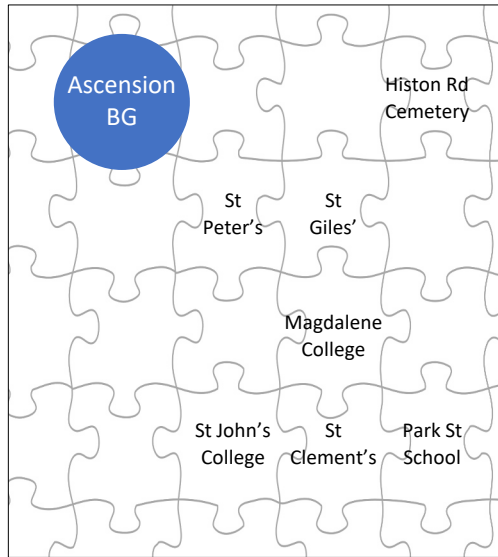


## Neighbouring Gardens

Page	Garden	Country	Date
1	Ascension Burial Ground, Cambridge	UK	November 2025
2	Docwra Manor, Shepreth	UK	October 2025
3	Madingley Hall, Cambridge	UK	October 2025
4	Magdalene College, Cambridge	UK	October 2025
5	St Giles', Cambridge	UK	September 2025





The Ascension Parish Burial Ground in All Souls Lane (1) is one of the most important sites of historical and religious significance in Cambridge. It also provides an important haven for plants and wildlife, with 225 species of flora and fauna recorded, including the mysterious parasitic ivy broomrape. More importantly perhaps, it provides a unique, spiritually uplifting atmosphere for those of a philosophical disposition, maintained by a band of willing volunteers, the Friends, led by Alison Taylor and James Clackson (12). More worryingly, it lies adjacent to the largest residential and research development ever undertaken by Cambridge University – the West Cambridge campus.

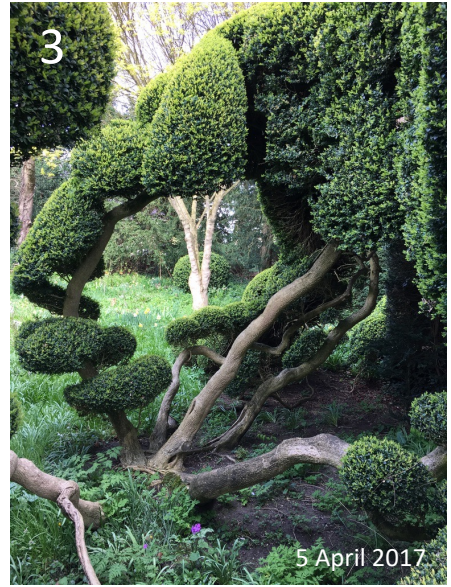
The Victorian Chapel of Rest at the heart of the cemetery was, for many years, the home of the stonemason Eric Marland (2,3,4). An unassuming and sociable character, Eric was the saviour of the cemetery, providing skilled letter cutting services for the maintenance of the gravestones and a deep appreciation of the cemetery's heritage.

And what a heritage. The burial ground contains the graves of 3 Nobel Prize winners, 7 members of the Order of Merit, 8 College Masters, and 15 Knights of the Realm (6-11). The best known and most visited grave is that of Ludwig Wittgenstein (6), an important philosopher of the 20th century.

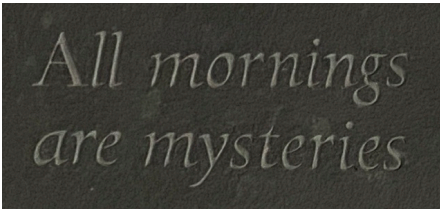
For a brief historical appraisal of the Burial Ground, visit [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DH\\_KtFTId2C/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DH_KtFTId2C/?hl=en). Eric's more personal viewpoint can be found here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_-l9c8t2bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_-l9c8t2bg).







Cambridge is fortunate in having a wide variety of excellent gardens to visit. One of the most evocative is Docwra's Manor Garden in Shepreth. The childhood home of gardener and writer Sarah Raven, Docwra's Manor was bought by her parents, John and Faith, when they married in 1954. John Earle Raven was a Classics Fellow and Senior Tutor at King's College in Cambridge, whose love of Greece was reflected in a lifelong passion for its flowers, many of which can be seen at Docwra, set within an ensemble of magical vistas. Docwra is open on Wednesdays, Fridays and the first Sunday of the month, year-round. The garden is on our shortlist for a visit in May.



Docwra's secluded spaces include a Spring Garden, the Front Garden, a Paved Garden, a Walled Garden, an Orchard, a Meadow and a Wild Garden.



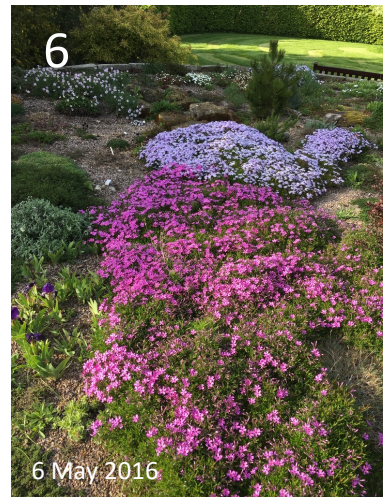
At this time of the year, autumn daffodils (9) and autumn crocuses (10) mix with medlars (11) and yucca (8). But wild cyclamen steal the show (4,5).







We are planning outings to local NGS gardens in 2026, as part of our ECLAS Science-in-Congregations programme. One will be to the garden at Madingley Hall. The Hall was built between 1543 and 1547 for the Hynde family. Over the ensuing 400 years, a rich tapestry of gardens has developed, starting with the Pleasure Gardens landscaped by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown for Sir John Hynde-Cotton in 1756, and including a gem of a Walled Garden, initially used as a kitchen garden for the Hall. There is also a two-acre Historic Meadow, possibly the haunt of the Cambridge herbalists William Turner and Nicholas Culpeper. The Hall, with its grounds and farmland, was sold to the University in 1948 and is now a Continuing Education Centre with attached hotel and conference facilities.



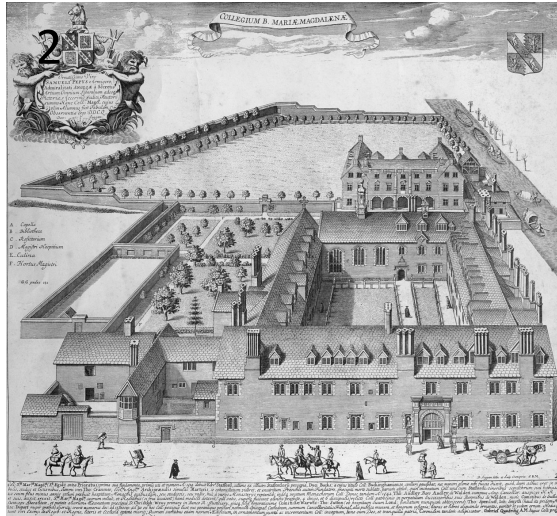
The Walled Garden contains many interesting features, including a raised alpine bed (5,6), a sunken garden (7), and an impressive Hazel Walk. It also has collections of plants used in herbal remedies, dyes and aromatherapy agents. It contains many unusual perennials, including a variety of ferns (2), spider plants (3) and alpines such as mountain sandwort (5) and moss phlox (6), as well as cottage garden favourites such as hollyhocks (4). The Walled Garden also provides a sheltered environment to support many late-flowering plants, such as delicate mallows (9).



Dedicated walks to admire the specimen shrubs and trees have been mapped out by the Madingley gardeners. For a short while, the intense autumn colours of plants such as *Euonymus*, *Cornus*, *Cotoneaster*, *Photinia* and *Ginkgo* will dominate the garden's palette, complementing the colourful hips of roses such as *Rosa rugosa* and *Rosa moyesii*. Well worth a visit this weekend. But keep your eyes open for the Botany Club visit to the garden and its renowned tearoom in 2026!







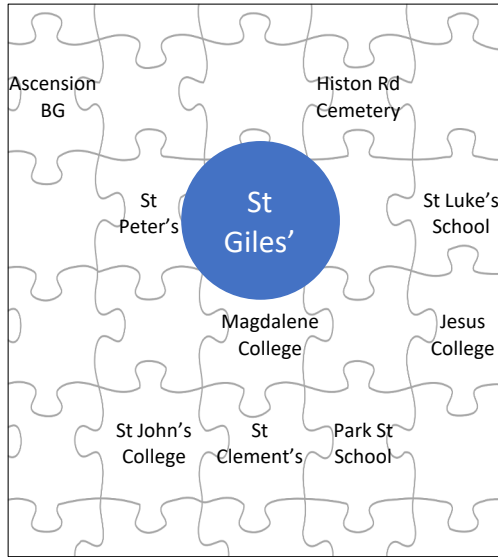
The gardens at Magdalene are beautiful at any time of the year, but the daffodils beside the Cam in the Fellows Garden in Spring are unforgettable (1). Autumn is just as colourful, with the russets and yellows of accumulating leaves providing spectacular back-drops, as well as a seasonal challenge for the small team of College gardeners - Damien, Sam and Cairo, led by Head Gardener Mark Scott (4). At the edge of the Fellows Garden in Spring, explosions of *Viburnum carlesii* (5) join the breaking 'sticky buds' (6) of the horse chestnuts, while golden showers of weeping willow (7) and a spectacular flowering cherry (9) adorn the College's riverside walls, delighting punters and strollers along the Boardwalk on the other side of the river.



David Loggan's 1688 print of the College (2) shows the enclosed Fellows Garden as meadowland. Variously known as 'pond yards', backsides, the orchard, the grove, the close, and the field, the Fellows Garden was the site of the original Benedictine monks' 7 fish-ponds until 1586. Rights to grazing the meadow were held by the Master until Victorian times - there is even a 16<sup>th</sup> century account of cows straying from the meadow into hall at meal-times! The field was landscaped in 1906 as a garden in the era of the celebrated essayist and Master of the College, A.C. Benson, creating avenues of limes, alders and poplars, with Japanese cherries (*Prunus longipes* cv 'Shimidsu Sakura') being added more recently. Multitudes of wallflowers are distributed throughout the College in Spring, followed by a wide range of colourful bedding plants, a task which requires considerable advance planning (8).







The Bridge Street Botany Club, funded by an ECLAS grant from the Templeton Foundation, links colleagues in neighbouring churchyards and gardens (see the jigsaw, above). One of our nearest neighbours is St Giles' Church, situated just below Castle Hill. The Rev Ank Rigelsford and I paid the churchyard an impromptu visit this week.

St Giles is an ancient foundation, being originally endowed by Hugolina de Gernon in 1092. It was extensively remodelled in Victorian times and reconsecrated in 1875. It has a splendid, South-facing, sunny churchyard, with an attractive entrance (1), flanked by herbaceous borders. The garden is tended by a band of willing volunteers led by Stella Cross, ably assisted by Alison Taylor, erstwhile County Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire, who also manages the neighbouring Ascension Burial Ground and St Luke's churchyards.

At this time of the year St Giles' has an autumnal appearance, with cyclamen emerging from the leaf litter (3), and the last vestiges of wallflowers gradually disappearing (4), soon to be joined by late-flowering Escallonia (5), and the last of the verbena, here being enjoyed by a resting dragonfly in the sunshine (6). A distinctive collection of trees surrounds the central lawn: limes (7), holly (8), hawthorn (9), pyracantha (10), a Judas tree (11) and even a young Ginkgo (12), joined by scarlet Cuckoo Pint (13) and seeding acanthus (14), all contributing to the autumnal mood.

