

# Oxford Heritage Walks Book 1

On foot from Oxford Castle to St Giles'

by Malcolm Graham

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This is a fully referenced text of the book, illustrated by Edith Gollnast with cartography by Alun Jones, which was first published in 2013. Also included are a further reading list and a list of common abbreviations used in the footnotes.

The published book is available from Oxford Preservation Trust, 10 Turn Again Lane, Oxford, OX1 1QL – tel 01865 242918

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## Chapter 1 – Oxford Castle to St Michael's Street

The walk begins within Oxford Castle, at the entrance to Oxford Castle Unlocked, where you can visit historic sites and buildings which were largely hidden from view until Oxford Prison closed in 1996. Oxford Preservation Trust created this heritage interpretation centre (2004-6, Panter Hudspeth and Richard Griffiths) as part of the successful restoration and redevelopment of Oxford Castle by Trevor Osborne Property Group and Oxfordshire County Council.<sup>1</sup> Standing here, you can travel back through a thousand years of history and there is a time-line on the ground to help you. The motte or mound behind you was part of the motte and bailey castle built by Robert d'Oilly in 1071 just five years after the Norman Conquest. A ten-sided stone keep had replaced a wooden one by the 13<sup>th</sup> century and, although the ruined tower was demolished in 1650, its foundations still lie beneath the grass on the top of the mound.<sup>2</sup> A visit to the mound offers excellent views over Oxford – imagine how much more you would have seen

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford City Council – hereafter Oxf CC 01/02201/LBV; *Oxford Castle Heritage Project* (2004), 4-5

<sup>2</sup> Alan Crossley, *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vol. 4: the City of Oxford* – hereafter *VCH Oxon iv*, 296-7

from the tall keep – and you can also go down into the castle’s 13<sup>th</sup> century vaulted well-chamber.

St George’s Tower, massively built of rubble stone, is a remarkable defensive structure, rising in four slightly receding stages with a later diagonally set staircase in one corner. It is traditionally dated to the founding or re-founding of the Church of St George’s in the Castle in 1074, but it sits uncomfortably close to the mound and is now thought to have been built in c.1020 as a watchtower strengthening the town’s western approaches.<sup>3</sup> The tower of St Michael at the Northgate Church, which we shall see later in the walk, had the same role in the northern defences.<sup>4</sup>

Oxford Castle is best known for King Stephen's siege of the Empress Matilda in December 1142 which ended when she escaped over the wall during a snowstorm, dressed in white, and made her way to Wallingford. The castle was held for King John by Fawkes de Breauté in 1216 when it was besieged by baronial forces.<sup>5</sup> Shire courts and assizes were held within the castle at Shire Hall until the Black Assize of 1577 when gaol fever broke out during the trial of Rowland Jenks, ‘a saucy foul-mouthed bookseller.’ Three hundred people, including the Lord Chief Baron and the High Sheriff, are said to have died and subsequent courts were held in the Town Hall until 1843.<sup>6</sup> The castle was used as a gaol as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century and, although it was allowed to decay from the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, the prison was retained.<sup>7</sup> During the Civil War, the Castle was garrisoned by the Royalists, and Parliamentary prisoners were housed there in unhealthy conditions which were blamed on Smith, the gaoler.<sup>8</sup> In 1649, the Parliamentarians strengthened the castle’s defences only to destroy this new work two years later.<sup>9</sup> The gaol continued to be housed in a building next to St George’s Tower where John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, visited and ministered to the prisoners in 1738.<sup>10</sup> The prison reformer John Howard criticized the small, overcrowded and verminous prison in 1777 and the county magistrates built a new County Gaol between 1785 and 1805 under the supervision of William Blackburn, the pioneering prison designer. High perimeter walls were built to prevent prisoners from escaping. You will notice that part of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century prison wall at this point has been taken down now that access, rather than security, is the priority. The two storey stone range in front of you (c.1795-1805, William Blackburn & Daniel Harris) was the debtors’ wing built

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (1988) – hereafter *Oxf Encyc*, 393-4; Julian Munby, *Oxford Castle medieval and later buildings* (2000), 2; information from Brian Durham

<sup>4</sup> Brian Durham, ‘Oxford’s northern defences: archaeological studies, 1971-1982’, *Oxoniensia* 48 (1983), 14,34; [www.imagesofengland.com/245996](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245996) ([ST GEORGES TOWER, ST GEORGES CHAPEL CRYPT AND D WING INCLUDING THE DEBTORS TOWER, Non Civil Parish - 1369490 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245996))

<sup>5</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 296

<sup>6</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 108

<sup>7</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 297-8

<sup>8</sup> Edward Wirley, *The Prisoner’s report* (1642), *passim*; Edmund Chillenden, *The inhumanity of the King’s Prison-Keeper at Oxford* (1643), *passim*

<sup>9</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 297-8

<sup>10</sup> T W Squires, *In West Oxford* (1928), 61

after the completion of the felons' and convicts' wing. This range, later known as D Wing, originally had a vaulted ground floor which was partially open to the outside to improve air circulation; an external balcony gave access to part of the first floor on this side of the building. The circular debtors' tower, furthest from St George's Tower, retains its original cell doors and partitions. Prisoners erected all these buildings under the watchful eye of their gaoler, Daniel Harris (c.1760-1840), who was also a builder, civil engineer and architect. He had strong archaeological interests and ensured that the Norman capitals from the crypt of St George's Church were rebuilt in an atmospheric crypt beneath D Wing.<sup>11</sup>

Walk towards New Road, noticing the juxtaposition of the castle mound and Nuffield College tower and spire built in the 1950s. Turn right beyond cycle racks, passing between the stone-built former Governor's House (1847-8, Benjamin Ferrey) and a modern building (2004-6, Sir Jeremy Dixon), which provides restaurant and hotel accommodation with a roof garden on the site of 20<sup>th</sup> century prison warders' houses. Emerging into the paved avenue beside Old County Hall, you have a fine view, away to your right, of the castellated prison frontage, now the entrance to the Oxford Malmaison Hotel. By the 1840s, the gaol had become too small and A Wing (1852-6, H.J. Underwood & J.C. Buckler) behind this frontage provided additional cells on three levels. The design followed the 'separate' system pioneered at Pentonville where prisoners in solitary confinement could reflect on the consequences of their crimes.<sup>12</sup> The closure of Oxford Prison, first suggested in 1946, led to the brilliant, if improbable, conversion of these premises into luxury hotel accommodation (2004-6, Architects Design Partnership with Jestico & White).<sup>13</sup>

Turn left up the avenue leading to New Road, noting on your right the castellated flanking wing wall to Old County Hall which terminates in a tiny turret. The blocked doorway in the wall originally led to a men's urinal.<sup>14</sup> New Road was new in 1769-70, built by the Botley and Newland Turnpike Trust between Castle Street and Hollybush Row to link up with an improved Botley Road and the newly-built Swinford Bridge. The Norman castle had overlaid part of Saxon Oxford, obstructing the western exit from the city, and New Road cut through the castle bailey on its way to Fisher Row. Christ Church owned much of the castle site at that time and ensured that the mound was retained 'as an ornament to that District, and as a venerable Monument of Antiquity.' The college successfully

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<sup>11</sup> Oxford Archaeology, *Oxford Castle: a Heritage Survey* (1996), 9-10; Munby, *op.cit.*, 7; Mark Davies and Catherine Robinson, *A Towpath Walk in Oxford* (2001), 76-7; John Rhodes, *Oxford Castle Conservation Plan* (1999), 58

<sup>12</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 299; Oxford Archaeology, *op.cit.*, (1996), 12-13; [www.imagesofengland.com/246000 \(FRONT RANGE WITH ENTRANCE INCLUDING A WING AND LINK TO WING WITH FORMER CHAPEL, Non Civil Parish - 1369492 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/246000/FRONT-RANGE-WITH-ENTRANCE-INCLUDING-A-WING-AND-LINK-TO-WING-WITH-FORMER-CHAPEL-Non-Civil-Parish-1369492-Historic-England)

<sup>13</sup> Oxford Archaeology, *Oxford Castle, Canal and College* (2008), 17; Oxford Preservation Trust, 19<sup>th</sup> Report to 27.6.1946, 8

<sup>14</sup> OS 1:500 Oxon XXXIII.15.21 (1876)

defended the mound again in 1848 when railway contractors wanted to plunder it for building materials.<sup>15</sup>

The portion of the castle bailey north of New Road became the Coal Wharf of the Oxford Canal which reached Oxford on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1790. The canal brought cheaper coal to the city and the arrival of the first boats was accompanied by church bells and bands. The wharf closed in 1937 and Nuffield College now occupies most of the site. Two gargantuan stone gate pillars opposite marked the entrance to the wharf but now lead to St Peter's College car park. Beyond the car park, you can see the portico and side elevation of Canal House (1827-9, Richard Tawney) which is now the Master's Lodgings for St Peter's College.<sup>16</sup>

Turn right up New Road, noting the fine pavement which was a by-product of the Castle development. Sir Charles Oman dismissed Old County Hall (1840-1, John Plowman) as 'quite the most abominable pseudo-Gothic assize court in all England, composed of mock-Norman arches, pepper box turrets, meaningless machicolation, arrow-slits in inaccessible places, and large round topped windows.'<sup>17</sup> The building is now listed as a 'delightful Neo-Norman fortress with Georgian-type windows in Gothic surrounds' and it is frequently photographed.<sup>18</sup> Beside the gateways and the main door, notice the stone piers topped by cast iron fasces and modern, traditionally designed lanterns. Fasces, bundles of wooden sticks with an axe blade emerging from the centre, were symbols of the Roman republic and they are widely used as symbols of power and jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup> The eastern flanking wing wall was unfortunately removed for the building of the adjacent New County Hall (1971-4, County Architect's Office/Albert Smith), a glass and concrete office block which is very much of its time.<sup>20</sup> A mature copper beech tree masks the link block between the old and new buildings. Notice the traditional Oxfordshire signpost and a turnpike milestone, both re-sited beyond the tree. The 1930s signpost stood originally at a crossroads near Bloxham and the milestone of c.1755 was on the Oxford to Banbury road.

Across the road, notice no. 10A New Road, the former Probate Registry (1863, Charles Buckeridge), an attractive stone building in late 13th century style which is unsymmetrical with its gables and tall chimneys.<sup>21</sup> Beyond the entrance to Bulwarks Lane - which we shall explore later in the walk - there is a modern red brick building occupied by The Bell & Compass and the Co-operative Bank. It stands on the site of the Anchor pub which, with its extensive yard and stables,

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<sup>15</sup> Julian Munby and Hugh Walton, 'The Building of New Road', *Oxoniensia* 55 (1990), 123-30

<sup>16</sup> H.J. Compton, *The Oxford Canal* (1976), 39, 145; Davies and Robinson, *op.cit.*, (2001), 56-61; [www.imagesofengland.com/245149](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245149) ([Canal House, Oxford - 1046618 | Historic England](#))

<sup>17</sup> Sir Charles Oman, *Castles* (1926), 44

<sup>18</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245686-7](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245686-7) ([COUNTY HALL WITH THE CURVING SCREEN WALLS AND TURRETS ON EITHER SIDE, Oxford - 1047201 | Historic England](#))

<sup>19</sup> [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia.com)

<sup>20</sup> Oxf CC 71/23856/A\_H; OM 17.8.1974

<sup>21</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245694](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245694) ([Law Centre, St Peter's College, Non Civil Parish - 1121996 | Historic England](#))

was once an important stopping point for country carriers.<sup>22</sup> The next building (c.1860), on the corner of Bonn Square, is almost triangular in shape, and makes use of an odd site left over when New Road was cut through Castle Street.

On the opposite side of the road, the Westgate Centre (1969-73, City Architect's Office/Douglas Murray) is of complex plan.<sup>23</sup> Linking with Pennyfarthing Place to the East, Castle Street to the West and a multi-storey car park to the South, the Centre was intended to 'form a natural extension to the existing shopping [area], providing a much-needed increase in the number of shops in the centre of the City.'<sup>24</sup> Pedestrians are protected from the weather by a glazed roof and from traffic by a basement level service road. Above the shops to the right of the main arcade, a new Central Library was provided and opened on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1973.<sup>25</sup> The Westgate Centre was refurbished in 1986 and the 'bandstand' outside the main arcade was part of that improvement.<sup>26</sup> Ambitious but controversial plans to revamp the existing Centre and extend it South to Thames Street secured planning permission in 2007 but the scheme is on hold at present.<sup>27</sup>

Bonn Square was transformed in 2008-9 after Graeme Massie Architects, a Scottish firm, won an international competition to re-design this valuable city centre space.<sup>28</sup> The Tirah Memorial (1900, Inigo Thomas) remains as a focal point for the new square and recalls men of the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry who died in a campaign against tribesmen on the North-West Frontier in what is now Pakistan in 1897.<sup>29</sup> The sloping paved area around the memorial is a reminder that this was the churchyard of the former St Peter le Bailey Church, raised by centuries of burials. Archaeological excavations in 2008 revealed 296 burials and 53 memorial stones on the site.<sup>30</sup> St Peter le Bailey Church was first recorded in 1122 but the medieval and later building fell down in 1726. It was rebuilt in a sturdy Classical style with a west tower (c.1740) but this structure, which jutted out into the roadway, was demolished in 1873 as a new St Peter le Bailey Church was being completed in New Inn Hall Street.<sup>31</sup> The churchyard was railed off, but, in 1897, it was opened as a public garden which survived with modifications until 2008.<sup>32</sup>

To the left, the re-designed Bonn Square offers a better view of New Road Baptist Church, which has an ashlar stone front with a Doric pedimented porch

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<sup>22</sup> E.g. Kelly's Directories Ltd., Kelly's Directory of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (1899), 205-8

<sup>23</sup> Oxf CC 69/19588/A\_H

<sup>24</sup> Oxford City Council, *Westgate Oxford* (c.1970), [3]

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Graham, *The Oxford Reader: 150 Years of Oxford Public Libraries* (2004), [4]

<sup>26</sup> Oxf CC 85/00194/NF; 86/00140/NF

<sup>27</sup> Oxf CC 06/01211/FUL

<sup>28</sup> Oxf CC 06/00487/FUL

<sup>29</sup> JOJ 7.7.1900; [www.imagesofengland.com/245696](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245696) ([OXFORDSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY MEMORIAL, Non Civil Parish - 1338518 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245696))

<sup>30</sup> H Webb, 'Medieval and post-medieval graveyard of St Peter le Bailey', *Oxoniensia* 74 (2009), 137

<sup>31</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 403; OC 13.9.1873

<sup>32</sup> OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 6075, plan held in Town Hall

and two flanking niches on the first floor (1819, John Hudson; major alterations and heightening, 1865, J.F. Earle). The church developed in this discreet off-street location during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, until 2008, its forecourt was still cut off from the street by fine Victorian railings installed in c. 1873.<sup>33</sup> Note the stone pillar which survives from that scheme and a Peace tablet fixed nearby to the rubble stone wall in 2010.

As you pass the Tirah Memorial, notice the two piles of books to your left and odd volumes apparently left on some of the benches. This artwork (2009, Diana Bell) was a gift from Bonn to Oxford and the piles of books cast in bronze symbolize the long-standing link between the two cities forged in 1948.<sup>34</sup> Ironically, the stone recording the official naming of Bonn Square on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1974 was lost during the refurbishment in 2008. In its place, you will see a plaque on the side elevation of no. 1 New Inn Hall Street recalling the 1974 event and the reopening of the new Bonn Square in May 2009. No. 1 is a three storey timber framed house with a vast stone chimney stack, dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with 18<sup>th</sup> century sash windows and later shop fronts.<sup>35</sup> The home of Richard Bettris (c.1606-82), a surgeon and well-known Quaker, this building was Oxford's first Quaker meeting house from 1654 until the early 1680s.<sup>36</sup>

Go down the steps and turn left into New Inn Hall Street, attractively re-designed as a shared space for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in 2009.<sup>37</sup> The street was known as North Bailey by 1399 and a later name, The Seven Deadly Sins, current between c.1570 and 1800, probably derived from a pub sign or from seven poor cottages. The current name recalls New Inn Hall, an academic hall built on the site of Trilleck's Inn (c.1460), which stood on the west side of the street.<sup>38</sup> During the Civil War (1642-6), its buildings were used as Charles I's Royal Mint and the famous Oxford Crown piece was struck there. The largely 18<sup>th</sup> century front of no. 5, the last property before the former Girls' Central School, was retained in the redevelopment of premises next to New Road Baptist Church and incorporates part of the façade of New Inn Hall.<sup>39</sup>

On the other side of the street, North Bailey House (1974-5, Collins, Stonebridge & Bradley) replaced Newspaper House (1880). This building had been Walter Higgins' furniture warehouse and, from 1928 to 1972, the home of the *Oxford Mail* and *Times*.<sup>40</sup> Down Shoe Lane, a corruption of Sewys Lane, St. Michael's

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<sup>33</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 417-18; OC 27.5.1865, 18.11.1865, 2.12.1865

<sup>34</sup> [www.dianabell.co.uk](http://www.dianabell.co.uk)

<sup>35</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245695](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245695) ([NEW ROAD BAPTIST CHAPEL, Oxford - 1047202 | Historic England](#))

<sup>36</sup> L J Kreitzer, 'Oxford's First Quaker meeting place', *Oxoniensia* 73 (2008), 59-71; [www.imagesofengland.com/245676](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245676) ([1, NEW INN HALL STREET, Oxford - 1322990 | Historic England](#))

<sup>37</sup> OM 4.3.2009

<sup>38</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 477

<sup>39</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 275-6; [www.imagesofengland.com/245677](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245677) ([5, NEW INN HALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369402 | Historic England](#))

<sup>40</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 276



Hall is a tall, four storey brick building (1875, F.J. Codd). It was part of Hyde's clothing factory, a sizeable employer of labour in Oxford before the motor industry.<sup>41</sup> To the north of Shoe Lane, the Brasenose College Frewin Hall development scheme (1980, Architects Design Partnership/John Fryman) replaced the former St. Michael's School (1876, E.G. Bruton), which consisted of a master's house with schoolroom behind. Part of the historic Frewin Hall boundary wall in Shoe Lane was retained in the scheme.<sup>42</sup>

Opposite Shoe Lane, St Peter's College now occupies the former Oxford Central Girls' School (1901, Leonard Stokes).<sup>43</sup> The stone-faced frontage is recessed between wings and the attractive iron railings are 1980s replicas of originals lost to wartime salvage. A wall tablet, 'Pupil Teachers' Centre', on the south wing recalls efforts by Oxford School Board to regularize the training of pupil teachers, who were children of 13 plus apprenticed to head teachers in order to learn the craft of teaching by example and practice.

Next to the former school stands Hannington Hall (1832, Thomas Greenshields), also now part of St Peter's College, which has an ashlar stone front of five bays, bays one and five being flanked by large pilasters. It was envisaged as the first stage of an ambitious scheme to revitalize New Inn Hall but no further building took place and the hall was united with Balliol College in 1882. The present name recalls James Hannington (1847-85), the martyred missionary Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, and dates from alterations (1896-7, Walter Shirley) carried out for the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union and Missionary Union.<sup>44</sup>

Back on the east side of New Inn Hall Street, nos. 22-24, though apparently of 17th century domestic origin with tall cocklofts, proved to be two bays of a single storey range (c.1500-30), fronting St. Mary's College, a small college of Augustinian canons founded in 1436.<sup>45</sup> Oak lintels above the doorways record earlier house numbers, 13 and 14, in Roman numerals. Nos. 26-30 form a pleasant courtyard group (c.1870) enclosed by the chestnut trees of the garden beyond. Further along the street, Oxford's first Methodist Meeting House (c.1780)<sup>46</sup> bears a plaque recording that John Wesley preached here on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1783, and on subsequent occasions.

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<sup>41</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 477; JOJ 16.10.1875; OHC City Engineer's Plan 16 Old Series

<sup>42</sup> Oxf CC 79/01131/LAH\_H; *Brazen Nose* (1980), 98

<sup>43</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 456; www.imagesofengland 245678 ([COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION, Oxford - 1047198 | Historic England](#))

<sup>44</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 423; www.imagesofengland 245147 ([ST PETERS COLLEGE, DINING HALL, Oxford - 1369710 | Historic England](#))

<sup>45</sup> John Blair, 'Frewin Hall: A Norman Mansion and a Monastic College', *Oxoniensia* 43 (1978), 86-90; www.imagesofengland 245682 ([22 AND 24, NEW INN HALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369403 | Historic England](#))

<sup>46</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 419; www.imagesofengland 245683 ([32 AND 34, NEW INN HALL STREET, Oxford - 1047200 | Historic England](#))

Next door, the 16th century gateway of St Mary's College contains within it the springings of the vaulting of an earlier gate hall. Frewin Hall (private) is partially visible beyond, and consists, basically of an L-shaped block. The hidden west wing was built (c.1582) for Griffith Lloyd (d.1586), Principal of Jesus College, over the 12th century cellar of a merchant's house, which later formed part of St Mary's College. A second storey was added (1888, T.G. Jackson) for Dr. C.L. Shadwell, Provost of Oriel (d.1919). The south wing, a 2-storeyed rubble-stone building, was built in 1721 for Dr Richard Frewin (d.1761), Camden Professor of History and a distinguished physician, whose name the house retains. A later occupant was the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, when he was at Christ Church (1860-1).<sup>47</sup> Behind the house, the steep slate roof of the Oxford Union debating hall, now the Old Library (1857, Benjamin Woodward)<sup>48</sup> is a prominent feature.

Between Frewin Hall and St Michael's Street, the east side of New Inn Hall Street is dominated by tall, four storey brick houses from the 1860s and 1870s, which have been internally reconstructed with projecting rear stairs to the new Quad (1977, Architects Design Partnership/John Fryman).<sup>49</sup> No. 38 is of polychrome bricks with carved stone capitals and no. 40 retains, at ground floor level, a parish boundary stone of 1933. On no. 50, a plaque recalls that the Rev Thomas Chamberlain, vicar of St Thomas's, founded St Edward's School on the site in 1863. The school moved to new and larger premises at Summertown in 1873. Recalling the old building. Warden Simeon remarked that 'As a harbour for rats it was probably unique.'<sup>50</sup>

Across the street again, St Peter's College (founded as St Peter's Hall, 1928) has taken over two important buildings. The Victorian Gothic St Peter le Bailey Church (1874, Basil Champneys), built of Bath stone and re-used stone from the old church, has become the College chapel. Next door, Wyaston House or Linton House (1797) now forms a library and entrance to St Peter's College. It is a fine Georgian house three storeys high with lower, one bay wings at either side. It was built for the Oxford Canal Company and became St Peter le Bailey rectory in 1878. The name Linton House recalls Henry Linton, rector between 1856 and 1884.<sup>51</sup> Modern railings featuring the keys of St Peter as a design motif adorn the garden wall in front of the property. Further north, the Wesleyan Memorial Methodist Church (1878, Charles Bell) abandoned the Grecian style of the earlier chapel behind it (1817, W. Jenkins; demol. 1966) for soaring Gothic.<sup>52</sup> The

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<sup>47</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 260-1; John Blair, *op.cit.*, 48-99; [www.imagesofengland 245684 \(FREWIN HALL, Non Civil Parish - 1122646 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245684/FREWIN_HALL,Non_Civil_Parish-1122646|Historic_England)

<sup>48</sup> Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (1974) – hereafter Pevsner, 273

<sup>49</sup> *Oxf CC* 79/01131/LAH-H; *Brazen Nose* (1977), 9-10

<sup>50</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 391-2; R.D. Hill, *A History of St Edward's School 1863-1963* (1962), 5-9; *A Short Memoir of Algernon Barrington Simeon MA* (1929), 7; Bodl MS Top Oxon d. 501, 77

<sup>51</sup> Davies and Robinson, *op.cit.*, 62; Pevsner, 248-9; *VCH Oxon iv*, 403; [www.imagesofengland 245144-5 \(ST PETERS COLLEGE, LINTON HOUSE, Oxford - 1046616 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245144-5/ST_PETERS_COLLEGE,LINTON_HOUSE,Oxford-1046616|Historic_England)

<sup>52</sup> Pevsner, 249, 299



tapering steeple is beautifully situated at the north-east corner of the building, closing the view down St. Michael's Street.

New Inn Hall Street was extended through the old city wall to George Street in 1872,<sup>53</sup> the descent from inside the wall across the site of the ditch being quite marked. A bastion of the wall is visible in the garden behind the former High School for Boys. The extension was temporarily called Sadler Street in honour of Ald. Charles Sadler (d.1872)<sup>54</sup> who, for many years, had been a power in the Liberal Corporation, but this name was soon dropped because of confusion with another Sadler Street in St Ebbe's. New Inn Hall Street thus became T-shaped until 1899, when the part leading to Cornmarket Street was re-named St Michael's Street.<sup>55</sup> Two notable buildings in the extension of New Inn Hall Street, both now demolished, were the engine house of the Oxford Volunteer Fire Brigade (1873-4, G. Shirley), and the Liberal Hall (1877-8, F.J. Codd) where Alliance House now stands.<sup>56</sup>

Turn right into St Michael's Street, which runs parallel to and just inside the city wall. Notice on the north side, nos. 34-36 which were apparently built as one house in the late 18th century.<sup>57</sup> Above the ground floor, they are timber framed, the rendering over the lath and plaster being ruled to give the appearance of stone; the sash windows flush to the wall on the first and second floors give the secret away. No. 34 was the home of Felicia Skene (1821-99) from 1869 and a blue plaque recalls her work as a friend of the poor and prison visitor.<sup>58</sup> Almost opposite, nos. 17-19 and no. 11 are of similar date and character.<sup>59</sup> Nos. 28-32 are small 19th century shops, with workshops above, incorporating one of the city wall bastions.<sup>60</sup> Now excellently converted into Bike Zone, they were occupied until 2008 by Messrs Alfred Maltby, Oxford bookbinders since 1834.<sup>61</sup> No. 26 (c.1800) is a little brick house 3 storeys high with Flemish bond brickwork above a stuccoed ground floor. More remarkable is no. 24, which dates from the late 17th century and is of renewed ashlar stone and three storeys high with twin pedimented shaped gables back and front. No. 20, Vanbrugh House, is again 17th century but it was re-fronted early in the 1700's.<sup>62</sup> It was the home of Oxford builder and master mason Bartholomew Peisley (d.1715) who presumably built it with his experience of working on Blenheim Palace very much in mind.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 6072; JOJ 12.10.1872

<sup>54</sup> OC 20.4.1872

<sup>55</sup> Herbert Hurst, 'Oxford Topography', *Oxford Historical Society* 39 (1899), 67

<sup>56</sup> JOJ 1.11.1873, 24.10.1874, 13.10.1877

<sup>57</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245881](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245881) ([34 AND 36, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1047121 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245881))

<sup>58</sup> Squires, *op.cit.*, 144-8; [www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk)

<sup>59</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245870-1](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245870-1) ([11, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1047117 | Historic England, 17 AND 19, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1343682 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245870-1))

<sup>60</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245880](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245880) ([BASTION 2, Oxford - 1047120 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245880))

<sup>61</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 238

<sup>62</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245876](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245876) ([VANBURGH HOUSE, Oxford - 1068871 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245876))

<sup>63</sup> [www.wiseabroad.com](http://www.wiseabroad.com) - article by David Sturdy; Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford: an Architectural Guide* (1998) – hereafter Tyack, 145

building is of ashlar stone, three storeys high with giant pilasters either side of the central bay carrying 'a cornice as deep as though it were a canopy.'<sup>64</sup>

Nos. 20-24 were restored and converted to form the Vanbrugh House Hotel in 2012.<sup>65</sup> Northgate Hall (1870-1, J.C. Curtis) was built as a chapel and schoolroom for the United Methodist Free Church. It is of stone and classical, five bays wide, with a central pediment.<sup>66</sup> Cement patches on the façade mask old commercial advertising panels. The building was transformed into a restaurant in 2013.<sup>67</sup>

On the south side, a late 19th century brick wall overhung with flowering trees introduces the mainly Victorian buildings of the Oxford Union Society, which are of red brick with stone or terra-cotta dressings and have tiled and slated roofs. From east to west, you can see New Buildings (1910, W.E. Mills), the two storeyed Main Block in Venetian Gothic style (1864, William Wilkinson), the Old Library with its high-pitched roof (1856, Benjamin Woodward) and the Debating Hall (1878, Sir Alfred Waterhouse).<sup>68</sup> East of the Union, the Three Goats Head pub is a three storeyed Victorian Gothic fantasy (1876), probably designed by F.J. Codd, which has heavy pillars supporting a polychrome brick facade, and decorative ironwork at first floor level.<sup>69</sup> Further down, the street is completed by Thomas Rayson's gabled reconstruction of the Plough public house (1925), the 14th century statue of St George at first floor level being introduced by Rayson to fill the niche.<sup>70</sup>

The north side ends with the stuccoed front of nos. 8-10 (c.1820), and the gables of nos. 4-6 (Arcadia and the Nosebag restaurant). These properties date back to c.1560 and originally formed part of a continuous row of timber-framed houses.<sup>71</sup> On the corner, no. 37 Cornmarket, or Northgate House (c.1860) has at first floor level a cast-iron electric lamp bracket with dragon finial (c.1895).<sup>72</sup> Retained when Cornmarket was re-lighted in 1974/5, this bracket was installed when electric street lighting in Oxford was still in its infancy.

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<sup>64</sup> Pevsner, 323

<sup>65</sup> OM 5.1.2012; OT 23.11.2012

<sup>66</sup> Pevsner, 299; [www.imagesofengland 245875](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245875) ([THE NORTH GATE HALL, Oxford - 1369447 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245875))

<sup>67</sup> OT 30.8.2012; OM 28.2.2013

<sup>68</sup> Pevsner, 273; [www.imagesofengland 245865-8](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245865-8) ([OXFORD UNION SOCIETY DEBATING HALL, Oxford - 1047115 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245865-8), [OXFORD UNION SOCIETY OLD LIBRARY, Oxford - 1068789 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245865-8), [OXFORD UNION SOCIETY MAIN BLOCK, Oxford - 1369445 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245865-8), [OXFORD UNION SOCIETY NEW BUILDINGS OXFORD UNION SOCIETY STEWARDS HOUSE, Oxford - 1068800 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245865-8)); OJI, 19.1.1910

<sup>69</sup> OCA R.5.6., 383. Oxford Local Board Minute Book records approval for house and office by Codd at 23 New Inn Hall Street, 3.1876; the City Engineer's plan is missing

<sup>70</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); OC 27.11.1925; OHC City Engineer's plan 3281 New Series

<sup>71</sup> [www.wiseabroad.com](http://www.wiseabroad.com) - article by David Sturdy; [www.imagesofengland 245872-4](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245872-4) ([4 AND 6, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1369446 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245872-4), [8, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1047118 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245872-4), [10, ST MICHAELS STREET, Oxford - 1068863 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245872-4))

<sup>72</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 356; OHC HT10439 shows bracket in place, 1907

## Chapter 2 – Cornmarket Street to Gloucester Street

Cornmarket Street is now dominated by buildings erected by chain stores in a very different retail world. These include Clarendon House (1956-7, Lord Holford), built for Woolworths and occupied by the firm until 1983; also the former Marks & Spencer building on the north corner of Market Street (1963, Lewis & Hickey) and the Littlewoods building (1964, D.M.C. Ruddick) which McDonalds now occupies.<sup>73</sup> The street-name Cornmarket recalls its country and market town character, and this lingers on in just a few buildings, especially here at the northern end. Nos. 26-28, three-gabled timber-framed properties on the corner of Ship Street, are particularly interesting as one of Oxford's few surviving medieval domestic buildings. Built as the New Inn in c.1390, the property was later subdivided and nos. 26-27 were occupied from the 1870s until 1983 by Zacharias', a firm well-known for its Wet-Off waterproof clothing and the slogan 'Zacs for Macs'. Alterations to the building left few visible traces of its antiquity but no. 28 was restored to something like its original appearance (1951, Thomas Rayson).<sup>74</sup> Nos. 26-27 were later reconstructed along much more archaeological lines (1986, Architects Design Partnership/John Fryman & F.W.B. Charles) as part of a Jesus College development.<sup>75</sup> Just opposite, notice the gabled 1665 facade of no. 38, the former Plough Inn, now Austin Reed, Ltd., which was an earlier Thomas Rayson reconstruction in 1925.<sup>76</sup> Next door, no. 39 (Timpson's) has a four storey 19th century front, possibly disguising an earlier core. No. 40 (Snappy Snaps) is an 18th century re-fronting of a 17th century house. The canted late 18th century style bays of nos. 41-42 above the Orange store, and no. 23 (part of W H Smith's) opposite, both mask 17th century timber-framed buildings.<sup>77</sup>

St Michael at the Northgate church stands at the corner of Ship Street and Cornmarket Street, its Saxon tower (c.1020) originating, like St George's Tower, as a watchtower on the town's defences.<sup>78</sup> It was built of Coral Rag stone with 'long and short quoins and two tiers of twin bell-openings with bulgy balusters and through stones.' A blocked west doorway high up originally opened on to the

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<sup>73</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 103-4

<sup>74</sup> Oxford Preservation Trust, 25<sup>th</sup> report to 7.6.1952 (1952), 13; [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com/245402-3](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245402-3) ([26 AND 27, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1047325 | Historic England](#), [28, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1369341 | Historic England](#))

<sup>75</sup> Julian Munby, 'Zacharias', or the New Inn', Oxford Preservation Trust, 60<sup>th</sup> report for 1986 (1986), 19-20; Zacharias' catalogue in Oxfordshire Museums collection

<sup>76</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); OC 27.11.1925; OHC City Engineer's plan 3281 New Series; [www.imagesofengland.com/245407](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245407) ([38, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1047327 | Historic England](#))

<sup>77</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245401](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245401) ([23, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1185685 | Historic England](#)), [245408-10](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245408-10) ([39, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1369342 | Historic England](#), [40, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1186051 | Historic England](#), [41 AND 42, CORNMARKET STREET, Oxford - 1047328 | Historic England](#))

<sup>78</sup> Durham, *op.cit.*, 14, 34

adjacent North Gate. The rest of the church is of 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century date with the addition of a north transept (1833, John Plowman). Later restoration work by G.E. Street (1853-4) was largely obliterated by a serious fire in 1953.<sup>79</sup>

Anthony Wood, the 17<sup>th</sup> century historian, remarked that the North Gate was the city's strongest, 'as indeed by good reason it should (be), having noe river before it as the other hath.' It was fortified with a portcullis and two gates, a military engine on the ramparts being ready to 'cast downe anything obnoxious to the enemy approaching thereunto.'<sup>80</sup> The town gaol was at the North Gate by 1239, and became known as Bocardo, a name thought to be derived from a logician's term for a syllogism, and to imply that the prison, like a syllogism, was an awkward trap from which to escape. A more prosaic suggestion is that it derived from the word 'boccard' or 'boggard,' meaning a privy, and referred to its insanitary state. A separate room for prostitutes, later known ironically as the maidens' chamber, was provided in c.1310. Bocardo's most famous inmates were the Oxford Martyrs, Bishops Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer (1555) and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1556), their cell door being now displayed in the tower of St Michael's church.<sup>81</sup> By 1641, Bocardo was a debtors' prison, or bridewell, and 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings show a bag suspended from the first floor window mutely soliciting donations from passers-by.<sup>82</sup> The North Gate was finally demolished in 1771 as an inconvenience to traffic, its opening being less than 11 feet wide at the narrowest point.<sup>83</sup>

The northern end of Cornmarket Street was then set back and rebuilt, a fragment of this rebuilding being the bayed three light Venetian window which survives above KFC at no. 35. A building on the same site was formerly a gymnasium and dancing school attended by John Evelyn in 1638, and by the future Charles II during the Civil War.<sup>84</sup> The rest of the street, above shop front level, dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prominent buildings on the west side are the three-gabled no. 36, formerly the Northgate Tavern (1879), and St George's Mansions (1910, Homer & Lucas), now a branch of the NatWest Bank, on the corner of George Street.<sup>85</sup> The latter was described as Oxford's first skyscraper when the plans were revealed.<sup>86</sup> On the east side, next to St Michael's, no. 30 is of ashlar stone and neo-Classical with a Dutch gable (1904, Herbert Quinton) and Boswell's at no. 31 has a gabled polychrome brick front (1878, F.J. Codd) originally built for Pearson's the ironmongers.<sup>87</sup> Boswell's, described as 'Oxford's

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<sup>79</sup> Pevsner, 294-5

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Clark, ed., 'Survey of the City of Oxford...by Anthony Wood, vol. i', *Oxford Historical Society 15* (1889) – hereafter *Wood's City i*, 255

<sup>81</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 334-5

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 344-5; OHC illustrations I147, 1853

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 302-3; H E Salter, 'Surveys and Tokens', *Oxford Historical Society 75* (1923), plan facing p. 72

<sup>84</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245305 \(68 AND 70, BANBURY ROAD, Oxford - 1047366 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245305/68-AND-70-BANBURY-ROAD-Oxford-1047366-Historic-England); *VCH Oxon iv*, 427

<sup>85</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1665 New Series

<sup>86</sup> OJI 13.6. 1910

<sup>87</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 310 Old Series; W T Pike & Co., *Views and Reviews Special Edition Oxford - hereafter Views and Reviews* (1897), 24

last independent department store', officially dates back to 1738 but members of the Boswell family were in business locally as carpenters or joiners even earlier. The firm made and sold portmanteaus, trunks and cases of all sorts at nos. 49-50 Cornmarket Street until 1929 when it moved to new premises round the corner at nos. 1-3 Broad Street and rapidly evolved into a department store. The Oxford Drug Company Ltd., had in the meantime taken over Pearson's shop at no. 31 Cornmarket Street. Forging a link between this chemist's business and Boswell's provided further scope for expansion.<sup>88</sup> These developments occupied all the land behind the pompously Classical corner building (1915, N.W. & G.W. Harrison) which was erected for William Baker & Co., and is now Waterstone's bookshop. Baker's claimed to have been established in 1795 – note the date above the shop front – but first appear as cabinet maker and upholster at no. 1 Broad Street in 1861. The business expanded into a three storey brick warehouse behind the shop in 1882, and that building, now much altered, survives in Ship Street. Elliston & Cavell acquired the business in 1902 after William Baker's death, but the house furnishing store remained outwardly independent until the 1970s.<sup>89</sup>

Pause before turning left into George Street, perhaps in the comparative calm beside the leafy churchyard of St Mary Magdalen Church, which has retained both iron railings and lampholders of c.1850, and many 19th century gravestones. Houses (demol. c.1790) formerly occupied much of this churchyard and another group (demol. 1820) stood to the north of the church.<sup>90</sup> The western side of Magdalen Street was rebuilt between 1894 and 1912, largely for the city's premier department store, Elliston & Cavell Ltd. (founded 1823). Debenhams took over Elliston's in 1953 and redeveloped the whole site (1999-2000, Le Riche Maw), retaining the impressive Victorian and Edwardian façades, to provide a much more space intensive store on the upper floors and separate retail units below.<sup>91</sup> You therefore have here an unusual window into local retailing history, beginning on the corner of George Street with a four storey property (1895) which had a highly desirable caretaker's penthouse flat behind the corner turret. T.H. Rose, chairman of Elliston's, commissioned the building with future expansion in mind and the store eventually took it over, for men's wear, in 1956.<sup>92</sup> Going north, the next property (1912, G.H. Blatherwick) was Taphouse's music shop (estab. 1857; closed 1984) which also hired out concert and practice rooms upstairs.<sup>93</sup> Taphouse's had replaced the notorious Woodstock Arms pub and a correspondent remarked that 'the sweet tones of his instruments and the

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<sup>88</sup> Views and Reviews, 24; Business Review (1895), 12; M Graham, ed., 'Oxford City Apprentices, 1697-1800', *Oxford Historical Society New Series 31* (1987), *passim*; OM 25.11.1959; Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>89</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2295 New Series; *Oxf Encyc*, 25; M.L. Turner & D.G. Vaisey, *Oxford Shops and Shopping* (1972), 50-1; *The Oxford Directory* (1861)

<sup>90</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 388; H E Salter, 'Survey of Oxford vol. 2', *Oxford Historical Society New Series 20* (1969), 232-3

<sup>91</sup> Oxf CC 97/1281/LH; OM 26.10.2000

<sup>92</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2502 Old Series; OM 28.12.1955

<sup>93</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1882 New Series; OM 29.3.1957; *Oxf Encyc*, 448



character of his sheet music contrast with the orgies and uncouth strains which so frequently disturbed the street and neighbourhood from the habitués of that missed house.<sup>94</sup> From 1956, Taphouse's became a barrier to shoppers at Elliston's, forcing them out into the street to get from one department to another and, when the music shop moved to Westgate in 1982, Debenhams took over the premises.<sup>95</sup> Whereas Elliston's facades are vaguely Classical in style, Taphouse's old shop has a medieval look with lancet windows and grotesque carvings on the upper floors. Nos. 5-12 Magdalen Street were Elliston & Cavell's main store and, until Debenhams introduced corporate branding for all its stores in 1973, the firm's name was emblazoned in ornate gilded letters on the ornamental cresting above the shop fronts. Nos. 9-12 (1894, H.G.W. Drinkwater), nearest to Friars Entry, were a major development, providing showroom space, workrooms and top floor bedrooms for shop assistants. Nos. 7-8 (1899-1900, Herbert Quinton) represented a further substantial extension to the south.<sup>96</sup>

Now head into George Street past Oxford's first skyscraper! The street was known as Irishman's Street by 1251, perhaps because 'Irishmen studied or else had commerce here' or more probably because of William de Hibernia, bailiff of Northgate Hundred in 1254.<sup>97</sup> Early medieval settlement in the area was abandoned after the Black Death reduced Oxford's population, and building only resumed after the City acquired the area as part of the Northgate Hundred in 1592.<sup>98</sup> The Civil War interrupted development, but houses lined much of the street by 1675 and gaps were filled during the 18th century.<sup>99</sup> Until c.1770, the street was sometimes called Thames Street, leading as it does to a branch of the river, Castle Mill Stream, at Hythe Bridge. Since then, the name George Lane, or Street, has taken over, recalling the former George Inn on the corner of George Street and Magdalen Street.<sup>100</sup>

It is hard to imagine that George Street once resembled today's picturesque Holywell Street.<sup>101</sup> Widened and almost entirely rebuilt in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, George Street became a major commercial area and was part of the one-time 'Bunny Run,' a circuit completed by Cornmarket, Queen Street and New Inn Hall Street, where strolling groups of lads and girls could hope to meet up for a sociable evening.<sup>102</sup> The Grapes public house (1894, H.G.W. Drinkwater) is a small gabled structure with an attractive red brick and terracotta frontage which was designed to complement the older, timber-framed buildings

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<sup>94</sup> *The Story of a Music Shop 1857-1957* (1957), [1]-[2] quoting OC January 1857

<sup>95</sup> OM 18.3.1982

<sup>96</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plans 2207 & 3453 Old Series

<sup>97</sup> *Wood's City i*, 365; *Oxf Encyc*, 152

<sup>98</sup> H E Salter, 'Survey of Oxford, vol. 1', *Oxford Historical Society New Series* 20 (1969), 227-9; VCH Oxon iv, 28-9, 91, 94, 266

<sup>99</sup> VCH Oxon iv, 92-3- copy of David Loggan map, 1675; Oxford Surveyed by Isaac Taylor in 1750 (1751) – copy in OHC

<sup>100</sup> VCH Oxon iv, 476; H E Salter, 'Survey of Oxford, vol. 1', *Oxford Historical Society New Series* 20 (1969), 227

<sup>101</sup> OHC photographs OCL74/1325-1329 - copies of 1820s Buckler drawings in Bodleian Library

<sup>102</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)



beside it.<sup>103</sup> They soon made way for much larger buildings and you can see how the Grapes' chimneys had to be extended up to the roofline of nos. 9/13 George Street (1907) in order to secure the draught needed for the coal fires. This mighty neighbour was built as Eugene de la Mare's toyshop - notice the retained enamel advertisement for toys, fancy goods and fireworks high up on the gable end of no. 9 – but the fine brick frontage was given a rendered makeover in the 1960s.<sup>104</sup>

On the other side of the street, beyond Debenhams, the letters YMCA and the date 1891 high up on nos. 6/16 George Street announce the former Young Men's Christian Association building (1891, F.W. Albury); a fire in 1966 robbed the building of some ornamentation.<sup>105</sup> On the corner of Victoria Court, no. 16 George Street is now part of Bella Italia restaurant but, in 1904, it was the head office for William Morris's Oxford Automobile and Cycle Agency. Morris Garages Ltd., used the premises as a showroom in the 1920s, displaying just one lorry in the window.<sup>106</sup> Across Victoria Court, the New Theatre (1933-4, W. & F.R. Milburn) is a tall ashlar stone building with a canopy along George Street, most distinguished perhaps for its Art Deco interior decoration.<sup>107</sup> It is the fourth New Theatre in this area since 1836. The first one was in Victoria Court and it was also sometimes known as the Theatre Royal or the Victoria. Social segregation of the audience was achieved by having three separate entrances, Victoria Court for standing room only, Red Lion Square for the gallery and Magdalen Street for more exclusive boxes. This theatre was often used for music-hall type entertainment since the University had forbidden professional drama during term-time in the late 16th century fearing that it might corrupt or at least distract the undergraduate population. By the 1880s, the University was more welcoming and a larger New Theatre (1886, H.G.W. Drinkwater), now with a frontage to George Street, opened on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1886. This theatre was rebuilt after a fire in 1892, but completely new and larger premises were necessary in 1908 (J.R. Wilkins) and again in 1933-4, as demand outgrew available space.<sup>108</sup>

Continuing along George Street, nos. 29/31 (1924) on your left were formerly new car showrooms for City Motors (estab. 1919) which had its head office round the corner in Gloucester Street until c.1968.<sup>109</sup> Next door, nos. 33/35, the former Radiant House (1925, J.R. Wilkins), were built for Hill, Upton & Co., Oxford's first electrical contractors (estab. 1890). The building has a handsome brick and stone façade with bronze panels and window frames. Originally, there were two globe lanterns on the roof, replicas of lamps designed for the contemporary

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<sup>103</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2180 Old Series

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 1076 New Series; OM 11.8.1961, 19.12.2011

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 1632 Old Series; Oxford City Fire Brigade, *Annual Report* (1966/7), 5

<sup>106</sup> Bodl 384415(17) Oxford Automobile and Cycle Agency, Catalogue (1904)

<sup>107</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plans 5759, 6312 & 6526 New Series

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 1048 Old Series, 1280 New Series; *VCH Oxon iv*, 431

<sup>109</sup> 'Fifty years of service: City Motors 1919-69', OM supplement 13.6.1969; 'City Motors 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary', OM supplement 3. 1979

British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.<sup>110</sup> On the corner of New Inn Hall Street, O'Neill's Bar at no. 37 was a radical transformation of the City's former electricity showrooms in 1996.<sup>111</sup>

Turn right into Gloucester Street which was known formerly as Pudding Bag Lane.<sup>112</sup> This may have been on account of its odd shape since it originally had two branches, one ending at Gloucester Green and the other in what is now Red Lion Square; perhaps, though, it was a modest tribute to the Oxford tradesmen whose culinary efforts once whetted the appetites of University men. Jamie's restaurant (opened 2008), on the corner, occupies premises which were formerly the Oxford & District Co-operative Society's gentlemen's outfitting department and you can still make out the words 'raincoats', 'sportswear', etc., in the upper panels of the windows.<sup>113</sup> The neo-Georgian block opposite (1935, Wills & Kaula/J.C. Leed), which continues down George Street, replaced the George Street Congregational Chapel (1832, Thomas Greenshields) and the George Street Cinema (1911, G.W. Booth).<sup>114</sup>

Beyond Jamie's, Anna Belinda have been exclusive dress designers at no. 6 Gloucester Street, the former Victoria Dairy premises, since 1971.<sup>115</sup> Red Lion Square is off to your right as you continue along Gloucester Street, leading to Debenhams delivery bay and the stage door of the New Theatre. The Red Lion (1905, J.R. Wilkins) rounded off a busy corner and replaced an earlier pub of the same name.<sup>116</sup> Ahead, you have a foretaste of the lively Gloucester Green redevelopment (1987-90, Kendrick Associates)<sup>117</sup> which we shall explore later. The open space opposite was the site of the Blue Pig pub, controversially demolished to widen Gloucester Street in 1935. Described as 'one of Oxford's oldest and most picturesque taverns,' the 17<sup>th</sup> century pub was frequented by jovial Oxfordshire farmers on market days, and by undergraduates who had a choice of exits if the proctors and bulldogs raided the premises.<sup>118</sup>

### Chapter 3 – Friars Entry to St Giles'

Turn right beyond the Red Lion pub garden into Friars Entry, noticing the red brick Burton Taylor Studio (1973), an extension to the nearby Oxford Playhouse

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<sup>110</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 3198 New Series; H J Butterfield, *Hill, Upton & Co.: Notes on the history of the firm* (1924), 1-2; OJI, 2.9.1925

<sup>111</sup> C.E. Goad, Oxford City Shopping Centre plans, revised 1.1996-1.1997

<sup>112</sup> OHC OCA G.5.1, Vellum Book, 85

<sup>113</sup> Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>114</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plans 1752 New Series, 1837 New Series, 1895 New Series; *VCH Oxon iv*, 421-2; P J Marriott, *Early Oxford Picture Palaces* (1978), 15-17

<sup>115</sup> OT 26.1.2012; Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>116</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 622 New Series; P J Marriott, *Oxford Pubs Past and Present* (1978), 37

<sup>117</sup> Oxf CC 84/00281/NFH

<sup>118</sup> SPAB, Oxford Blue Pig file, including cutting from Morning Post, 20.7.1934

funded by the famous actors, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.<sup>119</sup> Until Beaumont Street was laid out in 1822, Gloucester Street went no further than this and Friars Entry was still the most direct route from central Oxford to Worcester College and Walton Street. A great gate led into medieval Friars Entry but this was probably removed after the dissolution of the religious houses in Henry VIII's reign.<sup>120</sup> Crowded houses later lined the alleyway and added to the perceived remoteness of Worcester College, founded in 1714 in the surviving buildings of Gloucester College.<sup>121</sup> When Dr Landon, Provost of Worcester, was Vice-Chancellor (1802-6), Encaenia processions had to pass, with as much dignity as could be mustered, through Friars Entry, 'at the risk of being besprinkled by trundled mops in those straits of Thermopylae, of stumbling over buckets, knocking over children, of catching the rincings of basins, and ducking under linen-lines suspended across from the opposite houses.'<sup>122</sup>

Little survives of the old Friars Entry – and, visually at least, it begins disappointingly. The car park on the left and the pub garden on the right occupy the cleared sites of good three storey brick houses built in c.1825.<sup>123</sup> The alley recaptures some of its old character as it narrows at the Gloucester Arms public house (1825), restored and reopened as the White Rabbit in 2012 to recall Lewis Carroll's literary creation.<sup>124</sup> Further along, the Debenhams development promotes a good sense of enclosure, and provided space for an appealing pub, Far From the Madding Crowd. Named after Thomas Hardy's novel, it provides a splendid retreat from Oxford's busy streets. Thomas Hardy knew Oxford well, having worked in the office of Arthur Blomfield, architect of St Barnabas' Church, between 1862 and 1867 and the city features as Christminster in his novel *Jude the Obscure*.<sup>125</sup> Opposite, no. 24 Friars Entry is a three storey brick house which probably dates from the 1820s and retains a contemporary shop front with wide glazing bars. Now the Organic Deli café, it was occupied by local estate agents, E. Gordon Hudson, for many years until 2009.<sup>126</sup> On either side, good-looking display shop fronts formed part of a Randolph Hotel development (2002, Bell Slater Partnership)<sup>127</sup> but, like Emily's shop in the classic children's television series *Bagpuss*, they don't contain anything for sale! As you continue, the 1920s side elevation of the Odeon Magdalen Street cinema becomes obvious on your left. Opposite, there are photographs of produce in shop windows but, regrettably for the liveliness of Friars Entry, no access to the Tesco Metro store.

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<sup>119</sup> Don Chapman, *Oxford Playhouse* (2008), 217, 230

<sup>120</sup> Herbert Hurst, 'Oxford Topography', *Oxford Historical Society* 39 (1899), 107-8; *Oxf Encyc*, 147

<sup>121</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 502-4

<sup>122</sup> G.V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford* (1868), 189

<sup>123</sup> Anson Osmond, 'Building on the Beaumonts: an example of early 19<sup>th</sup> century housing development', *Oxoniensia* 49 (1984), 306

<sup>124</sup> OM 8.12.2012

<sup>125</sup> Dorothy Eagle and Hilary Carnell, *The Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles* (1977), 259

<sup>126</sup> Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>127</sup> Oxf CC 01/1929/FUL

You emerge into Magdalen Street opposite the west tower of St Mary Magdalen Church, built 1511-31, which has an image, possibly of St Mary Magdalene, high up in a niche.<sup>128</sup> Turn left past Oxenford House (1966, Fitzroy, Robinson & Partners) which replaced an earlier building that housed, among other things, Oxford's first broadcasting studio opened in 1925.<sup>129</sup> Next door, the Odeon Magdalen Street, formerly the Super Cinema (1922, J.C. Leed), was an Egyptian-style development on the site of former stables taken over by Morris Garages Ltd.<sup>130</sup> On the corner of Magdalen Street and Beaumont Street, the tall and Gothic Randolph Hotel (1864-5, William Wilkinson) provided Oxford with what was long described as its only modern-built hotel. Wilkinson (1819-1901) was architect to the St John's College estate in North Oxford and spent his last years in the hotel he had designed.<sup>131</sup> An iron and glass canopy was built outside the main entrance in Beaumont Street in 1889 to shelter arriving or departing guests.<sup>132</sup> The supporting iron columns bear the name 'Lucy & Co Oxford.' The Randolph was extended along Beaumont Street (1952, J. Hopgood), surprisingly in matching style at a time when Victorian Gothic was still deeply unpopular.<sup>133</sup> Colin Dexter's popular fictional detective, Inspector Morse, regularly visited the hotel bar to discuss cases with his colleague Lewis and the Randolph now has a Morse Bar to perpetuate this link.<sup>134</sup>

Cross Magdalen Street at the traffic lights for a closer look at St Mary Magdalen Church. The church is first recorded in c.1127 but its oldest surviving features are the nave and chancel, which were probably rebuilt in the late 13th century. The south chapel dates from c.1320 and has replacement statues (1914, H.W. Moore) in canopied niches in its buttresses. The south porch was added in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>135</sup> The north or Martyrs' Aisle (1840-2, Scott & Moffatt) was one outcome of a nationwide appeal to build a monument to the Protestant Oxford Martyrs, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. In 1839, the organizing Oxford committee planned to build a church near the site of the martyrdom in Broad Street but this proved impossible. They opted instead for the Martyrs' Aisle and a nearby memorial inspired by the 14th century Eleanor Cross at Waltham, one of fifteen erected by Edward I to commemorate the resting places of his Queen's body on the way to London. George Gilbert Scott & W.B. Moffatt won the design competition and the memorial was built between 1841 and 1843. Sir Francis Chantrey designed the statues which were carved in Caen stone by his assistant, H. Weekes.<sup>136</sup> The steps of the Martyrs' Memorial later provided a good place for political and religious meetings and the structure itself was often climbed by

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<sup>128</sup> Pevsner, 294; Hurst, *op.cit.*, 103

<sup>129</sup> Oxf CC 65/13513/A\_H; OJI 27.11.1925

<sup>130</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2803 New Series; Marriott, *Early Oxford Picture Palaces* (1978), 26-8

<sup>131</sup> www.imagesofengland 245324 ([THE RANDOLPH HOTEL, Oxford - 1369325 | Historic England](#)); Andrew Saint, 'Three Oxford Architects', *Oxoniensia* 35 (1970), 56-9

<sup>132</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1457 & 1471 Old Series; OC 12.10.1889

<sup>133</sup> *Oxford Encyc.*, 356

<sup>134</sup> Cliff Goodwin, *Inspector Morse Country* (2002), 71

<sup>135</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 387-90; *Oxf Encyc.*, 410

<sup>136</sup> Pevsner, 293-4; J P Wells, 'Martyrs' Memorial', *Oxford Magazine*, 2.2.1968, 161-3

undergraduates who left objects such as chamber pots at the top. As the memorial aged, locals were apt to advise credulous tourists that it was the simply the top of the spire of a sunken cathedral! More recently, the poor state of the memorial led to an Oxford Preservation Trust campaign, which funded the restoration of stonework and the repainting of shields below the statues (2002, Nimbus Conservation Ltd.).<sup>137</sup> Tucked away round the back of St. Mary Magdalen north churchyard, you will find one of Oxford's earliest public conveniences for women opened in 1909.<sup>138</sup> Underground toilets may now seem anything but convenient but facilities like this, enabling women to spend more time out and about, were of great social importance.

Standing near the Martyrs' Memorial, you have a good view down Magdalen Street East and up the east side of St Giles'. Balliol College buildings gradually occupied much of this frontage between 1714 and 1913, replacing earlier structures such as the Catherine Wheel inn (1402 - c.1829) where the conspirators, Robert and Thomas Catesby and Thomas Winter first discussed the Gunpowder Plot in 1605.<sup>139</sup> Balliol's property ends at a three storey ironstone building with a pediment in late 17<sup>th</sup> century style (1907, E.P. Warren).<sup>140</sup> Beyond that, no. 1 St Giles' is a late 18<sup>th</sup> century ashlar stone house, long used as offices by Morrell, Peel and Gamlen, Oxford's oldest firm of solicitors.<sup>141</sup> Then come the Dolphin Gate of Trinity College (1947-8, Sir Hubert Worthington) and the neo-Georgian front of the Dolphin Quad of St.John's College (1948, Sir Edward Maufe).<sup>142</sup> The Dolphin inn flourished here between about 1575 and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and St John's used the building as undergraduate accommodation until 1881.<sup>143</sup> Notice the former cabmen's shelter (1896), a timber structure near the Dolphin Quad which has been a refreshment kiosk since 2004. In the days of horse-drawn cabs, drivers had to sit out in all weathers and local well-wishers paid for this shelter which stood in the centre of the road south of St Giles's Church. By c. 1950, it had been moved to the present position close to where taxis still stand today.<sup>144</sup> South of the taxi rank, in the middle of the road, heavy iron railings by local ironfounders, William Lucy & Co., surround the now closed men's underground public conveniences, first sited here in 1895.<sup>145</sup>

Looking north-west across St Giles', you can best appreciate the magnificent neo-Greek building which houses both the Taylor Institution, nearest to you, and the Ashmolean Museum (1841-5, C.R. Cockerell).<sup>146</sup> The Ashmolean is the

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<sup>137</sup> [www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/projects/](http://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/projects/)

<sup>138</sup> Mary Leslie, *Through Changing Scenes* (1972), 63

<sup>139</sup> Pevsner, 100; *VCH Oxon iv*, 438

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 100

<sup>141</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245809 \(1, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369451 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245809/1-ST-GILES-STREET-Oxford-1369451-Historic-England); *VCH Oxon iv*, 191

<sup>142</sup> Pevsner, 200-1, 206-7

<sup>143</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 438

<sup>144</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2622 Old Series; [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>145</sup> OHC OCA GG.3.11, Sanitary Committee Minute Book 1895-8, 4, 92

<sup>146</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245853 \(TAYLOR INSTITUTE THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, Oxford - 1047111 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245853/TAYLOR-INSTITUTE-THE-ASHMOLEAN-MUSEUM-Oxford-1047111-Historic-England)

world's oldest public museum, opened in what is now the Museum of the History of Science in Broad Street in 1683. The Taylorian was founded by the architect Sir Robert Taylor in 1788 for the teaching of modern languages. The original building consists essentially of a central portion with a massive portico and two large projecting wings. The Taylorian wing facing St Giles' has four detached Ionic columns carrying statues by W.G. Nicholl of women representing the European languages of France, Italy, Germany and Spain. The rest of the building originally housed the University Galleries and collections from the Old Ashmolean were moved here – to a new extension at the back – in 1894. Both institutions have expanded very tactfully - the Taylorian along St Giles' (1932, T.H. Hughes) and the Ashmolean along Beaumont Street (1937-40, E. Stanley Hall).<sup>147</sup> The latest ingenious extension, completely hidden behind Cockerell's building, has given the Ashmolean 39 more galleries, much improved education facilities and even a rooftop restaurant (2009, Rick Mather Architects).<sup>148</sup>

Cross back to Magdalen Street West at the traffic lights and prepare to cross Beaumont Street. Until 1822, Magdalen Street continued seamlessly into St Giles' and, as you wait at the lights, you might consider that a pleasure worth recapturing. Any delay will however give you more opportunity to glance down Beaumont Street towards Worcester College. St John's College owned Beaumont Close to the west of St Giles' at this point, the site of the former Carmelite Friary, which extended north from Gloucester Green to the present Wellington Square. The college began to lay out this land for building in 1822 and the first houses in Beaumont Street were completed in 1823. Development soon extended into St John Street and Beaumont Buildings but building was not completed until c.1835, either because of a lack of demand for expensive houses, or, perhaps, because the short, 40 year leases offered too little return to potential speculators. Supervision of the estate was in the hands of Henry Dixon, a local surveyor, who was responsible for its overall lay-out and probably for the general design of the house elevations.<sup>149</sup> We shall have a closer look at the buildings later in the walk but, from this point, you can appreciate the overall classical uniformity which the scheme achieved. Beaumont Street, always a most prestigious address, provided a fitting approach to Worcester College at last, diminishing but not putting an end to snide comments that it was 'out of Oxford' or should be called 'Botany Bay College'.<sup>150</sup>

Once you have safely crossed Beaumont Street, head north along the west side of St Giles'. Enjoyment of this special street is diminished, of course, by through traffic and parked vehicles and it is perhaps unfortunate that the great width of St Giles' made it too easily adapted to the motor age! Why is it so wide? Both the Banbury and Woodstock roads funnel into St Giles' and traffic must always have

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<sup>147</sup> Pevsner, 268-9; *Oxf Encyc*, 22-4, 449-50; Tyack, 205-8

<sup>148</sup> Oxf CC 03/01697/FUL; [www.ashmolean.org](http://www.ashmolean.org); [www.rickmather.com](http://www.rickmather.com)

<sup>149</sup> Osmond, *op.cit.*, 301-25; Tyack, 203-5

<sup>150</sup> G.V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford* (1868), 189; Hurst, *op.cit.*, 102; C. H. Daniel, *Worcester College* (1900), 241



needed space here. The street is also located on the gravel terrace outside the city wall where the pressure on space was less intense and suburban development, evident by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, could be more generous in scale.<sup>151</sup> Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forecourts or gardens lay in front of most properties in St Giles' and, if other property owners had, as St John's College did in 1576, bought the sites of their forecourts, there might have been no room for street parking. As it is, the plane trees on either side of the street – planted since 1859 to replace diseased elms - represent approximately the depth of the lost forecourts and add considerably to the beauty of St Giles'.<sup>152</sup> The street was the ideal place of residence for the Town and Gown élite in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and many surviving houses date back to that time.<sup>153</sup>

Without crossing St Giles', and there are no official places to do so north of the Martyrs' Memorial, you can still get a good overall impression of the many fine buildings on the east side. St John's College is visible through the trees and beyond the stone wall around its forecourt. This frontage is actually medieval and part of St Bernard's College, a Cistercian college founded in 1437, which was dissolved with the other religious houses in 1539. Sir Thomas White, a London merchant, re-founded St Bernard's as St John's College in 1555 and, going north, you can plot the subsequent expansion of the college, particularly the very traditional Tudor-Gothic North Quad range (1881, George Gilbert Scott) which features another central gate tower.<sup>154</sup>

On the west side, beyond the Taylorian extension and the entrance to the 2009 Ashmolean extension, nos. 67-65 St Giles' have been refurbished as part of the Ioannou Centre for Byzantine Studies (2008, van Heyningen and Haward Architects).<sup>155</sup> Nos. 67-66 (1869) are of ashlar stone in Victorian Gothic style with projecting bays and a good retained shop front. The upper floors are ornamented with carvings of animals, birds and human heads. George Wyatt, a well-known builder and ironmonger, built the premises from designs provided by one of his workmen and another of his men did the carvings. Wyatt's were in business in Oxford between about 1840 and 1954, based at no. 67 St Giles' until 1926.<sup>156</sup> Next door, no. 65 is an early 18<sup>th</sup> century house which Henry Keene, architect of the Radcliffe Observatory, occupied and remodelled between 1769 and 1777. Note the recently restored Gothic shop front which was inserted by the chemist Charles Cripps in 1869. Bhojrah Khatanmal briefly ran an Indian and oriental goods warehouse here in 1904, one of Oxford's earliest Asian businesses.<sup>157</sup> Outside no. 65, you pass two prominent items of street furniture, a K6 phone box and a retained Dean & Son gas lamp standard, now converted to electricity.

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<sup>151</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 25-6

<sup>152</sup> Hurst, *op.cit.*, 106

<sup>153</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 191

<sup>154</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 402-6; Pevsner, 194-6

<sup>155</sup> Oxf CC 05/00110/FUL

<sup>156</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245975 \(66 AND 67, ST GILES, Oxford - 1047078 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245975/66-AND-67-ST-GILES-Oxford-1047078-Historic-England/); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); JOJ 16.10.1869; Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>157</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); Kelly's Oxford Directory (1904)

Further on, Blackfriars is a Dominican Friary (1921-9, Doran Webb) which has a frontage so domestic in scale that you could imagine that it has been there since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>158</sup> Pusey House brought more Gothic to St Giles' with its two-storeyed front (1918, Temple Moore) and a large chapel (1912-14, Temple Moore) on the corner of Pusey Street. Pusey House was founded as a memorial to Dr E.B. Pusey in 1884 and grew from small beginnings in a single house, no. 61 St Giles'. The chapel occupied the site of no. 57, used as a studio by the photographer Abbott Booty between 1864 and 1878. Since 1981, St Cross College has shared the Pusey House premises but the house continues its theological and pastoral work.<sup>159</sup>

Reaching the corner of Pusey Street, glance across St Giles' at the changing townscape on the east side. In the descriptions which follow, it is worth bearing in mind that the street numbers in St Giles' run up the east side to no. 30 and back down the west side from no. 31. North of the monumental St John's College façade, no. 9 is a restored 17<sup>th</sup> century stone house with two gables.<sup>160</sup> In Victorian times, local solicitors Gorden Dayman and Percival Walsh had their offices here. They were not on speaking terms after quarrelling early in their partnership and only communicated with each other through their managing clerk, Mr Draper.<sup>161</sup> Middleton Hall, north of a private vehicle entrance into St John's College, is a three storey ashlar stone house with a balustraded parapet. It was built in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and restored 1901-04.<sup>162</sup> Next comes a group of three and four storey stuccoed or stone houses dating from around 1800. On the right, the Lamb & Flag pub is a re-fronting of an older building dating back to c.1695 and it has a coach way to a yard with a fine horse-chestnut tree. No. 13, next door, steps up a storey and is a narrow prelude to the much grander nos. 14 and 15.<sup>163</sup> North of a gateway, no. 16 or St Giles' House, formerly known as Judge's Lodgings, is a splendid ashlar stone house two storeys high with a pedimented centrepiece. It was built in 1702 for Thomas Rowney senior (1668-1727), MP for Oxford from 1695 to 1722, and his wife Elizabeth. The Duke of Marlborough used the property as a town house in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and, from 1852 to 1965, the judge attending the Assizes lodged here while staying in Oxford. Oxford High School for Girls was based here for three years from its

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<sup>158</sup> Pevsner, 314; [www.imagesofengland 245257](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245257) ([STONE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF HEADINGTON ROAD 50 YARDS EAST OF HILLTOP, Oxford - 1046589 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245257))

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-16; K. Hylson-Smith, *A History of St. Giles' and the St. Cross/Pusey House site* (1993), 11-17; *Oxf Encyc*, 344; Tyack, 271-3, 315; Oxford Directories

<sup>160</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>161</sup> Charles Fenby, *The Other Oxford* (1970), 20-1

<sup>162</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland 245810](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245810) ([MIDDLETON HALL, Oxford - 1047133 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245810))

<sup>163</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland 245812-15](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245812-15) ([LAMB AND FLAG INN, Oxford - 1338861 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245812-15), [13, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047134 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245812-15), [14, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369453 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245812-15), [15, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1084344 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245812-15))

foundation in 1875, moving across to no. 38 St Giles' in 1878 and then to new premises in Banbury Road in 1880.<sup>164</sup>

Turning your attention back to the west side, savour the prospect of architectural variety which awaits you. Pusey Street was formed in 1827 as part of the contemporary St John's College development, providing the new St John Street with a link to St Giles'. Pusey Street took in the site of the attractive-sounding Polley's Row and was known as Alfred Street until 1925.<sup>165</sup> No. 56 St Giles', on the corner of Pusey Street, is a three storey ashlar-fronted house with attics in its mansard Welsh slate roof, built perhaps in the 1820s; the Oxfam Bookshop now makes good use of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shop front.<sup>166</sup> Next door, notice the coat of arms of Regent's Park College above the central doorway of the three storey late 18<sup>th</sup> century house. The property is the home of the Principal of the college which was founded in London in 1810 to prepare men for the Baptist ministry and moved to Oxford between 1927 and 1940.<sup>167</sup> No. 54 St Giles' takes us back a couple of centuries to around 1600 and has a two storey façade of plastered added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but the listed building description confirms that it is 'one of the few houses of its date left in Oxford and in more or less original state'.<sup>168</sup> A passageway to the right formerly led to Drewett's Yard but this is another of the lost rows of St Giles'. The next property is a tall narrow Victorian Gothic rocket-ship of a building with carved decorative surrounds to the upper windows. The shop was a tobacconist's for many years and, if you look closely, you can see a carved tobacco pipe in the spandrel of the window to the left of the door. The old shop front now announces the St Giles' Café, a popular resort for students and others since c.1937 when the proprietress, Miss Beta Hitchcox, was offering home-made cakes as a speciality.<sup>169</sup> A three storey late 18<sup>th</sup> century façade, masking an earlier core, leads on to the Eagle & Child, a pub since at least 1684, which is also known by variant names such as the Bird and Baby. The building retains late 17<sup>th</sup> century features but it has a modern stuccoed front with three gables at eaves level. The Oxford historian, Anthony Wood (1632-95), often visited the pub and the Inklings, including C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and H.V.D. Dyson, met here regularly from the 1930s to the 1960s.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245817 ([THE JUDGES LODGING, Oxford - 1047136 | Historic England](#)); *Oxf Encyc*, 302, 396; Pevsner, 314; Tyack, 145; V.E. Stack, ed., *Oxford High School 1875-1960* (1963), 1-5; W.R. Williams, *Parliamentary History of the County of Oxford* (1899), 125

<sup>165</sup> Hylson-Smith, *op.cit.*, 10, 18; Osmond, *op.cit.*, 307; St John's College, Plan of Building Sites in Beaumont Street, etc., 1826 - copy in OHC, MPC 847)

<sup>166</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245849 ([56, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369440 | Historic England](#))

<sup>167</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245848 ([55, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047108 | Historic England](#)); *Oxf Encyc*, 356-7

<sup>168</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245847 ([53 AND 54, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369439 | Historic England](#))

<sup>169</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245846 ([52, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047107 | Historic England](#)); Kelly's Oxford Directories

<sup>170</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245844 ([THE EAGLE AND CHILD PUBLIC HOUSE, Oxford - 1047147 | Historic England](#)); *Oxf Encyc*, 127, 193

Beyond the pub, a gate offers you a tantalizing glimpse of Wellington Place, a terrace of three storey mid 19<sup>th</sup> century houses tucked away behind St. Giles'.<sup>171</sup> Nos. 45-46 St Giles' are a pair of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century houses retaining excellent iron balconies and railings which will again be a feature at nos. 38-39 and 34-36.<sup>172</sup> Public safety considerations probably saved this ironwork from going for salvage in the Second World War. No. 43 has a datestone, W P 1660, at second floor level but the stuccoed front which includes no. 42 dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>173</sup> No. 43 became Oxford's Quaker meeting house in 1946 and served as Oxford register office from 1956 until 1976. Down in the garden of no. 42, notice a stone with the inscription 'Here Endeth Northgate Hundred'.<sup>174</sup> The Northgate Hundred was an area outside the city wall first recorded in 1141-2, which belonged to the lords of Headington Manor. The area shrank to little more than St Mary Magdalen parish and a small part of St Giles' parish by the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>175</sup> Gables reappear at no. 41 which is a three storey house of restored ashlar stone with a Doric front doorway and sash windows on three floors; it was built in around 1700 and re-faced in 1956.<sup>176</sup> Next door, no. 40 is, unusually for St Giles', set back behind the street frontage in a small garden. The main part of the house dates from about 1600 with alterations and additions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>177</sup>

Reverting to the east side of St Giles', there are two three storey ashlar stone houses north of St Giles' House before no. 20. The latter is a striking three storey house with a stucco front ruled to look like ashlar stone. The front has a two storey bow beside the central doorway and a Welsh slate roof with deep projecting eaves. Some of the first floor sash windows of this early 19<sup>th</sup> century house retain wooden blind boxes for blinds which would have protected furnishings from the afternoon sun.<sup>178</sup> Black Hall is the next property north with its gable end to the street. It originated as a prosperous 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse but its character has been obscured by stonework restoration.<sup>179</sup> Between no. 20 St Giles' and Black Hall, the Kendrew Quadrangle for St John's College (2007-10, Sir Richard MacCormac) has risen on the site of the short-lived Queen Elizabeth House (1961, R.E. Enthoven). Sir John Kendrew (1917-97) was a Nobel prize-

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<sup>171</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland

<sup>172</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245843 ([45 AND 46, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047146 | Historic England](#))

<sup>173</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245839 ([42, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1068618 | Historic England](#)), 245841 ([43, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047145 | Historic England](#))

<sup>174</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245248 ([STONE OUTSIDE NUMBER 42 ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1046585 | Historic England](#))

<sup>175</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 265-8

<sup>176</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245838 ([41, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047144 | Historic England](#))

<sup>177</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245837 ([40, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1068575 | Historic England](#))

<sup>178</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245819-21 ([17, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369454 | Historic England](#), [19, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047137 | Historic England](#), [20, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1063708 | Historic England](#))

<sup>179</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); www.imagesofengland 245822 ([BLACK HALL, Oxford - 1369455 | Historic England](#))

winning molecular biologist and President of St John's College between 1981 and 1987.<sup>180</sup>

Archaeological investigations on the site revealed a ditch interpreted as part of a late Neolithic henge monument (c.2200 BC), which would have been around 150 metres in diameter. It probably extended east to the modern Parks Road and the surviving earthworks perhaps led to the kink in the road by Keble College. The henge with its massive bank and ditch would have been a dominant feature in the significant late Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual landscape which has been identified through excavation and cropmarks.<sup>181</sup> Centuries later, the ditch became a convenient mass grave, apparently for victims of the massacre of Danes living in Oxford on St Brice's Day (November 13<sup>th</sup>) in 1002. This was a coordinated attack ordered by King Aethelred in response to Danish raids on England but it led to an invasion by Sweyn, the Danish king, in 1003 and Oxford was sacked in a reprisal raid in 1009. More peaceably, the excavation also revealed features in yards and gardens behind the medieval and later houses which grew up in St Giles'.<sup>182</sup> One surprising survival north of Black Hall is a 17<sup>th</sup> century rubble stone and timber-framed barn and this was converted into an arts and performance centre as part of the Kendrew Quadrangle scheme (2008, Dunthorne Parker Associates).<sup>183</sup> This building dates back to a time when Black Hall and other St Giles' properties were farms cultivating the open spaces of St Giles's Field in the north of the parish. From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century until the 1660s, there was a windmill a little way up Banbury Road and old maps show a pond south of St Giles' churchyard where the Oxford war memorial (1921, J.E. Thorpe, G.T. Gardner & Thomas Rayson) now stands.<sup>184</sup> The churchyard begins to obscure views of properties on the east side from here but you will probably be able to make out the contrast between the three-gabled nos. 22-23 St Giles', originally a single building of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the light brick Mathematical Institute (1964-66, University Surveyor/J. Lankester).<sup>185</sup>

Back on the west side, no. 39 is a Tudor style two storey ashlar stone house with two gables and projecting bays.<sup>186</sup> Note the arms of Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73), Bishop of Oxford from 1845 to 1869, above the doorway to 39A that led to the Diocesan Registry at the rear. From his unctuous manner, Wilberforce was nicknamed 'Soapy Sam' and he is perhaps best known today for his part in the evolution debate at the 1860 British Association meeting in Oxford University

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<sup>180</sup> Oxf CC 07/00388/FUL; ODNB; Pevsner, 270

<sup>181</sup> Thames Valley Archaeological Services, *Kendrew Quadrangle Excavations* (2008), Phases 1-2

<sup>182</sup> Thames Valley Archaeological Services, *Kendrew Quadrangle Excavations* (2008), Phase 3

<sup>183</sup> Oxf CC 06/00568/FUL; [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com](http://www.imagesofengland.com) 245825 ([PART OF QUEEN ELIZABETH HOUSE ADJOINING NUMBER 22 TO THE SOUTH, Oxford - 1047139 | Historic England](#))

<sup>184</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 394; *VCH Oxon iv*, 330; Victor Sugden, *An Oxford Diary* (2009); OJI 13.7.1921

<sup>185</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com](http://www.imagesofengland.com) 245826 ([22 AND 23, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1065714 | Historic England](#))

<sup>186</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com](http://www.imagesofengland.com) 245836 ([39A, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047143 | Historic England](#))



Museum. The story goes that he asked Thomas Huxley whether he considered himself descended from an ape; Huxley replied that this was preferable to being descended from someone who used his great gifts to obscure the truth.<sup>187</sup>

The west side of St Giles' finishes on a high note in more senses than one with a series of three and four storey late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. Shaded as they are by tall plane trees, it is easy to overlook their quality. No. 38 (c. 1830) was built as a pair of three storey ashlar stone houses with good cast iron railings and first floor balconies. St Ursula's Convent occupied both properties between c.1891 and 1922, adding a fourth floor and attics in 1910. St Benet's Hall, a Permanent Private Hall attached to the University, took over the premises in 1922. Originally founded in 1897, the Hall was a Benedictine foundation enabling Catholic monks to read for degrees at Oxford. Most undergraduates at the Hall are now laymen and St Benet's is the last University institution to admit men only for first degrees.<sup>188</sup> Next come no. 37A (c.1808) and no. 37 (c.1789), two detached three storey ashlar stone houses, the second of which has a fine central doorway set in a Doric frame. They occupy the site of a timber yard belonging to Vincent Shortland (d.1801), a successful carpenter who was twice Mayor of Oxford. He built no. 37 for his own occupation and his son sold the site of no. 37A in 1808.<sup>189</sup>

Between nos. 37 and 36, there is a modest gated entrance to the First Church of Christ the Scientist, originally built behind these premises in 1934. The present church dates from 1996 and the elegant reading room was added in 2004.<sup>190</sup> Nos. 36-34 (1828-9, Daniel Evans) are a three storey ashlar stone block with a ground floor of rusticated stone blocks which emphasize its grandeur. The ground floor windows have striking semi-circular lintels and the doors have semi-circular fanlights. As at no. 38, there are splendid cast iron railings and balconies.<sup>191</sup> The group was designed and built by the successful local builder Daniel Evans (d.1846) and a blue plaque records that he and then his son-in-law Joshua Symm occupied no. 34 for many years. Surprisingly perhaps, this grand home remained highly convenient for work since they had a builder's yard at the back accessed from Little Clarendon Street. The Oxford & County Secretarial School, familiarly and ungallantly known as the Ox and Cow, later occupied no. 34 between 1952 and 1999.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 496-7; [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) – 1860 evolution debate; ODNB; William Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford* (1900), 50-2

<sup>188</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245835 ([38 AND 39, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369418 | Historic England](#)); [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) – St Benet's Hall

<sup>189</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245833 ([37, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047142 | Historic England](#))

<sup>190</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); *VCH Oxon iv*, 424; Oxf CC 02/02233/FUL

<sup>191</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland](http://www.imagesofengland) 245832 ([34-36, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1047141 | Historic England](#))

<sup>192</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); *Oxf Encyc*, 299; [www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk)



Nos. 33-32 are three storey rendered houses with fine replica shop fronts and attic windows in Welsh slate roofs. Having been left to become structurally unsound, these buildings were totally reconstructed in 1976-7.<sup>193</sup> No. 31 St Giles', on the corner of Little Clarendon Street, is a three storey house with an ashlar stone façade and recent shop fronts.<sup>194</sup> John Wiblin's butcher's shop flourished here from 1870, having started in a small way back in 1855, and the business continued until c.1958. Wiblin's made Royal Oxford Sausages in premises at the back, sending them around the country by parcel post. They were also tinned and exported across the globe to people, presumably old Oxonians, who could not do without them.<sup>195</sup> Looking across Woodstock Road from here, you get a good view of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century west tower of St Giles' Church but consideration of the church and churchyard is reserved for another walk.

We cannot leave St Giles' without considering St Giles's Fair, the annual event in early September which closes the street to traffic for two days and provides a fascinating array of sights, sounds and smells. The fair was first recorded in 1624 as a parish wake and only became a massive spectacle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the population of Oxford grew and excursion trains began to bring in visitors from a distance. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century fair consisted of stalls selling crockery and other goods as well as sideshows, booths and drinking saloons. Later in the century, steam power brought larger, faster and noisier rides to the fair and a greater police presence reduced the opportunities for criminal behaviour. The lawlessness of the fair had perhaps reached a climax in 1830 when fairgoers released 44 Otmoor enclosure rioters who were being brought through St Giles' on their way to Oxford gaol. Moralists and spoilsports were still trying to have the fair suppressed as rowdy and licentious in 1893 and, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, growing motor traffic led to calls that the fair should be moved.<sup>196</sup> St Giles's Fair has survived all these threats, ceasing only in the War years, and you can still enjoy the bizarre spectacle of giant rides flinging people around just inches from some of Oxford's finest historic buildings.

## Chapter 4 – Little Clarendon Street to Beaumont Street

Now turn left down Little Clarendon Street, which existed in medieval times as a lane leading to Twenty Acre, an old name for part of Jericho.<sup>197</sup> It was English Lane in 1784 but became known as Workhouse Lane after the Oxford United

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<sup>193</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com/245830-1](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245830-1) ([32, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1369417 | Historic England](#), [33 AND 33A, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1068561 | Historic England](#))

<sup>194</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); [www.imagesofengland.com/245829](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245829) ([31, ST GILES STREET, Oxford - 1068551 | Historic England](#))

<sup>195</sup> OM 16.5.1956; Kelly's Oxford Directories; JOJ 17.10.1885

<sup>196</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 183, 312; JOJ, 11.9.1830; Sally Alexander, *St Giles's Fair 1830-1914* (1970), 10; Bernard Reaney, *The Class Struggle in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Oxfordshire* (1970), 29-45

<sup>197</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 26; H E Salter, 'Survey of Oxford vol. 2', *Oxford Historical Society New Series* 20 (1969), 207

Parishes built a workhouse nearby on the site of Wellington Square (1772, John Gwynn; demol. 1865).<sup>198</sup> This unflattering name gradually gave way to the present one in the 1830s and 1840s, reflecting the recent arrival of the Clarendon Press in Walton Street.<sup>199</sup> The north side of Little Clarendon Street was substantially developed in the first half of the 19th century, and partially rebuilt before 1914 as the street became a neighbourhood shopping centre with its own individual shops and a branch of F. Cape & Co., the St Ebbe's drapery firm.<sup>200</sup> Some older buildings survive, notably perhaps the Duke of Cambridge pub at no. 5 (c.1860), now a wine bar, and nos. 9-12 (1903), now Café Rouge and Pierre Victoire.<sup>201</sup> Beyond Café Rouge, Somerville College's student blocks, Vaughan and Margery Fry-Elisabeth Nuffield House (1958-66, Arup Associates/Philip Dowson) suddenly propelled the street into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concrete frame of Fry-Nuffield House towers above a canopy of segmental concrete arches which shelters a range of shops.<sup>202</sup> Little Clarendon Street quickly became known as Little Trendy Street with cosmopolitan businesses offering 'Presents and Gifts from five Continents'.

The south side of Little Clarendon Street is entirely modern beyond no. 31A St Giles'. First, you pass Dartington House (1969) with its buff brick upper floors massively jettied over retail units, some now occupied by the University Admissions Office.<sup>203</sup> Next come the concrete and glass University Offices (1969-74, Sir Leslie Martin in association with David Owers) which offer covered cycle parking in an arcade above the pavement.<sup>204</sup> This development can only be explained in the context of Wellington Square so turn left to view a remarkable juxtaposition – three sides of sedate, brick-built Victorian square and one side of 1970s brutalist concrete. Putting all this into a historical context, part of Oxford's Civil War defences ran across the site of Wellington Square, and remaining earthworks probably led to the area being called Rats and Mice Hill in the 18th century.<sup>205</sup> The Oxford Workhouse was here from 1772 until 1864 when it moved to new premises in Cowley Road.<sup>206</sup> John Henry Newman then purchased the site for a proposed Roman Catholic college but opposition 'from unknown persons, who mislead Propaganda' soon put paid to that scheme.<sup>207</sup> Instead, he sold the land to the University which developed it on 99 year building leases between 1869 and 1876. The Oxford architect, E.G. Bruton, drew up the overall

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<sup>198</sup> University College Estate map (1784) reproduced in Oxf CC 10/01475/FUL - Conservation Appraisal, Appendix A; *VCH Oxon iv*, 347-8

<sup>199</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 226

<sup>200</sup> University College, Little Clarendon Street estate map, 1848 - copy in OHC, MPC 578; Oxf CC 10/01475/FUL - Conservation Appraisal; Richard Foster, *F Cape & Co. of St Ebbe's Street, Oxford* (1973), [3]

<sup>201</sup> P.J. Marriott, *Oxford Pubs Past and Present* (1978), 13; OHC City Engineer's Plan 419 New Series

<sup>202</sup> Tyack, 317-18; Philip Opher, *Twentieth Century Oxford Architecture* (1995), 14; Pevsner, 252

<sup>203</sup> Oxf CC 70/23036/A-H – shopfront for Usborne's in existing building

<sup>204</sup> Oxf CC 19991; David Reed and Philip Opher, *New Architecture in Oxford* (1974)

<sup>205</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 92-3 – copy of Loggan map, 1675

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 347-8; OC 1.10.1864

<sup>207</sup> OC 29.10.1864, 24.12.1864, 21.1.1865, 11.2.1865; Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: a biography* (1988), 566

scheme, including access tunnels for sewers, gas mains and other services, and he also designed some of the houses. The estate included plots in Little Clarendon Street and Walton Street as well as the new Wellington Square. By this time, the formal square was becoming decidedly unfashionable and the larger plots initially offered in Wellington Square attracted little interest from developers. Reducing the plot size soon encouraged building and many of the new houses went on to become university lodging-houses, catering for the new breed of Unattached or Non-Collegiate students who came to Oxford from 1868.<sup>208</sup>

By the late 1960s, the Wellington Square leases were expiring and the properties were judged to be beyond economic repair. Comprehensive redevelopment of the north side of the square (1971-6, Sir Leslie Martin in association with Douglas Lanham) provided graduate student accommodation and shops facing Little Clarendon Street.<sup>209</sup> A University funding crisis in the mid 1970s saved the rest of the square and the remaining properties were converted for office and other academic purposes. They are of local yellow brick, three storeys high with ground floor bays, cellars and attics with gabled dormers. They retain fine contemporary area railings which survived the War because people might otherwise have fallen into the basements in the blackout. The central garden, originally laid out by William Baxter, did lose its railings to wartime salvage and plain modern railings were installed as part of a project to improve the space in 2005.<sup>210</sup> It's a pleasant retreat where you may hear someone strumming a guitar on a quiet afternoon.

On the west side of the square, No. 37 was both home and base for Oxford's first district nurses between 1879 and 1897. The nurses worked for between five and eight hours a day and one rule specified that 'They shall have eight hours sleep and at least two hours leisure daily.' The district nurses and the Acland Home for in-patients at no. 36, opened in 1882, were funded in memory of Sarah Acland (1815-78), the wife of Henry Acland, Regius Professor of Medicine. The Acland Home moved to new premises in Banbury Road in 1897.<sup>211</sup> In the south-east corner of the square, Rewley House (1872, E.G. Bruton) was built as larger premises for Rewley School, a high school for girls established in connection with the Sisterhood of St Thomas', which flourished here until 1903.<sup>212</sup> In 1926, the University took over the premises as a centre for extra-mural students and Rewley House, with major expansion (1984-6, Bradley Burrell Partnership), still serves as the Department of Continuing Education.<sup>213</sup> Continue round the corner

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<sup>208</sup> Malcolm Graham, *The Suburbs of Victorian Oxford* (1985), 76; M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys, *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 7, part 2 (2000), 192-208

<sup>209</sup> Oxf CC 70/19991/AB-H

<sup>210</sup> Oxford University Archives UC/M/2/5, 103 and UC/M/2/6, 136; information from University Parks, July 2010

<sup>211</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 360; *The Story of the Acland Home, 1882-1958* (1958), 4-5; The Sarah Acland Memorial Home for Nurses: *Report of Committee* (1879), 11-12

<sup>212</sup> T.W. Squires, *In West Oxford* (1928), 25; JOJ, 12.10.1872

<sup>213</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 136

and into St. John Street, noticing the cartouche tablet of the Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), who was Chancellor of Oxford University 1834-52, high up on no. 3 Wellington Square (1875, J.C. Curtis; carving by Samuel Grafton).<sup>214</sup>

Wellington Square ends suddenly where the workhouse boundary wall interrupted the northward progress of St John Street, laid out in c.1824 to focus on the tower of the Radcliffe Observatory as part of the St John's College development of Beaumont Close.<sup>215</sup> Cross the site of that wall and you travel back forty years with arguably as big a stylistic contrast as the one we've just seen in Wellington Square. Yellow brick gives way to Bath stone façades with cheaper red brick on less evident side and rear elevations, or red brick alone in humbler artisan houses. This reflects the overall estate plan but individual builders and other speculators built, perhaps, two or three houses at a time to form the eventual, unbroken terraces. Differing building heights and design features therefore provide a measure of diversity and you will see that St John Street houses are generally smaller and plainer than those in Beaumont Street, especially at this northern end where the workhouse deterred fashionable development. As you go down the street, notice surviving mud-scrapers and coal-hole covers which recall an age when the roads were muddy and coal was unchallenged as a domestic fuel.

Reaching Pusey Street, car enthusiasts in particular may like to turn left and investigate Pusey Lane, originally Alfred Lane, a service road behind St John Street. The section north of Pusey Street, still paved with stone setts, contained the small workshop where MG sports cars were assembled in the mid 1920s before factory production took over.<sup>216</sup> Returning to St John Street, cross the road and walk on a few paces to see no. 16 which has a blue plaque to William Turner (1789-1862), the Oxford artist best known for his watercolour landscapes, who lived here from 1833 until his death.<sup>217</sup> Now retrace your steps and turn left into Beaumont Place where former British Council offices (1966, Architects Design Partnership/John Fryman; converted 2009, gbs architects) were slotted into the back gardens of nos. 47-50 St John Street.<sup>218</sup> After a few paces, you reach Beaumont Buildings, an irregular three storey brick terrace with gaps remaining as garden plots between nos. 3 and 4 and nos. 19 and 20.<sup>219</sup> The houses are again of slightly differing heights but there is general use of Flemish bond brickwork with vitrified headers, and solid lintels above doors and windows. Turning left, notice white slip headers impressed J. Arlidge H(eadington) Q(uarry) 1826 at no. 9 and a date-stone A.T.H. 1826 above the first-floor string course at no. 6. The continued use of Winsor lanterns on brackets when electric street lighting finally replaced gas in 1977, helped to maintain the character of this

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<sup>214</sup> ODNB; OC 12.10.1872

<sup>215</sup> Osmond, *op. cit.*, 306; [www.imagesofengland.com/245859](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245859) ([NOS. 2 TO 63, ST JOHN STREET AND 5, PUSEY STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047113 | Historic England](#))

<sup>216</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) - MG history

<sup>217</sup> ODNB; [www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk)

<sup>218</sup> Pevsner, 306; Oxf CC 09/00459/FUL

<sup>219</sup> Osmond, *op. cit.*, 307, 309, 313-14

delightful backwater. Carry on past the two storey Beaumont Cottage (c.1830) to Beaumont Lane, a narrow service road beside no. 63 St John Street, and notice on the back wall of no. 28 Beaumont Street fragments of medieval window tracery. Although near the site of Beaumont Palace there is no evidence that this stonework came from that building.

Emerging from Beaumont Lane into St John Street, you have a good view of the Sackler Library (2001, Robert Adam with Paul Hanvey), funded by Dr Mortimer Sackler to replace the former library of the Ashmolean Museum. The Classical design matches the subject content of the bookstock and the main library building is a stuccoed rotunda like a latter-day gasholder. The entrance from St John Street leads into a circular pavilion based on the Temple of Apollo at Bassae, first excavated by C.R. Cockerell, the architect of the Ashmolean Museum.<sup>220</sup> Turn right towards Beaumont Street, the most prestigious road in the St John's College development, which overlaid the remains of Beaumont Palace, a house built for Henry I in c.1130 as a staging post on his journeys to Woodstock for hunting in Wychwood Forest. Usually known as the King's Houses, the palace became a substantial establishment and both Richard I (1157) and King John (1167) were born there. Edward I was the last king to stay there in 1275 and, in 1318, Edward II granted it to the Carmelites, or White Friars, who let their earlier premises in Worcester Street to the Benedictines of Gloucester College.<sup>221</sup> After the Dissolution of the Friary in 1538, the buildings were mostly pulled down to provide building stone for Christ Church and St John's College. A small part survived as a pigsty, serving as 'an admirable specimen of the mutability of all worldly matters.'<sup>222</sup> When Beaumont Street was built, some stones from the palace were re-erected as a garden feature (now lost) at no. 300 Woodstock Road.<sup>223</sup>

Beaumont Street's three storey houses were built between 1823 and c.1828 and they have impressive Bath stone facades with sash windows and handsome door-cases with attractively detailed fanlights.<sup>224</sup> Most houses have iron balconies or window guards at first floor level and some have attractive canopied verandahs. Many houses retain mud-scrappers and these tend to be grander than the ones in St John Street. The work of different builders is evident everywhere, as for example in the additional height of nos. 27-28 and 29 on the north side, or in the juxtaposition of slightly old-fashioned pedimented door-cases with more up-to-date semi-circular, plain headed ones. A few houses have been lost, to extensions of the Randolph Hotel and the Ashmolean and to the Oxford Playhouse (1938, façade by Edward Maufe), which has a remarkably sympathetic Clipsham ashlar stone façade with sash windows. Building the

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<sup>220</sup> Oxf CC 97/00209/NFH; [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) – Sackler Library

<sup>221</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 304-5

<sup>222</sup> OHC illustration I57, Beaumont Palace engraving (1774); Andrew Clark, ed., 'Survey of the City of Oxford...by Anthony Wood, vol. ii', *Oxford Historical Society 17* (1890), 431-2, 447

<sup>223</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 37

<sup>224</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245325-6](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245325-6) ([THE PLAYHOUSE, Oxford - 1185150 | Historic England, 24-37, BEAUMONT STREET, Oxford - 1047375 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245325-6))

Playhouse led also to the demolition of another house, no. 14, in order to widen the entrance to Gloucester Street.<sup>225</sup> Local architect, Thomas Rayson, with offices at no. 28, criticized the 'uninventive and unsatisfactory' rendering of the side elevation of no. 15 in 1939, arguing that old materials should have been used to re-create the destroyed Gloucester Street frontage.<sup>226</sup>

Walk down towards Worcester College, reaching a plaque recalling Beaumont Palace on a stone pillar in the garden of no. 24 Beaumont Street. Interestingly, a previous version of this plaque mentioned only Richard I, not King John, choosing perhaps to ignore Oxford's part in fathering one of the 'Bad Kings' in Sellars and Yeatman's *1066 and All That*. The grand Classical façade of Worcester College (1720-86, Dr George Clark and Nicholas Hawksmoor) has a recessed centre housing an upstairs library and projecting wings containing the hall (left) and chapel (right).<sup>227</sup> Note the stained glass in their large Venetian windows. Worcester College was founded in 1714 on the site of Gloucester College, established in 1283 as a 'house of study' for Benedictine houses in the Province of Canterbury.<sup>228</sup> Gloucester College died with the dissolution of its parent monasteries in the 1530s but Gloucester Hall took over the buildings between 1541 and 1714 and Worcester College has retained many of them, not least the 15<sup>th</sup> century buildings to the north and south of the entrance block.<sup>229</sup>

Cross Beaumont Street at the lights and walk into Worcester Street, passing an early 19th century rubble stone house with sash windows which provides a pleasing vernacular foil for Worcester College.<sup>230</sup> Turn left into Gloucester Green, noticing straight ahead, the side elevation of the former Central Boys' School (1900, Leonard Stokes) which made ingenious use of a small triangular site to provide a central hall and six classrooms. The side and rear elevations of the building are of brick and the roof is, unusually for Oxford, of Westmoreland slate. The front is of ashlar stone with mullioned bay windows and you will see a sculpted panel of King Alfred, traditionally the founder of Oxford University, and St Frideswide, patron saint of Oxford, above the central doorway. The Central Boys' School closed in 1934 and the building was long used as bus station offices and a waiting room while the future of Gloucester Green was endlessly debated.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Don Chapman, *Oxford Playhouse* (2008), 105

<sup>226</sup> SPAB, Oxford Beaumont Street file

<sup>227</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245207 \(WORCESTER COLLEGE, MAIN BLOCK, Oxford - 1184311 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245207/WORCESTER%20COLLEGE,%20MAIN%20BLOCK,%20Oxford%20-%2011843111%20Historic%20England)

<sup>228</sup> Pevsner, 221

<sup>229</sup> Pevsner, 218-23; Tyack, 157-9

<sup>230</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 194 – copy of Hoggar map, 1850; OS 1:500 Oxon XXXIII.15.16 (1876)

<sup>231</sup> [www.imagesofengland.com/245446 \(MIDLAND COUNTIES OMNIBUS COMPANY WAITING ROOM, Oxford - 1047305 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.com/245446/MIDLAND%20COUNTIES%20OMNIBUS%20COMPANY%20WAITING%20ROOM,%20Oxford%20-%201047305%20Historic%20England); Pevsner, 305-6; Tyack, 265-6; *VCH Oxon iv*, 456-7; OHC City Engineer's Plan 3467 Old Series



## Chapter 5 – Gloucester Green to Bulwarks Lane

Some historical context is perhaps appropriate at this point. Gloucester Green seems an unlikely name in the heart of Oxford, particularly perhaps for foreign visitors arriving at Heathrow or Gatwick who are offered this destination as an option. The Gloucester element comes of course from Gloucester College but what about the Green? People probably lived here during the early medieval period but their houses were abandoned after the Black Death (1348) reduced Oxford's population and the area was known as Broken Hays until the 17th century because 'it hath bin from all antiquity...a rude, broken and indigested place'.<sup>232</sup> In 1601, the City obtained a charter for a market here but farmers were unwilling to move from the central streets and the cattle market did not become established.<sup>233</sup> Instead, the City had a bowling green laid out in 1631, trees were planted around the edge in 1648 and the Green remained a pleasant square for just over a century.<sup>234</sup> A City gaol was then built in the middle (1786, William Blackburn; demol. 1879) and after unsuccessful attempts to re-launch the cattle market in 1775 and 1797, regular cattle markets were held here between 1835 and 1932. The cattle market became more important with the coming of the railways and the growth of the city and, after the demolition of the gaol, the pens were extended and a settling room for dealers (1881, F.J. Codd; demol. 1987) was built in the middle.<sup>235</sup>

After the cattle market was removed to Oxpens Road, the one-time Green was converted into a country bus station in 1935 with car parking at the east end. As early as 1936, the City Council considered developing the site as a three storey garage for 318 cars with petrol pumps and a restaurant, but the scheme was attacked by local traders as a Tower of Babel and the estimated cost of £45,000 was enough to secure its rejection.<sup>236</sup> In 1939, an underground car park was proposed with the added benefit that it might also serve as an air raid shelter for up to 2,000 people. Later speculative proposals envisaged burying Gloucester Green beneath a multi-storey car park for 2,500 cars (1968) or under three large department stores (1979).<sup>237</sup> In 1978, however, the City Council issued a Discussion Paper about the future of the area and responded to public opinion by adopting the so-called 'Romantic Option' for its development. The scheme chosen after a competition (1987-90, Kendrick Associates) provided offices, shops and flats, a new bus station on the west side of Gloucester Green and a tree-lined square beside St George's Place.<sup>238</sup> The open market, minus livestock,

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<sup>232</sup> *Wood's City i*, 363

<sup>233</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 307

<sup>234</sup> M.G. Hobson & H.E. Salter, *Oxford Council Acts 1626-1665* (1933), 162; *VCH Oxon iv*, 426

<sup>235</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 307, 335; JOJ 15.10.1881

<sup>236</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 154; *Oxford Monthly*, February 1938, 2

<sup>237</sup> Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick & Partners, *Oxford Central Area Study* (1968), 8, 130-1, fig. 80; Oxford City Council, *Gloucester Green Discussion Paper* (1979), 7-8; Oxford City Council, *Gloucester Green: Development of Bii Option* (1980), 28-9

<sup>238</sup> Oxf CC 84/00281/NFH

had returned to Gloucester Green in 1982 and this found a home in the new square. Geoffrey Tyack has described the development as 'exuberant post-modern eclecticism' and the visual diversity is reinforced by stone dressings and the use of contrasting brick colours, red, buff and blue; two prominent corner towers give the market square a faintly oriental air.<sup>239</sup>

Few older properties in Gloucester Green survived the 20th century but you can still see the much altered rear elevation of the former Corn Exchange and Fire Station (1894-5, H.W. Moore) beyond the bus station.<sup>240</sup> Emerging into the market square, you can't miss the vast brick bulk of the Odeon George Street, the former Ritz Cinema (1935, R. Cromie) although it is now masked by trees.<sup>241</sup> Cross the square towards the east side, threading your way on market days between stalls and shoppers to reach St George's Place. This short link to George Street was created in 1935 and the name recalls the former St George's Church (1849, P. Harrison; demol. 1935) on the site.<sup>242</sup> Below the corner turret of a short-lived Co-op supermarket (1985), you'll see a wall plaque to two soldiers, Private Biggs and Private Pigger, executed nearby on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1649 as ring-leaders in a mutiny by free-thinking Levellers in Cromwell's Oxford garrison.<sup>243</sup> Higher up the wall, notice another faded plaque recalling the Co-op store which was a development on the City Motors site behind Threeways House.<sup>244</sup> Now head for George Street past the Odeon cinema which has the bust of a woman, an attractive bas relief by the sculptor Newbury Trent, high up on the building. A serious fire in 1963 destroyed his work inside the cinema and the interior was radically altered when three screens were introduced in 1975.<sup>245</sup>

You emerge in George Street opposite mature horse chestnut trees and a stone wall with sturdy piers and railings, which introduces the main building of the former City of Oxford High School for Boys (1878-80, T.G. Jackson). A blocked doorway to the left of the wall was intended to lead to a Headmaster's House, but this was never built. Turning right down George Street, you soon have a view of the two storeyed north front of the school which is of ashlar stone with mullioned and transomed windows. Steps lead up to an imposing entrance and the gable above houses a clock and the mottoes of City and University.<sup>246</sup> The school closed in 1966, being merged with Southfield School in Glanville Road to create Oxford School, and this building was restored in 1978 to become Oxford University Social Studies Faculty Centre; today, it houses the History Faculty. Further on, beyond a Victorian pillar box, nos. 41-7 George Street are mid-19th century brick houses, the oldest surviving buildings in this much-altered street.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Tyack, 335

<sup>240</sup> Pevsner, 324

<sup>241</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 7479 New Series; P.J. Marriott, *Early Oxford Picture Palaces* (1978), 30-1

<sup>242</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 390

<sup>243</sup> E.J. Warr, *The Oxford Plaque Guide* (2011), 74-5

<sup>244</sup> OM 17.7.1985, 14.9.1985

<sup>245</sup> Marriott, *op.cit.*, 30-1; Ian Meyrick, *Oxfordshire cinemas* (2007), 109; OT 24.4.1936

<sup>246</sup> www.imagesofengland 245444-5; *VCH Oxon iv*, 458; *Oxf Encyc*, 90; Tyack, 254-5

<sup>247</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 192 – copy of R.S. Hoggar, Plan of Oxford (1850)

They are followed by the Four Candles pub, a modern brick building in matching style with a corner turret (1995).<sup>248</sup> The pub name recalls an oft-repeated comedy sketch by Ronnie Corbett and Ronnie Barker in which a customer's request for 'fork handles' is joyously misinterpreted. Ronnie Barker (1929-2005), who grew up in Oxford, attended the nearby City of Oxford High School for Boys between 1940 and 1945.<sup>249</sup>

On this side of George Street, you can still see where the Ritz Cinema was named high up on the tall brick façade as you head west. Next, you come to the front of the former Corn Exchange and Fire Station (1894-6, H.W. Moore), a large building of red brick and stone dressings. It was erected to replace the Corn Exchange demolished for the new Town Hall and to provide more adequate premises for the Oxford Volunteer Fire Brigade. A few shops with living accommodation above were added to the development in order to recoup some of the outlay.<sup>250</sup> The Fire Station, abandoned in 1971 for new premises in Rewley Road, retains its large ground floor doors and a door lintel bearing a sculpted fireman's helmet and the brigade's motto 'Semper Paratus Semper Volens' (Always Ready, Always Willing). By the steps to the Corn Exchange, notice the foundation stone laid by the Mayor, Ald. Walter Gray on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1894. The building was extensively refurbished (2010-11, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios) to house a Crisis Skylight Centre and café and a new arts company, Arts at the Old Fire Station.<sup>251</sup> Further on, the Eurobar was formerly the Welsh Pony pub (largely rebuilt 1899, William Drew & Sons), so-called because ponies were sold at the nearby cattle market. At the turn of the century, it was briefly renamed the Corn Exchange Hotel, a name you can still see on the Gloucester Green façade.<sup>252</sup>

Beyond Bulwarks Lane – this portion was still sometimes called Broken Hays in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – no. 59 George Street (now Zizzi) is a much-altered Victorian clothing factory (1890-2, H.G.W. Drinkwater) which was built for the London tailors and ladies' outfitters, Messrs. W.F. Lucas & Co., and was intended to employ between 200 and 300 people.<sup>253</sup> Many local women worked in the clothing industry either at home or in clothing factories despite low wages because there were few other job opportunities. Next comes a site important in the history of the Oxford Co-operative & Industrial Society Ltd., founded here in 1872. The society gradually acquired adjacent properties and built a new main store (1908, Frank Mountain), which continued to trade here until c.1977. The store is neo-Dutch and ponderous in design, a loud echo of Moore's restrained Corn Exchange with bands of ashlar between vivid red brickwork. Amazingly, a

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<sup>248</sup> C.E. Goad, Oxford Shopping Centre Plans revised 1.1995, 1.1996

<sup>249</sup> OHC City of Oxford High School for Boys, Admissions Register, 1881-1966

<sup>250</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2429 Old Series; *VCH Oxon iv*, 308, 358

<sup>251</sup> Oxf CC 09/02553/FUL

<sup>252</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 3393 Old Series

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 1581a & 1881 Old Series; OC 11.10.1890, 15.10.1892; *VCH Oxon iv*, 203,216

similar style was used again for the 2-storey eastern extension (1929, F.J. Cooke).<sup>254</sup>

The south side of George Street ends with a range of red brick neo-Georgian offices and shops built in c.1930. Across the road, you can still see a Chain Alley street name-plate beyond the Eurobar but this passageway was effectively destroyed in the 1980s to make an entrance to the new Gloucester Green bus station. Older Oxonians will remember the prefabricated concrete Municipal Restaurant (1947) beyond Chain Alley. Ten such restaurants had opened during the Second World War to make the most economical use of rationed food and this one was the last of these characteristically austere buildings to close in 1977.<sup>255</sup> Now, the tall range of offices built as part of the Gloucester Green development (1987-90) overlooks the bus station and brings scale and colour to the north-west corner of George Street.

Turn left into Worcester Street, where a car park now occupies part of the Oxford Canal basin. The canal crossed this site from a bridge under Hythe Bridge Street just east of Hythe Bridge to a hump-backed bridge in Worcester Street on its way to the Coal Wharf in New Road. The car park site was the Merchandise or Goods Wharf with a monumental brick and stone warehouse (1795) built over the canal to house dry or vulnerable cargoes.<sup>256</sup> When this building was demolished in 1954, Thomas Rayson bewailed 'the loss of one of Oxford's finest buildings. A great brick and stone structure standing on noble arches has been swept away to form a car park.'<sup>257</sup> Lord Nuffield had bought the entire canal wharf for his proposed engineering college in 1937 and early designs for Nuffield College envisaged buildings on the car park site.<sup>258</sup> Only the New Road side was developed, however, and current proposals for a development created around a new canal basin in Worcester Street would certainly enhance this area. As built, Nuffield College (1949-58, Harrison, Barnes & Hubbard) has many echoes of the Cotswolds and a splendid tower and spire which make a positive contribution to the Oxford skyline.<sup>259</sup> Austen Harrison's original scheme in 1938 had envisaged a Mediterranean-style complex of white Portland stone with flat roofs, but Lord Nuffield rejected this as 'un-English'.<sup>260</sup> The gateway in the Worcester Street frontage provides a glimpse of the water feature in the quad which recalls the lost canal. The dormer windows and cupola of the Oxford Register Office (1912, W.A. Daft) face you at the end of Worcester Street. This characterful building with white-painted sash windows originally provided County Offices at a time when legislation had given the County Council significant new powers, especially for

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<sup>254</sup> Donald Barnie, *Seventy-five Years' Co-operation in Oxford and District* (1947), 12; Arthur Ledger, *A History of 100 Years Co-operation in Oxford* (1972), 2-7; Oxford Telephone Directories, 1977-8; OHC City Engineer's Plans 1317, 1372 & 4040 New Series

<sup>255</sup> Malcolm Graham, *Oxfordshire at War* (1994), 145-6; OHC Information Index

<sup>256</sup> H.J. Compton, *The Oxford Canal* (1976), 40; Davies and Robinson, *op.cit.*, 56

<sup>257</sup> Bodl, MS Top Oxon d. 489 Undated newscutting

<sup>258</sup> Howard Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983), 166-77

<sup>259</sup> Pevsner, 235-6; Tyack, 300-1; www.imagesofengland 246019 ([NUFFIELD COLLEGE, Oxford - 1278775 | Historic England](https://www.imagesofengland.com/246019/NUFFIELD%20COLLEGE,%20Oxford%20-%201278775%20Historic%20England))

<sup>260</sup> Colvin, *op.cit.*, 171-4

schools.<sup>261</sup> To the left, there is a fine view of the castle mound and, with imagination, you can clear away New Road, reinstate the moat and wall which lay between you and the mound and rebuild the stone keep, which would have been an impressive sight from here. Outside the moat and on the site of Nuffield College, there were formerly mounds and trenches thought to have been dug when Stephen besieged Empress Matilda in Oxford Castle in 1142. The tradition that Jews were responsible for building these siege-works caused the area to be known as Jews' Mount. The gallows for public executions were sited on these mounds in c.1675.<sup>262</sup>

Retrace your steps and turn right into George Street Mews, now a service lane for commercial premises in George Street and Nuffield College on the right. The street retains a surface of stone setts but the building of Nuffield College cleared a row of old houses on the right. These were condemned before the Second World War but, in 1940, they were put back into use for evacuee families from Ashford in Kent.<sup>263</sup> George Street Mews continues into Bulwarks Lane, which is a totally delightful escape from traffic. The echoing atmosphere of the lane with its brick and paved surfaces and ancient rubble walls sprouting ragwort and ivy-leaved toadflax is unique in Oxford. At first, you head up a slight incline out of the vanished moat and towards a postern gate in the city wall at the point where the path turns sharply left. You might therefore imagine that the name Bulwarks Lane derives from the city's defences but, according to Anthony Wood, it is a misinterpretation of 'Bullock's Lane' so called from one Bullock a scavenger who brought the dung and filth of the city hither and by the town's permission build him a house (c.1588) which was the first house in the lane.<sup>264</sup> Until the 1970s, Bulwarks Lane was lit by gas lamps and Victorian columns by local ironfounders Lucy & Co., and Dean & Son were re-used when electric lighting was introduced.

You can see Nuffield College over the rubble wall to your right and, to your left, there are prominent three storeyed ranges built for St. Peter's College in the 1930s (R. Fielding Dodd).<sup>265</sup> They are of red brick with stone dressings and designed in late 17th century style with tall chimneys and attic dormers. Notice the Dorfmann Centre (2003, Lee Fitzgerald Architects), which oversails the rubble wall as you reach the turn. This 'exquisite timber box' provided an extra seminar facility for St Peter's in a remote corner of the site.<sup>266</sup> Round the corner, the new building meant removing the blocked doorway and the stone sills of windows which marked the former Wesleyan Boys' School (1831). Four strips of ashlar stone in the rebuilt rubble wall are a reminder of this school which closed in 1928.<sup>267</sup> On the right, the Doric portico of Canal House (1827-9, Richard Tawney) rises above the rubble wall and a Coade stone cartouche above the

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<sup>261</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1738 New Series; Oxf CC 13/00843/FUL

<sup>262</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 11; Squires, *op.cit.*, 72, 131-2, plate XXXIV; *Oxf Encyc*, 70

<sup>263</sup> OM 19.2.1943, 22.2.1943

<sup>264</sup> *Wood's City i*, 216, 576

<sup>265</sup> Pevsner, 248-9

<sup>266</sup> Oxf CC 02/01599/FUL; [www.leefitzgerald.co.uk/portfolio](http://www.leefitzgerald.co.uk/portfolio)

<sup>267</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 456

pediment depicts Britannia with a shield bearing the arms of City and University. Behind her, a narrow boat sails impossibly close to the Radcliffe Camera and the University Church. Built as offices for the Oxford Canal Company, Canal House is now the Master's Lodgings for St Peter's College.<sup>268</sup> Beyond the brick rear elevation of Canal House, Bulwarks Lane curves right, echoing the line of the castle bailey and, before New Road was laid out, it led directly to Castle Street. The lane now ends abruptly with steps at New Road, the rest having been obliterated by the re-alignment of Castle Street and by the new County Council offices (1971-4, County Architect's Office/Albert Smith).<sup>269</sup>

Turn right into New Road to return to Oxford Castle and the starting-point of the walk.

### Abbreviations used in the footnotes

Bodl – Bodleian Library  
JOJ – Jackson's Oxford Journal  
OC – Oxford Chronicle  
OCA – Oxford City Archive  
OCC/OxfCC – Oxford City Council Planning Applications  
ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography  
OHC – Oxfordshire History Centre  
OJI – Oxford Journal Illustrated  
OM – Oxford Mail  
OS – Ordnance Survey  
OT – Oxford Times  
RCHM – Royal Commission on Historical Monuments  
SPAB – Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
VCH – Victoria County History

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