

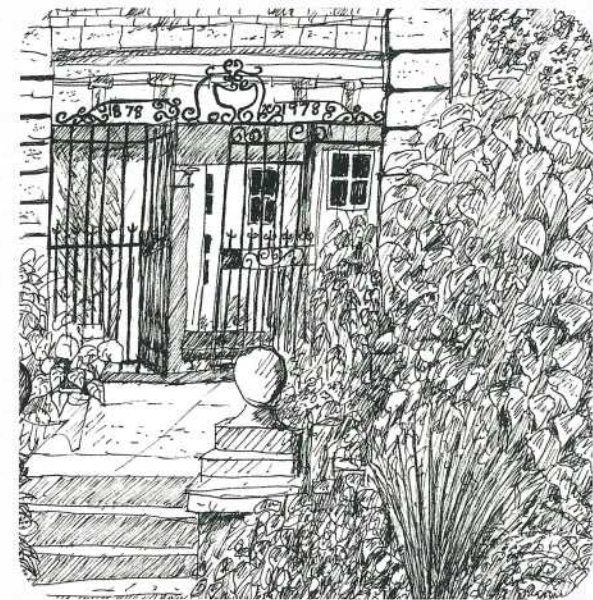
The Gardens of
Lady Margaret Hall



The Gardens of Lady Margaret Hall 1879 – 1929

*Whatever the future brings, our descendants will always love
flowers and landscapes, the river and the willows. Whatever
we do not have in common, at all events we shall have that
- the love of that natural beauty which God has been
pleased to give the world.*

Elizabeth Wordsworth, 1908
Principal of Lady Margaret Hall 1879-1909



by Eileen Stammers-Smith
Foreword by Mavis Batey

Introduction

Gardens have always played an important role in the life of an academic community, although Plato and Epicurus would never have contemplated women in the studious walks of the groves of Academe. In the men's colleges in Renaissance Oxford refreshment of spirit and healthy exercise for the body were part of the humanist training for the young. Many distinguished alumni drew inspiration from the college walks and one, Joseph Addison, who sought for 'truth in Maudlin's learned grove', has had a famous walk named after him. Lord Kames, a notable figure of the Enlightenment, saw college gardens as a necessary part of training for excellence: 'Good professors are not more essential to a college than a spacious garden sweetly ornamented, but without anything staring or fantastic, so as upon the whole to inspire our youth with a taste no less for simplicity than for elegance'.

All these traditions, albeit at first on a more domestic scale, were assimilated when the women's colleges came into being; they came too late on the academic scene to benefit from dissolved monastic establishments or to find space within a thriving city and had to find accommodation elsewhere.

The women's movement for higher education had arisen in the North Oxford suburb in which Lady Margaret Hall would be established. Certain wives and sisters of professors had obtained permission to attend some of the university lectures in the late 1860s and it was soon after a set of Ruskin lectures in 1873, that a committee of North Oxford women, including Matthew Arnold's niece, Mrs Humphry Ward, Mrs Creighton, Mrs Max Muller and Walter Pater's two sisters, began their campaign. They met in houses decorated with the first Morris wallpapers, for as Mrs Ward said, they were very anxious to be 'in the fashion, whether in aesthetics, in house-keeping or education'; earnest discussions were continued on their new croquet lawns. Most of Oxford went along with admitting women to lectures or for a society of home students but it was the idea of a residential women's college for outsiders that aroused opposition.

Lewis Carroll, who certainly had the interest of young women at heart, was vociferous on the subject and argued that resident women students should have their own university separate from the Oxbridge men's colleges. He and his friend, Dr Liddon of Christ Church, were concerned lest a woman's college would breed 'a social monster, the He-woman,' competing with the activities of the men's colleges.

At both Oxford and Cambridge, when women's colleges were finally set up, it was, at first, in rented houses of varying architectural merit, usually remote from the established men's colleges. In Cambridge Girton 1869 and Newnham in 1875 appeared on the academic scene and in 1879 Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville Hall were founded for 'the reception of women desirous of availing themselves of the special advantages which Oxford offers for higher education'. Cambridge women's colleges did not increase beyond the original two, but in Oxford there were St Hugh's in 1886, St Hilda's in 1893 and the Society of Oxford Home Students, 1878, which became St Anne's in 1938.

In 1877 the Trustees of the new Oxford Hall, (which was to be named after Lady Margaret, mother of Henry VII, 'a scholar, a gentlewoman and a saint') began looking for the accommodation they knew they wanted; a home for a small number of gentlewomen wishing to join as far as was then permitted in Oxford academic life, on definitely 'church' lines to counter the secular nature of recent developments in Cambridge. The 'humble villa' they found in Norham Gardens had recently been built on land leased from St John's College.

Norham Manor owned by St John's was unique, having been conceived as a park suburb; it filled in the area between existing Park Town and the University Parks, completed in 1860. Whereas Park Town was classical like a Bath square, the Norham Manor Estate was distinctly Victorian Gothic. In the wake of the Oxford Movement, Oxford had succumbed to High Gothic at Keble College and the Ruskinian Museum, but in the 1860s, a local architect who was a diocesan surveyor and a designer of parsonage houses, promoted the Gothic precedent in planning domestic as well as institutional and collegiate architecture, and so gave Norham Manor its parsonage-looking houses.

An almost continuous line of professors occupied the family houses on the south side of Norham Gardens overlooking the park; they had been able to stake their claim early as they were allowed to marry before the celibacy ban on other dons was lifted in 1877. After the 'unholy rush to the altar' began, there was a scramble for up-and-coming North Oxford, as the dons were required to live within a mile and a half of Carfax.

North Oxford was imbued with Morris's ideas that the house, its decorative contents and the garden were a unity, and Reginald Blomfield architect and designer of much of Lady Margaret Hall and its gardens, was influenced by these ideas. In the early years members of the College took a great interest in their own garden, and in keeping with the Arts and Crafts tradition, formed a

Gardening Club. Seeing the garden and the house as one entity would make the College seem more of a home than an institution. Dedicated Garden Stewards kept minutes of meetings and meticulous records of planting and gifts to the garden, particularly Miss Deneke, who did so for 40 years.

Later, the College threw itself into the wartime Dig for Victory scheme and replaced flowerbeds and lawns with vegetable gardens, enabling the College to be self-sufficient during the war years.



LMH Garden in 1930s by Estella Canziani (1887 – 1964)

By the time Eileen Stammers-Smith (Fairey) came up in 1948 the gardens had been reinstated. She returned to live near Oxford nearly 30 years later, after a distinguished teaching career, and fulfilled a cherished wish to write the story of the gardens that had meant so much to her. After much research in the College garden archives, three articles were published in *The Brown Book* over a period of years, and these are now published together as a tribute to her memory.

Mavis Batey M.B.E.
President of the Garden History Society
(1985-)



The First Fifty Years 1879 – 1929

Lady Margaret Hall was founded in 1879, originally in a modest rented house at the far end of Norham Gardens. Over the next 120 or so years the College expanded; the buildings grew to accommodate increased numbers of students, and the grounds were extended to cope with the increases. The history of the gardens is inextricably bound up with that of the buildings. Each successive addition directed the shape and scope of the garden, just as much as the need to provide for its various uses – games and exercise, dry walks for winter days, trees for shade and flowers for pleasure in the summer, sheltered places to sit and read or have tea on the lawn. As it became possible to buy more land to provide for the essential features of an expanding academic institution, the garden grew and changed, too. Although Reginald Blomfield's original designs for the garden, as it was until about 1926 have been overlaid by later accretions and planting, (including moving tennis courts, war-time vegetable gardens, and recent labour saving simplifications) the overall sense of spaciousness and symmetry in spite of the awkward site, the restrained simplicity of the landscaping in relation to the buildings, 'calling in the country' and river from beyond still play a part in an effect which is aesthetically pleasing.

The trustees of the new Oxford hall knew what they wanted when they began looking in 1877. In 1878, 21 Norham Gardens was a new house, built as a speculation by F.R. Pike, an Oxford auctioneer and estate agent, on land leased from St. John's College, the owners of the Norham Manor Estate. His architect was Hillson Beasley and the house is a rather undistinguished Victorian Gothic edifice in yellow-white brick, with a stumpy-pillared Arts and Crafts porch up a few steps and a band of carved rosettes above the first floor windows as its only ornament. Inside, the main rooms are well-proportioned and spacious. Entrance from the road was by two gates leading to a small semi-circular 'sweep' of gravel. The red brick house next door, 19 Norham Gardens, 'Gunfield', which was to play an important part in the future of the College, had been leased in 1877 by the Misses Jephson and their brother. This house was the last of a number built in Norham Gardens by Frederick J. Cobb before he was forced into liquidation. He designed the exuberant fantasy of bays, turrets and finials for his own occupation.

The first lessee of 21 Norham Gardens was the Rev. E.S. Talbot, then Warden of the recently-founded Keble College, one of the small group of people interested in the provision of higher education for women at Oxford. The

committee had looked at various houses but their choice of this one was ideal for the future. Beyond Old Hall was virtually open country, with allotments, hay fields and grazing ground running down to the water meadows and the river Cherwell and on the south side the University Parks. This gave room to extend when extension became possible and desirable; instead of being cramped on every side by buildings and roads, as Somerville and St. Hugh's were to be, there was the possibility from the first of room for building and a fine spacious garden with well-grown trees as a backdrop, a sense of the Oxfordshire country and river landscape beyond.

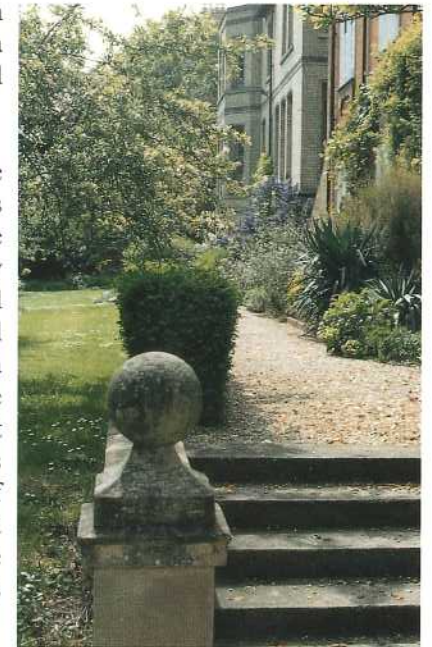
The original garden of Old Hall appears to have been like any other small Oxford back garden. Nobody designed these; they reflected the needs and interests of individual households. Running down to the Parks boundary was a lawn, approached from the gravel path in front of the house by a grass bank. Beyond were a few fruit trees. A lean-to conservatory and flower borders occupied the space below the windows. In the earliest photograph taken here one can see a young clematis tentatively making its way up the wall. Early photographs on the Norham Gardens side show a small rose-bed at the foot of the stonework; by 1883 there is a climbing rose up to the capital of one of the porch pillars and two window-boxes in the window to the left, with snapdragons in them – perhaps this was one of the two rooms occupied by Miss Wordsworth. Other climbers can be seen growing from the basement level. By 1884 there are well-grown *Clematis montana* in flower on the house walls, a border with irises against the side wall and a low box hedge in front of the Champneys addition. This must have been a newly-planted garden when the first eight (soon to be nine) students and their Lady Principal took up residence in October 1879. The house and garden provided a pleasant domestic setting, allaying by its modest homeliness the fears of those who thought higher education would render women less womanly. For the students sharing 'a unique and exhilarating opportunity' it would be reassuringly like their own homes, though possibly in a simpler style. 'The Lady Principal would gratefully receive any presents, such as Books, Pictures, Casts, a Pianoforte, Harmonium, Clock or the like which would add to the comfort and usefulness of the house.'

It was not long before more room for the growing number of students was needed (Old Hall had only nine bedrooms) and in 1881 the college brought in Sir Basil Champneys (1842 - 1935) to design what became known then as New Old Hall, an addition to the east side of the white brick villa. The Talbots had been to look at Champneys' Newnham building in 1875 and he built for the Hall a miniature of his work at Newnham; three bays in 1881 so that student numbers could rise



from 12 to 18; a fourth bay in 1884 for six or eight more students. It is unlikely that the monarch after whom it was named would have recognised the style but 'Queen Anne' was soon to become the fashion for country houses in the hands of Norman Shaw, Ernest George and the young Edwin Lutyens. Champneys made no attempt to link his addition stylistically to the original Old Hall; it was built in warm red brick with curly pedimented gables, imposing chimneys, and tall dormer windows breaking the line of the gutter. On the gable end was a white-painted doorcase with a carved stone pediment. Above were two bow-windows of elaborate design also painted white like the other window frames. Like his Newnham building this creates something of the atmosphere of Tennyson's 'Princess' but white painted woodwork was a novelty then and facetious remarks were made by undergraduates about the Hall being 'red, white and *blue*' (though whether this refers to the stockings or the blood of the young ladies, history does not relate). The piecemeal construction was necessary because the Hall had no endowments and was from the first heavily burdened by debt. Operating costs were met entirely from fees and if students were away ill, there was a financial crisis. This continuing financial uncertainty accounts in part for the modesty of everyone's expectations and for the fact that the garden of Champney's addition simply repeats the North Oxford back garden layout of Old Hall, with a lawn, a low box hedge and gravel path by the house and by 1894 *Wisteria* and Virginia creeper growing on the corners of the gable end. There was a tennis court by the Parks boundary and small trees were dotted about the lawn.

St. John's College was always apprehensive that the residential desirability of its North Oxford development might be compromised by a 'hostel block' or any kind of institutional building and had insisted that the link between Old Hall and the new building should be of a temporary nature so that if the experiment of women's education failed it would be possible to let the buildings as two separate houses with a minimum of alteration. Champneys was too experienced an architect to have left the still visible hiatus of his own accord; he put the stairs on it.



The college had leased land from St John's for Champneys' extension, together with more land for a garden east of the house. This end of the garden was marked in the 1880s by a footpath from the Parks to Norham Gardens ('recent' in 1879) and beyond this were the University Tennis courts. Numbers rose again and the Hall rented a house nearby, confusingly named Wordsworth Hostel. When St. John's refused permission to enlarge this it was resolved to undertake a planned and gradual expansion towards the river, 'the beginnings of a dignified and worthy college building, not merely a house with additions' and the beginning of the equally dignified and worthy garden.

St John's was reluctant at first to lose control of any part of its North Oxford holdings but in 1894 the Brown Book reported, 'The Council has purchased a piece of ground extending from the Hall to the Cherwell and propose to build on it as soon as possible, a new wing equal in size to the present Hall. Funds for this purpose are much wanted!' For many years the boundary between the leasehold and freehold land was marked by a pink japonica near the wall to Norham Gardens.

At this exciting moment Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942) was commissioned to submit plans for one building and suggestions for others in the future. Buildings for educational establishments had formed part of Blomfield's practice from his earliest days but one wonders whether, in choosing this particular architect, the Council had realised that it was obtaining also a garden designer, already the author of an influential and controversial book. Plans for college buildings, some unexecuted, during the years in which he was in effect the college architect, together with garden designs, some later changed or never implemented, form a valuable source of material in the college archives on Blomfield as architect and garden designer ; all the more important since he sent all his papers for scrap in 1940.

Blomfield was 38 in 1894 (14 years younger than Champneys) and was making a successful career as an architect. The son of the Rev. G. J. Blomfield, he had been at Exeter College and then trained with his uncle, Sir Arthur Blomfield, an established church architect, who build St. Barnabas in Jericho in Oxford. Blomfield set up his own London practice in 1884.

It is always an advantage for an architect to be able to draw and Blomfield was a skilled draughtsman both of plans and of attractive sketches which lifted the plans into life. His design work was well supported by written material and a carefully worked out philosophy. Other architects of the time had a real interest

in the gardens of their houses – Lutyens' fruitful partnership with Miss Jekyll is perhaps the best known – but in 1892 Blomfield had published *The Formal Garden in England* expounding his view that the garden must be the architect's province, since only he knew anything about design. He looked back to the seventeenth century when, as his contemporary Sedding had delightfully put it, 'the garden curtseys to the house' and both are in the formal decorative style of Queen Anne. The eighteenth century landscape garden movement and the nineteenth century horticulturalists had forced a separation between house and garden so that now the garden might bear no stylistic relationship with the house.

Blomfield makes his view of the complementary roles of architect and gardener dogmatically clear:

'Horticulture stands to design much as building stands to architecture; the two are connected but very far from being identical...The designer, whether professional or amateur, should lay down the main lines and deal with the garden as a whole, but the execution, such as the best method of forming beds, laying turf, planting trees and pruning hedges, should be left to the gardener, whose proper business it is.'

His principal antagonist was William Robinson, who declared that only the gardener with his knowledge of horticulture was properly equipped to decide on the layout of a garden. Blomfield argued that 'the principles of design which govern the house should extend to the grounds which surround it...the house and grounds should be designed together in relation to each other.'

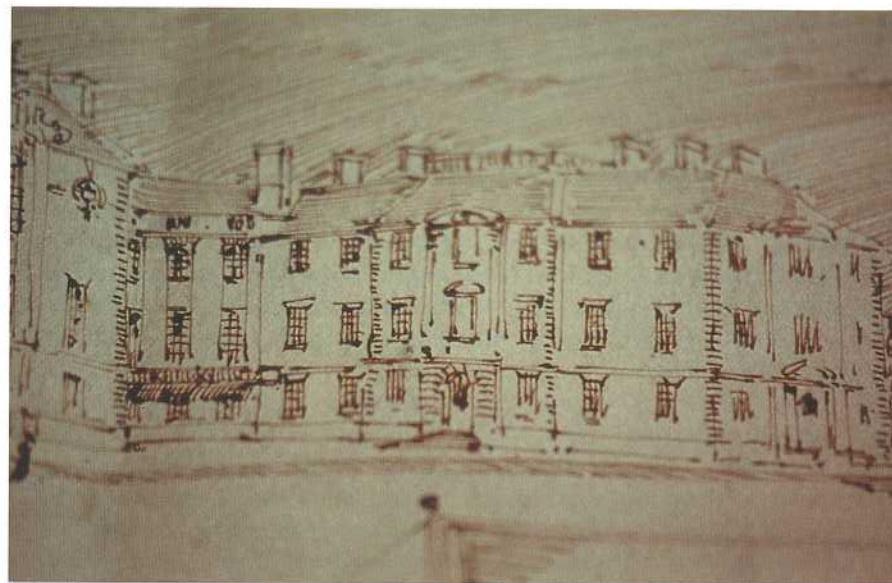
At a period when houses were designed in styles based on the past this meant that a historical element should also be incorporated into the garden (though without that insistence on authenticity of planting which has recently become desirable). There was no question by 1895 of imitating the mediaeval architecture of the men's colleges with their staircase system and quadrangles. Nor was Victorian Gothic seen as appropriate for a women's college. A domestic style was called for but Blomfield did not build Wordsworth in Champneys' 'Queen Anne'. His developing personal style involved an assimilation of the architectural proportions and vocabulary of the later seventeenth century and early eighteenth century – what came to be called Wrenaissance and what he called 'neo-Georgian'. He was at his most relaxed and most able in modest and restrained work of this kind which exactly suited the ethos of Lady Margaret Hall, still quite small, with its desire 'to keep in view

the idea of family life along with the advantages of competition and varied companionship'. Blomfield's Wordsworth building and his complementary design for the garden both show a sensitivity to scale and a feeling for 'the genius of the place'.

In 1894 in a letter to Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College and a member of the LMH Council, it is evident that Blomfield has very swiftly gained a grasp of the essentials. The proposed site 'is a practicable building site with several advantages in view of the conditions of the lease.' He assumes that the footpath dividing the property in two can be moved. He points out that as the site is bounded by the Parks and the Cherwell, frontages can never be blocked by other buildings; that the aspect is a good one and he will make the main aspect to the south, getting full benefit from the sun 'and good views of the buildings from the Parks' as well as pleasant ones from the students' rooms. By 1895 an agreement had been made with the University and the Parks to move the footpath to its present position¹, between Old Hall and Gunfield, taking some seven feet from the side of Old Hall garden to make a wide passage, with walls which the University undertook to maintain. Wordsworth was opened in 1896 and in 1897 Blomfield presented a comprehensive plan which included two future buildings (Talbot and Toynbee) and a design for the whole of the L-shaped garden down to the watermeadows. One's respect for Blomfield's skill and foresight is enhanced by seeing on this plan that he knew from the start what would be appropriate both as a frame for his buildings and the needs of the college, remembering that there was never any money to spare.

Wordsworth was not joined to Old Hall but a free-standing and very handsome building on the first freehold land acquired by the Hall. Photographs of it taken before 1926 make one wish Lodge had never been added to it. Wordsworth is in 'a scholarly but jolly Wrenaissance' as Andrew Saint puts it, in red brick softer in colour than Champneys' brick, with Clipsham stone facings. Its solidly English air and attractive proportions – with window-boxes, white painted windows and balustrade and the skilful contrast of these with stone and brick, plain and ornamented surfaces - make Champneys' Old Hall gable look rather fussy. It is light and pleasant inside, with rooms on the sociable corridor principle. A one-storey dining hall (demolished in 1908 for the building of Talbot) projected towards Norham Gardens and Blomfield dignified the whole with stone steps and balustrades leading up and down the different levels in the

1 Editor: moved again in 1999 nearer to Gunfield, increasing the LMH garden by approximately 7,000 square feet.



Toynbee: sketch by Reginald Blomfield

garden, where stone cannon balls marked the edges of paths and crowned the balustrades and fastigate yews marked the angles. Perhaps in response to this design impetus, a Gardening Club was formed in 1897 'the members of which have displayed considerable energy and have cultivated a part of the garden with great success. A new border has lately been assigned to them.'

Blomfield's plan is dignified and simple. The Hall had been forced to buy the land right down to the river but much of this was watermeadow, which flooded every year and could neither be built upon nor planted. His design therefore ends at the ditch, one of the means by which water was channelled into the backwater and the river. Here he proposed a hedge along the garden side, with in the centre a *claire-voie* or opening set with iron railings so that the river could be glimpsed from within. At the eastern corner a diagonal path on the line of the then boundary led to the end of Toynbee (as it was called when he built it some twenty years later) marked by a double procession of lime trees leading to a small circular enclosure with a statue in it. From here one looked back along the avenue to another small *claire-voie* in the hedge with another view of the river. The gravel path crossed the front of Talbot (to be built in 1910) skirting a very attractive formal garden, as far as the Parks boundary where there was a small semi-circular enclosure from which the path turned east again

by a single line of limes. This part formed the lower arm of the L-shape. The longer and narrower arm ran parallel with the south-facing Wordsworth and Old Hall. Here were two slightly sunken gravel tennis courts and a 'grass lawn' with sloping banks leading up to gravel paths and border beds in front of Wordsworth. Between Wordsworth and Old Hall was a much-loved part of the garden, where a path between the two was flanked by flower beds, a row of clipped yew trees separating them from the lawn. Instead of the tennis court by the Parks boundary, a semi-circular bank led up to a yew hedge six feet high and beyond this New Old Hall garden was to be filled up and planted as an orchard and Old Hall garden to be retained 'as now'. West of Wordsworth were standard roses in beds lining the path to a gate in the stone wall leading to Norham Gardens. Blomfield carefully marks the section showing variations in

the level of the 'long garden'; first a lawn, then one long bed, then a slightly sunken path, the second long bed and beyond it a bank down to the row of yew trees and another bank leading down again to the 'grass lawn'. The formal bed in front of Talbot is equally carefully designed, in three geometrical squares with alternate square and circular centres, and it is a pity that it appears never to have been made. In a plan of 1912 (with corrections 1914) for his proposed 'new wing' (Toynbee) Blomfield makes another attempt to place this garden in a symmetrical relationship with the buildings behind it. Talbot, built in 1910, was a building of which he was justifiably proud. Its garden front is in a grander style than Wordsworth, effectively signalling the dining hall and library within,

and its west front for many years formed an impressive main entrance to the college. For the garden side in 1912 Blomfield sketched two square beds, one with a statue or fountain in the centre, flanked by two beds in rectangular form. Steps lead down an inclined bank eastwards from the garden door of

Wordsworth, matched by similar steps from the east corner of Toynbee. Like his 1897 design this was a skilful way of dealing with the fact that Toynbee projected much further than Wordsworth.

The early provision of tennis courts and later a hockey ground within the garden had been encouraged by Miss Wordsworth to 'promote the athletic spirit as an antidote to headache and lassitude.' Croquet was also played. 'Cricket, however, was never allowed.' Many students took long walks in the Oxfordshire countryside, 'hunting in couples' as an alternative to organised games but others envied the Hall its facilities for games and exercise in its own grounds. Though the Minute Books do not begin until 1925 when a formal Garden Committee was set up, responsible to the College Council and with £40 per annum to spend on plants, tools and manure, Miss Helena Deneke writes in the Garden Log Book that she became Garden Steward in 1922 'and work on the garden begins with a view to more cultivation than hitherto.' Apart from the Old Hall garden and the adjoining orchard in front of Champneys' extension, the garden in 1922 'consisted chiefly of the part between Old Hall and Wordsworth.' Here Blomfield's long beds planted with crimson peonies and scarlet oriental poppies looked 'like DCL gowns' and the trees and bushes by the wall to Norham Gardens were well grown. 'The rest,' wrote Miss Deneke dismissively, 'can hardly be called garden. It is given up to games.'

The ground began to be prepared for the building of Lodge, between Old Hall and Wordsworth, in 1924. 'This is painful,' records Miss Deneke. 'The herbaceous borders have to go and with them for the time being our gardening pride.' It was not all loss however, since the soil excavated was carried on a little truck railway across the lawns to the south side of the watermeadows to join the soil collected there when foundations had been dug for Wordsworth and Toynbee. Such attempts to raise the watermeadows were constantly being made but they were still only used for allotments and hay, and part was leased to a Mr Rhodes who kept a livery stable, for his 'tired horses', until 1926. No attempt could be made to extend the garden to the river until something more had been done and in 1924 'a modest scheme with respect to expert advice on the garden and watermeadow' was submitted to Sir Reginald for his approval. His dignified design was becoming blurred by the random planting of trees and the making of grass tennis courts in front of Talbot. His 1912/14 design for the Talbot garden, a variant of his 1897 plan, had suffered the same fate and was never made. In 1926 'Sir Reginald Blomfield's plan for laying out the grounds was presented, which he has very kindly given to the Hall. It was decided to let these plans lie on the table for the time being and to thank Sir Reginald again

for his kindness.' This plan seems to have been lost. However, the Garden Committee felt that 'some scheme for giving members of the Hall more space for recreation other than games was desirable' and embarked on a garden design of its own for the front of Talbot. Two hard tennis courts could be built on the newly-raised ground by the river and the grass courts could be 'turned into a garden to replace the one lost by the building of Lodge.' On the Talbot front an old diagonal path from the corner of Toynbee to the corner of Wordsworth was re-aligned parallel with Talbot. Beyond this, brick steps were built down to the lower level at the south corner of Wordsworth. These new steps led to four small beds round a bird bath (presented in 1927), pretty perhaps for a small suburban garden but quite out of scale and style with the buildings behind and the garden all around. No attempt was made to align this garden on the garden fronts of the three buildings (a design problem which had exercised Blomfield and for which he had provided two, possibly three, solutions) and the idea that grand formal bedding would be appropriate to echo the grandeur of Talbot's garden front was probably never thought of. The beds were encircled by an arc of cherry and crab apple trees (which died because the soil was poor and an underground stream ran nearby) and a plantation of flowering trees and bushes hid the ditch. When Lodge was finished a herbaceous border was made on the garden front to match



Old Hall and garden before 1926

one in front of Wordsworth; this contained plants from St. Hugh's garden given by Miss Annie Rogers, Gertrude Jekyll's devoted disciple, and tulips from Dame Millicent Fawcett.

In 1925 Captain Mercer, the chivalrous Clerk of the Works, submitted a report on the watermeadows, costing for raising, levelling and drainage. This was to be delayed 'until Sir Reginald completed his design for dealing with the watermeadows as a whole.' Blomfield's approval was sought to fill in the belt of trees on the north side of the meadow and £10 was allocated for their purchase, but when he was asked about a rail or fence on this boundary 'he would express no definite opinion, since he regarded the matter as outside practical politics.' It is evident that relations between the architect and the college began to deteriorate after 1921 and the building of Lodge in 1926 seems to have delighted no-one. Even Miss Eleanor Lodge, after whom it was named, said 'she was sorry it was such an ugly name. It sounds a very poor thing after Wordsworth and Toynbee.' (At the same meeting it was decided to call the library building Talbot.) With his usual scrupulous attention to detail, Blomfield designed Lodge in a simpler form of the neo-Georgian he had used for Wordsworth and it fits in very well. But repetition, however subtle, cannot be stimulating for an architect. In 1926 he submitted plans to extend Wordsworth towards the river and to form a quadrangle with Talbot and Toynbee by building a chapel on the fourth side. An earlier sketch of 1916 on the back of the plan shows his original idea of placing the chapel in the space between Old Hall and Wordsworth. It looks a delightful building, square with a dome like a classical tempietto, and joined by cloisters to Wordsworth. Both these designs were rejected, probably on the grounds of cost, and in 1929 Blomfield was superseded as the college architect by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, who had designed Whitelands College for Miss Grier's friend, Miss Mercier.

Not given to extravagance, as Lutyens was, nor a genius like his great contemporary Blomfield was an architect of great talent and perhaps the ideal man for LMH at this period. For over thirty years he designed for and advised the college and his buildings there are among his best. They give no hint today of the climate of financial stringency in which they were built and have a dignity which is not shared by any of the later buildings. His garden design, also laid down with an eye to elegant simplicity and economy, shows both practical good sense and a fine understanding of the setting. Its classical lines and restraint in detail still ensure that the planting which has been done since, and which has made LMH garden one of the most interesting 'plantswoman's' gardens in Oxford, has been supported and enhanced by his design.

1929 – 1949

In 1929 Miss Grier wrote to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott inviting him to design a chapel ‘to replace the temporary building we have at present’ and, within the next four or five years, as funds might become available, a new dining hall with kitchens and accommodation for about 40 undergraduates and Fellows to bring the student numbers up to 150.

Sir Giles was the son and grandson of eminent architects and primarily an architect of public buildings and institutions. The best of his work for LMH is undoubtedly the impressive chapel, in a Byzantine style, joined to the end of the Deneke building by a passageway intended to house memorial tablets; another passageway (known as Hell Passage because for many years it contained a terrifying set of prints of Dante’s *Inferno*) connected Deneke with Toynbee so that one could walk from one end of the college to the other under cover. Deneke was built much further towards the river than any of Blomfield’s buildings and the dining hall was at right angles to it, forming a small quadrangle with the chapel.

In the voluminous correspondence there is hardly a mention of the garden; Scott was evidently not interested in garden design. As always it was the situation which attracted praise. The *Yorkshire Post* wrote in 1932: ‘The new building will be one of the few places from which it is still possible to realise the beauty of Oxford’s setting of water, woods and hills as Wycliffe saw it 600 years ago, when he hailed Oxford as “a fit place for saints to dwell in, the very gate of heaven.”’

The land had been purchased in 1923 (it included the freehold of the Old Hall site) and constant efforts had been made since then to raise the watermeadows, at first to prevent annual flooding and provide games pitches. By 1931 £2643 had been expended on this task, on draining, ditching, pipelaying and shoring up the back-water; nevertheless the first set of piles driven for Deneke foundations disappeared into the ground and the work had to be done again. In 1933 the Garden Committee decided ‘to plant two crabs, an ampelopsis and a cotoneaster to cover the ugly wall’ on the garden side of Hell Passage. The Benson Place end of Deneke was soon covered in Virginia creeper so that the general effect toned in better with Blomfield’s warm red brick, and a narrow bed for wallflowers and tulips was made below the terrace which opened off the SCR French windows, with steps down to the level of the lawn which stretched

to the wych elm and copper beech and looked across to the sunken garden in front of Talbot, with its birdbath presented by old students in 1927. This garden had a yew hedge (gift of the Garden Steward) outlining its north and west banks and there were roses and herbaceous plants in beds by the wych elm which could be seen from the terrace – these were removed in 1937 and never replaced. The chapel quadrangle was grassed over, with beds of roses and Michaelmas daisies and a double white cherry. The rockery made with stones presented by St Hugh’s, always known as ‘the warrior’s tomb’, was removed from Old Hall garden about this time.

By 1935 Miss Deneke was resignedly concluding that ‘it is a mistake to plant anything but willows, poplars and alders in our lowest-lying ground. The ground is waterlogged. In the upper garden the ground is made up. We must cherish what trees we have and not expect too much.’ Even the Pickford Memorial garden suffered from underground streams which ran there and in front of Talbot, so that plants for both gardens had to be chosen with care and there were many disappointments. A hedge surrounded this garden, too, so that there was still an impression of separate gardens, each with its own focus and its own building as a background, linked by banks and steps and the pattern of paths but each with its own character, formal or informal. This effect was lost when the hedges were grubbed up in the war to save labour.

A key figure in the development of the garden was Miss H.C. (Lena) Deneke. About 1922 she had been asked by Miss Grier to take over its supervision and in 1924 formally became Garden Steward, a post which she occupied until her retirement in 1960, when she was invited to continue, which she did until 1968. In the Garden Log Book kept from the earliest time she scrupulously records successes and failures, all purchases and planting, every gift of trees, shrubs, bulbs, garden seats and ornaments. Miss Deneke’s interest was in making a beautiful garden for all to enjoy. Balancing practical uses with beauty and colour was a delicate matter. For a poor women’s college to have its own games pitches and tennis courts on site was much better than hiring these facilities elsewhere – indeed at various times it was proposed to let the courts to outsiders to make a little money – but over the years the tennis courts were gradually moved further from the buildings and eventually the hockey pitch was settled on the raised watermeadows beyond the ditch. Even the new vogue for sun-tanning was decorously catered for in 1933 when a wattled enclosure was provided near the bathing place, after complaints of the inadequate dress of sunbathing junior members were received from the Curator of the Parks, which had jurisdiction over that part of the river bank. His request was

amicable: 'May I rely on the good sense of your students...to strike a reasonable compromise between the millinery ideals of a Puritan and a water nymph?'

The other important person, especially during the war, was Miss Elinor Gardner. A Newnham graduate, a geologist by training, Miss Gardner had been a research fellow of the Hall since 1930. She had a distinguished career before the war, accompanying archaeological expeditions to the Middle East. In 1935 she travelled with Freya Stark, who wrote warmly of her Christian unselfishness and trustworthiness. In 1938, perhaps foreseeing that foreign expeditions might soon be curtailed, she trained at Waterperry Horticultural School and Edinburgh Botanic Gardens and returned to LMH to organise digging for victory. Before this she had already added a useful stiffening of

professional knowledge to the deliberations of the Garden Committee, on which she first appears when her fellowship was renewed in 1933. She drew plans and made suggestions for the Pickford Memorial Garden; she suggested re-shaping the beds east of Talbot to give them better proportions and more consequence; an avenue of Lombardy poplars was planted to line the path by the gravel tennis courts; she drew plans for a Fellows' garden where by 1937 there were rose beds, delphiniums, two azaleas, four 'drooping' birches, and a small lawn with four sentinel yews, all gifts from the SCR or friends. These plants, and a beech hedge on the north side, were carefully chosen by Miss Gardner on personal visits to Hillier's.



The thrift which had constantly to be exercised (though she would always say 'Oh, there's plenty of money!') is emphasised by the glee with which Miss Deneke records the careful calculations which showed that gravel from the tennis courts dug up for the Pickford Memorial Garden would just serve to make paths for the Fellows' Garden, whilst turf taken up there could be relaid in the Pickford Memorial Garden. Moreover, the men shared her pleasure in this neat dovetailing of grass and gravel. The sundial which had stood on the semi-



circular bank by 'new' Old Hall since 1901 made a centrepiece for the Pickford Memorial Garden and four flower beds were planted with crocus, grape hyacinth and bedding plants in season. In 1937 Miss Gardner proposed a water garden in the hollow between the raised hockey ground and the hard tennis courts (1934) which became known as the Eye of the Lord. Here were iris, mimulus and osmunda fern, with one willow which grew enormous. In 1937, too, at Miss Grier's suggestion, the wall and gates in front of Old Hall were taken down and replaced with two limes and a hawthorn, set in a strip of lawn with a stone kerb.

Some of the gardeners who carried out this work naturally came and went but several were as long-serving and loyal as the Hall's indoor staff. Miss Skipworth had reported in 1925 when the subject of status and pensions was raised, that 'history is on the side of an arrangement for Pritchett, plus a youth or man, as groundsman and Ward as gardener.' After 24 years of service, Pritchett was given a pension of £1 a week in 1932 and it was only then discovered that his name was really Prickett. Ward and the men and boys were expected to carry coal and clean knives and boots in the house each morning, and to help with trunks at the beginning and end of term, but in 1930 Ward was

given a rise to £3 a week as a skilled man and relieved of household duties. With a team at best of head gardener, two groundsmen and an extra youth, slow development of the garden was possible through the Thirties. Gardeners' wages were a big item in the budget and there was dismay in 1933 that 'an extra boy engaged was a full grown boy' and so entitled to a higher wage. Fortunately Ward was devoted to his work and Miss Deneke often praised his skills. Prickett's garden shed was moved from the wych elm into the north east corner behind Deneke, a small greenhouse was built here in 1937 and Ward added a potting shed, and cold frames made from the Old Hall lean-to conservatory. In 1938 Miss Deneke put the compost heap on a modern footing:

'This is now made and extended in the extreme north west corner of the watermeadow. I correspond with Miss Bruce of Sapperton on the conversion of grass clippings into manure and learn there is a mystic lore on this. The principle seems to be that everything done is done by using plant life only. No minerals or metals - no corrugated iron sides "use of old railway sleepers instead." The moon is important, and the stars. Miss Bruce's special solution is sent to us, and instructions how to make and apply it. The mystic ones with their astrology cause Ward to scoff. But the solution is effective.'

In 1938 she gave a shelter for the Fellows' garden and promised a wrought iron gate which because of the war was only made and placed in position in 1952.

In September 1939 two of the gardeners were called up and by the end of that year potatoes were planted along a strip of the hockey field, enlisting JCR labour. In May of 1940 Deneke lawn was dug up. By 1941 Miss Gardner had been co-opted onto the Garden Committee, lodging at Gunfield and joining the SCR for meals, to take over the direction of labour and the supervision of planting. Assisting her was a series of Land Girls, generally two at a time on half time. The War Agriculture Committee helped with ploughing or other work needing special machinery, though they were often dilatory. Miss Deneke indented for more tools. Full records were kept by Miss Gardner and make interesting reading. In 1941 not only nearly 8 tons of potatoes but greens, broad and butter beans, marrows, carrots, radishes, lettuce and cress are listed, as well as raspberries and blackberries. Of 1300lbs of tomatoes (many grown under cloches against the wall of Deneke terrace) 203lbs were canned with the help of the W.I. who brought their canning equipment in. A total of 1450 square yards was under cultivation, more than doubled in the following year, though a few beds were kept as amenities and for cut flowers.

In 1942 livestock was added with a gift of 12 hens and 24 Khaki Campbell ducks. Ward built a hen house and a duck house on the hard courts by the boathouse and the ducks 'were given the Eye of the Lord and devastate it... Miss Hurnard develops a great sense of tenderness and understanding for the ducks especially. Ward remains in charge for feeding and cleaning.' Beehives from Gunfield were placed near Ward's garden shed and Rachel Trickett remembers that cleaning out the Deneke rabbit hutches was one of the chores 'though we never tasted rabbit stew and they seemed to be pets'. There had been 30 volunteers for garden work in 1939 but in 1940 'they flagged as the necessity for urgent work seemed less insistent'. Another gardener left, leaving only Ward and 'old Webb' (who died in 1941). Conscription of undergraduates became imperative, on the domestic and the garden front. Junior members had to sign on for war work and a minimum of two hours from the six required each week could be spent on gardening. Rachel Trickett recalls her duties, 'in a wooden hut which still exists. I spent much time picking out sunflower seeds - for what purpose I was never told, though it was rumoured that the seeds were to feed Miss Hurnard's ducks, whose eggs were used for the SCR breakfasts. I never discovered where the sunflowers grew but their large heads were in plentiful supply.' An official ration of meal was secured for the fowl and the first egg was celebrated in verse:



Digging in the war-time gardens

November 1942

Is triply welcome now that you
With Saints and Central Heat allied
Keep souls and bodies fortified.

Rachel Trickett also remembers being terrified by 'an extraordinary and powerful woman in jodhpurs and leggings' (Miss Gardner in her Land Army uniform) who shouted at her on a raw November day for not pulling strongly enough on the heavy garden roller with her team mate. They soon co-ordinated their efforts 'but I felt like a slave in Egypt'.

Others learned a lot from their war work. Elizabeth Mackenzie and Pat Kean were taught how to double dig and Miss Mackenzie planted 57 dozen leeks, whilst Miss Kean became adept at nipping out unwanted shoots from the tomato plants. Undergraduates reported daily to Miss Gardner or Ward. Ward was said to dislike supervising female labour and opted to do groundsman's work and take care of the fowl as long as the war lasted. His lack of aspirates occasionally made his orders confusing – did he propose work on the edges or the (h)'edges?

In spring 1942 the hockey field was ploughed up and some mock-Milonic verses lament its loss for croquet and archery, too; the last of its seven verses reads:

Ah me! What boots to curse unyielding Fate?
Our patriotic eyes must forward view.
Hence, then, my Muse, to vegetate;
Tomorrow to fresh leeks and 'taters new.

That year vegetables provided a considerable item of diet. Root, green and salad vegetables, Jerusalem artichokes, squash and sweetcorn, endive and ridge cucumbers were grown as well as 150 dozen leeks. In 1943 Miss Gardner was awarded the Land Army armlet for her services and she and her Land Girls won prizes for vegetables, fruit and herbs at Blenheim Park Land Army Rally. It was decided virtually to exclude potatoes in 1944 and put in greens up to the limit allowed. The War Agriculture Committee ploughed and harrowed, threshed the peas (after great delay) and provided transport for manure from Hawes at Horton-cum-Studley at £90 for four tons. The change of use may in the long run have been good for the garden.

In January 1945 Elinor Gardner went on extended leave, needing a rest, and later accepted a post as Garden Steward at the Froebel Training College at

Offley, Herts. She continued to attend Garden Committee meetings and advise on planting at LMH. The slow work of reconstruction began, despite unfavourable weather, the persistence of rationing and continuing labour troubles. Potatoes were planted for the last time in 1946, when summer vegetables were discontinued. 'The hens are given up; we vacillate over giving up the ducks' (the duck house was finally removed in 1948). The bees had gone back to Gunfield in 1944 and in 1947 much tidying of paths and edges and replanting of flower beds began. In 1948 Miss Deneke could proudly report that 'guests at the Garden Party say LMH garden is one of the best kept in Oxford' and, giving Ward his due, 'I met Ward at 7 p.m. on June 16 putting in extra time tidying. All is beautifully mown and weeded'.

For Rachel Trickett the wonderful hot summer of 1945 is her most vivid memory: 'I remember lying under the huge copper beech tree revising, with daisies scattered on the hardly-mown lawn, a few tall lovely delphiniums, everything, it seemed to me, idyllic... The garden (even knowing its drearier purlieus) always seemed to me Arcadian. It still does'. Undergraduates who came up after the war will agree with her, marvelling at how swiftly everything returned to normal.

1950 – 1990

In the Fifties there was still 'the incessant struggle to make ends meet and the need of rigid economy' which Eleanor Lodge had noted as far back as 1923 in her short story of LMH. The College's comparative poverty was exacerbated by steadily rising prices and the increasing cost of labour. The Hall had always pursued a policy of building when it could, rather than accumulating funds for endowments. The building of Wordsworth had been rendered possible by loans, of Talbot by gifts, of Toynbee with an issue of debentures. Financial stringency naturally had its effect on the gardens too, now much bigger with the building of Deneke and the chapel with its garden court. Often it was only the generosity of donors which enabled the purchase of the plants and trees. LMH became a full member of the University in 1954 with a new charter and statutes and pressure on accommodation became more acute as university restrictions on the number of women were gradually relaxed; nearby houses were bought for graduate flats. It was obviously time to consider more building and in 1961 the Hall acquired its first quadrangle. This was made possible by a gift from the Wolfson Foundation of £100,000. It comprised a new library (Linda

Grier) facing Lodge and a new entrance range opposite Talbot, the original main entrance to the College from Norham Gardens. The architect, Raymond Erith, said in 1957 that his library design was 'a modern building but the treatment is principally late Roman; the idea being to provide some sort of link between Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's Byzantine chapel and Sir Reginald Blomfield's version of Georgian.' This appears to be one of those rare occasions when a college architect had actually looked at what his predecessors had done with a view to building something harmonising with but not imitating their work. All the interior furniture and fittings were designed by Erith, who also supervised the redecoration of the dining hall and the Old Library in Talbot, both very successful visually. He ranks with Blomfield as a wise choice.

The stone arcades, which were much liked but had been incorporated at a later stage of the planning, meant that it was difficult for Erith to bring the building within its budget of £70,000; his irrefutable answer to calls for economy here was, 'I do not think the proposed finish too good for a building supposed to last two or three hundred years.' The entrance range arouses mixed feelings. One is irresistibly reminded of the Castel Vecchio in Verona, even to the deep dry moat. This was necessitated by changes of level and difficulties of drainage, since summer storms often brought water pouring down Norham Gardens on its way to the river and Talbot basement was flooded in 1960, not for the first time. Andrew Saint mischievously described the new entrance as 'like a stable for well-bred mares' and others less wittily as 'a female prison'. It has rather a blank and eyeless look though Erith said he was aiming for 'simplicity and repose' in keeping windows on this side to a minimum. Over the years, proposals to grow climbers out of the moat up these walls have never come to anything. Virginia creeper was proposed but hotly rejected by the Neo-classicists on the governing body. 'It was discovered that the Garden Committee had anyway spent the money intended for the plants on something else'. Miss Deneke had earlier moved swiftly to cover the garden side of Scott's Hell Passage with shrubs and climbers to conceal what was thought an eyesore. In 1968 this bed was cleared and planted as a herbaceous border. Deneke's west end was often overgrown with Virginia creeper which helped to tone Scott's bricks in with Blomfield's but probably nothing would have grown well if it had been planted in the moat, and might have provided a foothold for intruders. The chief aesthetic merit of this entrance is that it makes a suitable frame for Blomfield's dignified Talbot building. Erith wanted the quadrangle to be 'domestic in character' and suggested that climbing roses, wisteria and magnolias should be trained on the walls of the library and Lodge with a pebbled 'dry bed' below the arcades. Lodge was given more consequence by

filling the long-empty niches on the first floor with four busts, said to be ancient philosophers, given by Mrs Sedgwick. Surplus earth from the quadrangle was moved to make up the marshy area north of the Fellows' garden and the lawn was hastily laid for the opening of the library by the Queen. In 1967 it had to be taken up and re-laid over a better drainage system. The tussocky grass continued to be a source of dismay. Funds were sufficient to pave the area in front of Talbot and the Lodge archway in York stone but the rest of the walks were first gravel – as the cheapest alternative – and later more practical but undistinguished concrete. A quadrangle is a novelty for a woman's college and may be said to mark architecturally a final stage in the acceptance as women as full members of the University. One feels, however, that the expanse of lawn needs some relief - a low fountain base perhaps, a simple parterre or a statue of Miss Wordsworth? It has the merit of giving a clear view on entrance of Talbot opposite and of the dignified tubs of evergreens on either side of the doorway bought from Hillier's at Miss Gardner's suggestion to replace the red geraniums which had filled them in Coronation year. These were replaced with bays in 1980.

At one time, Miss Agate had been secretary to Spedan Lewis of the department store, and he took an interest in LMH's gardens; he had given water lilies and irises for the water garden by the boat house and in 1957 two *Ginkgo biloba*. In 1956 he commissioned and paid for a plan of the garden drawn by Mr Duncan, an expert resident on his Hampshire estate. The plan marks every tree with its height in feet and a key names each one in Latin, whilst a colour index notes rough grass, lawn, flower beds, small trees and shrubs, gravel and other paths, and water. Such a detailed professional plan is of immense value now in checking what was in the garden at that time. It is perhaps time for another to be made. In 1958 the Principal, with Miss Agate and the Garden Steward, was invited to visit Lewis's Longstock Water Gardens in Hampshire, then only an amenity for Lewis's 'partners' (i.e. employees) but now occasionally open to the general public.

It is intriguing to discover that LMH might have had a second quadrangle. In 1967 Erith submitted sketches for a Principal's house and undergraduate rooms across Benson Place forming a square with the north side of the library, Toynbee and Deneke, with the chapel in one corner. One may feel that this may have been a better solution than the one adopted a few years later for this space but although the Hall by then owned the freehold, Brewer's Garage did not surrender their lease until 1970. The idea was quietly shelved.

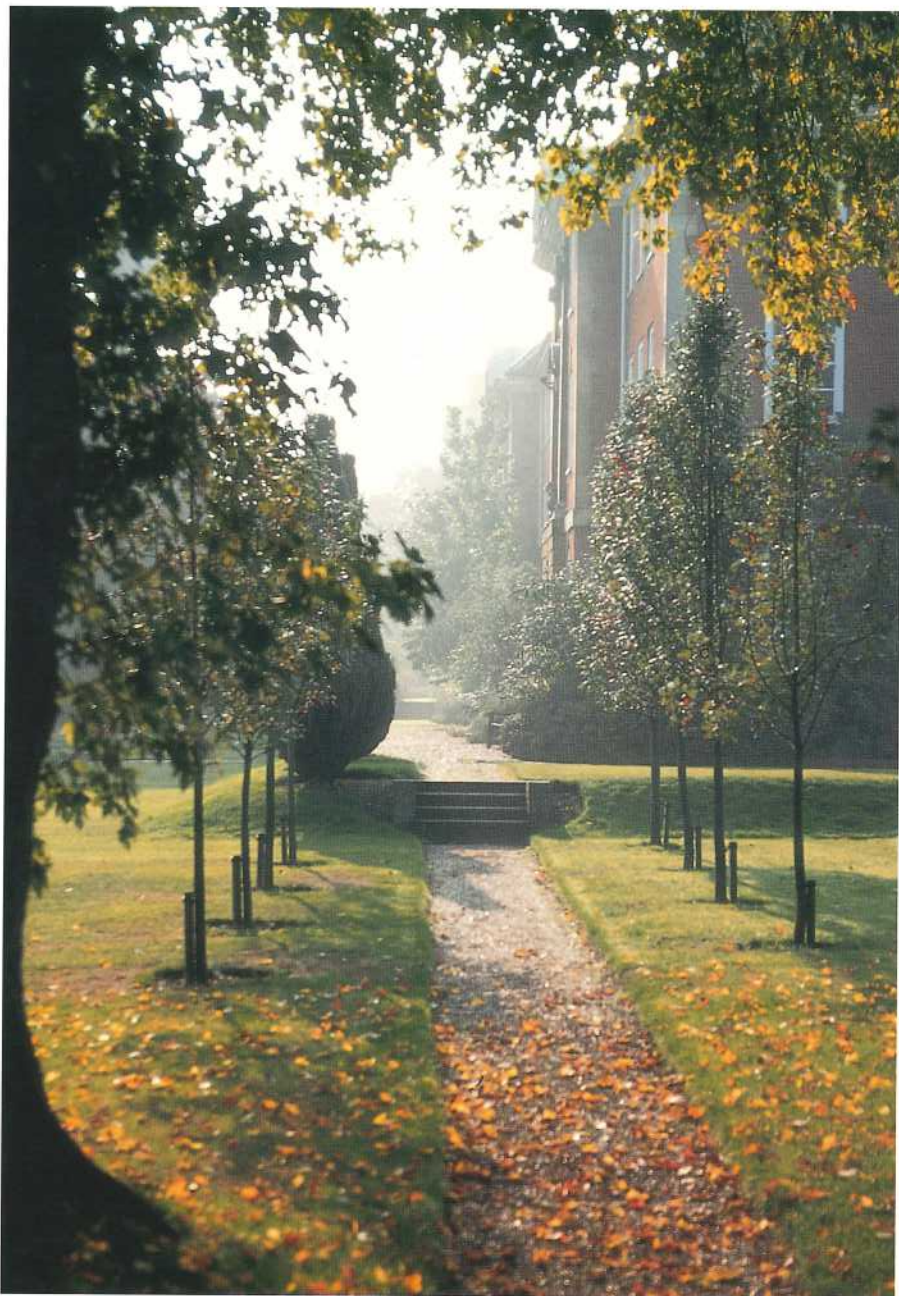
Grier) facing Lodge and a new entrance range opposite Talbot, the original main entrance to the College from Norham Gardens. The architect, Raymond Erith, said in 1957 that his library design was 'a modern building but the treatment is principally late Roman; the idea being to provide some sort of link between Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's Byzantine chapel and Sir Reginald Blomfield's version of Georgian.' This appears to be one of those rare occasions when a college architect had actually looked at what his predecessors had done with a view to building something harmonising with but not imitating their work. All the interior furniture and fittings were designed by Erith, who also supervised the redecoration of the dining hall and the Old Library in Talbot, both very successful visually. He ranks with Blomfield as a wise choice.

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In the 1960s and 1970s there were great changes, not least in the personnel involved in the care and supervision of the gardens. Ward, Head Gardener under Miss Deneke for so long, retired after 44 years in 1960, with an inscribed clock and long service medal from the RHS. He deposited in the archives some sketch plans for the Fellows' Garden, the Pickford Memorial Garden and a shrub border by the Parks fence on which he had worked. Britnell, his second in command, took over. His interest and competence were stressed and he was given an increase in wages above the agricultural minimum. Now began a period of some difficulty in finding suitable gardeners. In 1975 the gardening staff was reduced by one man as an economy measure. In 1955 when Miss Deneke was asked if the Hall needed four gardeners, she had pointed out that there was ample work for them, especially when sometimes they were taken off to work indoors. Casual labour was unsatisfactory and anyway difficult to get, so by 1977 garden maintenance was contracted out. In 1973 Trinder retired after 41 years. Miss Deneke herself retired in 1968, and when in 1973 she died it was acknowledged that 'the gardens in particular are her permanent memorial and testify to her energy, foresight and taste'. The Spring Garden by the river is named in her honour. Historians of the garden owe her an incalculable debt for the detailed records she kept – though she was said sometimes to have written the Garden Committee minutes *before* the meetings! In 1969 Miss Elinor Gardner gave up her expert supervision as 'visitor' on the Garden Committee after 40 years and Miss Hicken took over as Garden Steward. It was thought that in future expert advice might be sought from Waterperry, and Mr Burras, Superintendent of the Oxford Botanic Garden, was appointed as consultant; he was to prove very helpful during the next phase of garden making and became a member of the Garden Committee in 1974.

Other changes came with various natural disasters and the perennial flooding and waterlogging of parts of the garden, almost inevitable so near the river. The backdrop of trees in the Parks had succumbed to Dutch elm disease, which also killed the elms within the garden, including the fine wych elm facing the SCR across Deneke lawn. It was replaced by *Sophora japonica*, the Pagoda or Scholar tree, in 1978.



A freak gale brought down a large poplar on the boathouse, completely destroying it. Fortunately, it could be rebuilt with a cedar frame and shingle roof from the insurance money, but it was longer before the wrecked boats could be replaced and the area landscaped again. In spite of these losses, the gardens were well stocked and lovingly tended – some borders and beds by the Principal and members of the governing body – and provided a constant source of pleasure to residents and visitors. One delight, first mentioned at this time, was the presence of nesting spotted flycatchers and sightings of jays and even a pair of lesser-spotted woodpeckers as well as the occasional kingfisher. Later, nesting boxes were put up and records kept.

The Site and Buildings Committee considered a memorandum from the Principal early in 1970 on ways of funding two new buildings. There would be enough, she reckoned, from various sources, to consider making an Appeal for the rest, about £150,000. The first building, to be called Sutherland, might be paid for out of the Appeal and the second, Lea, could be postponed or cancelled if sufficient funds were not raised. Once again the College went to look at work done at Newnham as they had before appointing Champneys in 1881. Christophe Grillet was commissioned to submit plans and proposed a couple of ‘pavilions’ (as he called them) originally to be in concrete but eventually built in red brick (a different red brick from anything used before). Early on in the planning stage the Garden Committee discussed what would be needed for the area round the new buildings and it was agreed to ask for £50 more for current garden expenses and put collecting boxes out on visiting days. Grillet suggested Brenda Colvin to design the new garden and she produced a plan which made the best of a rather awkward space. The site was a junction area, criss-crossed with paths to Sutherland and Lea, Deneke, the chapel and the library. The architect had turned the first block in revised plans to face the library arch so one curved path was possible. To give variation to the level ground and conceal the bounds without impeding access, Brenda Colvin built two mounds which soon replaced the ‘warrior’s tomb’ in College tradition as pseudo-historical features. They were soon christened ‘long barrows’ and jokes were made about the problems they would present to future archaeologists.

A great variety of trees and shrubs decorated the space including a *Catalpa*, an *Amalanchier*, a tulip tree and an *Arbutus*, as well as beech, *Acer*, willow, *Prunus*, *Quercus ilex* and Portugal laurel (back in favour since its eclipse since the Victorian period). By the chapel were three *Libocedrus decurrens* to represent the Trinity, in a bed of *Stachys* Silver Carpet with a seat. Shrubs included *Cotoneaster* and *Berberis*, *Garrya elliptica* and *Mahonia*, *Viburnum* and broom. This garden

does not seem as fully dressed now as the plans suggest, and the planting could not be implemented all at once but by 1973 it was considered complete.

Between Lea and the chapel on the boundary Miss Colvin designed a pool surrounded by a paved terrace, with a fountain and built-in stone seat. Water lilies and *Rheum palmatum*, rushes and *Berberis* were placed in this corner, with *Rosa spinosissima* and a high wire on the wall behind as a defence against intruders. Because it is low and shallow, the pool has caused endless trouble. There was a danger of seepage into the foundations of the chapel, built on 30ft piles; the fountain pump is noisy and the water lilies did not last long; the paved terrace can be very slippery. There were fish in the pool for a while but they grew too big, or died when it was necessary to move them to clean out the pool – Mr Burras lent a skip and tank from the Botanic Garden for this purpose.

After considerable discussion the provision of roof gardens on Sutherland and Lea went ahead; the architect was decidedly not in favour as his plans had not taken account of such a possibility. Open access to the roofs came to be considered unwise and the troughs leaked. It was finally agreed to leave them empty.

More discussions took place in 1977 over the cost of contract maintenance by an outside firm. The only firm interested in the £8,000 offered (they said £11,000 would be needed to maintain the garden without change) stipulated drastic alterations, the garden to rely in future only on shrubs, bushes, trees and vistas. Mr Burras proposed that the Hall should find its own ways of simplifying the garden without destroying its flower beds and its character. If the Hall spent about £2,000 on machinery and found two good gardeners, one of whom could be resident, changes could be made gradually to suit future needs with some flexibility. The contractors agreed on maintenance work over five months of the year and limited work beyond this for £5,000 to £6,000. A good gardener was appointed, the highly skilled and enthusiastic Mr Ray, and before long he was using the greenhouses again to raise seed, replacing old and defective shrubs and introducing new colour schemes into the beds and borders.

The LMH gardens were opened under the National Gardens Scheme for the first time in 1977 and substantial sums were often raised on open days, which helped in the purchase of plants. They became an annual event, usually in April when the spring bulbs were at their best. The gardens continued to flourish with generous gifts from present and past members, memorial trees, shrubs and seats. A notable benefactor was Mr Carr Balthazar who set up the Joan Balthazar Memorial Garden Fund in his wife’s memory.

It has been worth the constant tussle over more than a century with the watery terrain, the constant lack of funds, the set-backs and disappointments when one sees what is generally acknowledged to be one of Oxford's most beautiful college gardens in its setting, its design, and its planting. Tucked away at the end of Norham Gardens, it is still not as well known as it should be to outsiders or even Oxford residents, but this may be seen as an advantage. Visitors who find their way to it are full of astonished praise.

Acknowledgements

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