of Oxford (1691) John Blunder, a fictional servant, took a tour of the University during which he climbed the Mount at New College and visited Magdalen's Water Walks.¹⁰¹ The appearance in the poem of a servant touring Oxford was a device used by D'Anvers to create humour but the poem also acted as a serious description of the sights and experiences available to visitors in Oxford. The poem had notes printed next to the verses, containing extra information, such as the Physic Garden's topiaried yew giant which had a face of carved marble.¹⁰² At the end of the 1740s at least four separate guides to the University had been published: *The Present State of the Universities, and of the five adjacent Counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Bedford, Buckingham, and Oxford* (1744), *A Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* (1747), *The Foreigners guide through the Two Universities* (1748), and *Oxon Academia* (1749).¹⁰³ Additionally later editions of Daniel Defoe's popular *A Tour through the island of Great Britain* contained a detailed section on the University's colleges from 1748, including descriptions of their gardens.¹⁰⁴

The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford drew attention to the Southern, Eastern and Western prospects of the City. It was also noted that the green spaces set amongst the City's developments were created by the gardens of the colleges.¹⁰⁵ *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* applied the same

¹⁰¹ Alicia D'Anvers, *Academia, or, The Humours of the University of Oxford, in Burlesque Verse* (London: 1730), 19.

¹⁰² D'Anvers, *Academia, or, The Humours of the University of Oxford*, 10.

¹⁰³ Thomas Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities, and of the five adjacent Counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Bedford, Buckingham, and Oxford*, vol. 1 (London: 1744); *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford* (London: 1747); Thomas Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and the Adjacent Counties. Describing the Several Colleges, and Other Public Buildings* (London: 1748); John Pointer, *Oxoniensis Academia: Or the Antiquities and Curiosities of the University* (Oxford: 1749).

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, vol. 2 (London: 1748), 238-253.

¹⁰⁵ *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 1-2.

topographical ideas used in the poetry about Oxford to emphasise the beauty and importance of the University within the guide's text.¹⁰⁶ The writing style used by *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* and the other guides followed an established pattern for handbooks, i.e. to inspire and encourage the reader to visit the places it described. Anderson and Urry have both drawn attention to the way in which guidebooks were often constructed to stimulate the tourists' desire to visit by including descriptions of interesting view points and specific features of interest.¹⁰⁷

In the published guides about Oxford between 1740 and 1760 particular emphasis was placed on the new building works.¹⁰⁸ The combined effect of the gardens and the Garden Quadrangle at Trinity was recorded as one of the beauties of Oxford.¹⁰⁹

In *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* (1747) and *A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (1748) the emphasis on the garden at Trinity was the scale of the landscape and variety found within the three divisions.¹¹⁰ In the text of *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* there is a clear separation between the experience of viewing the architecture and the landscape together and the identification of the diverse elements in the garden.¹¹¹ The description of the prospect from the east end of the garden into the Garden Quadrangle was an important effect worthy of identifying separately from the description of the garden.

The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion repeated this descriptive device

¹⁰⁶ *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 18, 46, 52.

¹⁰⁷ Jocelyn Anderson, *Touring and Publicizing England's Country Houses in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 54, 58, 192-3; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2002), 3.

¹⁰⁸ *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 41; Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 248.

¹⁰⁹ Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 248.

¹¹⁰ *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 41; Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 248-249.

¹¹¹ *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 41.

again to highlight the prospect of the Garden Quadrangle at New College from the Mound.¹¹²

In Oxford the topography of many colleges caused the smaller enclosed gardens to be left out of the guides entirely. Only when the Radcliffe Square was completed was Exeter College's garden included in the guides. The College was then described as possessing both a prospect of the Radcliffe Library and a well laid out garden.¹¹³ The topography and typology of the college gardens and walks had a bearing on the way that they were accessed and the tourists' ability to appreciate them. The types of college gardens that attracted the attention of the guide writers throughout the period of the study were largely the ones located in the suburbs or along the city walls. These two types of garden covered the fringes of the south, east and north of the city, largely escaping the limitations of the medieval city. The gardens in these suburban areas of Oxford were often large and laid out with a variety of different features within them.¹¹⁴

In the guidebooks interest in the gardens focused largely on the variety of effects found in them if there was no vista or prospects to describe. Batty Langley in his *New Principles of Gardening* observed that 'the Pleasure of a Garden depends on the variety of its Parts' an effect used in the descriptions of Trinity and St John's.¹¹⁵ Langley noted that regular gardens were unable to provide what he called, 'new and delightful Scenes to our View at every step we take'.¹¹⁶ The five college gardens or walks belonging to St John's, Christ Church, Trinity, Magdalen, New College and

¹¹² *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 26, 27.

¹¹³ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1766), 69.

¹¹⁴ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1753), 94, 79, 32.

¹¹⁵ Batty Langley, *New Principles of Gardening* (London: 1728), iii.

¹¹⁶ Langley, iii.

Merton that appeared in *The Present State of the Universities* (1744) suggested that these spaces were considered the most appropriate to visit for their diversity and curiosity after visiting the colleges' buildings.¹¹⁷ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (1753) selected the same gardens for its descriptions of college gardens.¹¹⁸

Until the nineteenth century there remained an emphasis on the importance of variety and curiosity in the guides. *Oxoniensis Academia* (1749) described Merton's garden as 'admired for its variety of Walks (open and close, upper and lower)'.¹¹⁹ The 'neat Fountain with Artificial flowers on the Surface of the Water' existed in a cabinet of Trinity College's wilderness (Figure 7.11) and then was revealed to the visitor in the open grove that replaced it.¹²⁰ Pointer wrote about Trinity's fountain, possibly a unique feature in the college gardens, and the former wilderness as curiosities in contrast to the rest of the garden. *The Gentleman and Lady's Pocket Companion* (1747) drew the reader's attention to the fact that Trinity College garden had three divisions, each different from the other.¹²¹ It was also observed in the same publication that St John's Inner Grove had a mount, a terrace, a wilderness and arbours.¹²² *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford* made similar observations, reporting that at St John's 'the inner garden has everything almost that can render such a place as agreeable' and that the Magdalen walks had 'all the Variety that could be wished for' (Figure 7.12).¹²³ The elegance and variety found in these gardens, and promoted in the guides, drew the visitors' attention to the possibility of a worthwhile experience. Some of the individual

¹¹⁷ Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities*, 77-8, 90, 73, 47-48, 58, 83.

¹¹⁸ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (London: 1753), 86, 103, 63, 79, 32, 94, 44-46.

¹¹⁹ Pointer, *Oxoniensis Academia*, 17.

¹²⁰ Pointer, 17, 88.

¹²¹ *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 41.

¹²² *The Gentlemans and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 46.

¹²³ Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford*, 67, 47-48.

elements found in the gardens and identified in the books indicate that a high level of horticultural skills would have been required to maintain them.

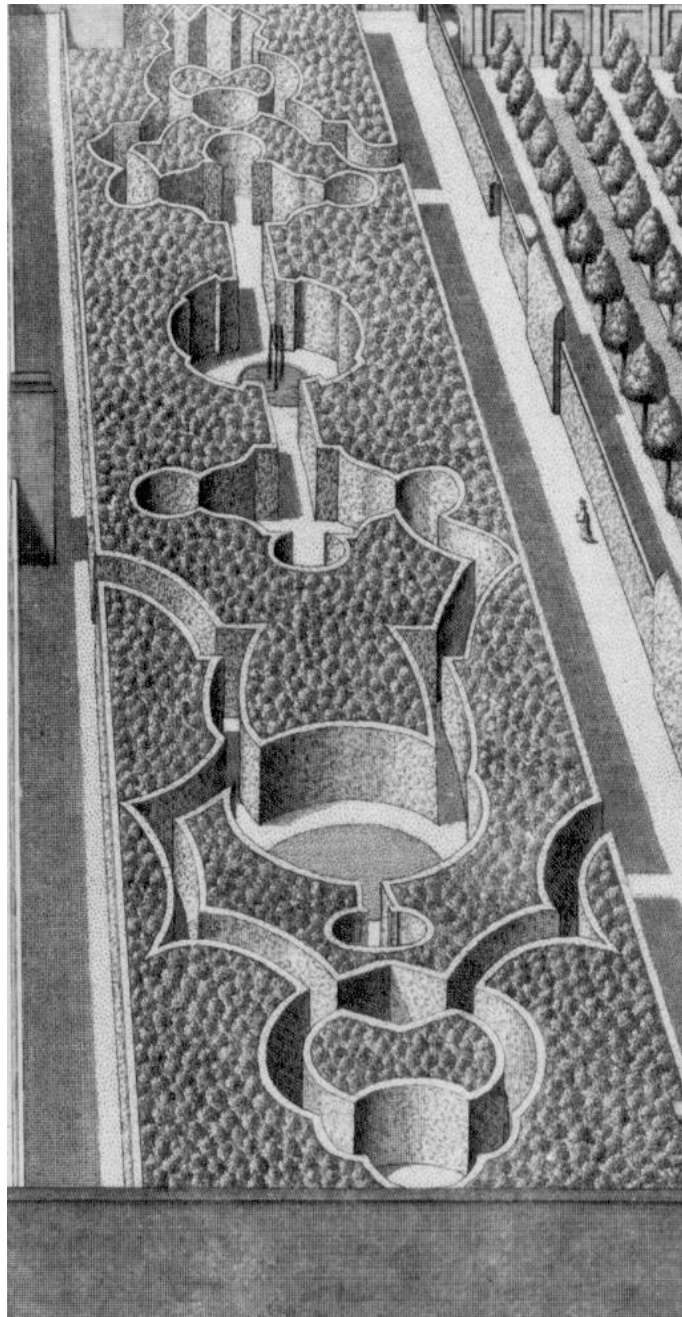


Figure 7.11. The Wilderness, forming the third division of Trinity College Garden: Detail from Trinity College, in William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 45. Copyright: the author.

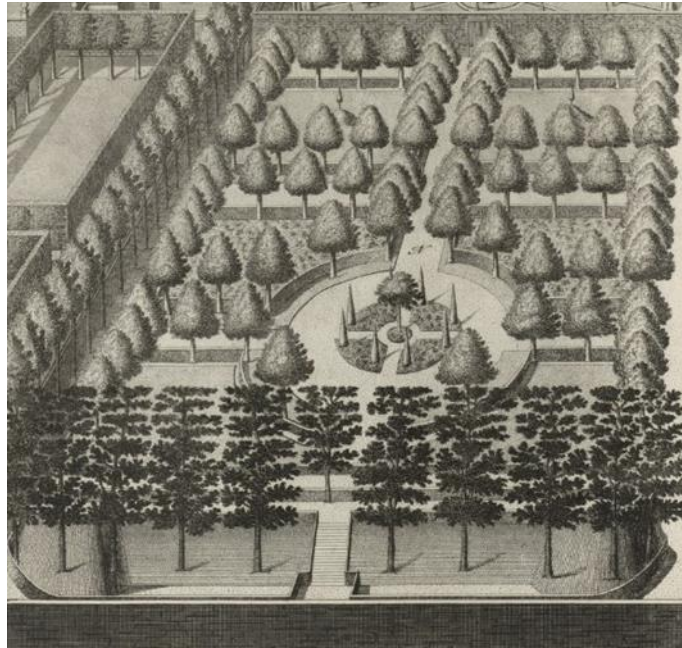


Figure 7.12: The Inner Grove of St John's College: Detail from St John's College, in William Williams, *Oxonia Depicta*, 1733, engraving, plate 48. Copyright: Harvard University, Houghton Library.

The selective descriptions of the gardens provided the guidebooks with items or places that represented larger ideas of taste so that the tourist was able to develop or feel that they were developing some facility in making judgements of their own. New College's Mount appeared in all four of the guides during the 1740s, and the prospects that it offered from climbing to its top were also noted.¹²⁴ However only Pointer's *Oxoniensis Academia* drew attention to the parterres below it.¹²⁵ The parterres had been recorded in the private diary of Zacharias von Uffenbach in 1710 but by the 1740s they do not appear to have captured the attention of the guide writers.¹²⁶ The lack of a complete description of the garden was not an oversight, it

¹²⁴ *The Gentlemen and Lady's Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 27; Salmon, *The Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford*, 46; Pointer, *Oxoniensis Academia: Or the Antiquities and Curiosities of the University*, 45.

¹²⁵ Pointer, *Oxoniensis Academia: Or the Antiquities and Curiosities of the University*, 45.

¹²⁶ W.H Quarell and W.J.C. Quarell, eds., *Oxford in 1710: From the Travels of Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1928), 8.

was a simply a convention. Writing about the gardens in the guides consisted of a record of the size of the space, and listing the most important features.

A Pocket Companion for Oxford (1753) provided limited information on the Trinity and Merton gardens leaving only New College, Magdalen and St John's with useful descriptive entries in the publication.¹²⁷ Trinity garden had been reduced in the guide's description from three divisions to two and the Merton garden was simply described as 'very pleasant, having the Advantage of a Prospect of the adjacent Walks and Country from the South Terras'.¹²⁸ In *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* on Magdalen and New College sites worthy of visiting were emphasised by the inclusion of engraved plates of the New Building from the Magdalen Grove and the view of New College's Garden Quadrangle from the Mount.¹²⁹ In 1759 Mrs Phillip Lybbe Powis visited New College's garden and noted:

*The gardens of the College are large, and from a very high mount the Gothic spires, &c., of the building has a fine effect and the area before this eminence is reckon'd a curious specimen of the old parterre taste; 'tis divided in quarters.*¹³⁰

Powis' description fits neatly with the first paragraph on the New College garden in 1753 edition of *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* and possibly indicates that visitors may have been happy to observe one or two elements in a garden before moving on to the next part of their itinerary.¹³¹ Ian Ousby, writing about tourism and taste in the eighteenth century, highlighted the desire of middle class tourists to visit attractions

¹²⁷ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1753), 79, 94, 44-45, 32, 86.

¹²⁸ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford*, 76, 94.

¹²⁹ *A Pocket Companion for Oxford*, plates between 30-31, 44-45.

¹³⁰ Emily J. Climenson ed., *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwick House, Oxon. A.D. 1756 to 1808* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1899), 39.

¹³¹ Climenson, 39; *Pocket Companion for Oxford* (Oxford: 1753), 44.

that could be entered and then viewed with the resulting effect of having their taste reaffirmed.¹³² The guidebooks selected the sites worthy of visiting and then identified the specific items within each college that were worth seeing. The selection and identification of objects or effects in the guides gave the viewer a cultural validation leading to the social acceptance that the act of viewing them was a reflection of an individual's taste.¹³³

Emphasis on what constituted variety in the garden changed over time as fashions also altered. In the August, September and October editions of the 1771 *The Lady's Magazine* a travelogue was neatly inserted into a serialised novel titled *A Sentimental Journey* exploring Oxford.¹³⁴ Whilst visiting New College's garden the writer noted with sadness that the evergreens on the Mount had been removed leaving only grass.¹³⁵ She wrote with some indignation that 'the seat for the refreshment of visitors on the top of the Mount had also been removed.'¹³⁶ The lady then went on to mourn the loss of the parterres and the 'effects of violence' to the Mount.¹³⁷ On top of the Mount she found a chained eagle and the prospect which she described as 'variegated with Gothic spires and battlements' was also marred.¹³⁸

The observations made in *The Lady's Magazine* provided a more sophisticated and critical approach to describing the college gardens at Oxford than any of the contemporary University and City guides. It recorded the pleasures of the

¹³² Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: taste, travel and the rise of tourism* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1990), 5, 8.

¹³³ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 3.

¹³⁴ "A Sentimental Journey", *The Lady's Magazine; Or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex*, vol. II (August, 1771): 1-2; "A Sentimental Journey", vol. 2 (September, 1771): 52, 54; "A Sentimental Journey" vol. 2 (October, 1771): 99, 102-3.

¹³⁵ "A Sentimental Journey", 103.

¹³⁶ "A Sentimental Journey", 102-3.

¹³⁷ "A Sentimental Journey", 103.

¹³⁸ "A Sentimental Journey", 103.

experiences rather than simply writing lists of tasteful features.¹³⁹ Accounts of the colleges and their gardens were neatly linked with each other, creating a continuity to the writing missing in the guides. The author observed that ‘we are formed to taste the pleasures of variety and novelty’, an attitude of enjoyment which did not appear in the guides.¹⁴⁰ In contrast to *The Lady’s Magazine* the description of New College’s garden in *The New Oxford Guide* (1789) placed an emphasis on the historic city walls forming the garden’s boundaries.¹⁴¹

At the beginning of the nineteenth century travel guide writers were looser in their style and structure and had much more in common with the article in *The Lady’s Magazine*. William Mavor’s *The British Tourist* described the college gardens with much more eloquence than the publications of the mid-eighteenth century. He tempted readers in the form of fluid narratives, adding pieces of history and descriptions of sites as they unfolded on the journey. St John’s garden, formed out of the two groves, was noted by Mavor to have ‘received some touches from the masterly hand of Mr [Lancelot] Brown’.¹⁴² This information, now known to be untrue, did however create the effect of the garden sounding more important. Mavor went on to note that the college gardens were open to all who wished to walk in them. St John’s garden, in his opinion, possessed one of the most pleasant promenades in Oxford.¹⁴³

The acknowledgement in print that college gardens could be used as a place of recreation for tourists during their stay in the City was unusual before 1800 but in the

¹³⁹ “A Sentimental Journey”, vol. 2 (September, 1771): 52; “A Sentimental Journey”, vol. 2 (October, 1771): 99.

¹⁴⁰ “A Sentimental Journey”, vol. 2 (September, 1771): 52.

¹⁴¹ *The New Oxford Guide* (Oxford: 1789), 48.

¹⁴² William Mavor, *British Tourists*, vol. 6 (London: 1809), 185.

¹⁴³ Mavor, 185.

nineteenth century it became a more frequently made observation. The author of *The Young Travellers* thanked New College and the other colleges for allowing the freedom of 'strangers' to walk in their gardens.¹⁴⁴ The terraced walk at Merton gardens was described as being crowded with people taking their morning exercise.¹⁴⁵ The visit to Merton by the children in *The Young Travellers* took place on a Friday, making it unlikely that many of the other promenaders were tradesmen and their families from the City. The emphasis on walking in the college gardens in early nineteenth century guides indicates that tourists were no longer simply visiting them as part of an itinerary based on a guide book's suggestion and confirming their taste, but they were also using them as recreational spaces.

A tourist's time spent visiting a college garden was a short one if the recommendations of the guides are to be believed. In a single day a tour of the University might involve visiting a number of college and their gardens.¹⁴⁶ Charles Moritz recorded in his diary in 1782 that he was taken to a number of the different public walks in one afternoon.¹⁴⁷ In October 1783 John Wesley recorded that on his return to Oxford he spent a day visiting a number of the gardens and walks.¹⁴⁸ Between the experiences of seeing one garden and another there were necessary connecting walks, providing additional experiences for tourists as they followed their itineraries. If a tourist used *The New Oxford Guide* or William Wade's *Walks in Oxford* they were offered structured walks to choose from.¹⁴⁹ Few college gardens possessed prospects of the City or the surrounding countryside but the act of moving

¹⁴⁴ *The Young Travellers; Or, A Visit To Oxford* (London: 1818), 48.

¹⁴⁵ *The Young Travellers*, 119.

¹⁴⁶ *The Oxford University and City Guide* (Oxford: 1819), iv.

¹⁴⁷ Charles P. Moritz, *Travels in England in 1782* (London: Cassell and Company, 1886), 131.

¹⁴⁸ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Stoke-Damerel: 1829), 830.

¹⁴⁹ *The Oxford University and City Guide* (Oxford: 1819), vii-viii; William Wade, *Walks in Oxford*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1817).

from one place to another created a processional topographical experience not unlike effect of viewing the suite of engravings of Oxford by James Donowell published in 1755.

John Dixon Hunt has argued persuasively that the action of following a circuit or planned route constitutes a procession with its own objectives or rituals.¹⁵⁰ There was also a strong ritualistic element in the entry into the colleges. A tourist had to make their entry into the garden via the Porter's Lodge and leave the same way.¹⁵¹ This circuit was based on the authority of the Porter reminding the tourist of their status as a stranger in the University. Visits to Oxford had a processional element because of the access between the colleges and other University buildings. For the first time, in 1819, *The Oxford University and City Guide* published tour itineraries starting from the inn where the tourist was staying.¹⁵² Previously the guide books had begun their tours from Magdalen because it was the first college on the visitor's entrance to Oxford along the London Road.¹⁵³ Thomas Salmon's guide, published in 1744, appears to have started this convention taken up by the later guidebooks.¹⁵⁴

When Lord Grenville took the Czar of Russia, the King of Prussia and the Prince Regent on tour in 1814, he followed a well-established promenade that showed off the gardens of Merton, the Broad Walk and finally visited Magdalen.¹⁵⁵ Grenville's route comprised of gardens, buildings and rural prospects which showed off both art and nature in equal measure. The walk was the physical manifestation of many of

¹⁵⁰ John Dixon Hunt, "Lordship of the feet': toward a poetics of movement in the garden" in *Landscape design and the experience of motion*, ed. Michael Conan, 24 Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 2003 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2003), 188.

¹⁵¹ *The Oxford University and City Guide* (1819), v.

¹⁵² *The Oxford University and City Guide*, vii-viii.

¹⁵³ *The Oxford University and City Guide*, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities*, 45.

¹⁵⁵ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 18 June, 1814.

the popular topographical ideas associated with the University. The tour was widely reported in the press and the articles presented the University and City as a place worthy of visiting.¹⁵⁶

In the case of a walk between Worcester, Christ Church and Merton, described in *The Young Travellers*, descriptions of Castle Hill (the old motte), St Thomas' Church and then Christ Church's Broad Walk were included.¹⁵⁷ The picturesque images of the old castle and the rural aspect of St Thomas' provided additional views for the visitor before joining the Broad Walk and its prospect across the Christ Church meadow.¹⁵⁸ In the travelogue the route provided viewpoints that added to the pleasure of walking between college gardens.

In the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century the promise of interesting rural or urban scenes between the colleges continued to emphasise the topographical idea of Oxford as *urbs in rure*. William Wade's *Walks in Oxford* used Thomas Warton's 1751 *Ode for Music* to evoke the topographical idea of the University in his preface.¹⁵⁹ *The Young Travellers'* author emphasised the health giving rural qualities of Oxford and contrasted this with the smoke of London. Both *Walks in Oxford* and *The Young Travellers* continued to apply the topographical ideas of Oxford as *rus in urbe* and the college gardens were presented as *loci amoeni*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 July 1814; *Evening Mail*, 15 June 1814; *Bristol Mirror*, 18 June 1814; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 25 June 1814.

¹⁵⁷ *The Young Travellers*, 108-115.

¹⁵⁸ *The Young Travellers*, 109, 111.

¹⁵⁹ Wade, *Walks in Oxford*, Preface.

¹⁶⁰ *The Young Travellers*, 1-2.

7.5. Framing college gardens as places of moral jeopardy and illicit pleasure

It has been established in the previous sections of this chapter that a number of the collegiate gardens in Oxford played important social and recreational roles in the lives of the citizens of Oxford during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Some members of the University, an all-male institution, considered that there were serious social and moral implications in allowing unchaperoned townswomen to use the college gardens.¹⁶¹ From 1714, and until the second half of the eighteenth century, there were a number of publications complaining about the use of the college gardens by mixed company. Some writers went so far as to claim there were incidents of intimacy and sexual activity taking place in them.¹⁶² Merton's walks became particularly infamous as a site for trysts and illicit relationships. John Dry's poem *Merton Walks or the Oxford Beauties, A Poem* (1717) celebrated the women who frequented the gardens at Merton in the guises of classical goddesses and nymphs but some members of the University were outraged by what they perceived to be the celebration of lax moral behaviour in a collegiate landscape belonging to a celibate society.¹⁶³

On 14 August 1717 the Warden and Fellows of Merton agreed to pass an Order to shut the gates that connected the fields to the College to prevent the unruly congregations of women and students in the garden who met there on Sunday

¹⁶¹ [John Dry], *Merton Walks, or The Oxford Beauties: A Poem* (Oxford: 1717); Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*; Amhurst, *Terrae-Filius, or, The Secret History of the University of Oxford (1721; 1726)*, ed. William E. Rivers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004); *The Oxford Toast's Answer to the Terrae Filius's Speech, for Which She Has Receiv'd the Publick Thanks of That Famous University, Etc* (Oxford: 1733).

¹⁶² *The Oxford Packet* (London: 1714), 21.

¹⁶³ Thomas Hearne, *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, vol. VI (Oxford Historical Society: Oxford, 1902), 92-3.

nights.¹⁶⁴ In the same month Thomas Hearne recorded in his diary that members of the University were unhappy with Dry's publication of *Merton Walks* and that the garden was now closed via Merton Fields.¹⁶⁵ The publication of Dry's poem, and its celebration of the garden's less than chaste reputation did not go unpunished by the University. Edward Whistler, the poem's printer, temporarily lost his place as the Yeoman Beadle of the Arts in October 1717 for his perceived role in embarrassing the University.¹⁶⁶ In less than a year, on 17 June 1718, another College Order was passed by the fellows of Merton for closing the back gates on Sundays again.¹⁶⁷ At that meeting the Garden Master was empowered to shut the gates at other times in order to maintain appropriate behaviour in the garden, if it was necessary.¹⁶⁸ The authorities wanted to end the easy access that existed from Merton Fields onto the College's walks and control the entry to the site. Following the closure of the groves in 1717 and 1718 the Warden and Fellows of Merton College closed the gates between the fields and their garden on Sundays again in 1719.¹⁶⁹

In 1718 Nicholas Amhurst, a member of St John's, published *Strephon's Revenge: A Satire on the Oxford Toasts*, a poem attacking the use of Merton's garden as a meeting place for unchaperoned single women, known as 'Toasts', and students.¹⁷⁰ Amhurst claimed that women were threatening the garden's status as a *locus amoenus*.¹⁷¹ The lack of social order that Amhurst believed he had found on the

¹⁶⁴ George Aitken, *The Life of Richard Steele*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1865), 40; George C. Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton College: with biographical notices of the wardens and fellows*, Oxford Historical Society, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press for the Oxford Historical Society, 1884), 124.

¹⁶⁵ Hearne, *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, vol. VI, 82.

¹⁶⁶ Hearne, 97.

¹⁶⁷ Aitken, *The Life of Richard Steele*, vol. 1, 40.

¹⁶⁸ Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton College*, 124.

¹⁶⁹ Aitken, *The Life of Richard Steele*, vol. 1, 40.

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge* (London: 1718).

¹⁷¹ Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, 3.

public walks of Oxford was, in his opinion, an affront to the ordered society promoted by the University.

Thersites Philibiblos, the pen name for another member of the University, wrote in the *The Free Thinker* in June 1718 that the Merton garden had been re-named 'Vanity Fair' and 'Little Kensington Gardens' by people.¹⁷² Merton's garden was described as a place where assemblies of 'Beau-Students' and 'the Coquette Beauties of Oxford' took place on Sunday.¹⁷³ Thersites Philibiblos' letter about the misuse of Merton's garden was a refinement of Nicholas Amhurst's conceptualisation of the public walk as a threat to the order of a college garden. Philibiblos also claimed that students minds were being subverted into only thinking about 'Love', 'Gallantry' and 'Dress' through the distractions provided by the women (Figure 7.13).¹⁷⁴ The description of Merton garden as Vanity Fair allowed Philibiblos to present the space as one which was fraught with threats to men and the idea of a celibate academic community. Kirsty Milne (2015) drew attention to Philibiblos' labelling of Merton garden as Vanity Fair and that meant it carried with it a stigma, as a place of sinfulness.¹⁷⁵ She also observed that through making an association with Kensington Gardens, a location known for lax moral behaviour, Philibiblos was framing the idea of Merton's groves as real and morally dangerous locations.¹⁷⁶ Nicholas Amhurst continued to attack the Oxford Toasts in 1721, when he wrote that the Toasts still frequented the public walks (Figure 7.14).¹⁷⁷ It was his belief that the

¹⁷² *The Free-Thinker*, vol. 1 (London: 1722), 265.

¹⁷³ *The Free-Thinker*, 365.

¹⁷⁴ *The Free-Thinker*, 266.

¹⁷⁵ Kirsty Milne, *At Vanity Fair: From Bunyan to Thackeray* (Cambridge: University Press, 2015), 87.

¹⁷⁶ Milne, 88.

¹⁷⁷ Amhurst, *Terrae-Filius*, 233.

walks in the college gardens remained, at times, spaces that were morally perilous and where inexperienced men could become entrapped or compromised.



Figure 7.13. An Oxford Smart: Attributed to George Knapton, *A Graduate of Merton College, Oxford*, 1755 or later, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Copyright: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

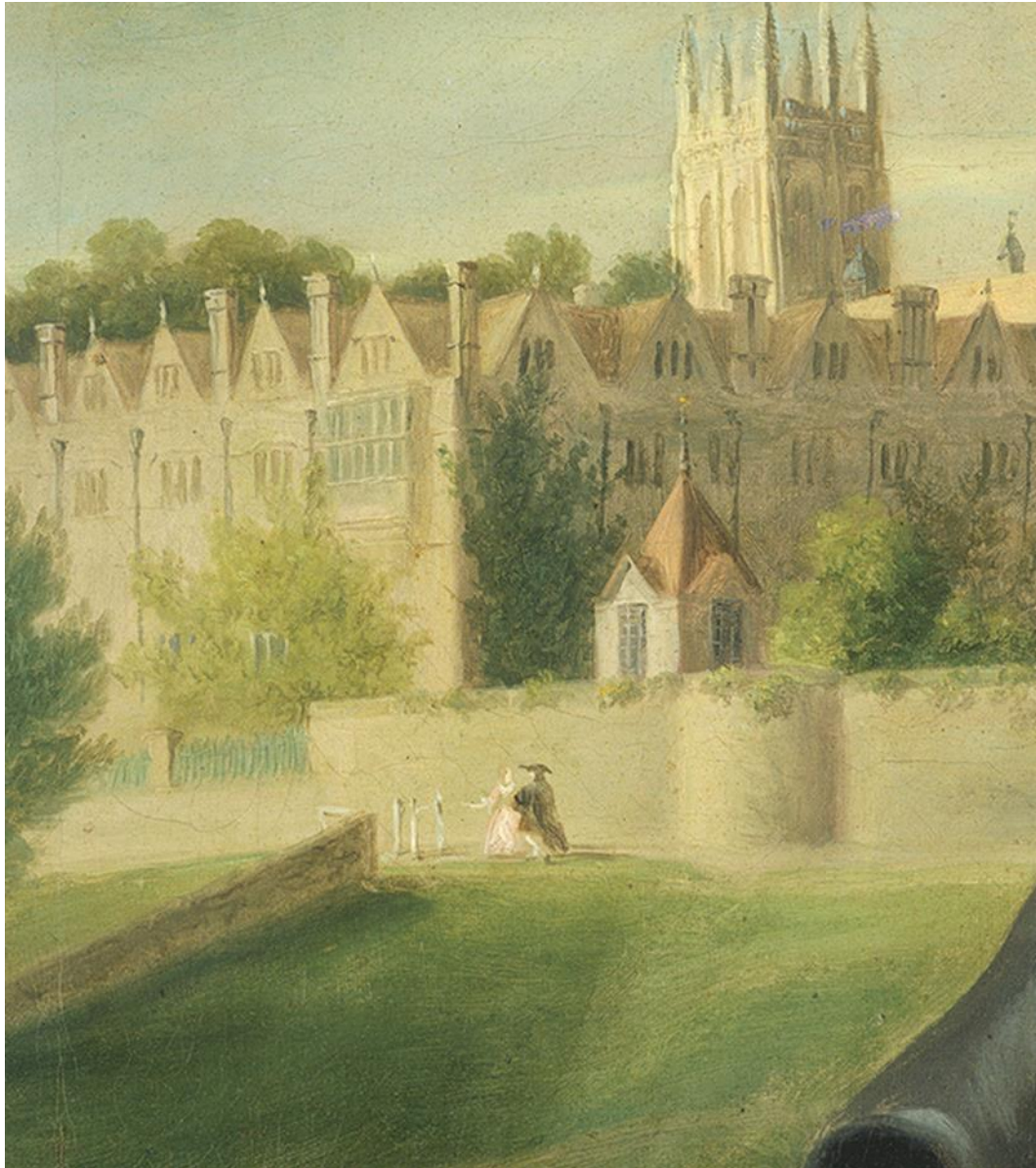


Figure 7.14. Detail of *A Graduate of Merton College, Oxford*, Attributed to George Knapp, 1755 or later, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. A gowned student walking, with fashionably dressed female, on Dead Man's Walk, underneath the Terrace and bastion of Merton College's garden. The green painted palisade was commissioned to open up the prospects of Merton Fields and the Christ Church Meadows from the Fellows' Garden in 1755. Copyright: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Thomas Hearne used a similar device to Philibiblos when he described in his diary the evening assemblies that were taking place on Magdalen's walks. In 1723 he observed that the meetings on Magdalen walks as taking place 'every Sunday night

in Summer time strangely filled, just like a fair'.¹⁷⁸ During the eighteenth century fairs were considered to be events in which boundaries were broken down and where the order of society was temporarily subverted. Hearne recorded that one incident between a young man and young woman had taken place on the Water Walks and that the case had caused a letter to be published on their immoral behaviour (Figure 7.15a and 7.15b).¹⁷⁹ The idea of women in collegiate gardens was presented by some members of the University as a threat to the balance of a celibate collegiate society.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Hearne, *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, vol. VI, 102.

¹⁷⁹ Hearne, 102.

¹⁸⁰ Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, 6.



Figure 7.15a and 7.15b. William Hogarth, *Before* (above) and *After* (below), 1730-31 oil on canvas, Tate, London. Copyright: Tate, London.



The claim made by Amhurst, Philibiblos, and Hearne, all of whom were members of the University, was that collegiate landscapes were not suitable spaces for public walks.¹⁸¹ They and Richard Newton, Principal of Hart Hall, believed that academic landscapes should be devoted to contemplation, requiring peace and solitude.¹⁸² Collegiate landscapes were considered to be morally improving and tied to the

¹⁸¹ Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, 6; *The Free-Thinker*, 265-6; Hearne, *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, vol. VI, 102.

¹⁸² Richard Newton, *University Education* (London: 1733), 121-122.

Horatian concept of *dulce et utile*.¹⁸³ Amhurst *et al* thought that the educational nature of the college garden was at odds with the role of public walks devoted, as they were, to pleasure and fashion. Some members of the University also feared that unchaperoned Oxford Toasts (fashionable single women) and the Oxford Smarts (stylish undergraduates) were being tempted by the erotic classical associations that the gardens summoned up in their imaginations.¹⁸⁴ In *Strephon's Revenge* Amhurst claimed that spirit of the University had declared that women were to blame for the moral failings of the University.¹⁸⁵ Amhurst also turned the topographical symbolism used by the University on its head and claimed that Oxford, because of the behaviour of some women, was no longer a modern Athens and was instead Paphos, a place famous for its devotion to Aphrodite.¹⁸⁶ Philibiblos and Amhurst both carefully applied the topographical and classical themes used by the University as devices to highlight the moral outrages, as they perceived, that were taking place within the college gardens and walks.¹⁸⁷

In 1733 a female writer published a response to the claims made by Amhurst *et al*.¹⁸⁸ The publication was stimulated by a particularly offensive speech written and published by a person claiming to be the *Terrae Filius* (the official satirist of the University) for the last Public Act that had taken place that year.¹⁸⁹ The *Terrae Filius*, in the publication *The Oxford Act: a new ballad-opera* (1733), had attacked single women, accusing them of being part of the problem for the moral decline of the

¹⁸³ Newton, *University Education*, 121-122.

¹⁸⁴ *The Free-Thinker*, 266, 269; Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, vi, 29-30.

¹⁸⁵ Amhurst, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Amhurst, 3-4.

¹⁸⁷ *The Free-Thinker*, vol. 1, 271; Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, 2-4.

¹⁸⁸ *The Oxford Toast's Answer to the Terrae Filius's Speech* (London: 1733).

¹⁸⁹ *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 10.

University.¹⁹⁰ In a pamphlet published in the same year a female writer, who described herself as 'The Oxford Toast', challenged the claim that independent single women were a threat to the order of the University's society.¹⁹¹ She questioned *Terrae Filius*, rhetorically, as to whether women should be contained. The college gardens were, again, specifically identified as contentious spaces.¹⁹² In the pamphlet she asked 'I suppose we must not walk neither, by your good Will, in *Christ Church Meadow, or Trinity Wilderness, or Merton Grove*'?¹⁹³ It is interesting to note that the places that the writer gave as examples were not the large, open, public walks belonging to Trinity, St John's or Christ Church but they were ones of a more intimate and secluded nature. The writer, who identified herself as a famous Toast, claimed that she would rather seek her fortune as a prostitute in the area around Drury Lane rather than have her freedom curtailed in Oxford.¹⁹⁴

In 1738 Elizabeth Sheppard, writing as Shepilinda, provided evidence that well brought up middle class Oxford girls were on extremely sociable terms with the students.¹⁹⁵ Sheppard's background did not resemble Amhurst's portrayal of a Toast. However the level of intimacy she displayed with the students and her use of the college walks suggests that middle class single women in Oxford operated in the same spheres as the Toasts. The term 'Oxford Toast' was used as a compliment from at least the 1740s. Toasts were celebrated by the poet Thomas Warton as both beautiful and talented women who added lustre to the society of the City and University. Each year Trinity's Junior Common Room appointed a poet laureate to

¹⁹⁰ W.T. Gibson, "The Suppression of the *Terrae Filius* in 1713", *Oxoniensia*, vol. 54 (1989): 413; *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 10-13.

¹⁹¹ *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 10-11.

¹⁹² *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 11.

¹⁹³ *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 11.

¹⁹⁴ *The Oxford Toast's Answer*, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Neate, *Memoirs of the City and University of Oxford in 1738*, 27, 33, 35, 40, 47.

celebrate in verse the Toast who they selected to become their Lady Patroness for the year.¹⁹⁶ Warton produced two of these celebratory poems; one on Letitia Cotes, a daughter of the Principal of Magdalen Hall, and a second poem was dedicated to Patricia Wilmot, the daughter of a prosperous bookseller.¹⁹⁷ Neither of these women, like Elizabeth Sheppard, resembled the 'Crack'd chambermaids, and common strumpets' that Amhurst claimed to fill the public walks.¹⁹⁸

In 1751 *The Student* published a satirical article about the qualifications needed to be an 'Oxford Beauty', an alternative name for a Toast.¹⁹⁹ An Oxford Beauty's most important task was to be seen by the University's and City's societies on a different public walk in the University each day, observing that 'this evening let her be in *St John's Grove*, and to morrow in *Christ Church Walk*'.²⁰⁰ According to the article a young woman needed to be feted by a crowd of men on the walks if she was to be acclaimed an 'Oxford Beauty'.²⁰¹ This form of public adulation by the males was also described in Cleland's *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*.²⁰² The presentation of an elegant figure on the college walks in front of the opposite sex appears to have been a necessary rite of passage for the social success of single women in Oxford for much of the eighteenth century. A further indicator of a Toast's social ascent was the amount of graffiti bearing her name around the city. In *The Student* it was observed that the seats on the public walks were used to write the names of the women who

¹⁹⁶ Richard Mant, *Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Warton*, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1802), xxii.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Warton and Joseph Warton, *The Poems of T. Warton, and J. Warton*, *The British Poets*, vol. 68 (Chiswick: 1822), 47-51.

¹⁹⁸ Amhurst, *Strephon's Revenge*, 43.

¹⁹⁹ "Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY", *The Student, Or, The Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany*, vol. 2 (1751): 255-258.

²⁰⁰ "Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY", 257.

²⁰¹ "Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY", 257.

²⁰² [Cleland], *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*, 75; "Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY", 257.

were acclaimed to be Oxford Beauties.²⁰³ Window panes in taverns and the walls of necessary places (lavatories) were also used.²⁰⁴ The article described the seats provided on the public walks as ‘wooden registers’ which were be consulted to find out who was acclaimed to be an Oxford Beauty.²⁰⁵ This destructive tradition may have been one of the reasons why the chairs and seats in the college gardens required the high level of maintenance each year from the carpenters and painters.²⁰⁶

In the second half of the eighteenth century there appears to have been a greater acceptance of the social intimacy that took place between the sexes in the gardens. In ‘On seeing Miss B-ts-y N-ch-les’, published by *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1759, Magdalen’s Grove and Water Walks and Merton garden were used as locations for the poem.²⁰⁷ The gardens, groves and walks of the colleges were described by the poet as spaces that facilitated the pursuit of love.²⁰⁸ The poem described Magdalen’s Grove as ‘Sacred to harmony and love,’ and it transformed, through language, the contemporary walks into classicised rustic idylls of happiness rather than spaces fraught with moral jeopardy.²⁰⁹ Part of the poem was however suppressed by the editor for inappropriate stanzas and the erotic associations of the collegiate *locus amoenus* were not entirely lost.²¹⁰

²⁰³ “Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY”, 257.

²⁰⁴ “Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY”, 257.

²⁰⁵ “Of the Qualifications Requisite to Form a Complete UNIVESITY BEAUTY”, 257.

²⁰⁶ St John’s College Archive, SJA ACC V. B1.

²⁰⁷ Oxoniensis, ‘On Seeing Miss B-Ts-y N-Ch-Les’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. 29 (1759):31.

²⁰⁸ Oxoniensis, ‘On Seeing Miss B-Ts-y N-Ch-Les’, 31.

²⁰⁹ Oxoniensis, ‘On Seeing Miss B-Ts-y N-Ch-Les’, 31.

²¹⁰ Oxoniensis, ‘On Seeing Miss B-Ts-y N-Ch-Les’, 31.

7.6. The college garden and Oxford's social season

During the summer months college gardens and walks were not simply social arenas used by the inhabitants of the City and places of academic retreat for the University. The *Encaenia* week at the end of June, or beginning of July, was the major ceremonial and social event of the University calendar. It was a celebration at which the names of the University's benefactors were remembered and honorary degrees were bestowed.²¹¹ These events were augmented by balls, levees, concerts, dinners, public breakfasts, receptions, spectacles and promenades.²¹² The *Encaenia* celebrations had a national profile, drawing members of the nobility and fashionable society to the University and City for a week after the London season had ended. Events during the week were so socially significant that the *Hampshire Chronicle* noted in 1793 'that the races at Winchester were thinly attended on account of the *Encaenia* at Oxford'.²¹³ Although the formal event lasted for only three days, when it was combined with the musical concerts and other festivities it went on for a week. Together the *Encaenia* week, the Oxford Races and the Trinity term Assizes formed the major calendar events of Oxford's social season. During the summer the colleges and their gardens formed an important role for the justification of the University's claim that it was a centre of taste.

The *Encaenia* was (and still is) a celebration of the University which was established in 1669 as part of the wider ceremonies known as the Public Act that took place in the newly built Sheldonian Theatre.²¹⁴ In July 1733 the last Public Act took place and

²¹¹ H.E Salter and Mary Lobe eds., *The Victoria County History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Institute of Historical Research, 1954), 27.

²¹² *Oxford Journal*, 10 July 1773.

²¹³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 8 July 1793.

²¹⁴ Salter and Lobe, *The Victoria County History of the County of Oxford*, 26.

in 1759 it was replaced by *Encaenia*.²¹⁵ The grandeur of the 1733 Public Act, at which Handel was employed to give concerts, was a conscious effort on the part of the University to present itself to the country as a major national institution.²¹⁶

The college public walks and gardens were used during the *Encaenia* week as social venues by those who attended the celebrations.²¹⁷ A letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* gave an account of the 1763 *Encaenia*, in which the writer recorded that his party had visited 'one or two' public walks after the formal events in the Sheldonian.²¹⁸ James Woodforde attended concerts on 6 and 7 July 1774 held in the Sheldonian Theatre and on each evening he visited different walks.²¹⁹ On 6 July he strolled on the Christ Church Meadow walks, noting in his diary that there was a large number of people there and on the following night he visited the gardens of Merton.²²⁰ Woodforde noted that on 7 July the Merton Walks were 'exceedingly crowded'.²²¹

In the 1770s the association of the collegiate public walks, and in particular Merton's garden, with the possibility of sexual encounters returned. During the 1773 *Encaenia* week, which included the Installation of Lord North as Chancellor of the University, a letter was published in *The Covent Garden Magazine* describing the arrival and behaviour of brothel keepers and prostitutes from London.²²² One of the prostitutes, a Miss Br---ton, was recorded as having set herself up in Merton's garden and was

²¹⁵ Richard Sharp, "The Oxford Installation of 1759", *Oxoniensia*, vol. LVI (1991): 145-6.

²¹⁶ H. Diack Johnstone, "Handel at Oxford in 1733", *Early Music*, vol. 31, no. 2 (May, 2003): 249.

²¹⁷ "Account of the Encaenia at Oxford", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 33 (July 1763): 348; *The London Chronicle*, 9 July, 1810.

²¹⁸ "Account of the Encaenia at Oxford", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 33 (July, 1763): 348.

²¹⁹ Woodforde, *Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776*, 237.

²²⁰ Woodforde, 237.

²²¹ Woodforde, 237.

²²² Coterianus, "Amorous Intelligence", *The Covent Garden Magazine Or The Amorous Repository* (July 1773): 279.

offering herself for 'deux guineas pour le coup'.²²³ The writer identified the 'shady groves and shady walks' as a suitable venue for London's prostitutes to ply their trade during the week.²²⁴ It was also reported by the correspondent that the necessary place or 'temple of Cloacina' at the end of the garden was used as the temple of Venus with Miss Br---ton 'officiating as Priestess' there.²²⁵

Fashionable society, which had descended in large numbers for the Installation and *Encaenia* week, appears to have required the services of the *demi monde* to provide additional pleasures in the gardens. The association between the shady walks and the illicit behaviour appears to have been a strong one at Oxford. The difference between the attitudes of first and second half of the eighteenth century were that women were no longer portrayed as a specific threat to other garden users or the integrity of collegiate gardens.

The Trinity gardens were used as the venue for a public breakfast held on the first day of the *Encaenia* week in 1787; the tables were arranged under the Lime Tree Walk, next to the wilderness, and the event was described as having been conducted with 'great Taste and Decorum'.²²⁶ Playing for the guests at that event were the Oxford Band, a highly regarded group of musicians who were based at the Hollywell Music Rooms.²²⁷ *The Gentleman's Magazine* for the 1793 *Encaenia* reported that 'the weather proving favourable during the whole of the week, the promenades were well attended' as a part of the week's attractions.²²⁸ Thomas Dibdin recorded in his memoirs the sight of female visitors walking on the lawns of

²²³ Coterianus, "Amorous Intelligence", 279.

²²⁴ Coterianus, 279.

²²⁵ Coterianus, 279.

²²⁶ *Oxford Journal*, 23 June 1787.

²²⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 23 June 1787.

²²⁸ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 63 (1793): 666.

the gardens in their fashionable attire, adding further beauty at the same *Encaenia* celebrations.²²⁹

After the Installation of Lord Grenville as the University's Chancellor in 1810 some of the college gardens and walks were used to host a 'spectacle'. James Sadler, a pastry chef and amateur chemist, received permission from the heads of Merton, Christ Church and Corpus Christi to close off the access to Merton Fields so that he could attempt a balloon ascent (Figure 7.16).²³⁰ Sadler was allowed to charge 5s. a ticket for spectators to watch the event from Merton Fields, Christ Church Meadow walks and the gardens of Corpus Christi.²³¹ The cost of 5s. for a ticket made it an exclusive event, advertised to the nobility and gentry and consciously associated itself with the celebrations of the *Encaenia* week.²³² In the garden of Corpus Christi a band had been engaged to play in the morning to provide entertainment for the most important guests before the ascent in the afternoon.²³³ The event was patronised by Lord Grenville, the Duke of Somerset, the Marchioness of Buckingham, Lord Temple, Lord George Grenville and Sir Sydney Smith, among others.²³⁴ The terrace walk of Corpus Christi's garden was devoted to wealthy observers, the effect being described somewhat humorously as 'the ladies, in all the gaiety of dress took their stands, and ornamented these stations with the line of beauty'.²³⁵ Lord Grenville watched the event from the garden of Corpus Christi with the Master, Dr Cooke. The spectacle held in Corpus Christi's garden and on the Christ Church Meadow and

²²⁹ Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, vol. 1 (London: 1836), 110.

²³⁰ *Morning Post*, 9 July 1810.

²³¹ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 14 July 1810.

²³² *Morning Post*, 9 July 1810; *Oxford Journal*, 30 June 1810.

²³³ *Oxford University and City Herald*, 14 July 1810; *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 9 July 1810.

²³⁴ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 9 July 1810.

²³⁵ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 9 July 1810.

Merton Fields captured the attention of Oxford’s inhabitants, its visitors and the press. The garden at Corpus Christi was recorded by the reporter as a space ‘ornamented’ by the beauty of its visitors, suggesting that the ladies attendance at the event improved the elegance of the landscape.²³⁶

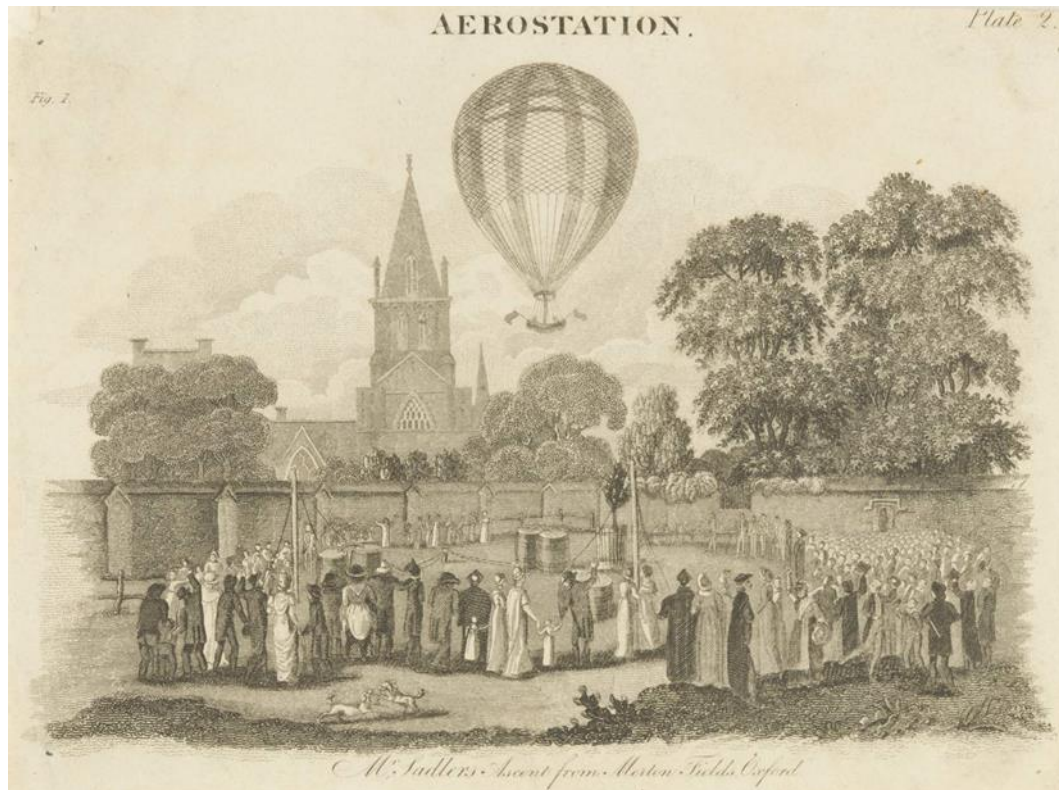


Figure 7.16. “Aerostation. Mr Sadler’s Ascent from Merton Fields, Oxford”, n.d. engraving. The ascent took place on 7th July 1810 to commemorate the installation of Lord Grenville as Chancellor of the University. Copyright: the author.

At the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century an annual promenade established itself and came to be known as ‘Show Sunday’. The promenade took place on the Christ Church Broad Walk on the Sunday preceding the formal events of the *Encaenia* week.²³⁷ It was an event in which the members of University, townspeople and visitors attending the *Encaenia* all dressed in their best

²³⁶ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 9 July 1810.

²³⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, 4 July 1810.

clothes and came together to walk up and down the Christ Church's Broad Walk.²³⁸ The *Morning Chronicle* in 1810 described the promenade on the Broad Walk and around the Christ Church Meadow walks as an 'enchanted scene' and the event continued until nine o'clock in the evening, after which the crowds paraded up and down the High Street.²³⁹ It became a well-known enough to be illustrated by George Cruikshank and published in *The English Spy* in 1820 (Figure 7.17).²⁴⁰ A description of Show Sunday in 1842 indicated that the college gardens were also opened on that evening to form part of a larger promenade.²⁴¹ In 1834 an additional promenade took place on the Christ Church walks the Monday before the *Encaenia* celebrations and the Installation of the Duke of Wellington as the Chancellor of the University.²⁴² The *Morning Advertiser* reported that the Dukes of Wellington, Newcastle and Buccleuch all participated in the promenade, with other noblemen, until nine o'clock when the fashionable company finally broke up.²⁴³

²³⁸ Basil Blackmantle, *The English Spy* (London: 1825), plate XIV op. 246.

²³⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 4 July 1810.

²⁴⁰ Blackmantle, *The English Spy*, plate XIV op. 246.

²⁴¹ *Oxford Journal*, June 11 1841.

²⁴² *The Morning Advertiser*, 11 June 1834.

²⁴³ *The Morning Advertiser*, 11 June 1834.



Figure 7.17. Robert Cruikshank, “Shew Sunday-Sketches of Character in the Broad Walk, Christ Church Meadows, Oxford.”, 1824, etching, aquatint and hand coloured, plate XIV. Copyright: Alamy.

By the accession of Victoria the popularity of the *Encaenia* week appears to have begun to fade. In 1842 the week was reported in the *Oxford Journal* as lacking attractions and it was noted that there was only a ‘tolerable’ influx of visitors.²⁴⁴ Compared with the splendour of the *Encaenia* week of 1759, 1773 and 1810 it appears that the charms of the University’s annual event had faded somewhat.²⁴⁵

7.7. Summary

The college gardens provided social and recreational spaces for members of the University, townspeople and visitors to Oxford. Public walks were provided at the expense of some of the colleges and these performed a valuable civic role in the life of the City. The use of gardens and groves by single women caused some unrest from members of the University, highlighting tension between conflicting ideas of what role a college garden was supposed to perform. During the summer social

²⁴⁴ *Oxford Journal*, 11 June 1842.

²⁴⁵ *Oxford Journal*, 26 June 1773.

season Oxford college gardens allowed the polite townspeople to rub shoulders with the *beau monde* on an annual basis. Collegiate landscapes were active arenas during the summer in which the University was able to play out its role as a national and socially significant institution. The arrival of large parts of London's fashionable society in Oxford to participate in or observe during the *Encaenia* week helped form an idea that the University and its collegiate gardens were places of 'celebrity'.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The number and variety of college gardens makes them a significant group of landscapes to study together. In the last twenty years there have been important studies on various landscape types but the figure of the gardener and horticultural trade has remained on the fringes of landscape and garden history. The research question for the study asked 'What can be revealed concerning the organisation, operation and use of Oxford college gardens from 1733 until 1837 from the critical analysis of archival and printed sources?' Existing literature on the subject of collegiate gardens did not address the management of the landscapes and it limited itself to generalisations about the uses of the spaces. Archive material, including the New College *Long Books*, from college archives, revealed that the organisation and operation of college gardens relied on the services of garden contractors, placing the role of the gardener and Oxford's horticultural trade at the centre of the study.

Expenses borne by the colleges in the maintenance of their gardens were absorbed across a number of areas in the accounts. Furthermore the study has drawn attention to diverse examples of extra funding for the gardens outside the annual income of the colleges. Some types of additional funding did not form part of the institutional accounting, leaving gaps in the calculations for the true cost of maintaining the gardens. By acknowledging the gaps in the financial papers, it is necessary to concede that any assessment of the costs associated with the gardens, using only the annual accounts, is not possible. The collections of bills in Wadham, Worcester, St John's, Lincoln and New College archives provided additional ways to track expenditure in the garden that had been lost when it was

entered in the accounts. Hitherto well respected historians have not focussed on the financial details of these landscapes and by doing so this work has offered an alternative perspective for understanding the collegiate landscapes.¹ A reticence to make use of financial papers in the study of college gardens has, until now, inhibited the ability to understand how an institution managed its gardens and paid for its contractors and materials.

Through a forensic examination of the expenditure on the gardens the study demonstrates that the annual costs of maintaining them were far larger than those entered under the gardeners' stipends and their bills. Scrutiny of tradesmen's bills and cross-referencing them with the annual accounts has revealed that non-horticultural expenses associated with the garden were absorbed into the costs of maintaining the fabric. These conventions in accounting hid the wider costs of operating the gardens. The expenditure of building summer houses or buying garden furniture was similar to the expense of employing a garden contractor. Additionally the maintenance bills from painters, ironmongers and carpenters were for sizable sums of money incurred on an annual or regular basis. Bills from tradesmen, when combined with the horticultural disbursements, indicate that many colleges were willing to absorb heavy costs for the sake of their gardens. The annual accounts, day books and bills in the college archives demonstrate the sociocultural and economic significance of the gardens within the University and City.

¹ Mavis Batey, *Oxford Gardens: The University's Influence on Garden History* (Amersham: Avebury, 1982); Howard Colvin, "Architecture" in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 5, eds. L.S. Sutherland and L.G Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 831-53.

Much of the day to day authority for the organisation of the gardens was devolved by the colleges. The organisation required to maintain the collegiate landscapes was not arranged along traditional lines of employing small independent tradesmen, rather it was managed by contractors from the horticultural and building trades. The significance of the working relationship between the gardeners and other tradesmen has been identified and assessed. Garden contractors and carpenters, according to surviving bills, worked closely together. Efficient commercial partnerships were needed for responsibilities such as the regular repair and upkeep of garden tools, the supply of flower sticks and the putting up and taking down of garden stands. These tasks were allocated to sub-contractors who carried the jobs out in the name of the contractor.

The evaluation of the operation of garden contracting and sub-contracting within the University identified the difference between the daily rate charges and the real pay received by individual gardeners. Daily rates were commercial charges that covered the cost of a sub-contractor's labour as well as the contractor's organisational and operational outgoings and included a margin for profit. The bills sent to the colleges did not contain a record of the real pay of the sub-contractors and the study has established that this figure was likely to be significantly less than the day rate. Fluctuations in employment over the seasons, coupled with a lower daily wage, significantly challenge the current opinion on the earning potential of a well-trained gardener. Stephenson's work on contracting and wages in the London building trade was particularly useful to

support the conclusions about the businesses of garden contractors operating within the University.²

The operations required to maintain collegiate gardens needed the support of multiple technologies. The skills used by the gardeners during this period consumed large quantities of materials. From the analysis of the objects, materials and dates recorded in the tradesmen's bills it has been possible to identify tasks and understand the rhythms of the garden contractor's year. The production of fruit for the table in many of the gardens, previously assumed to be ornamental spaces, was one such area that was identified through the scrutiny of the material culture of the garden. Such an examination of the material culture of the gardens of Oxford has not been undertaken before. The appearance of records for the absent technologies in the surviving financial papers provided material to develop a method for understanding the operations that were undertaken in the gardens. In turn the identification of the operations provided an understanding of the nature of the physical garden over time. The evidence for an emphasis on floristry provides a new lens to look through when understanding the gardens of Brasenose, St John's and New College.

The appraisal of college maintenance contracts and the businesses of tradesmen-gardeners revealed that the care of the gardens was often part of a larger portfolio of horticultural interests. The limited number of college contracts and the seasonal fluctuations in the employment of labour required contractors to run versatile and diverse businesses. Nurseries, seed shops, plant contracting,

² Judy Z. Stephenson, "'Real' Wages? Contractors, workers and pay in London building trades, 1650-1800", *The Economic History Review*, 71, 1 (2018): 106-132; Judy Z. Stephenson, *Contracts and Pay. Work in London Construction 1660-1785* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

market gardening and farming all offered ways to diversify the business portfolio of a tradesmen-gardener. Robert Penson established a monopoly over the supply of trees, shrubs and plants for the colleges he held a garden contract with from the 1770s. By setting specific charges for his daily rates for labour based on the type of task he further strengthened his business. In addition Penson's and the Tagg family businesses formed an oligopoly within the Oxford's nursery trade in the second half of the eighteenth century and which continued into the nineteenth century. When these two businesses declined and eventually closed, the nursery trade became a more competitive and volatile market in which a number of the city's nurseries failed or closed. The dominance of Robert Penson and the Taggs trade with the University's colleges during the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has not been considered until this study. Penson's ascendancy over the college contracts from the late 1770s until the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century demonstrates the success of his system for managing the contacts. The use of sub-contracted staff meant that contractors did not pay for labour when it was not needed. A large pool of well-trained and readily available gardeners must have existed in the city to allow the contractors to use the system of sub-contraction effectively. Penson and other college gardeners may have been tradesmen but first and foremost they were businessmen, managing their contracts and the organisation of sub-contracted labour.

The expense of maintaining a garden was a large one but the social and cultural capital that they brought to the colleges was significant. Although the gardens belonged to all-male, celibate, academic institutions, throughout the period of the study they were used by the townsfolk, including unchaperoned women, and

tourists. The University and its constituent colleges formed an autonomous civic corporation in its own right within Oxford and the provision of outdoor spaces was a manifestation of that role. College gardens were treated as polite, sociable spaces that defined the University as a centre of taste. The ambitions of the University and its colleges to present themselves as polite institutions and cultural centres created the demands for both academic landscapes and sociable walks.

While college gardens were used for acts of private and civic sociability they also performed further ritual roles. For some members of the University and writers, such as Lord Kames, the landscapes were spaces to be devoted to scholars seeking *mousikê*.³ The inspiration from the muses found in *loci amoeni* created a spiritual and intellectual connection between the collegiate landscapes and the groves of the Athenian academies. The events around the University's annual *Encaenia* ceremony gave a greater importance to promenading; Show Sunday on Christ Church's Broad Walk was an event to see, and be seen at, with national celebrities. Gardens and walks belonging to the colleges became arenas in which the national elite mixed with members of the University and the City. Descriptions of these events and the lists of titled visitors were published in newspapers across the British Isles. London's fashionable society stayed for a week each year during the summer and briefly made Oxford the social and cultural centre of England.

³ [Henry Home, Lord Kames], *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: 1774), 454; "A Sentimental Journey", *The Lady's Magazine*, vol. 2 (August 1771): 1; Robert Montgomery, *Oxford: A Poem* (Oxford: 1831), 15, 27-29.

The gardens of the colleges were devoted to both pleasure and profit. Landscapes were designed to be used to stimulate and refresh the mind, encouraging the student or fellow to further intellectual endeavours.⁴ The public walks within the University provided polite society with a setting in which sociability and exercise could be controlled and ritualised. In both cases the idea of providing these landscapes types was so that the pleasure of individuals regulated the good order of collegiate and civic society. The Horatian concept of *dulce et utile*, as a socially and intellectually improving device, was powerfully expressed in the creation and use of the collegiate gardens.

The productive use of the collegiate landscapes is an area of analysis that has hitherto received little or no attention. Gardens were used for the production of fruit, nuts and vegetables; Magdalen went as far as to maintain a herd of fallow deer to provide venison for its table. Whether it was growing fruit or rearing game, the colleges were able to express their topographic idea as *rus in urbe* through husbandry in their landscapes. Even small gardens, like the one at Jesus, were able to create a bucolic haven through the growing and harvesting of fruit within its walls.

Understanding college gardens to be culturally distinct landscapes has been an additional element of the examination of the subject. Through the study of the topographical idea of the collegiate gardens and its relationship with the University's topographic image, it is possible to understand that they differed from other landscapes. College gardens, like the university campus, form a sub-type of the academic landscape. Associations between the topography of ancient

⁴ Richard Newton, *University Education* (London: 1733), 121-122.

Greece and the colleges were made from at least the early seventeenth century onwards.⁵ The use of the gardens as places for academic retreat and exercise were recorded in the writings and diaries of members of the University and others.

The thesis has demonstrated an understanding of how studying a localised collection of gardens, belonging to the same sociocultural group, primarily through archival sources and in particular the financial records, can reveal the ways in which they were organized, operated and used. The identification of the role of garden contractors as the college gardeners was an important discovery that facilitated an understanding of the maintenance and development of the gardens. In the previous literature the history of the garden was inextricably linked to the University, its colleges and the personalities of the academics rather than Oxford's horticultural trade.⁶ Addressing the organisation, operation and uses of the collegiate gardens in this study has contributed to understanding how they worked and why. Appreciating the importance of the financial and organisational components of the contractors' businesses emphasises the sophistication in their commercial enterprise. Traditional negative interpretations of jobbing gardeners operating in a provincial urban environment are challenged. The contractor's organisation, for it to work, relied on a high level of skills possessed by the City's sub-contractors. The multifaceted systems used to organise and operate the college gardens and meet the demands caused by

⁵ Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London: 1612), 180; Anthony Wood, *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis*, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1674), 211; John Peshall, *The History of the University of Oxford, to the death of William the Conqueror* (Oxford: 1772), 1; Thomas Tickell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell: With the Life of the Author* (London: 1796), 67; Montgomery, *Oxford: A Poem*.

⁶ Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *Oxford's College Gardens* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1932).

their various uses emphasises the sophistication of Oxford's horticultural trade between 1733 and 1837.

8.1. Summary of findings

The key findings of the study assessing of the organisation, operation and use of collegiate landscapes of the University of Oxford are five-fold. There were sophisticated contracting systems that were operated to suit different types of college garden. The operations in gardens required access to a pool of highly skilled gardeners to work as sub-contractors. Thirdly, that the level of daily pay for tasks in the garden were likely to be much lower than previously thought. Colleges were willing to spend a much larger amount of money on the development, care and ornamentation of their gardens than previously understood. Finally, that the collegiate landscapes were used by a number of different social groups for diverse purposes during the period of the study.

8.2 Recommendations for the future

The study has identified that in the later part of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries public walks were being beginning to be created in the collegiate landscapes of Oxford. A detailed study of the college gardens between 1650 and 1732 is required to understand how these spaces were organised, operated and were used. Such a research project would allow a greater understanding of the development of academic landscapes within the University of Oxford and provide a background for this thesis.

A study of collegiate landscapes at the University of Cambridge between 1733 and 1837 would offer a broader and potentially deeper understanding of collegiate landscapes when considered together with the findings of this study.

The operation and use of the collegiate gardens in Cambridge would allow for a greater understanding of the idea of an academic landscape. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand the variety of academic landscapes that existed in England in the Early Modern and Modern periods outside of tertiary education and how they were organised, operated and were used.

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