

Christchurch Park's History Starts with Monks and Wealthy Landowners

12th
↓
16th
Century

Key Dates in the Park During This Time

1177

Augustinian Priory of Holy Trinity is founded

1297

Edward I visits Christ Church

1536

Priory suppressed by Henry VIII

1546

Paul Withypoll buys the estate

1548-50

The Mansion is built by Edmund Withypoll

1561

Queen Elizabeth I visits Christchurch

c.1567

Wilderness Pond created



The Augustinian Priory of Holy Trinity

The first people to live here were monks. The Augustinian Priory of Holy Trinity (also known as Christchurch) was established here in 1147 with 260 hectares of farmland and fishponds, as well as land and rents in several nearby parishes. It flourished as a community with between six and twenty monks until the reign of King Henry VIII when, in 1536, the Priory was suppressed and the estates seized by the Crown. Most of the buildings were levelled to the ground.

Although the guesthouse for the Priory still stands just outside the Soane Street entrance, the sole present

day reminders of Holy Trinity within the Park are the Round Pond, Wilderness Pond and a section of its 16th Century enclosure wall. Although the wall was largely rebuilt in the 16th and 18th centuries, it retains the line and some of the original brickwork of the monastic version. The ponds are thought to have served as fish ponds which helped feed the monks, housed in the nearby buildings.

There is a strong suggestion that the church tower from the Priory remained until the early 18th Century, possibly being used as a summer house.

An Early London Businessman Moves In

In 1545 the Christchurch Estate was sold to a prominent London merchant, Paul Withypoll. Paul Withypoll's son Edmund inherited the property and built a house on the site of the Priory ruins. The house was constructed at the same time and with much the same ground plan (resembling an 'E' shape) as the now demolished Redgrave Hall. Apart from the construction of the house, little else is known about the development of the estate under the ownership of the Withypoll family.

Key Dates in Britain and Around The World

1169

Mount Etna erupts killing 15,000 people, Italy

1190s

Windmills are first used in Britain

1209

Cambridge University is founded

1297

William Wallace defeats the English army at Stirling Bridge

1378

Roman church is split and there are two Popes

1492

Christopher Columbus lands in the Caribbean

1566

The Ottoman (Turkish) Empire is at its greatest extent