

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



Trinity College Dublin is the oldest university in Ireland. It was created by royal charter in 1592, at which point Dublin Corporation provided a suitable site, the former Priory of All Hallows, an Augustinian house which was founded by Dermot McMurrough in 1166 and which survived until its dissolution under Henry VIII in the 1530s. Queen Elizabeth I (the last Tudor monarch and daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn) said Trinity College was to be for “the education, training and instruction of youths in the study of the liberal arts and in the cultivation of virtue and religion”.

FEATURE AND PHOTOS

BY

ALAN MAHON

Aerial Photo right: Peter Burrow







TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN IS RECOGNISED INTERNATIONALLY AS IRELAND'S PREMIER UNIVERSITY AND IS RANKED IN 61ST POSITION IN THE TOP 100 WORLD UNIVERSITIES BY THE QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2013.



The front lawn, Trinity College

At first glance you would expect that it takes very little to maintain the grounds at Trinity. After all there are only a couple of pitches and some lawns dotted around here and there on the campus. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Grounds Supervisor at Trinity is David Hackett. A former Botanic Gardens student, David has held that position since 1992. Prior to that he worked for thirteen years with Dún Laoghaire Corporation's Parks Department (as it was known then before it became Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council). David also teaches in the Dublin School of Horticulture and is a Royal Horticulture Society (RHS) assessor for Dublin for level 2 and 3 qualifications. David enlightened me as to what his responsibilities are on the forty six acre main campus site and my perception of maintaining just a few pitches and lawns quickly disappeared.

On site there is one soccer pitch, one hockey pitch (which, in summer, changes to a cricket pitch along with a grass running track to BHAA standard around the



David Hackett, Grounds Supervisor

perimeter), a newly constructed rugby pitch, three artificial tennis courts, a Futsal pitch, croquet lawn, along with the lawns spread across the campus. On top of that David is also responsible for the hundreds of trees (mostly mature), the litter bins, planting beds and an indoor tree arboretum that is located

within the science laboratories. But there is more to David's long list of responsibilities. In Santry there are 32 acres of sportsfields to be maintained, a Boat Club in Island Bridge, 10 acres of ground at St. James' and Tallaght hospitals (these are where the Trinity medical students train) and if this is not enough there is the 12 acre Trinity College Botanic Garden in Dartry. To maintain all these facilities, David has fifteen staff working with him.

There is not enough space to cover everything that David does, so this article will only concentrate on what is involved maintaining the grounds in Trinity.

Sports Pitches

The hockey, cricket and soccer pitches lie on one of the oldest sites in Dublin. The land was originally part of the mudflats of the River Liffey. This land was reclaimed, where eventually, All Hallows Priory was built. Even today the flow of the Liffey influences the drainage of the pitches. If heavy rain falls and the tide is out, the pitches will drain



The soccer and cricket pitches

very quickly and play can resume almost immediately but if there is a high tide, it will take several hours before the pitch is playable. The site of St. Patrick's Well (which Nassau Street was named after) is situated very close to the pitches. There are no man made drains under these pitches. The soil is naturally rich in Potassium and Phosphorus so the fertiliser applied will have no P or K – usually 46:0:0. The soil PH ranges from 7.8 – 7.9. David gets the soil tested every two years. Tissue analysis is done in the alternating years.

With regard to the cricket square, this is rolled and compacted as much as possible. No topdressing is carried out in the summer (unlike golf greens). This is done during the winter months instead using imported fine clay from England (particle size needs to be 0.0002mm and is not available commercially in Ireland). The summer height of cut of the square is 3mm while the outfield is mown at 7mm. The hockey and soccer pitches are cut at 20mm. Pure ryegrass is grown on the cricket pitch while the outfield will have a hard fescue and smooth stalked meadow grass sward. A four month slow release fertilizer (10:2:4) is used on the cricket square during the growing season.

A grass running track is provided from April to September around the perimeter of the pitches and is maintained to Business Houses Athletic Association (BHAA) standards. The track is overseeded and aerated at a depth of eight inches (200mm) during March. The height of cut of the grass track will be reduced to 7mm in April and maintained at this height until September.

Construction of a state of the art rugby pitch began in September 2013 and David hopes that it will be ready for play by August 2014. The grass type used is ryegrass and



Rolling the pitch



New rugby pitch

hard fescue and was sown on a 100mm sand rootzone. Drains were installed under the rootzone

All of the pitches mentioned above are maintained to a very high standard. They have to be as Trinity teams take part in the Irish Division One soccer and cricket leagues as well as athletic competitions. Home matches are played on the college pitches so it is important for David and his crew to get it right first time.

There is a fine pavilion on the eastern side of the pitches, which contains the dressing rooms. The pavilion is styled on the Lords Cricket Pavilion in England. This pavilion is very eco friendly. It has solar panels installed for heating and the pavilion also collects rainwater. Trinity recently obtained a Green Flag Award, which made it become the first third level institute in a capital city in the world to achieve such an award.

The croquet lawn creates a bit of a headache for David and his staff as it is the site used for the famous annual Trinity Ball. A marquee and concert stage is erected over the lawn where up to 7000 students and their partners dance the night away, leaving a big clean up operation for David and his crew.

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Trees

There are around 600 trees growing on the grounds comprising an eclectic mixture of species, brought together from many parts of the world. There are eight species of maples, including the iconic Oregon maples in Library Square, seven species of oak, along with ash, silver birch, alder, wild cherry, holly, arbutus, hawthorn, and wych elm. The large Oregon maple in Library Square is described



The pavillion is styled on the Lord's Cricket Pavillion



Leaf blowing is a constant job during autumn and early winter



Two Oriental Plane tress planted bewteen 1840 and 1870



The Tennis Courts

in The Tree Council of Ireland's 'Champion Trees' list as the '2nd greatest girthed of its kind in Ireland' and is thought to have arisen from the first batch of seed brought back by David Douglas in 1827.

The vast majority of trees are deciduous bringing a multitude of challenges, particularly leaf collection and removal during the autumn and early winter. All the leaves are gathered and put into large containers where they are brought out to the Santry site for composting.

The indoor arboretum houses many tropical plants, including a thirty foot high banana tree. These trees grow directly in the ground. David has an automatic watering system installed where each plant is given a prescribed amount of water at night.

As Trinity lies on a site of archeological interest, any work on the ground that involves digging (such as tree planting or drainage works), must be supervised by an archaeologist. The remains of the Old Hallows Priory and burial grounds lie directly under the west end of the campus. Reminders of the medieval site are still present. Back in 1948 two birch trees were planted, each one in the centre of the two lawns inside the front entrance (College Green entrance). Both share the same genetic make up and were planted on the same day. Sixty six years later, one of the trees is much bigger than the other. The reason for this is that the smaller tree is restricted in growth as it was planted over the rubble from the remains of the ancient priory. The taller tree had more fertile ground to grow in and thrived far better than its sister on the other side of the path. You can see this for yourself the next time you visit Trinity College.

David Hackett has his office on the third floor of a building overlooking Pearse Street. When you walk inside it is like stepping back in time. The original stairs and banisters are still there as too are the timber window



Banna tree growing in the indoor Arboretum

frames. Some of the glass in the windows is as old as the window frames themselves and if a pane of glass needs replacing, the replacement glass has to be made by hand. The building has a preservation order on it.

All the 120 litter bins on site are David's responsibility. These include 36 solar powered compacting bins (on the main campus, with six on the St. James' hospital site). These are very efficient and save a lot of manpower. When the bins are half full of rubbish, a signal is sent to a control panel attached to the bin, which activates a compactor to crush the waste inside, leaving space for more rubbish, saving a lot of manpower hours. David tells me that instead of emptying the bins every day, these solar powered bins don't have to be emptied until every third or fourth day. Plans are in place to replace the remaining litter bins with solar powered ones.

Waste in the college is separated into a long list of various components. These include mixed dry recyclables (plastic, tetrapack, cans, newsprint and light

cardboard), glass, organic waste (food, grounds & animal bedding), paper, cardboard (baled into 500kg bales), batteries, WEEE (all electrical items with a battery or a plug), light bulbs (as hazardous recyclables), timber, construction and demolition (building project waste all of which is recycled), metal recycling, hazardous materials and chemicals, waste oils (recycled). The annual amount of waste collected is staggering.

After spending time with David I now have a completely new perspective of Trinity College Dublin. Next time I visit I will look at the pitches, trees and lawns in a different light. And when I dispose of my drink bottle and sandwich wrapper in one of the bins I will think of the tons of recycling that takes place each year thanks to David and his team.

Machinery Used

- John Deere 2653B triplex mower
- Jacobsen t-plex 185 tees mower
- 2 x Toro 30" rotary mowers
- Jacobsen Eclipse cylinder mower
- 2 x Lloyds paladin 20" cylinder mowers
- Ransome 36" cylinder mower
- 4 x Rover pro cut rotary mowers
- Kubota BX2200 (with snow blade, brush, Quad X spreader)
- Powerall 15 roller
- Hardi TR3 sprayer with 3m boom and 50m reel with hand lance
- Stihl earth auger with 100 + 200mm bits
- 3 x backpack blowers + 1 x hand held
- Brush cutter
- 2 x 30" + pole hedge trimmers
- Shibaaura S 320 tractor
- Borisco diesel mobile well pump
- Hako profi-variete + BSG brushes
- Bauer 401 sprinkeler + 6 x portable sprinklers
- 2 x Sisis pedestrian scarifiers
- 3 x chain saws + 1 x pole chain saw
- Billy-goat truck loader vacume
- Sisis MS/4 spiker
- Sisis Autospread topdresser
- Sisis reciprocating pto driven brush
- Falcon compressor with 600mm + 300mm aerator attachments
- Allied 414S2D road sweeper
- Simm power washer
- Ryan mataway pedestrian overseeder
- Hand drag mats + brushes + trulutes
- Bowdry pedestrian water collecting roller
- Groundsman 460 SDR spiker
- Scotts 2000 spreader
- 1 x manual soil screen (drum type)
- Paterson Sorrel roller / aerator
- Water bowser 1140 litre
- Overton backpack vacume
- Greenmech chipper/ shredder