



OXFORD  
PRESERVATION  
TRUST

NEWSLETTER  
SPRING  
2008

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*Hythe Bridge Street crossing the canal and Castle Mill Stream, viewed from the north.  
Drawing, Westhall, 1822 © Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive.*

## **Worcester Street Car Park and Macclesfield House, New Road, Oxford**

Looking at these two sites today, there seems little of interest: on one side of New Road a featureless car park of 60 years, and on the other a 1960s office building. Yet they hide a very different history and position within the ancient city and in 21<sup>st</sup> century Oxford. For together these sites lie at the very core of the story of Oxford and occupy a pivotal position within the success of the new West End development.

Sparked by the impending redevelopment in this area, Oxford Preservation Trust, in partnership with Nuffield College and Oxfordshire County Council, owners of the Car Park and Macclesfield House respectively, commissioned Julian Munby and John Rhodes of Oxford Archaeology to carry out a Historic Context and Conservation Study to inform the future development of the sites. And what it has revealed so far is fascinating.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, with their close proximity to the Castle Mound, the sites reveal important information about Saxon Oxford and the story of the Castle. They go on to tell of the history of the development of the military and industrial city over 1000 years.

From Saxon times there are historic associations with the river: Hythe Bridge Street may already have been a saxon 'hythe' – landing place. Later, the Normans altered the layout of this quarter with the construction of the 'motte and bailey' castle with water-engineering to feed its defensive systems extending under the site of

Nuffield College as far as Bulwarks Lane, Castle Street and Paradise Street. Macclesfield House sits over the edge of the castle ditch, while early maps show the 12<sup>th</sup> century siege mounds (Jews Mount and Mount Pelham), thought to be from King Stephen's siege of Matilda in Oxford Castle, lying partly within the area of the Car Park. Documents refer to Geoffrey de la Barbican living at the north end of Tidmarsh Lane where the remains of an eastern castle barbican may still lie.

A much later phase also radically transformed the look of the area with the arrival of New Road and the Canal bringing industry close to the heart of the city, the latter now beneath the Car Park and Nuffield College site. Old photographs show substantial wharf buildings, a coal wharf, a fine Doric temple style built as the wharf offices later becoming the Master's Lodgings at St Peter's College, and a handsome warehouse built to protect a Merchandise Wharf. The demolition of the latter in 1955 prompted the local architect Thomas Rayson to write to the Oxford Times: 'No one has bemoaned the loss of one of Oxford's finest buildings. A great stone structure standing on noble arches has been swept away to form a car park!'

Elsewhere we provide an update on the West End redevelopment, which provides an opportunity to see this area improved, but we feel sure that this study will prove a useful tool as plans come forward. The Conservation Plan at Oxford Castle, author John Rhodes, was the model for this and has proved a hugely useful document throughout its regeneration. The study is in its final stages and has been referred to in the West End Area Action Plan, which we are delighted about. We hope to mount an exhibition later in the year.

## OPENING DOORS OPENING MINDS

Following the great success of Opening Doors Opening Minds 2007, the Trust is pleased to announce that Opening Doors Opening Minds is back with two exciting events planned for this summer. On **Saturday 21 June** 10am-4pm a **Medieval Fair** will animate the Castleyard once again, bringing a thousand years of history to life.



*The 2007 Medieval Fair. Photograph: Greg Smolonski*

Over the weekend of **13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September Oxford Open Doors** is inviting you to explore your city as part of Oxford's own distinct celebration of Heritage Open Days when interesting, unusual and little known venues will be throwing open their doors. Please put the dates in your diary and tell your friends and family. More information and a brochure will be available later in the year.

*For your diary ✓*

**Saturday 21 June: Medieval Fair**

**13- 14 September: Oxford Open Doors**

## Design-A-Gargoyle Competition

It has been wonderful to see how this competition has captured the imagination of local young people since its launch at Opening Doors Opening Minds. The University's challenge was to design a gargoyle based on one of three themes – myths, monsters or people that have a historical connection with Oxfordshire within the last millennium. The Director had the difficult but pleasurable task, along with the other judges—the sculptor Martin Jennings, Bodley's Librarian Dr Sarah Thomas, and Oxford University Head of Building Conservation Isobel Hughes—of choosing the nine winning designs from more than 500 very imaginative submissions. The winners were given an award by Wantage MP and Shadow Arts Minister Ed Vaizey before Christmas at the Divinity School, although the real reward must be to see their own work go up on the northwest face of the Bodleian Library for all to see. The Trust has been delighted to be involved in this very imaginative competition which has done so much to encourage children to look above the shops and streets of the city to see history above their heads

and appreciate the great variety of gargoyles staring down .

Congratulations to all who took part and to the overall winners – well done!

'Dodo' by George O'Connor, 11

'Green man' by Hannah Duckworth, 12

'Three men in a boat' by Henry Chadwick, 12

'Tweedledum and Tweedledee' by Eva Masmanian, 13

'Wild Boar' by Ben Bryant, 13

'Sir Thomas Bodley' by Alfie Turner, 13

'Aslan the Lion' by Hayley Williams, 14

'General Pitt Rivers' by Kerrie Chambers, 14

'Tolkien' by Alex Sermon, 14



*The winners with their designs. Photograph: Rob Judge*

## OXFORD CASTLE

We have now completed a full summer season and a year at Oxford Castle Unlocked, and we are delighted to see our initial project aims being realised. The project was designed to involve local people in their history and provide the city with a new public space to give a sense of place and pride in Oxford.

So we were delighted when, in late November, students from **Pegasus School** in Blackbird Leys performed their school play in the Castleyard. An imaginative and impeccably produced rendition of the Diaries of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Oxford diarist Antony a Wood, this followed visits to the site and work with the Learning & Access Officer, Helen de May. The play was a great success, and we hope more local schools will use the Castleyard for similar projects in future, encouraging a sense of local ownership of the Castle and the town.



*Pegasus School performing in the Castleyard.*

The Castleyard is also the venue for a range of **public events** throughout the year, an area of the project which is being further developed. Forthcoming events include 'The Great Eggscape' over Easter weekend, the Oxford Folk Festival and St George's Day celebrations in April, and Art Weeks in May. For more details, visit [www.oxfordcastleunlocked.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcastleunlocked.co.uk) **Creation Theatre** will also be back in the summer with a production of 'Much Ado About Nothing' – with a special gala night for the Trust on 3 July.

Following last winter's landslide, we are delighted that Oxfordshire County Council will be carrying out repairs to the **Castle Mound** in March, and plan to have this completed before the summer. **The Mound remains fully open to the public.**

We are pleased that the Castle has attracted **awards** recognising the contribution of the project to the city:

**RICS National Awards** Overall Project of the Year 2007, **RICS South East Region Awards 2007** Overall Winner and Regeneration Winner, **Civic Trust Awards 2007** CentreVision Award, **RIBA South Award 2007**, **Daily Mail British Homes Awards 2007** mixed used development of the year, **MIPIM Awards International Hotel & Tourism Resorts**, **Oxford Preservation Trust Environmental Awards 2007**, **Regenerate Awards 2007** Best Mixed-Use Regeneration Project, Oxford Castle Unlocked: **Tourism Excellence Awards 2007**, Highly Commended, Malmaison: **Caterer and Hotelkeeper Awards 2007** National Hotel of the Year and **Condé Nast International Hot New Hotel**

*For your diary ✓*

Thursday 3 July: *Much Ado About Nothing*,  
OPT Gala Night,  
Oxford Castle

**Creation**  
theatre company

## LAND NEWS

This winter the Trust has been carrying out **tree and hedge maintenance work** on various parcels of land. The schedule is timed to allow wildlife access to the berries, etc, in the autumn and to be completed prior to the start of the nesting season.

Following consultation with tree officers at Oxford City Council and an ecological survey of the area which showed that there were no bats roosting in the trees, the Trust is undertaking work on the willows along the eastern boundary of **Hinksey Meadow**, furthest away from the village road and at right angles to Willow Walk. The work will be phased to minimise the impact on wildlife and a rolling maintenance programme will follow. However, the land, which was recovering well following the summer floods, has once again been under water, which has delayed the start of the work.

Trust land at **Swinford** and **Kennington** has also been under water this winter, showing the importance of these flood meadows to the water management of Oxford.



*College barge moored at Meadow Lane.  
Photograph: Nick Hallas*

A major project took place this autumn with dredging of the creek at **Meadow Lane, Iffley**. With Environment Agency approval, the full length of the moorings was dredged and the sediment placed on the bank outside the flood plain. The volume was greater than expected and we are grateful to the Sea Scouts who have lent us some of their field for temporary storage. Re-instatement works will be completed this summer.

Our thanks, too, to the members of the Oxford College Barges Preservation Trust who helped with the physical enabling works. A Management Plan for the whole site – including the Scouts' field and Kidney Island – has been drawn up and will be implemented in stages.

We are also delighted to be involved with two of **Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan** projects. At 'Oxford Meadows' (which includes Wolvercote Meadows, Pixey Mead & Yarnton Mead) a joint approach to land management is under consideration. This would allow an improved grazing regime, which is essential for the management and enhancement of these lovely natural meadows. Less advanced are proposals for a joined up approach along the Thames from Marston into Oxford. Although the Trust's land at Marston is mainly arable we hope that sympathetic management will tie in with proposals for the flood meadows fronting the river.

The **partnership** between the Trust and BBOWT continues to work well and we are grateful to Rachel Sanderson and to our land agents Carter Jonas (Edward Pettit-Mills) for their considerable hard work.

## PLANNING

The Trust seems to have been even busier than usual with planning matters since the last newsletter.

The major planning application to come forward was the **University Depository** on Osney Mead. The application was called-in to Full Council in November after it was approved in September by the Strategic Development Control Committee by a close-run decision of 6-5 votes.

The Trust had long been concerned that the full impact of the proposed building was not apparent from the photomontages produced by the applicants, and we therefore commissioned a photomontage from independent landscape visualisation consultants, SLR Consulting Ltd, showing the proposed structure in the view from Raleigh Park against the backdrop of the spires. This was reproduced in the accepted size which shows the closest approximation to what the eye would see.

This image was formally submitted to the City Council, and a copy was sent to all 48 city councillors.



*Detail of the photomontage produced for the Trust.*

*Photograph: SLR Consulting*

The Trust wrote to members and local MPs, and was a joint signatory with CPRE Oxfordshire, the Oxford Civic Society and the Oxford Green Belt Network of a letter which appeared in *The Times*. Sir David Yardley, the Trust's Chairman, was also interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme. At a meeting of Full Council, the City Council refused the application in a named vote (26 to 15).

We have since been very disappointed to learn that the University is appealing against the decision. The Trust has elected to be a principal party at the appeal which will take place later this year.

*The Trust would like to thank all those who wrote to object to this application.*

**Oxford views** have been a dominant theme throughout the history of the Trust. Recently, we have been giving considerable thought, with others, to how a better system of protection for the 'views of Oxford' can be provided. It currently relies on the view cones policy within the Oxford Local Plan, written in the 1970s, which is essentially a series of triangles drawn onto plans of the city showing major public views, but not all of them. The view cones policy has been very successful in according protection in the past but can no longer compete in the digital age. The Trust is speaking with English Heritage, the City Council and the District Councils as it is often from their areas that the views are seen.

Since the autumn, the Trust has been considering the most recent developments in the government's major undertaking, a Regional Spatial Strategy for every region. The **South East Plan**, drawn up at regional level, will guide development in South East England up to 2026 and will replace Oxfordshire's Structure Plan. The inspectors' report into the Examination in Public on the new Plan recommends to government a new settlement of 4,000 dwellings south of Oxford at Grenoble Road, a 'highly focussed selective' review of the Green Belt to be carried out by the City Council and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). This land lies wholly in the SODC area. As ever, it is likely to unleash further attacks on the Green Belt elsewhere around Oxford.

We now await the latest draft South East Plan to see if the Inspectors' recommendations for housing numbers at Oxford are confirmed. When published, there will be a 12-week consultation period before the final version is set. We will write to you again once the document is out. To keep up-to-date with developments, register your email address with South Oxfordshire District Council on: <http://handsoff.southoxon.gov.uk>

Government housing allocations also continue to have repercussions at **district level** with proposals coming forward in Cherwell for a new settlement at Upper Heyford and eco-towns at Shipton Quarry and Weston on the Green.

The districts are at various stages in the preparation of the new **Local Development Frameworks** (LDF) which will replace the Local Plans and will outline planning strategy for the next 20 years. The **Vale of White Horse District Council** plans remain strong on Green Belt issues, and the Trust asked for continued support for protection of views of the City visible from its area. In the City, the *Submission Core Strategy DPD* and *Final Sustainability Appraisal Report* have been delayed. We understand that a supplementary preferred options document will be published for consultation in the spring to take on board whatever is included in the South East Plan. The Trust continues to be very concerned that many people are unaware that the Core Strategy is the central policy document for the City Council which will guide future development, and so may miss their opportunity to influence it.

The **West End Area Action Plan** was examined by an independent inspector in Oxford in January. The Trust made representations asking for proper account of the Oxford views to be taken in designing new buildings and asking about the robustness of the Design Code for the area. The intention to create a fabulous new quarter of Oxford is shared by all parties and we must hope that all these policies and documents contain what is necessary to ensure what is delivered on the ground meets the aspirations.

At the **Westgate**, archaeological investigations are currently taking place. Proposals to install temporary car parks by the Ice Rink came forward and the Trust requested that more information be made available to local businesses and residents so that the local impact of the delivery of the new shopping centre could be better understood. At **Bonn Square** work has begun. The Trust has also been involved in the **West End Community Plan Group**, a group of local residents and businesses, set up with support from the City Council. The Group's aim is to produce the equivalent of a Parish Plan for the West End, making local people's voices heard in this period of change for the area.

A number of masterplans have been produced for sites across the City. At **Oxford and Cherwell Valley College**, the masterplan came before the City Council when the Trust spoke about the indicative height of the buildings (up to 18.2 metres) which could block key historic views of St. George's Tower from the western hills and views of the River Thames from the top of the tower which are crucial to the story of the development of the City.

A revised masterplan for the **Radcliffe Infirmary** was also examined. It is important not to miss the opportunity for this site to make a positive contribution to both university and city, and to integrate the site into the surrounding area. We raised concerns principally about the impact of suggested high buildings on views of the Radcliffe Observatory, and the permeability and level of public access into and through the site.

**Ruskin College** also submitted their masterplan for the Old Headington site. An application has since been submitted for the first new building, a dining hall in the walled garden.



*View of the Radcliffe Observatory from Walton Street, along the meridian line.*

*Photograph: Gaelle Jolly*

**Public realm** matters included increasing numbers of applications for external seating. The Trust is supportive of the general idea of a 'café culture' for the city but it needs to be coordinated and managed if it is to be successful. This we hope will be addressed by the City Council's 'Improving the Street Environment' document, currently in preparation, which builds on the existing Public Realm Strategy. The Trust has also become concerned in recent months about the suggested closure of a number of public lanes and other **public access** routes, including Bulwarks Lane and Roger Bacon Lane. These are public routes and should remain as such.

The worrying trend for applications for **demolition** of historic buildings and the loss of local distinctiveness continues across the city.



*The Coach & Horses. Photograph: Jane Baldwin*

This includes a further application for the attractive Arts & Crafts house at 190 Iffley Road. We are still hoping that the refusal of planning permission to demolish the **Coach and Horses, St Clement's**, will be upheld at the appeal at Oxford Town Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> February. We have been pleased to see that 17 Iffley Road is to be restored and brought back into occupation, which just shows that taking a strong line can work.

Finally, a very large **Waste Reduction and Materials Recovery Facility** has been proposed for the **Gosford Silos** site. The Trust felt it was inappropriate in this sensitive location in the Kidlington Gap and at an important gateway to the city.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

The 2007 Environmental Awards, including six plaques and twelve certificates, were presented on Tuesday 2 October – see enclosed brochure for full details of all the winners.



*2007 Environmental Awards. Photograph: Greg Smolonski*



We are pleased to announce that the **2008 Environmental Awards** will be sponsored by **Kemp & Kemp**.

We are now seeking **entries**, to be received by 25 April, and are keen to encourage good quality projects, whether large or small, which make a contribution to the public domain within Oxford or the Green Belt. Categories include restoration schemes, new buildings, landscaping or environmental projects, and small projects, so even relatively small-scale work may be eligible.

If you would like to enter a scheme, or to draw our attention to a project in your area, please get in touch, or visit our website:

[www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/news/awards/php](http://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/news/awards/php)

## MARTYRS' MEMORIAL



*The Martyrs' Memorial. Photograph: Gaelle Jolly*

It is five years since the **Martyrs' Memorial** was restored in the Trust's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and it is now time for the monument's quinquennial inspection. Remaining funds raised for the original project were set aside to allow for future maintenance, and we hope that it will be sufficient to cover any cleaning and repairs as well as some possible further improvements to the Memorial's setting. Watch this space for details of what we hope may become a larger project to mark the Trust's 80 years.

## TREE RESEARCH PROJECT

The Trust is delighted to welcome **Aimee Cormack**, a final year history student at Oxford Brookes University, who is joining the Trust on a placement as part of her 'History Work Based Learning' module. Aimee will carry out research into the history and activities of the Trust's Tree Committee which operated from the 1930's. The Trust planted many trees, including the willows at Osney, now replaced, and the Sunderland Avenue hornbeams. This new research will highlight the Trust's other contributions and identify surviving trees. We will bring news of this in our autumn newsletter.

## TRUST NEWS

We are delighted to welcome as a Trustee District Judge **Mr Richard Robinson**, whose interest in land and environmental issues will be greatly valued.

**Grants** have been given to the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, Oxfordshire Woodland Project, OX1, and to **Palmers Leys**, Oxford University's recently acquired land at Nuneham Courtenay. **Christ's Hospital** in Abingdon received a grant for the restoration of the roof on their Long Alley Almshouses and the Ashley Charitable Trust for two benches in the **Jane Ashley Memorial Garden** at the Churchill Hospital. At **Cotteslowe Community Woodland**, a further award was made towards the cost of plants for the hazel plantation. The **Wheatley Windmill Restoration Society**, which has been assisted by the Trustees in the past with their valuable restoration work of this local landmark, has been awarded another grant towards the cost of a fan wheel.

An order form for Oxfordshire CPRE's **Oxford Green Belt Way** guidebook, which marks out a circular walk around the city, is included with this newsletter. **Trustee John Ashdown will be leading an introductory walk on 26 April**—see separate sheet for details.

Once again, the Trust offered a varied programme of events for **Heritage Open Days** last September, with tours of the Tudor Painted Room hidden away in Cornmarket Street. Those who have not seen this secret gem can do so this year (see 2008 Programme Card). The Trust's house at 26A East St Helen Street in Abingdon was open, and we thank our tenant, Karen Wyatt, who cares for this house and the garden so beautifully, and members Ian and Cressida Battersby, who did sterling work as stewards on this occasion. Our Director, Debbie Dance, and Trustee John Ashdown also led a record number of visitors on a tour of the Carfax Conduit and the historic Well House in North Hinksey.

## MEMBERSHIP

Trust membership continues to grow and we thank you all for your continued support. We hope that our 2008 programme has something for everyone. Our programme of talks in the Key Learning Centre at Oxford Castle began well with talks in

the autumn and winter by County Councillor David Robertson on Oxford transport and City Council officer Michael Crofton-Briggs on involvement in the planning process. In February, Trustee Keith Mitchell, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, packed the room with his talk on "Who Guards Our Green Belt in the Future". History talks are always popular, and Trustee Geoffrey Tyack attracted a large audience to hear his talk on Oxford church architecture. On 18 November 2008 Geoffrey will return to speak on "**Oxford Churches Since the Oxford Movement**". Before then, Trustee John Ashdown will give two Spring lectures, "**The Golden Cross 21 Years On**" on 11 March, and "**The Hinksey Hill Well and the Carfax Conduit**" on 8 April. Lectures begin at 6pm and are also open to non Trust members, at an additional fee of £1.

### NEW MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Membership cards will shortly be issued to all members who are paying the correct subscription. Benefits include free access to the Castle Mound, a 10% reduction on tickets to Oxford Castle Unlocked, plus a 10% reduction in the shop and Café 1071. You will also receive a 15% discount off meals and wine at the Victoria Arms pub in Old Marston (except Sundays and Bank Holidays).

**Please note these discounts will be available only on presentation of a valid membership card.**

This year's **AGM** will be held at Maison Française, Norham Road, on Tuesday 1 July 2008. Join us for the 'best tea in Oxford', when our guest speaker, Sarah Maxfield, Chief Executive of Oxford Inspires, the cultural development agency for Oxford and Oxfordshire, will speak on "Oxford's Cultural Identity and Local Distinctiveness".

### OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

The *International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments* is holding its 11<sup>th</sup> conference, on '**Interrogating Tradition**', in Oxford from 12 to 15 December. For more details, including call for papers, visit [www.arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste](http://www.arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste)

**OxClean Spring Clean 2008** is an initiative of the Civic Society to encourage local groups to clean up a public space they care about. It takes place from 14 to 16 March: see details on <http://oxclean.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk/>