

# Oxford Heritage Walks Book 3

## On foot from Catte Street to Parson's Pleasure

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 2015. Also included are a further reading list and a list of common abbreviations used in the footnotes.

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### Chapter 1 – Catte Street to Holywell Street

The walk starts – and finishes – at the junction of Catte Street and New College Lane, in what is now the heart of the University. From here, you can enjoy views of the Bodleian Library's Schools Quadrangle (1613–24), the Sheldonian Theatre (1663–9, Christopher Wren) and the Clarendon Building (1711–15, Nicholas Hawksmoor).<sup>1</sup> Notice also the listed red K6 phone box in the shadow of the Schools Quad.<sup>2</sup> Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of the nearby Weston Library, was responsible for this English design icon in the 1930s. Hertford College occupies the east side of Catte Street at this point, having incorporated the older buildings of Magdalen Hall (1820–2, E.W. Garbett) and created a North Quad beyond New College Lane (1903–31, T.G. Jackson). Jackson originally envisaged a below-ground link with the rest of the college, and his covered bridge (1913–14) was built in spite of objections that it would obstruct views of New College bell tower. Described from the outset as Oxford's Bridge of Sighs, it must now be one of the city's most photographed buildings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (1974) – hereafter Pevsner, 255–6, 260

<sup>2</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245981 \(K6 TELEPHONE KIOSK ADJACENT TO BODLEIAN LIBRARY, Non Civil Parish - 1047082 | Historic England\)](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245981/K6_TELEPHONE_KIOSK_ADJACENT_TO_BODLEIAN_LIBRARY,_Non_Civil_Parish_-_1047082)

<sup>3</sup> OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 6095; Pevsner, 141; OT 11.10.1913

Peeling back the centuries, we find ourselves in a very different place. The area occupied by Catte Street is thought to have been just outside the ramparts of the original Saxon burh, or fortified town, laid out in c.900. It was then incorporated into the town in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century when the defences were extended eastwards to an East Gate where the Eastgate Hotel now stands. Catte Street, for reasons unknown, was called Cat Street from 1200 until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It then became Catherine Street, but the present 'Olde English' spelling was adopted in 1930 to end confusion with the other Catherine Street in East Oxford.<sup>4</sup>

Catte Street lay just inside the town walls, which were thoroughly overhauled between 1226 and 1240. Smith Gate was a postern gate through the wall at the north end of the street. It consisted of a single archway which was enlarged to take carts between 1635 and 1643, but it had been demolished by 1675.<sup>5</sup> An octagonal Chapel of Our Lady was erected beside Smith Gate in c.1520, but it had been converted into a house by 1583 and a shop by 1708. It was sometimes, though wrongly, described as the oldest house in Oxford. Holywell Press, founded in Holywell Street in c.1890, ran their printing and publishing business from the former chapel between c.1903 and 1921.<sup>6</sup> T.G. Jackson then restored the building and incorporated it into Hertford's North Quad. Notice, above the south door, a sculpted representation of the Annunciation.<sup>7</sup> David Loggan's bird's eye view map of Oxford in 1675 shows many houses, and even a maypole, at the north end of Catte Street.<sup>8</sup> You can still see Morris dancers and other entertainers here every May Morning, but the old houses gradually gave way to the present rich tapestry of college and university buildings.

Now walk into New College Lane and beneath the Bridge of Sighs with its unexpectedly bright red brick under-surface. The view beyond is dominated by the New College cloister wall and the bell tower (1396–7) where the use of stone from the Headington quarries was first recorded.<sup>9</sup> Turn left down St. Helen's, formerly Hell, Passage. In this context, Hell could well have described dark and uncomfortable living conditions in the shadow of the city wall but an old pub called Hell in Holywell Street was pulled down in 1809 and this seems more likely to have inspired the name. The modern street name is an ingenious sanctification of the old one! The passage punches its way through the site of the wall and turns sharply right, snaking to avoid the rear extensions of nos. 6–7 New College Lane built on the site of a bastion.<sup>10</sup> On the other side of the path, the Third or Holywell Quad of Hertford College (1975–81, Shephard and Epstein)<sup>11</sup> filled a gap created by pre-war slum

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vol. iv: the City of Oxford* (1979) – hereafter *VCH Oxon iv*, 477; Ann Spokes Symonds, *The Origins of Oxford Street Names* (2010) – hereafter Spokes Symonds, 85–6

<sup>5</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 53; H. Paintin, *Articles on Oxford and District* (c.1930), v. 2, 48; *VCH Oxon iv*, 301–3

<sup>6</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); Christopher Hibbert, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (1988) - hereafter *Encyc Oxf*, 188–9; Kelly's Oxford Directory

<sup>7</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 183; Pevsner, 138–41; Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford: an Architectural Guide* (1998) – hereafter Tyack, 274–6

<sup>8</sup> Reproduced in *VCH Oxon iv*, 92–3

<sup>9</sup> Tyack, 46; W. J. Arkell, *Oxford Stone* (1948), 46–7; *Encyc Oxf*, 270

<sup>10</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 396–7; Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 154

<sup>11</sup> Tyack, 332

clearance. A blue plaque commemorates Jane Burden (1839–1914), the Pre-Raphaelite muse born nearby, who married William Morris in 1859.<sup>12</sup>

Continue east to the Turf Tavern, a two storey timber-framed and rendered pub known originally as the Spotted Cow. The building probably dates from after the Civil War but it was remodelled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and has a large 19<sup>th</sup> century bar front on the north side.<sup>13</sup> Now very much on the tourist trail and visited over the years by an impressive cast of celebrities, the Turf was formerly a college servants' pub where locals played bumble-puppy, a mixture of skittles and bagatelle.<sup>14</sup> From the garden to the east of the pub, the city wall of 1226–40 is impressively high and the later New College bell tower would have helped to strengthen it. The north side of Oxford was most vulnerable to attack, however, and the defences were reinforced, probably in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, by an outer wall running from Smith Gate to East Gate. This feature was unique among medieval town defences in England and was probably inspired by Edward I's great concentric castles in North Wales. Bastions in the outer wall corresponded to those on the surviving inner wall and the space of about 33 feet between the two, known as the Slype, was largely occupied by fishponds in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the outer wall ceased to be maintained and by 1675 much of it had gone; at this time houses and gardens took over the site.<sup>15</sup>

Follow the path, which leads below an upper room of Turf Cottages, noticing on the right an attractive pair of early 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages with sash windows. A manhole cover beneath your feet reads 'Lucy and Co., Oxford, Eagle Iron Works' and the path then swings left to Bath Place. Here the path is defined by stone paving set among cobbles and stone setts. An open stone gutter collects rainwater and channels it into iron gratings, one of which is signed 'The Hub Ironworks Co. Ltd., Chipping Norton'. Above this picturesque surface, the houses are all of 17<sup>th</sup> century origin but have been altered by 18<sup>th</sup> century sash windows and the boxed-out bays of nos. 2 and 3. On the west side, the timber frame of no. 1 is marked by plastering, and shutters survive at ground-floor windows. To the east, roughcast hides house fronts, which are of brick or stone downstairs and are timber framed above.<sup>16</sup> Bath Place was built in the back-filled ditch outside the city wall and the change of level as you emerge into Holywell Street is still evident.

Holywell Street lies in the extensive manor of Holywell, which has been owned by Merton College since 1294 and only became part of the city in 1677.<sup>17</sup> Development on the north side of the street is documented from the 13<sup>th</sup> century but sites were abandoned in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century after the Black Death.<sup>18</sup> Merton College began to let

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<sup>12</sup> [www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 467; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245858 ([THE TURF TAVERN, Non Civil Parish - 1369443 | Historic England](#))

<sup>14</sup> Bodl. MS Top Oxon d.490, 154; *VCH Oxon iv*, 429–30

<sup>15</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 91; N. Palmer, 'Excavations on the Outer City Wall of Oxford', *Oxoniensia* 41 (1976), 148–50, 158–9; *VCH Oxon iv*, 301

<sup>16</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245512-13 ([71 AND 72, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047290 | Historic England](#)) - ([UNIVERSITY REGISTRY ANNEXE, Non Civil Parish - 1369365 | Historic England](#))

<sup>17</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 272; M. R. Roberts, 'Excavations at Jowett Walk', *Oxoniensia* 60 (1995), 227

<sup>18</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, 225–46

building plots here again in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Ralph Agas's map of Oxford in 1578 shows some houses on the north side. On the south side, house building commenced in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the street was substantially complete by 1675.<sup>19</sup> Holywell Street has largely retained its domestic scale – in contrast to, say, George Street or Castle Street – and major change has affected the less visible and sunless south side. Since through traffic was excluded in 1975, the pedestrian has been able to enjoy the rich variety of the buildings. The Holywell Music Room (1742–8, Dr Thomas Camplin), opposite, is a good starting-point as it was probably the first special-purpose building of its kind in Europe. It is a rubble stone building with a stuccoed, pedimented front and a modern entrance lobby. The Classical door case bearing the arms of Wadham College, the present owners of the building, was added in 2009–10 (John Melvin Architects).<sup>20</sup> The music room is set back from the street but it is linked to houses on either side by curved stone wings. Further west, no. 35 is a fine two storeyed house with three large dormers in a stone slate roof. The ground floor is of roughcast rubble and was altered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; but the timber-framed first floor retains oriel windows, each supported by three carved and enriched brackets, which bear the initials, M.L. & A.L., and the date, 1626. Three more human grotesque brackets support the jetty below the dormers.<sup>21</sup> Next door, no. 36 is a re-fronted 17<sup>th</sup> century property, which served until 1951 as the head office and yard of the well-known Oxford builders, Knowles and Son (established 1797). The north side of Holywell Street concludes with a series of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century fronts, broken only by the tactful insertion of the former Blackwell's Music Shop (1970, Gillespie, Kidd and Coia)<sup>22</sup> on the site of the King's Arms garage. This then became Holywells restaurant, and is now Wadham's McCall MacBain Graduate Centre. At the very end of the road, the King's Arms Hotel was rebuilt late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and occupies two buildings, both of which are timber framed beneath a stuccoed and sash-windowed facade.<sup>23</sup>

Cross to the north side of Holywell Street and turn back towards Mansfield Road. Being in shadow for much of the time, the buildings on the south side are more easily overlooked. Demolition has also taken its toll, with the Indian Institute replacing the Vanbrughesque Seal's Coffee House (c.1710; demolished 1883)<sup>24</sup> and the North Quad of Hertford College displacing houses further east. The same college's Third or Holywell Quad (1975–81) was, by contrast, an attractive piece of infilling and included the restoration of five houses, nos. 51–55 Holywell Street, to provide student accommodation. [N.B. The main entrances to these properties and many other converted Holywell Street houses are now at the back and street numbers are not always displayed on front doors. Where this is the case, the original numbers are given in brackets]. The three properties nearest to Bath Place (nos.

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<sup>19</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 89–91

<sup>20</sup> Pevsner, 217; Tyack, 187–8; information from Edith Gollnast

<sup>21</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245577](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245577) ([35, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047234 | Historic England](#))

<sup>22</sup> OM 10.11.1970

<sup>23</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245578-82](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245578-82) ([36, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047235 | Historic England](#)) – ([WADHAM COLLEGE BURSARY, Non Civil Parish - 1335895 | Historic England](#)) – ([38, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047236 | Historic England](#)) – ([39, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047237 | Historic England](#)) – ([KINGS ARMS HOTEL, Non Civil Parish - 1335897 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>24</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 97–8

53–55) were originally one building of c.1670 but they have been much altered and refaced.<sup>25</sup> Notice the roman numerals, XXXII, carved into the door lintel of the first of these houses (no. 53), which recall an earlier numbering of the street by Merton College for administrative purposes. The organist and music teacher, Alexander Reinagle (1799–1877), lived for a time at the corner house (no. 55),<sup>26</sup> and also at the now demolished no. 21 on the other side of the street. Beyond Bath Place, no. 56 has a late 18<sup>th</sup> century stucco front with sash windows on three floors and a side entrance. No. 57 next door is a good late 17<sup>th</sup> century house, formerly the William IV pub. It is a stuccoed and timber-framed building with an overhang at first-floor level and a large central gable with a moulded pediment; originally, it had Ipswich windows on the upper floors like those surviving at no. 126 High Street.<sup>27</sup> No. 58, a 19<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting of an older property, was for many years the home of John Chessell Buckler (1793–1894), architect, antiquary and an artist renowned for his local topographical drawings.<sup>28</sup> The three storey no. 59 (1900, Castle, Field and Castle) replaced the Barley Mow pub and is notable particularly for its massive eaves cornice.<sup>29</sup> Nos. 61–2 were built together in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century and have painted stone fronts three storeys high with gabled dormers above the cornice. Attractive hoods above the doors rest on scrolled brackets and, while the windows of no. 62 have been altered, no. 61 retains keystones above first-floor sash windows. The next two properties are early 19<sup>th</sup> century, timber framed and roughcast with sash windows and contemporary ground-floor shutters. No. 65 is probably a 19<sup>th</sup> century re-construction, reusing grotesque carved brackets, marked A.S. & C.S. 1639, from the previous building, to support the bays. Beyond a very sympathetic 1950s insertion for New College, replacing a house demolished during the construction of the college library (1939), you reach two 17<sup>th</sup> century properties, now treated as one. They are timber framed with first-floor jetties but both have been remodelled. Old wooden casement windows with lattice lights do, however, survive in the top floor of the nearest house, which was once the Boot Inn.<sup>30</sup>

At this point, cross the street again to examine houses on the north side. The gradual re-fashioning of older properties in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is again the main theme and the first house east of the Holywell Music Room (no. 33) seems to be a rare example of complete rebuilding in c.1850. Note the attractive blind boxes to its first-floor sash windows. No. 32 is a 17<sup>th</sup> century property re-fronted with ashlar stone in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; next comes a stuccoed timber-framed house of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with a contemporary scroll-bracketed hood above a pilastered doorcase. Alterations to no. 30

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<sup>25</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245584-5](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245584-5) ([51 AND 52, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047238 | Historic England](#)) – ([53-55, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1335887 | Historic England](#))

<sup>26</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 149

<sup>27</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245586-7](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245586-7) ([56, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369380 | Historic England](#)) – ([57, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047239 | Historic England](#))

<sup>28</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245588](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245588) ([58, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1335918 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>29</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 3541 Old Series

<sup>30</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/24589-92](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/24589-92) ([61 AND 62, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047240 | Historic England](#)) – ([63 AND 64, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1104929 | Historic England](#)) – ([65, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369381 | Historic England](#)) – ([68, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047241 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); Pevsner, 175; OCA City Engineer's Plans 706/9425; 51/01714/A\_H, held in Town Hall

preserved the prominent 17<sup>th</sup> century gabled dormers but later features include ground-floor shutters for the three-light sash windows and a flower-box rail for the window above. The coachway or broad gate, of which there are eight in Holywell, formerly led through to Charles Symonds' famous livery stables, patronized by Cuthbert Bede's fictional hero, Verdant Green. In the 1920s, Layton's garage briefly occupied these stables. The remaining Holywell Street houses as far as Mansfield Road (nos. 29–24) are now part of the nearby Harris Manchester College and three are adorned by the coats of arms of college benefactors. The canted bays and sash windows of these houses bear witness to early 19<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting of older properties. The novelist, Rhoda Broughton, lived at no. 27 from 1878 to 1890. The stone door case of the next house (no. 26) may be 17<sup>th</sup> century and bears the Merton College number, HP (Holywell Parish) XVIII; the later front is plain and stuccoed above a stone plinth. Upper-floor bays are again a feature of the next two houses (nos. 25–24) and the Alternative Tuck Shop on the corner takes advantage of a rare bowed shopfront with a pent roof.<sup>31</sup>

Nos. 21–23 Holywell Street and the adjoining Park Place and Brazier's Yard were demolished for Mansfield Road (c. 1894)<sup>32</sup>, but the north side of the street is otherwise intact. No. 20 is a timber-framed house of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century but its three gables were hipped back and the present front was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: mullioned windows were revealed on the second floor when the front was re-rendered in 1949. The next two properties have stuccoed brick fronts of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with sash windows and eaves cornices. No. 18 has rusticated quoins and a fine pedimented stone hood above the door. No. 19 formerly contained a 'knuckle-bone' floor dated 1701–2, which was a mosaic of calves', sheep and deer bones, gleaned perhaps from the slaughterhouse behind it.<sup>33</sup> Such floors were once quite common in Oxford but none survive. No. 17 was formerly the King's Head pub and like nos. 14–16, is a timber-framed house of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. No. 13, with rubble walls and unusually tall gabled dormers, brings a breath of Cotswold air into Holywell; it has restored mullioned windows on the upper floors and Yorkshire sliding sashes below. A series of regular stuccoed facades then indicates more drastic 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting of earlier timber-framed houses. First-floor overhangs are still visible at nos. 10–12 and the doorways of nos. 8–10 have attractive bracketed hoods; no. 10 is approached by three steps with an iron handrail.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245565–74 ([24, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1087060 | Historic England](#)) – ([25 Holywell Street, Non Civil Parish - 1047226 | Historic England](#)) – ([26, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369377 | Historic England](#)) – ([27, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047227 | Historic England](#)) – ([28, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047228 | Historic England](#)) – ([29 AND 29A, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369378 | Historic England](#)) – ([30, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047229 | Historic England](#)) – ([31, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369379 | Historic England](#)) – ([32, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047230 | Historic England](#)) – ([33, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047231 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk); Cuthbert Bede (pseud. Edward Bradley), *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green* (1853-7), 157; ODNB – Rhoda Broughton

<sup>32</sup> Listed first time in Kelly's Oxford Directory 1894/5

<sup>33</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 139; for illustration see [www.pictureoxon](http://www.pictureoxon) HT9968

<sup>34</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245553–63 ([8, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047266 | Historic England](#)) – ([9, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1335832 | Historic England](#)) – ([10 AND 11, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369394 | Historic England](#)) – ([12, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047267 | Historic England](#)) – ([13 AND 13A, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish](#)

By 1675, there was an unbroken row of houses on the north side of Holywell Street<sup>35</sup> and the gateway with large stone piers between nos. 7 and 8 may have been inserted when no. 7 was re-built with a side entrance in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It leads now to Merton College's 7 Holywell Street Annexe, which faces Jowett Walk. No. 7 and the next house (no. 6) are both two storey stucco-fronted houses with two three-light sash windows, but no. 7 is much higher, providing more spacious rooms, and it has a bold moulded parapet. Its neighbour is a 17<sup>th</sup> century house remodelled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and you may just be able to pick out three dormers concealed behind the parapet. The first floor has three-light sash windows, the central one being projected forward as a bay window. The Cardinal's Hat inn occupied both properties during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and its lessees ran the popular cockpit and bowling green in what is now St Cross Road. The next two timber-framed houses have typical 18<sup>th</sup> century alterations, but no. 3 is a very fine ashlar stone house of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with four gabled cocklofts. The latter have 18<sup>th</sup> century sashes but there are mullioned windows below and those on the ground floor have hoodmoulds. There is a two storey bay to the west of the main doorway which is of stone and topped by a good early 18<sup>th</sup> century hood; the oak door is studded with nails and may well be original. Next comes a single storey stuccoed block built over cellars with an attic dormer window and a side passage. This building is part of no. 2 and was described as the laundry when the house was put up for sale in 1869. The main house is of major importance and dates from the early 1600s. It has an ashlar stone ground floor with projecting bays set high above a semi-basement. The upper floors are timber framed and roughcast, the first-floor jetty being supported by four carved wooden brackets; smaller brackets support the first-floor oriel windows, which were re-glazed with sashes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Iron handrails to the steps incorporate a mud-scraper. No. 1 was re-fronted in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, its plain facade being enriched by a semi-circular arched doorway with a pedimented sash window above.<sup>36</sup>

Holywell Street now ends at Magdalen College's late 15<sup>th</sup> century boundary wall around the college grove and deer park. Until then, Holywell Street continued east as Benseval Street towards Holywell Mill. Magdalen, founded in 1458, suppressed this old route and created a new access road to the mill further north off the modern St Cross Road.<sup>37</sup> Beside the square tower in Magdalen's wall, Merton College, as Lords of the Manor, maintained

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[- 1087113 | Historic England](#) – ([14, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369395 | Historic England](#)) – ([15 AND 16, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047268 | Historic England](#)) – ([17, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1087082 | Historic England](#)) – ([18, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047269 | Historic England](#)) – ([19, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1087089 | Historic England](#)) – ([20, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369396 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>35</sup> See Loggan map in *VCH Oxon iv*, 92–3

<sup>36</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245545–52 ([1, Holywell Street, Non Civil Parish - 1047263 | Historic England](#)) – ([2, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1186750 | Historic England](#)) – ([3, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369392 | Historic England](#)) – ([4, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047264 | Historic England](#)) – ([5, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1186761 | Historic England](#)) – ([6 AND 7, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047265 | Historic England](#)) – ([WALL AT REAR OF NUMBER 7, Non Civil Parish - 1299036 | Historic England](#)) – ([GATEPIERS BETWEEN NUMBERS 7 AND 8, Non Civil Parish - 1369393 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>37</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 272

both a pillory and the so-called Gownsmen's Gallows. Four Catholics – George Nichols, Richard Yaxley, Thomas Belson and Humphrey Pritchard – were executed here for their faith on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1589, an event commemorated by a stone plaque on no. 100 Holywell Street, opposite. Dr Routh, President of Magdalen College from 1791 to 1854, remembered two undergraduates being hanged on the Gownsmen's Gallows for highway robbery, but by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century only stocks remained.<sup>38</sup>

## Chapter 2 – Holywell Street to Mansfield Road

Cross Holywell Street and inspect the south side while retracing your steps to Mansfield Road. The first house, no. 100, dates from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and is of a Cotswold character. The west range has been much altered but the eastern one retains its gable and a stone slate roof so often replaced by Welsh slate or red tiles.<sup>39</sup> For many years, Oxford's first regular newspaper, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (1753–1928) was printed at premises behind this house but, in 1901, William Morris, later Lord Nuffield, took over these buildings and the adjoining yard for his cycle and motorcycle business.<sup>40</sup> Next door, no. 99 is an early 17<sup>th</sup> century stone house with gables, which have 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden bargeboards. J.R.R. Tolkien lived here briefly in the early 1950s. Nos. 96–8 are of one build in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, being timber framed and roughcast on a stuccoed base; the ground floor windows still have shutters.<sup>41</sup> Catherine Lloyd lived at no. 96 from c.1881 to 1899 and took great exception to New College developments next door. She painted the 'six old houses demolished by greedy New College to make way for a useless married Tutor's House' and later called her house 'Knowvu' because the new building, set back from the street, had taken away her view.<sup>42</sup> New College did indeed profoundly alter this part of Holywell Street, replacing 27 old properties with the long range of buildings (1872–96) which extend west towards a distant sycamore tree. Basil Champneys designed the buildings up to and including Robinson Tower but Sir George Gilbert Scott had already established the scale of the development further on. Interestingly, it was the College which insisted on adding the fourth storey to Scott's range, arguing that this would make the building more impressive and reduce the cost per room, important then as now for undergraduate accommodation.<sup>43</sup>

As you pass the Holywell Gate in Robinson Tower, you get a distant glimpse of the medieval town wall beyond the green space known as the Slype, the narrow strip of land which formerly lay between the surviving inner wall and the lost outer one. Maintenance of the inner wall in perpetuity was imposed upon New College when the town granted the site

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<sup>38</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 274; E.J. Warr, *The Oxford Plaque Guide* (2011), 33–4; J. Buxton, *New College, Oxford* 1379–1979 (1979), 98

<sup>39</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245595](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245595) ([100, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047242 | Historic England](#))

<sup>40</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 10

<sup>41</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245593-4](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245593-4) ([96-98, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1104897 | Historic England](#)) – ([99, HOLYWELL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369382 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>42</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 146

<sup>43</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)



to the founder, William of Wykeham, in 1379 and triennial inspection by the Lord Mayor was resumed in 1962. The whole expanse of the inner wall (c.1226–40) therefore remains largely intact from New College bell tower to the north-east corner bastion and southwards towards High Street complete with its bastions, wall-walk, battlements and loop-holes. You can enter the College (admission charge) through Holywell Gate during the winter or from New College Lane in the summer months. Nothing is left of the outer defensive wall, which remained the city's responsibility and was allowed to decay and eventually disappear as its defensive value waned.<sup>44</sup>

Now turn right into Mansfield Road where you are immediately attracted by an ornamental clock tower which formed part of a Harris Manchester College scheme to provide five student rooms behind no. 24 Holywell Street (2014, Yiangou Architects LLP).<sup>45</sup> Notice the Varsity cyclist with gown and mortarboard on the weathervane. The development included the nearby Sukum Navapan Gate, which provides controlled access to college properties including Arlosh Hall (1913, Percy Worthington) straight ahead. Away to your right, nos. 1 and 1A Mansfield Road are backland developments behind no. 20 Holywell Street. The University's Clerk of Works was based at no. 1A, a two storey brick building with stone dressings, from c.1925 to 1954.<sup>46</sup> As you head north, it is worth recalling that, beyond the closely-packed houses in Holywell Street, much of Holywell parish remained largely agricultural until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although excavations in the Science Area have documented Bronze Age barrows and evidence of Romano-British settlement.<sup>47</sup> A Merton College map of 1666 shows arable fields and pasture leased to George Napper, the lessee of Holywell Manor.<sup>48</sup> Rural Holywell began to disappear after the University acquired land from Merton College for the University Museum and the University Parks between 1853 and 1864.<sup>49</sup> Merton College, probably encouraged by the progress of the St. John's College building estate in North Oxford, made plots available for large villas on the south side of what was to become South Parks Road in the 1860s, leaving space for a new road – Mansfield Road – leading towards Holywell Street.<sup>50</sup> As Varsity sport became more important, cricket pitches began to take over the remaining green spaces and Merton's cricket ground initially occupied a huge area between Wadham and the modern St Cross Road.<sup>51</sup> The sale of the western part of this cricket ground for the new Mansfield College led to the building of the first section of Mansfield Road in 1886.<sup>52</sup>

You will now have reached Jowett Walk, named of course after Benjamin Jowett (1817–93), the famous Master of Balliol College.<sup>53</sup> Between 1889 and 1891, Balliol purchased land from Merton College further up Mansfield Road for a tutor's house and a cricket

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<sup>44</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 91; *VCH Oxon* iv, 301–2; N. Palmer, 'Excavations on the Outer City Wall of Oxford', *Oxoniensia* 41 (1976), 150–3

<sup>45</sup> Oxf CC 12/01792/LBC

<sup>46</sup> Listed in Kelly's Oxford Directory, 1925–54

<sup>47</sup> P. Bradley, 'Excavations at Chemistry Research Laboratory', *Oxoniensia* 70 (2005), 143, 194–5

<sup>48</sup> Merton College mss, Holywell estate map 1666, copy in OHC

<sup>49</sup> *Guide to Trees & Shrubs in the University Parks* (1976), 12–13

<sup>50</sup> OHC MPC599, 606 copies of Merton College mss estate maps

<sup>51</sup> OS1:2500 Oxon XXXIII.15 (1876)

<sup>52</sup> OHC City Engineer's Estates plan E39; Merton College mss. Mansfield Road plan

<sup>53</sup> ODNB - Benjamin Jowett

field.<sup>54</sup> After Jowett's death, the college decided to commemorate him by extending the field south of an ancient footpath, Love Lane, to a new road, Jowett Walk, along its new southern boundary.<sup>55</sup> Local people questioned the need for a carriage road, but *Jackson's Oxford Journal* welcomed the idea of 'a wide well planted and handsome road in the place of Love Lane, which is only eight feet wide, unlighted and bordered by a hideous wire palisade.'<sup>56</sup> The development approved by the City Council in 1894 also provided a site for the large building on the corner of Jowett Walk which is now occupied by Queen Elizabeth House, part of the Department of International Development. Originally known as Holywell House, this Elizabethan-style gabled stone building (1898, Blomfield Jackson) was a private house built for the Revd John Henry Mee (d. 1917), the University's choral director. The School of Geography took over the property in 1921 and added an extension to the north in 1969. A further three storey extension to the east along Jowett Walk (2007, Hawkins/Brown) provided additional research and teaching space for Queen Elizabeth House.<sup>57</sup> Jowett Walk also provides graphic evidence of recent building to house growing numbers of students. Balliol's Jowett Walk Buildings (1993, MacCormac Jamieson Prichard),<sup>58</sup> on the left, provided 146 student rooms and the Merton College 7 Holywell Street Annexe (1994, Architects Design Partnership),<sup>59</sup> opposite, supplied 93.

On the other side of Mansfield Road, Harris Manchester College (1891–3, Thomas Worthington) presents a conventional collegiate façade with a gate-tower, a chapel to the left, and a gabled range to the right, which includes the library. Both Manchester College and Mansfield College came to Oxford as a result of the University's decision to admit Nonconformist students in 1871. In Manchester's case, the non-denominational college founded originally in 1786 decided to move from London to Oxford in 1889 after suppressing fears that this might have a demoralizing effect on the students! Manchester formally became an Oxford University Hall in 1990 and achieved full collegiate status as Harris Manchester College in 1996, following a benefaction from Lord Harris of Peckham. The college is not open to visitors but, during office hours, you may be able to visit the chapel if you ask at Reception. It contains fine stained glass windows by Morris & Co., (1893–8) which include figures of Religion, Liberty and Truth designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones.<sup>60</sup> Continue along Mansfield Road and turn left into Savile Road, admiring the oriel window in the gable end of the college library.

Savile Road was named after Sir Henry Savile (1549–1622), mathematician, classical scholar and Warden of Merton College. The road follows the old alignment of Love Lane, a footpath which ran west from Holywell Church to the back of Wadham College and then north to the Parks. This had probably been used for recreational walks from the earliest

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<sup>54</sup> J.H. Jones, 'The Development of Holywell between 1700 and 1900', *Top. Oxon.* 22 (1978), 10

<sup>55</sup> OHS MPC606 copy of Merton College mss estate map

<sup>56</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, 9–12

<sup>57</sup> JOJ 15.10.1898; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245642 ([SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, Non Civil Parish - 1107880 | Historic England](#)); V. Sugden, *An Oxford Diary* (2009), 331; Oxf CC, 07/02383/ FUL including conservation statement; information from Colin George, Oxford University Estates Department

<sup>58</sup> Oxf CC NFH/1252/92

<sup>59</sup> Oxf CC NFH1311/91

<sup>60</sup> *Encyc Ox*, 238; Pevsner, 233; Images of England, 245002 ([MANCHESTER COLLEGE, Non Civil Parish - 1046676 | Historic England](#)); [www.hmc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.hmc.ox.ac.uk)

times, and its delightful name must reflect its appeal for courting couples. The path was 'beautifully repaired' in 1755 to become 'a neat Terras Walk', and the masthead of early issues of *Jackson's Oxford Journal* features the splendid view of Oxford towers and spires which ramblers enjoyed from the cornfields north of Holywell Street.<sup>61</sup> Love Lane became a University Walk, maintained through a tax on resident members of the University, but freely accessible to everyone. Initially, the walk went as far as the junction of Banbury Road and Parks Road with the option of completing the circuit by returning along Parks Road. During a hard winter in 1820, it was extended into a five-mile circular route when a large sum, raised by subscription, paid unemployed men to build raised footpaths beside the Banbury and Woodstock roads.<sup>62</sup> Five Mile Drive and a raised section of pavement near Woodstock Road roundabout are surviving reminders of that work today. The building of the University Museum and the creation of the University Parks blocked part of Love Lane, and Balliol's Jowett Walk development extinguished another section. When Savile Road was first laid out in 1886, the carriageway soon gave way to the earlier footpath.<sup>63</sup> The road was extended to the back of Wadham in 1903 when New College School decided to move here from New College Lane.<sup>64</sup> If you continue right to the end, you'll see behind a locked gate the last portion of Love Lane, closed a century ago. The lane heading alongside Wadham College wall towards South Parks Road is now an occasional storage area providing nest sites for enterprising blackbirds in Spring.

Savile Road today is a place of extraordinary architectural variety. As you return to Mansfield Road, there is Wadham College Library (1977, Gillespie Kidd & Coia), a Brutalist affair of shuttered concrete and glass, on your right, followed by the red brick neo-Georgian Principal's Lodging and Farmington Institute for Manchester College (1993, Peter Yiangou Associates).<sup>65</sup> On your left, an ashlar stone addition (2007, Towle Spurring Hardy Architects) provides a gym and music and arts space for New College School.<sup>66</sup> The original school buildings (1904–5, Nicholson & Corlette)<sup>67</sup> are in gabled Cotswold style set well back from the street. The heady mix is completed by no. 1 Savile Road (1903, Nicholson & Corlette),<sup>68</sup> next to the school, and tile-hung Warham House (1923, R. Langton Cole) on the corner of Mansfield Road.<sup>69</sup> As you walk along the road, notice the tall lamp-posts with stylized floral decorations on their columns. They are signed 'Hoddesdon/D W Windsor' and were probably installed in the late 1970s as aesthetic replacements for redundant gaslamps.

Heading north now, notice opposite nos. 5/7 Mansfield Road, two neo-Georgian houses with hipped roofs built for Balliol College (1925, E.P. Warren).<sup>70</sup> Then comes an earlier and very different property, The King's Mound (1892, T.G. Jackson), a grand tutor's house in

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<sup>61</sup> Sir John Peshall, *The History of the University of Oxford . . .* (1773), 253–4

<sup>62</sup> G. V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1870), 99–100

<sup>63</sup> OS 1:2500 Oxon XXXIII.15 (1898)

<sup>64</sup> OHC City Engineer's Estates Plan E39

<sup>65</sup> Oxf CC NFH/0312/93; Tyack, 336–7

<sup>66</sup> Oxf CC 05/02261/FUL

<sup>67</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 297 New Series

<sup>68</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 313 New Series

<sup>69</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 2869 New Series

<sup>70</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 3145 New Series

Jacobean style, again for Balliol. Jackson envisaged a whole quad like this but nothing more was built.<sup>71</sup> A mound is still evident at the northern boundary of the garden and extends into the University Club next door. This small redan or bastion was part of the inner line of Oxford's Civil War defensive earthworks (1642–3, Richard Rallingson) built to protect the Royalist capital. By October 1643, these defences were judged to be insufficient and a more ambitious outer line (1644–5, Bernard de Gomme) was completed, including four large bastions in this area between Parks Road and St Cross Road. Parliament ordered Oxford's earthworks to be dismantled in 1647 but traces of them survived longer in rural Holywell than anywhere else in the city, and de Gomme's bastions have been identified during excavations in the Science Area, most recently on the site of the Chemistry Research Laboratory.<sup>72</sup>

On this side of Mansfield Road, you pass Savile House (1896 with later additions), now part of New College School but originally a private house for G.C. Bourne, an Oxford rowing Blue who went on to become Linacre Professor of Physiology.<sup>73</sup> Next, the south range of the John Marsh Building (1962, Thomas Rayson)<sup>74</sup> announces Mansfield College which took its name from the family which set up a theological college chiefly for Congregationalists in Birmingham in 1838. The college moved to Oxford in 1886, renting premises in High Street until its new buildings here were completed. Rayson's scheme provided Mansfield College with additional student accommodation but took out the old lodge (1902, Basil Champneys)<sup>75</sup> in the process. The original college buildings (1887–9, Basil Champneys) are in a relaxed Tudor Gothic style and occupy three sides of a quad, with the chapel alongside Mansfield Road; the south-facing site and the warmth of the Taynton stone provide a hint of sunshine even on a dreary day. They must have been a particularly welcome sight during the First World War when a Garden Club for wounded soldiers was opened in the college grounds and served over 5,000 teas in 1916–17.<sup>76</sup> Rayson's block effectively completed the quad in matching Guiting stone and the unadorned ashlar stonework evidently provides the perfect base for recording the college's sporting triumphs.<sup>77</sup> A recent addition (2006, Oxford Architects), very unobtrusive for its size, lies to the west and another building designed by Rick Mather is planned for the Fellows' Garden.<sup>78</sup> An Anthony Gormley sculpture, 'Present Time', 1986–1989, now stands in the centre of the quad.<sup>79</sup>

Until recent years, the immediate environs of Mansfield College were little affected by change. Now, flues on the roof of the Chemistry Research Laboratory rear above the college buildings like the funnels of an ocean-going liner. Across Mansfield Road, much of

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<sup>71</sup> OC 15.10.1892

<sup>72</sup> R. T. Lattey, 'A Contemporary Map of the Defences of Oxford 1644', *Oxoniensia* 1 (1936), 166–71; P. Bradley, 'Excavations at Chemistry Research Laboratory', *Oxoniensia* 70 (2005), 143–201

<sup>73</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plans 2703 Old Series, 1151 & 2725 New Series; J. Buxton, *New College Oxford 1379–1979* (1979), 98–9

<sup>74</sup> Oxford University Design Society, *New Oxford* (1961), 27

<sup>75</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 163 New Series

<sup>76</sup> OC 1.6.1917

<sup>77</sup> JOJ 12.10.1889; Tyack, 256–7; Oxford University Design Society, *New Oxford* (1961), 27

<sup>78</sup> Oxf CC 04/00986/FUL, 08/01741/FUL, 11/02210/EXT

<sup>79</sup> [http://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/GMA\\_3561](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/GMA_3561)

the former Merton College playing field is now occupied by the attractive University Club (2002–4, Maguire & Co.),<sup>80</sup> and an all-weather court. This space would have looked very different today if Dixon Jones' 1996 scheme for Saïd Business School had not been rejected.<sup>81</sup> As you continue along Mansfield Road, notice the stone plinth wall with panels of cast and wrought iron, which form a screen outside Mansfield College chapel.<sup>82</sup> Further on, you become very much aware of the scale of the University Science Area which has, since the 1960s, occupied the sites of almost all the grand Victorian villas on Merton College's estate in South Parks Road. Beyond the all-weather court, you have glimpses of the rear elevations of the Virology, Microbiology and Pharmacology Laboratories (1995–2000, Architects' Design Partnership), which were built on a site originally intended for a westward extension of the Zoology & Psychology Building (1965–70, Sir Leslie Martin). Their restrained brick elevations and slate roofs contrast strongly with the concrete Brutalism of the earlier building. Beside the road, the Tinsley Building was built as the Institute of Virology (1981, Architects Design Partnership).<sup>83</sup>

Nearing South Parks Road, you currently face an extraordinary hotchpotch of unrelated buildings. On the left, beyond Mansfield College, the Chemistry Research Laboratory (2000–4, RMJM/Jerry O'Reilly & Chris Abell)<sup>84</sup> is five storeys high, all clear glass with louvres and flues at roof level. On the right, you come to Halifax House, the massive and controversial Biomedical Science Building (2005–09)<sup>85</sup>, stone and glass fronted, with green-glazed panels. Straight ahead, you have the utilitarian Physical Chemistry Building (1939–40, Lanchester & Lodge), in what Pevsner described as 'squared-up Georgian' style.<sup>86</sup> This is soon to be replaced by Chemistry Research Laboratory 2, also known as CRL2 (Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp), another high-tech structure which will have timber louvres on the elevation facing Mansfield Road.<sup>87</sup> Away to your left, you have a glimpse of the Dyson Perrins Organic Chemistry Laboratories (1957–9, Basil Ward), which belatedly brought modernism to the Science Area. Behind this, until 2014, reared the Hans Krebs Biochemistry tower block (1961–3, Ramsey, Murray, White & Ward), which was demolished as part of the University's current master plan for the area.<sup>88</sup> The eight storey concrete-framed building was an unwelcome addition to the Oxford skyline, but the proposal by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon for a 25 storey Zoology Tower in the University Parks just outside the Science Area was still more controversial. The Vice-Chancellor argued that the tower would bring 'a touch of San Gimignano' to Oxford, but Congregation rejected the scheme in June 1962.<sup>89</sup> These controversies led in 1963 to the introduction of a High Buildings policy, which has guided development in the City ever since.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Oxf CC, 01/01725/FUL

<sup>81</sup> OT 19.7.1996, 17; OM 7.11.1996, 2

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/> Listed Entry Number 1369659

<sup>83</sup> Tyack, 333; *Encyc Oxf.*, 240; *Oxford Journal*, 7.8.1981; Philip Opher, *Oxford Modern: a Guide to The New Architecture of the City and University* (2001), 17

<sup>84</sup> Information from Dr Richard Jones, Dept of Chemistry, 3.11.2010; Oxf CC 99/01401/NF

<sup>85</sup> Oxf CC 10/03254/FUL; OT 15.4.2010 confirms dates

<sup>86</sup> Pevsner, 277

<sup>87</sup> Oxf CC 10/03254/FUL

<sup>88</sup> Pevsner, 277–9; Oxf CC 10/03254/FUL; OM 22.8.2014

<sup>89</sup> H. M. Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983), 184–6

<sup>90</sup> Oxf CC, *High Buildings in Oxford, a Report of the City Architect* (1963), *passim*

### Chapter 3 – University Museum and Science Area

An avenue of mature lime trees still brings some order and visual tranquillity to South Parks Road, but how did this once peaceful backwater become a major centre for scientific research and a busy thoroughfare? Today's Science Area is an unforeseen consequence of the University's decision in 1853 to locate a new scientific University Museum in Parks Road on part of Merton's Holywell estate. South Parks Road originated as a track between Parks Road and Love Lane, which was upgraded into a carriage road during the Museum development.<sup>91</sup> At first, all the science departments were accommodated within the Museum complex, and all the science professors had rooms there apart from those based at the Botanic Garden.<sup>92</sup> More space was soon needed, and a science area began to evolve. The Clarendon (Physics) Laboratory was added to the north in 1868, and a University Observatory was built in the University Parks in 1874.<sup>93</sup> Other buildings were erected north and south of the University Museum before the First World War, and a new Engineering Laboratory was built at the top of the Keble Road triangle in 1914 to prevent a major incursion into the Parks. The Dyson Perrins Chemistry Laboratory (1913–16) represented the first eastward expansion of the science area along South Parks Road. Another nine acres of the University Parks were allocated for science expansion in 1924 and a Science Area master plan by Southwell & Griffiths in 1934 led to comprehensive development on the north side of South Parks Road, which was completed in the 1950s. Expansion on to the south side of South Parks Road began in the 1960s after the Zoology Tower was rejected.<sup>94</sup> Since 1999, the road has been part of an inner ring road providing an alternative route for traffic banned from High Street during the day.<sup>95</sup>

Turn left into South Parks Road, keeping to the south side of the street, if you wish to see the building which set all this change in motion. [Alternatively, cross Mansfield Road with care and rejoin the walk later by crossing South Parks Road at the traffic lights.] On the right, you pass the former Dyson Perrins Chemistry Laboratory, now the University's Centre for the Environment (1913–16, Paul Waterhouse; east wing added, 1920–2). Oxford was under pressure to improve its scientific facilities at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this red brick building with ashlar stone dressings went on to become the scene of much important chemical research. The laboratory was named after C.W. Dyson Perrins, heir to the Lea and Perrins Worcester sauce fortune, who helped to fund the building.<sup>96</sup> Next comes the stone clad and glazed Earth Sciences Building (2010, Wilkinson Eyre Architects), which replaced the Central Chemistry Laboratory.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Oxford University Archives WP6 13/7

<sup>92</sup> Oxf CC 11/00940/CONSLT

<sup>93</sup> Pevsner, 278; JOJ 11.10.1873, 24.10.1874; *Guide to Trees & Shrubs in University Parks* (1976), 14 describes tree plantings to screen it, 1878–81

<sup>94</sup> Pevsner, 271, 276-80; Colvin, 186; Oxf CC 11/00940/CONSLT; Oxford University Archives MU4/48

<sup>95</sup> Oxfordshire County Council, *Oxford City Centre Changes* (1999), *passim*

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/> List Entry Number 1389444; Pevsner, 277;

<sup>97</sup> Oxf CC 07/02018/FUL; 10/03254/FUL

On your left, beyond the Chemistry Research Laboratory, you reach nos. 1–2 South Parks Road, the only survivors of the cull of grand Victorian villas on the south side of the road, and now occupied by the Department of Statistics. No. 2 (1865–6) and no. 1 (1868–9) were both designed by William Wilkinson, architect to the nearby St John’s College estate, and they followed the contemporary North Oxford fashion for Domestic Gothic.<sup>98</sup> Between them, you get a glimpse of the Rothermere American Institute (2001, Kohn Pederson Fox).<sup>99</sup> Beyond no. 1, a locked gate prevents access to the remnant of Love Lane which leads down to Savile Road. Until the building of the University Museum in the 1850s, the lane continued northwards across fields known as the Park or Parks, which provided an informal recreation area for both Town and Gown.<sup>100</sup> The Warden of Wadham College’s garden extended right up to South Parks Road until Rhodes House was built, and still has a back gate here. Tall folk, at least, can peer over the gate, and see the embankment beside Love Lane which is a surviving part of Oxford’s Civil War earthworks. Rhodes House (1929, Sir Herbert Baker) was built as a centre for overseas scholars attending the University under the scheme established in Cecil Rhodes’s will in 1902. Pevsner described the building as ‘a curious wedding of high-roofed Cotswold and classical copper-domed rotunda’.<sup>101</sup> Notice the Zimbabwe Bird, the national emblem of Zimbabwe, standing proudly on top of the rotunda. During the Second World War, there were plans to use Rhodes House as a replacement for the Town Hall if the latter were bombed.<sup>102</sup>

At Rhodes House, Baker began the lengthy Oxford love affair with squared Bladon rubble stone as a building material. Examples opposite include the extension to the Radcliffe Science Library on the corner of Parks Road (1933–4, Sir Hubert Worthington), and the main Inorganic Chemistry building (1954–60, Lanchester & Lodge). Between the two, the original Radcliffe Science Library (1901, T.G. Jackson) is of Doulling ashlar stone, which Jackson chose for many of his Oxford buildings from the 1880s.<sup>103</sup> You now come to the junction of South Parks Road and Parks Road where a large V.R. letter box is set into a surviving section of rubble wall marking Wadham’s former boundary. The size of the letter box hints at the volume of mail generated by the science area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Parks Road is first recorded as Beaumont Street in c.1250, and it was variously known as The Way to the Parks, Park Street, Park Road or The Parks before the present self-explanatory name was adopted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>104</sup> Together with Holywell Street and Longwall Street, the road provided an extra-mural route around medieval Oxford, and wheeled vehicles continued to use it until c.1770. Subsequently, Wadham installed barriers just north of the college, and carriages could only use the road by special permission. Parks Road was only reopened as a public highway in the 1870s after a lengthy dispute.<sup>105</sup> Pedestrian access was never in doubt, and the generous, tree-lined pavement on the east side probably reflects its role as part of the University Walk. Looking

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<sup>98</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/> List Entry Numbers 1391088-9

<sup>99</sup> Oxf CC 10/03254/FUL

<sup>100</sup> *Supra*, 10-11

<sup>101</sup> Pevsner, 275

<sup>102</sup> OCA City Engineer’s Strongroom Drawer 20/69, Drawer 21/66

<sup>103</sup> Pevsner, 276–7; Arkell, 104

<sup>104</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 477; 1861 census; 1871 census; JOJ 31.8.1764

<sup>105</sup> Cox, *op.cit.*, 65; *Encyc Oxf*, 315

across Parks Road, notice the 17<sup>th</sup> century style ashlar stone frontage of the former Schools of Rural Economy and Forestry (N.W. & G.A. Harrison), built in two stages between 1907 and 1914. The attractive frontage was retained when St John's College added the eye-catching Garden Quad (1993, MacCormac Jamieson & Prichard) behind it.<sup>106</sup> Cross South Parks Road at the traffic lights and, as you head north past the Radcliffe Science Library extension, glance across Parks Road. The two storey neo-Georgian house, no. 9 (1932–3, Morley Horder) was formerly the Agricultural Economics Research Centre. The severely Gothic red brick house next door (1862, Charles Buckeridge) was a private university hall – first, Charsley's Hall, then Marcon's Hall – until the end of the First World War before becoming Oxford's first maternity hospital between 1921 and 1931.<sup>107</sup> Across Museum Road, the polychrome brickwork of the Warden's Lodgings provides a first glimpse of Keble College (1868–83, William Butterfield), which occupied part of a St John's College estate originally intended for suburban villas.<sup>108</sup>

On the east side of Parks Road, you now have a good view of the University Museum of Natural History (1855–9, Thomas Deane & Benjamin Woodward). This remarkable building, described by Peter Howell as 'one of the outstanding architectural creations of the nineteenth century',<sup>109</sup> was the result of a campaign led by Henry Acland to improve teaching in the natural sciences. Deane & Woodward's 'Rhenish Gothic' design, supported by Acland, beat off a classical rival, and the building was structurally complete when the British Association met here in 1860. That meeting is best known now for the evolution debate during which Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, 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>110</sup> A stone carved by Alec & Fiona Peever was placed outside the museum in 2010 to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this famous occasion.<sup>111</sup>

You first see the museum across a lawn below which a two storey extension to the Radcliffe Science Library, the Lankester Room, was carefully inserted in 1972–5.<sup>112</sup> As you walk towards the building, look out for dinosaur footprints in the lawn. They are casts of the prints of a Megalosaurus, a giant carnivorous dinosaur, discovered in an old limestone quarry at Ardley, near Bicester, in 1997.<sup>113</sup> The footprints, irresistible to small children, are a curtain-raiser for the dinosaurs displayed inside the museum. In summer, you may well be treated to flying displays by swifts which have long nested, and been

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<sup>106</sup> Philip Opher, *Twentieth Century Oxford Architecture* (1995), 40; Pevsner, 276; OC 9.10.1908, 9.10.1914; OHC City Engineer's Plans 1049 & 1303 New Series

<sup>107</sup> Pevsner, 276; *VCH Oxon* iv, 361; H.E. Salter and M.D. Lobel, eds., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford: Volume 3, the University of Oxford* (1954), 32; C. E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford* (1927), vol. 3, 338, 437; Oxford directories

<sup>108</sup> Pevsner, 225–9; Tyack, 229–32; M. Graham, *The Suburbs of Victorian Oxford* (1985), 67

<sup>109</sup> Peter Howell, 'Oxford Architecture, 1800-1914', in M.G. Brock and Mark Curthoys, eds., *History of the University of Oxford, vol. 7: Nineteenth Century Oxford* (2000) – hereafter Howell, 739

<sup>110</sup> *Oxf Encyc*, 496–7; [www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/debate.htm](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/debate.htm) ; [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) – 1860 evolution debate; ODNB; William Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford* (1900), 50–2

<sup>111</sup> <http://alecpeever.com/portfolio/architectural-features/>

<sup>112</sup> Wikipedia – Radcliffe Science Library; Oxf CC 71/21025/A

<sup>113</sup> [www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/dinosaur.htm](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/dinosaur.htm)



studied, in the central tower.<sup>114</sup> The bold, almost symmetrical University Museum building originally stood alone apart from the former Chemistry Laboratory to the south, which was inspired by the Abbot's Kitchen at Glastonbury, and a detached Curator's House (demolished 1955). Bath stone was used for the walls, but different coloured stone was chosen for the dressings, and patterned slates for the steep roofs. Two Irish craftsmen, James and John O'Shea, undertook the carved detail of animals and foliage around the windows, but the building cost far more than expected, and they were dismissed before they could finish the job. They had also offended some dons by carving caricatures – later destroyed – among the owls and parrots inside the porch! The interior of the museum is perhaps even more remarkable, with exhibits placed in a central courtyard covered by an iron and glass roof made by Francis Skidmore of Coventry.<sup>115</sup> This exuberant structure was restored to pristine condition in 2013–4 (Purcell).<sup>116</sup> During opening hours, you may well wish to break off here to explore the collections of the University Museum, and visit the adjoining Pitt Rivers Museum (1885–6, T.N. Deane & Son).<sup>117</sup>

Now retrace your steps to South Parks Road, keeping to the pavement on the north side. Notice the Royal Chemistry Society National Chemical Landmark plaques as you pass the Inorganic Chemistry building. One recalls the pioneering work of Professor Dorothy Hodgkin (1910–94), chemist and crystallographer, who was awarded the Nobel prize for chemistry in 1964. Another records the identification of cathode material by a team led by John Goodenough in 1980, which ushered in the age of portable electronic devices. A third plaque notes the discovery by Allen Hill, Tony Case and Graham Davis in 1982 that led to the development of blood glucose sensors now used by millions of diabetics.<sup>118</sup> You cross Robinson Close before reaching the Earth Sciences Building. Sir Robert Robinson (1886–1975), was Waynflete Professor of Chemistry 1930–55 and winner of the Nobel prize for chemistry in 1947.<sup>119</sup> A stone tablet on the former Dyson Perrins Chemistry Laboratory translates as: 'I Waterhouse a Balliol man made this. If only it had been better'. The large letters, read as Roman numerals, add up to 1915, the building's original completion date, but the opening was in fact delayed until 1916. Another tablet, half hidden by a drainpipe, spells out the names Perrins and Perkin. William Henry Perkin (1860–1929) was Waynflete Professor of Chemistry 1912–29 and the driving force behind the new laboratory.<sup>120</sup>

Carry on along the lime-tree avenue, past Mansfield Road and the traffic lights, before crossing Sibthorp Road, an access road named after the Oxford-born botanist, Dr John Sibthorp (1758–96).<sup>121</sup> You pass the Plant Sciences Library, originally the Imperial Forestry Institute (1947–50, Sir Hubert Worthington), another building of squared rubble and ashlar stone.<sup>122</sup> Next comes Edward Abraham Road – Sir Edward Abraham was

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<sup>114</sup> [www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/swifts.htm](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/swifts.htm) ; OM 14.7.2014;

<sup>115</sup> Pevsner, 280–2; Tyack, 217–20; Howell, 239–41

<sup>116</sup> OM 6.2.2014

<sup>117</sup> Pevsner, 282

<sup>118</sup> ODNB – Dorothy Hodgkin; [http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/streets/inscriptions/north/south\\_parks](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/streets/inscriptions/north/south_parks)

<sup>119</sup> ODNB – Sir Robert Robinson

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/> List Entry Number 1389444; Wikipedia – William Henry Perkin

<sup>121</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 137

<sup>122</sup> Pevsner, 278

Professor of Chemical Pathology 1964–80<sup>123</sup> – and the long red brick neo-Georgian façade of the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology (1926–7, E.P. Warren), which looks more like an English country house than the vitally important workplace where Howard Florey and his team developed the clinical use of penicillin from 1939 to 1943.<sup>124</sup> Modern buildings to the rear have inevitably affected the setting of Warren’s building. To the north-west, the four storey Oxford Molecular Pathology Institute (2011, Nightingale Associates/Make Architects)<sup>125</sup> respects the older building with matching brick-coloured horizontal louvres in front of its windows. Further along, to the north-east, the EPA Building (2001) – the initials are those of Sir Edward Abraham – is a three storey block linked by a dramatic glazed bridge to the original building.<sup>126</sup>

Away to your right, approaching St Cross Road, the monumental concrete Zoology & Psychology Building (1965–70, Sir Leslie Martin), now known as the Tinbergen Building, was the first incursion of the Science Area onto the south side of South Parks Road.<sup>127</sup> Continue past the red brick and tile-hung South Lodge of the University Parks (1893, H.G.W. Drinkwater)<sup>128</sup> and glance right towards Cherwell Edge, one of the few Victorian villas in this area to have survived. Occupied by Linacre College since 1977, the red brick Queen Anne style house (1886–7, J.W. Messenger; additions 1907–8, Basil Champneys) was built for Sir William Hunter, a retired Indian civil servant. Champneys’ additions to the south and east were for later occupants, the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus.<sup>129</sup> Linacre built the OC Tanner Building, a new entrance block and 18 additional rooms to the north (1992–4, ECD Partnership),<sup>130</sup> which blends almost imperceptibly with the earlier work.

## Chapter 4 – Parson’s Pleasure to St Cross Road

Continue straight on through bollards into a footpath that was upgraded in 1994 to become a cycle track between the Science Area and New Marston.<sup>131</sup> You need to be wary of bikes in this shared space. On the right, beyond Linacre College, you have views across New College sports ground towards the pavilion and, beyond it, the Social Studies Faculty Centre. On either side of the pavilion, notice a line of three storey properties providing 45 study bedrooms, which make up New College’s Weston Buildings (1998–9, Initiatives in Design).<sup>132</sup> To your left, you have glimpses through railings of the University Parks, laid out by the University as both a recreational and educational space between 1864 and 1865.<sup>133</sup> The new facility was hugely popular with respectable North Oxford families, who might

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<sup>123</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 76

<sup>124</sup> Tyack, 282–3; *Encyc Oxf*, 144

<sup>125</sup> [www.path.ox.ac.uk/Facilities/OMPI\\_\(23.7.11\)](http://www.path.ox.ac.uk/Facilities/OMPI_(23.7.11))

<sup>126</sup> *Fusion*, vol.1, no.1, Michaelmas. 2002, 4–5

<sup>127</sup> Pevsner, 276–80

<sup>128</sup> OC 14.10.1893

<sup>129</sup> OC 9.10.1908

<sup>130</sup> Oxf CC 90/01020/NFH

<sup>131</sup> [www.parks.ox.ac.uk/guide](http://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/guide)

<sup>132</sup> Oxf CC 97/01022/NFH

<sup>133</sup> *Guide to Trees and Shrubs in the University Parks* (1976), 13

typically, after Sunday church services, take a turn round the Parks in the hope of meeting their friends. On weekdays, nursemaids from wealthy homes pushed their charges along the gravel paths in perambulators.<sup>134</sup> Not everyone welcomed the gentrification of the Parks, for the area had long been a place for informal recreation. In his poem, *The Deserted Parks*, Charles Dodgson, otherwise Lewis Carroll, criticized the exclusion of tiny urchins and whispering lovers and the sacrifice of the area's simple charms to 'one selfish pastime', namely cricket!<sup>135</sup>

Cross the Holywell millstream, a branch of the river Cherwell, and turn left through a gate into an anonymous grassed area dotted with trees. The main river lies ahead of you with tall willow trees on the far bank and, in summer, you will probably see people enjoying themselves in punts. This area was formerly called Loggerhead, presumably from its shape, but it became much better known as Parson's Pleasure, the quintessential Oxford bathing place, where men bathed nude. The name may reflect the fact that most swimmers were in Holy Orders, but it might have been a corruption of Patin's or Patten's Pleasure. Today, there are signs warning against diving or swimming in the deep water of the Cherwell but Parson's Pleasure was a bathing place for males for centuries at least. It is first recorded in June 1666 when Oliver Craven, a Trinity College graduate, drowned here. Until the 1860s, Parson's Pleasure remained in a more or less natural state and town lads could swim there for a small fee. Admission was subsequently restricted to Varsity men, although Lord Randolph Churchill, driving over from Blenheim, brushed off the attendant Charles Cox with the words, 'I don't care about that', and went in regardless! Cox (1827–1920) looked after Parson's Pleasure for 75 years, helping his father at first and then becoming head attendant. He taught many men to swim, and claimed to have rescued over a hundred swimmers from drowning, but he could not himself swim.<sup>136</sup> The bathing place was screened off to ensure that respectable ladies on the Mesopotamia walk were not shocked by the sight of naked men. Nude swimming by males was still commonplace in Victorian times and, although Oxford Corporation bathing places insisted on men wearing costumes from 1932,<sup>137</sup> the old ways continued at Parson's Pleasure. Punting on the Cherwell grew in popularity from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the passage of punts through the bathing place then became an issue.<sup>138</sup> Until the 1970s, notices still advised women to disembark from boats at either end of the bathing place to avoid embarrassment. One Parson's Pleasure story has Maurice Bowra and three colleagues standing together naked when a punt full of women comes into view. His colleagues cover their privates but he covers his face, explaining, 'I don't know about you gentlemen, but in Oxford, I at least am known by my face!' Health and safety concerns and the diminished appetite for river swimming encouraged the University to close the bathing place down and clear the site in 1991.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Graham (1985), 452

<sup>135</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Complete Poems* (1939 ed.), 823

<sup>136</sup> VCH Oxon iv, 428; Henry Taunt, *Parson's Pleasure Bathing Place* (1913), 8, 11

<sup>137</sup> OT 5.8.1932

<sup>138</sup> Taunt, *Parson's Pleasure*, 6, 10

<sup>139</sup> [www.wikipedia.co.uk](http://www.wikipedia.co.uk) – Parson's Pleasure

Walk to the far end of the Parson's Pleasure site where the Cherwell broadens out into an area known as Devil's Eye or Mill Pond in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>140</sup> At this point, the river turns sharply and divides into two channels, a higher level millstream leading to King's Mill and a lower stream fed by a weir. Dame's Delight, a river bathing place for women and families, flourished on the higher level stream opposite between 1934 and 1970.<sup>141</sup> Rollers were installed as a means of getting punts over the weir and, in summer, you may wish to spend a few moments at this delightful spot seeing how well people cope with the challenge. The footbridge just below the rollers (1949, R. Travers Morgan & Partners) is notable as being the first pre-stressed concrete bridge in Britain, and perhaps the world.<sup>142</sup> Leave Parson's Pleasure by an iron gate beside this bridge, keeping a look out for bikes as you emerge. Go straight across the track, and enter a riverside meadow through a kissing gate which, unusually, offers pushchair friendly access. This area of grassland, known as Music Meadow<sup>143</sup> for no obvious reason, is a precious relic of pastoral Holywell and, with the adjacent green space of New College sports field to your right, you can easily imagine yourself back in time. A footbridge on your left – to be ignored on this occasion – leads into the Mesopotamia Walk, created by the University in 1864–5 as part of the Parks development. The new walk continued the tradition of the University in providing footpaths for the wholesome recreation of resident members, and this route via King's Mill was a particularly useful link from North Oxford towards Headington and Shotover.<sup>144</sup> Its course lies between branches of the river Cherwell and the name Mesopotamia, meaning 'land between the rivers', echoes the rather grander Mesopotamia between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Continue along the riverside path which takes you past tall clumps of giant willowherb in summer. Beyond a weeping willow tree, the Cherwell flows away to your left, and the path heads straight on through a gap in an ancient hedgerow. During the Civil War, a ditch here between the Holywell millstream and the Cherwell may have formed part of the inner line of the City's defences.<sup>145</sup> Beyond the hedge, you find yourself in Great Meadow, formerly a large open field bordered by two branches of the river Cherwell and the Magdalen College water walks. The renowned tight-rope artiste, Charles Blondin, caused something of a sensation here in August 1861, entertaining up to 5,000 people by walking along a 200 feet long rope suspended high above the ground and then repeating the feat carrying a 12 stone man.<sup>146</sup> The land nearest the Holywell millstream was raised by rubbish dumping in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and used as allotments during the Second World War. This provided the original site for St Catherine's College but what you see initially, away to your left, is Merton College sports field, relocated from Mansfield Road. Further away, above the trees in the distance, you also get a glimpse of the Islamic Studies Centre in Marston Road. A raised gravel path takes you past the Arumugam Building (2005, Stephen Hodder),<sup>147</sup> the latest addition to St Catherine's College. Turn right when you reach the college access road. The original buildings of St. Catherine's

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<sup>140</sup> OHC MPC604 copy of Merton College estate map

<sup>141</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 428

<sup>142</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/469292](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/469292) ([FOOTBRIDGE OVER RIVER CHERWELL AT PARSONS PLEASURE PUNT ROLLERS, Non Civil Parish - 1119763 | Historic England](#))

<sup>143</sup> OHC MPC575, 591 copies of Merton College estate maps, 1738 and 1847

<sup>144</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 363; JOJ 15.10.1864, 14.10.1865

<sup>145</sup> Bradley, 'Excavations at Chemistry Research Laboratory', 200–1

<sup>146</sup> OC 10.8.1861, 5

<sup>147</sup> B. Juniper, *St Catherine's College* (2006), 2

College (1960–4, Arne Jacobsen) are away to your left and merit a closer look. Described by Pevsner as ‘a perfect piece of architecture’, St Catherine’s was created as a complete college with rooms for 300 students, a hall, library, common rooms, a lecture theatre and a bell tower but no chapel. Jacobsen designed every aspect down to the furniture and cutlery in the hall and the attention to detail is remarkable.<sup>148</sup> As you look over a low wall into the site, the Master’s Lodgings are to your right next to the ornamental canal which runs beside one of the long residential blocks. With continuing growth in student numbers, St Catherine’s faced a design dilemma when it came to extending the college. The newer buildings north of the access road (1994–2005, Stephen Hodder)<sup>149</sup> fit in well with Jacobsen’s masterpiece and, as you leave the college, you will notice that even the car park is handsomely detailed.

Cross Napper’s Bridge over the Holywell millstream and walk into Manor Road. The name of the bridge recalls the Napper or Napier family, a well-known Roman Catholic family, who leased Holywell Manor from Merton College from 1531 until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Away to your left, beside the millstream, there was a popular bowling green in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, run by the lessee of the nearby Cockpit inn. This became a private garden for the Warden of Wadham College in the early 1800s.<sup>150</sup> Manor Road was a farm track until the 1890s when Merton College upgraded it and added the offshoot Manor Place. The groups of red brick houses with tile-hung gables and prominent bracketed hoods replaced old Holywell properties which the college had demolished. Bay windows are absent from the earlier houses (1891, Castle, Field and Castle) but are included at nos. 12–20 Manor Place (1896).<sup>151</sup> These Victorian properties now face the very different and arch-modern Social Studies Faculty Centre (1998–2003, Norman Foster & Partners).<sup>152</sup> The Social Studies building is on a site latterly used by the Territorial Army which the military had occupied since the 1920s.<sup>153</sup> Further along, on the same side of Manor Road, you come to the St Cross Building (1961–4, Sir Leslie Martin and Colin St John Wilson), a monumental structure of sand-coloured brick, quite low but with three sky-lit reading rooms for the Law, English and Statistics Libraries.<sup>154</sup> It occupied the sites of some rubble stone and pantiled cottages and a vast brick building (1866, E.G. Bruton), which originally housed racquet courts, fives courts, billiard rooms and changing facilities.<sup>155</sup> The cottages were survivors from an earlier phase of Holywell history and, until 1878, stood near a 13<sup>th</sup> century cruck-framed barn.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Pevsner, 240-4; Tyack, 307-10

<sup>149</sup> Oxf CC 93/00132/NFH; Juniper, *op.cit.*, 2

<sup>150</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 272, 426; Jones, *op.cit.*, 12

<sup>151</sup> OHC City Engineer’s Estates Plan E41

<sup>152</sup> Oxf CC 97/00510/NFH; 02/00951/FUL

<sup>153</sup> History of University OTC on [www.oua.ox.ac.uk](http://www.oua.ox.ac.uk)

<sup>154</sup> Pevsner, 274–5; Tyack, 310–11

<sup>155</sup> JOJ 13.10.1866

<sup>156</sup> Jones, 13; M. Graham, *Images of Victorian Oxford* (1992), 11 reproduces a J.A. Shuffrey watercolour of cottages in 1910; Corpus Christi College ms B6 443, vol. 8, no. 2 is a drawing of the interior of the barn in 1777 by J.B. Malchair – microfilm copy at OHC; J C Buckler recorded the barn in 1877 – information from John Ashdown; Bodl MS Top Oxon c. 406, f. 11 is a watercolour of the barn by Miss C.E. Lloyd just before demolition in 1878

On the south side of Manor Road, your first glimpse of Holywell Manor House is a four storey extension (1992, Architects Design Partnership) providing 23 study bedrooms.<sup>157</sup> This occupies the site of an octagonal cockpit with a conical roof which stood here between about 1675 and 1845. The cocks were kept in a nearby two storey building filled from floor to ceiling with pens. In later years, the adjacent portion of the Manor House became a pub, the Cock Pit, where cock-fighting would have been an extra attraction.<sup>158</sup> The Manor House itself is a much altered early 16<sup>th</sup> century rubble stone building, some windows having hood moulds and arched lights. It was built by Merton College in 1516 and the gabled ranges at both ends were added between c.1555 and 1572 while the Nappers were lessees. From about 1740, Holywell Manor House was used as a workhouse. It was divided into three tenements after a workhouse for all Oxford parishes opened in 1772 in what is now Wellington Square.<sup>159</sup> The dilapidated building was adapted in 1856 to provide accommodation for the Oxford Female Penitentiary (established 1832), which sought to reclaim ‘unfortunate females . . . from a life of misery and privation’, and prepare them for respectable domestic service.<sup>160</sup> The Penitentiary, later managed by the Clewer Sisterhood, occupied the Manor House until 1929, and made substantial additions to the building.<sup>161</sup> These included a laundry where long hours of laundry-work by the inmates accounted for more than half the charity’s income by 1888.<sup>162</sup> In 1930, Balliol College took over the Manor House, cleared almost all of the Penitentiary buildings and added an open quad (1931, Kennedy and Nightingale).<sup>163</sup> A small upstairs room in the Manor House (not open to the public) contains murals (1934–6) by Gilbert Spencer depicting scenes from the foundation legend of Balliol College.<sup>164</sup>

The ancient holy well or spring from which the parish takes its name lay between the Manor House and Holywell Church. Dr Richard FitzJames, Warden of Merton College, built a fine stone well-house over it in c.1488 with his coat of arms over the door. The water flowed into a rectangular stone chamber which was ‘amply large enough for several persons to bathe at one time and swim around’. John Henry Newman was among those still using the well as a cold bath in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but drainage operations during the formation of Holywell cemetery lowered the water table, destroying the spring and many domestic wells in the parish.<sup>165</sup> The Penitentiary chapel (1862, James Castle)<sup>166</sup> was built over the site of the well and, if you peer through the garden gate, you’ll see that Balliol retained the south wall of this chapel as the boundary wall between the Manor House and the church. A few steps further on, another gate reveals the stone outer wall of the chapel with six Gothic windows.

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<sup>157</sup> Oxf CC NFH/1273/91

<sup>158</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 272, 429; G. Simms, ‘Historical and Antiquarian notes on Holywell Parish’, *Proceedings of OAHS*, v (1889), 203, 211

<sup>159</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 272–3, 346–7

<sup>160</sup> JOJ 21.2.1857, 30.1.1858

<sup>161</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 273; Bodl G A Oxon 8<sup>o</sup> 488 Oxford Female Penitentiary reports, 1863, 1881, 1883, 1896, 1898, 1900

<sup>162</sup> E. Palmer, ‘Oxford Female Penitentiary’ [appeal] (1888), 1

<sup>163</sup> *Oxford Magazine* 1932/3, 7-8; *VCH Oxon* iv, 273; OHC City Engineer’s Plan 5299 New Series

<sup>164</sup> ODNB – Gilbert Spencer; the murals can be seen on a Balliol College Flickr album

<sup>165</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 17–18; H. Paintin, *Articles on Oxford and District* (c.1930), vol. 1, 119; *Proceedings of OAHS*, v, 1889, 207 and vi, 1896, 110–11

<sup>166</sup> OC 13.12.1862; Bodl G A Oxon 8<sup>o</sup> 488 Oxford Female Penitentiary reports, 1863

The last church service was held at St Cross or Holywell Church in 2008 and the building was subsequently restored and converted into an Historic Collections Centre for Balliol College (2009–11, Montgomery Architects Ltd).<sup>167</sup> The former church is occasionally open to the public and, during office hours, you can usually access the attractively planted churchyard through the gate by the west door. [Monuments in the churchyard and cemetery have been numbered here to match the illustration in the printed book]. The oldest monument is probably the table tomb commemorating William Merryman (d.1628) and his wife Anne (d.1619), which lies to the right of the path after you've climbed a few steps from the south porch [1]; on the left beside the steps notice also gravestones relating to the Knowles family, builders in the parish [2]. Further along, you'll find a good head stone topped by a skull between scrolls commemorating Arthur Lloyd (d.1700) [3]. The church itself dates back to c.1100 but this is far from obvious externally. The upper part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century west tower was rebuilt in 1464 and there is a painted sundial dated 1803 (restored 2001) beneath the stair turret. The nave walls were rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and north and south aisles, replacing lost medieval ones, were added between 1837 and 1844. Note the weather-beaten carved heads which terminate the mouldings of the west windows of these aisles.<sup>168</sup> Inside, the late 13<sup>th</sup> century tower arches at once confirm the existence of earlier aisles, and the horseshoe-shaped chancel arch with small St. Andrew's crosses in the impost was part of the early Norman church. A poignant brass commemorates Eliza Franklin (d.1622) wife of the innkeeper of the King's Arms, who 'dangerously escaping death at three several travells in childe-bed died together with the fourth'. On the west wall, there is a charity board which records, among others, the benefaction of William Merryman. The parish chest is 18<sup>th</sup> century and came from St Peter in the East Church. Members of the Knibb family, including the famous clockmaker John Knibb (1650–1722), are recalled by a memorial on the north wall, and there is a memorial window (1901) to the composer and former churchwarden, Sir John Stainer, at the east end of the south aisle.<sup>169</sup>

The area between Holywell Church and Magdalen College Grove was originally known as Holywell Green or Common. The nearby Holywell Mill is first mentioned in c.1200 and, in early medieval times, many weavers and fullers may have lived here. There was another holy well, sometimes called Jenny Newton's Well, on Holywell Green,<sup>170</sup> which people were still visiting in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to relieve eye complaints and other sores. A mineral water spring discovered in 1738 relieved folk with obstructions of any kind or impaired appetites and it was alleged that 'those whose spirits have been faint and languid in a short time have acquired a new flow . . .'<sup>171</sup> The site of the well was lost in 1848 when part of Holywell Green was enclosed to form Holywell Cemetery, one of three opened in the late 1840s to relieve the pressure on the city's small central churchyards.<sup>172</sup> Merton College granted land in front of the cemetery for a parish school (1850, Thomas Grimsley),

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<sup>167</sup> Oxf CC 08/02564/LBC; <http://archives.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Archives/stcross01.asp>

<sup>168</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245806](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245806) ([CHURCH OF ST CROSS, Non Civil Parish - 1369450 | Historic England](#))

<sup>169</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 377-8

<sup>170</sup> Merton College mss Holywell estate map 1738, copy in OHC

<sup>171</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d.490, 16-17

<sup>172</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 364

which is now part of the nearby 10 St Cross Road complex. The building is of coursed rubble stone with ashlar dressings and is Gothic in style. Inside, Grimsley made use of structural terracotta to support the roof. The integral cemetery lodge was used initially as a teacher's house and an infants' school was added in 1857. Pupil numbers fell as families moved out of central Oxford and the school closed in 1938.<sup>173</sup>

Beside the lodge, a gate leads into Holywell Cemetery, where fine monuments jostle with shrubs and mature trees. The cemetery served the eastern half of the city and many well-known Oxford tradespeople and University figures are buried here. To the left of the path as you go in, a flat stone commemorates John Redcliffe-Maud (1906–82) [4], best known perhaps for his chairmanship of the Royal Commission which led to local government reorganisation in 1974.<sup>174</sup> To the right of the path, notice the fine memorial to Kenneth Grahame (1859–1932), author of *Wind in the Willows* [5]. Further on, you will see a remarkable casket with decorative copper panels which records the sad drowning of a little boy, Lewis Theodore Pilcher, and his nursemaid, Elizabeth Sibley, at Medley in 1893 [6]. The cemetery chapel (1848, H.J. Underwood)<sup>175</sup> has been demolished, providing space for modern burials, which have included Maurice Bowra (1898–1971) [7], Warden of Wadham, the theatre critic Kenneth Tynan (1927–80) [8] and H.V.D. Dyson (1896–1975) [9], an associate of the Inklings. Notice among the cremation burials, a memorial for Vivian Ridler (1913–2009), Printer to the University, and his wife, the poet, Anne Ridler (1912–2001) [10], which bears the inscription 'Nothing is lost for all in love survive'. The science-fiction author James Blish (1921–75) [11] was buried just beyond the chapel site.

By the 1970s, much of Holywell Cemetery had become an untended wilderness, and many memorials were lost in the undergrowth. Its subsequent restoration was largely due to Canon Peter Bostock, who supervised the initial clearance of the site in his retirement and recorded over 1,200 gravestones as they were revealed. The Friends of Holywell Cemetery were established in 1987, and, with expert advice and the help of volunteers, they continue to manage the cemetery as a delightful nature reserve and a window on Oxford's past. Setting out to explore Holywell Cemetery from the chapel site in an anti-clockwise direction, you will find the memorial to Benjamin Harris Blackwell (d. 1855) [12], Oxford's first City Librarian and father of the founder of Blackwell's bookshop, within a few paces. Further down, a tall Celtic cross beneath a yew tree commemorates Sir John Stainer (1840–1901) [13], composer and Professor of Music, near the memorial to Thomas Randall (1805–87) [14], an Oxford hatter who is thought to have been the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's Mad Hatter.<sup>176</sup> The two families were linked in 1865 when Randall's only daughter, Eliza (1836–1916), married Stainer.<sup>177</sup> Reaching the south-east corner of the cemetery, you have a distant view of dormer windows in the red tiled roof of Holywell Ford

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 449; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245805](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245805) ([ST CROSS COLLEGE, Non Civil Parish - 1047130 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245805)); Buckler drawings dated 1838 and 1844 show a well east of the church and manor house – British Library Add Mss 36375, 52-3

<sup>174</sup> Canon Peter Bostock, *Holywell Cemetery* (1986), *passim*

<sup>175</sup> JOJ 14.10.1848

<sup>176</sup> Friends of Holywell Cemetery, *A Short Guide to Holywell Cemetery* (c.2000), *passim*; M. Davies, 'The Real Mad Hatter?', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16.5.2013

<sup>177</sup> ODNB – Sir John Stainer; OJI 13.9.1916



(1888, C.C. Rolfe), which was built on the site of Holywell Mill.<sup>178</sup> Between 1946 and 1947, Dylan Thomas lived in a summer-house in the grounds (1889; restored after a fire, 1984).<sup>179</sup> The intervening land still contained visible Civil War earthworks in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but allotments and tennis courts later took over the site and, above ground at least, no trace survives today. As long ago as 1924, Merton College was planning to build houses here in an extension of Manor Place.<sup>180</sup>

Walking north alongside the boundary wall, notice on your left a tablet commemorating Peter Bostock (1911–99) [15], Canon Emeritus of Mombasa Cathedral, already noted for rescuing the cemetery from neglect. Nearby, you will find a memorial to George Claridge Druce (1850–1932) [16], botanist, Mayor of Oxford and owner of a chemist's shop in High Street; the appropriate Latin inscription 'Floreat Flora' means 'Let flowers flourish.' Beyond the central path, Sir John Rhys (1840–1915) [17], Professor of Celtic, and his wife are commemorated by an unusual terracotta monument attributed to Mrs G.F. Watts of the Compton Pottery in Surrey.<sup>181</sup> Behind the Rhys memorial, a massive Celtic cross marks the last resting place of Frederick Max Müller (1823–1900) [18], the German-born Sanscrit scholar who was a professor at the University for 50 years. Further back, off a short side-path, you will find the grave of art critic Walter Pater (1839–94) [19]. Resuming your walk beside the boundary wall, you pass a chest tomb, off to the left, commemorating the historian Montagu Burrows (1819–1905) [20] and a memorial to Charles Cannan (1858–1919) [21], Secretary to the Delegates of the University Press. Opposite, a group of Palmer and Poulton memorials on the wall includes a restored wooden cross from Flanders commemorating Lieutenant Ronald Poulton-Palmer (1889–1915) [22], killed in action in May 1915. He was England's rugby captain and had scored five tries in the 1909 Varsity match, a feat that has still to be matched.<sup>182</sup> As the path leads you round to the west, notice to your right a Celtic cross memorial to Sarah Acland (1815–78) [23] and her husband, Sir Henry Acland (1815–1900), Regius Professor of Medicine. Other family members commemorated include their only daughter, Sarah Angelina Acland (1849–1930), a pioneering colour photographer.<sup>183</sup> Behind the Acland monument, a pointed top headstone commemorates Sir Paul Vinogradoff (1854–1925) [24] who became Professor of Jurisprudence in 1903 after leaving his native Russia; the Latin inscription records the thanks of 'a grateful foreigner to his host Britannia'.<sup>184</sup> A finely-detailed Celtic cross recalls the historian Hastings Rashdall (1858–1924) [25], and a table tomb further along forms a notable memorial to Henry Beaumont Bird (d. 1856) [26], a 12 year old chorister at Magdalen College, who died of typhoid fever. The effigy by the sculptor, Thomas Earp, shows Henry in his chorister's surplice with his hands clasped in prayer. At the head of this tomb, notice also a plaque commemorating Reginald Bird (d. 1891), a Fellow of Magdalen College and one-time mounted policeman in Australia.<sup>185</sup> The poet and Inkling Charles Williams (1886–1945) [27] was buried to the right beneath the branches of a yew tree.

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<sup>178</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1318 Old Series

<sup>179</sup> D. Eagle, ed., *Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles* (1977), 260

<sup>180</sup> OS1:500 Oxon XXXIII.15.19 surveyed 1876; OHC City Engineer's Estates Plan E41

<sup>181</sup> Information from John Ashdown

<sup>182</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

<sup>183</sup> ODNB – Sarah Angelina Acland

<sup>184</sup> M. Graham, *Diverse Oxfordshire* (2010), 54

<sup>185</sup> *Registers of Magdalen College*, new series, vol. 6, 169

When you reach the north boundary wall, turn right briefly to see a wall tablet commemorating Bert, the son of marmalade manufacturers, Frank and Sarah Cooper, who died in an accident in South Africa in 1903 [28]. Now retrace your steps along the boundary wall to the point where it is treated architecturally with gothic canopies and preaching angels copied from an original in St Mary the Virgin Church. A wall tablet J.W.B. and an elaborate chest tomb commemorate Dr. John Burgon (1813–88) [29], vicar of St Mary's from 1868 to 1875 and subsequently Dean of Chichester. As the path swings left near the east end of St. Cross Church, notice the memorial to Sir Hugh Cairns (1896–1952) [30], an Australian Rhodes scholar who went on to become the first Nuffield Professor of Surgery.<sup>186</sup>

Now leave the cemetery and walk into St Cross Road. On the left, a gateway leads to 10 St Cross Road (1996, Batterton Tyack Architects), a brick and tiled annexe to St Cross College and Brasenose College alongside the former St Cross School. St Cross Vicarage (1864, Charles Buckeridge) formerly occupied this site.<sup>187</sup> Cross the road by the pedestrian crossing, noticing a cluster of rendered Balliol College houses opposite (1896–7, Ernest George & Yeates), built on the site of a row of 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages demolished in 1896;<sup>188</sup> no.7 has the date 1897 above the front door. Beyond the cottages, you would, until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, have passed Holywell's other bowling green and cockpit, operated in conjunction with the Cardinal's Hat inn in Holywell Street from c.1672.<sup>189</sup> Jowett Walk now covers part of the site. At this point, notice the private lane towards Holywell Ford on your left and then Grove Cottage, a 19<sup>th</sup> century building of coursed rubble stone with ashlar dressings which has Magdalen College Grove as a fine backdrop. Modern rubble walls hide premises for the Oxford Conservation Consortium and Grove Cottage Flat, replacements for brick built and roughcast garages (c.1909) which provided extra space for the expanding Morris Garages.<sup>190</sup> On your side of the road, you pass Holywell Cottage, a fine late 17<sup>th</sup> century house of plastered rubble with a hipped roof and three gabled dormers; original timber cross-casement windows survive as does a fine oak door.<sup>191</sup> Next comes the side wall of no. 1 Holywell Street where ashlar stone beneath a renewed string course indicates that this building was re-fronted and not wholly rebuilt in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>192</sup> Straight ahead, you have a glimpse beyond Holywell Street of the old city wall and tall trees in New College garden.

## Chapter 5 – Longwall Street to Catte Street

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<sup>186</sup> Friends of Holywell Cemetery, *A Short Guide to Holywell Cemetery* (c.2000), *passim*

<sup>187</sup> Architect and date on plaque by gate; *VCH Oxon* iv, 376

<sup>188</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plans 2319 & 2776 Old Series; 2533 New Series; H. Hurst, 'Oxford Topography, an Essay', *Oxford Historical Society* 39 (1899), 138

<sup>189</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 426, 429; P. Manning, 'Sport and Pastime in Stuart Oxford', in H. E. Salter, ed., *Surveys and Tokens, Oxford Historical Society* 75 (1920), 101-2

<sup>190</sup> Oxf CC 00/00443/LH

<sup>191</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245803](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245803) ([HOLYWELL COTTAGE, Non Civil Parish - 1047129 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245803))

<sup>192</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245545](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245545) ([1, Holywell Street, Non Civil Parish - 1047263 | Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245545))

You are now back at the junction between Holywell Street and Longwall Street, where William Morris, later Lord Nuffield, was in business in the early 1900s. With rapidly increasing car ownership and demand for car hire, he was soon looking to expand and the result was the restrained neo-Georgian red brick Morris Garage (1910, Tollit and Lee). The central doorway in the façade gave access to a large covered garage and workshops. Waiting motorists had a well-lit reading room on the first floor and chauffeurs had their own room behind the single storey part of the facade.<sup>193</sup> In 1912, the first Bullnose Morris was assembled inside the garage but production also began at Cowley in February 1913. Although Lord Nuffield's empire became so vast, he always retained an affection for this building and his first-floor office was preserved intact until his death in 1963.<sup>194</sup> The historic frontage of the garage was retained in a New College redevelopment scheme (1980, Architects Design Partnership/John Fryman)<sup>195</sup> and a display in the former showroom window recalls the Morris association. Notice the date, 1910, on the rainwater heads and the V.R. post box, installed next to no. 100 Holywell Street in 1878,<sup>196</sup> which was re-located here beside the central doorway.

Now walk down Longwall Street towards High Street. The view to your left is dominated by Magdalen College's 15<sup>th</sup> century battlemented stone wall and, as you round the corner, you become aware of Magdalen's Grove Buildings (1994–9, Demetri Porphyrios) above the college wall. The complex includes a neo-medieval residential block and the Auditorium (2000), a Classical style lecture room with an octagonal entrance pavilion.<sup>197</sup> Until 1671, you would have seen another long wall to your right, the inner city wall looming above a ditch which had become 'overrun with mud and filth and . . . an occasion of stench and noysomness to the place'.<sup>198</sup> The wall around New College is still there of course but house building subsequently obscured it, covering also the site of the lost Crowell or crow's spring at the northern end of the street.<sup>199</sup> The change brought a new visual interest, however, contrasting the vertical elements of the houses with the horizontal lines of the Magdalen College wall opposite. Nos. 19–20 Longwall Street were built as a pair in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and are of roughcast timber framing with sash windows and ground floor shutters. No. 18 (c.1830) is more ambitious, with an ashlar stone front, a moulded eaves cornice and a band at first-floor level.<sup>200</sup> Round the corner, the domestic scale and rhythm of the street were shattered by New College's Sacher Building (1962, David Roberts), which provides a smooth ashlar surface which has always been a magnet for graffiti.<sup>201</sup> Further down, nos. 9–14 are roughcast timber-framed houses of the mid 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1625 New Series; OJI 13.7.1910

<sup>194</sup> OM 6.9.1963

<sup>195</sup> OM 13.10.1978, 29.8.1980

<sup>196</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>197</sup> [www.magd.ox.ac.uk/college/history](http://www.magd.ox.ac.uk/college/history)

<sup>198</sup> A. Clark, ed., *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood . . . vol. ii*, *Oxford Historical Society* 21 (1892), 216–7

<sup>199</sup> Bodl MS Top Oxon d. 490, 9-10, 16

<sup>200</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245631-2](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245631-2) ([18, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047217 | Historic England](#)) – ([19 AND 20, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1325542 | Historic England](#))

<sup>201</sup> Pevsner, 175

century with shutters, one of them folding. Nos. 9–12 have attractive iron window guards below their first-floor sash windows.<sup>202</sup>

Bodicote House – more sympathetic infilling for New College (1969, Oxford Architects' Partnership/Geoffrey Beard)<sup>203</sup> – then bridged a gap in the street frontage which continues with more 18<sup>th</sup> century sash-windowed facades. Just opposite, a gate in the Magdalen wall offers a glimpse of the Auditorium and distant views of the Grove and New Buildings. Back on the other side, no. 6 has a rusticated ground floor but the upper storeys are again of roughcast timber framing. A low door to the right of the frontage once gave access to Longwall Place and four cottages built in the shadow of the City Wall. Nos. 1–3 are of late 17<sup>th</sup> century date and retain one large gable with a first-floor jetty; sashes, doorways and a Welsh slate roof bear witness to continuing alteration and modernization.<sup>204</sup> The next property, Longwall House (1856–7) is a twin-gabled, painted brick building. Together with buildings down the adjacent passage, it formed an extension to Magdalen College School (founded 1480), which had been reconstituted in the late 1840s. The former Magdalen College Schoolroom (1849–51, J.C. Buckler), now Magdalen College Library, is visible opposite and above the college wall on the corner of Longwall Street and High Street.<sup>205</sup> A series of late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses on the south side of High Street terminate the view down Longwall Street;<sup>206</sup> all are now occupied as student housing by Stanford University of California.

Cross Longwall Street at the traffic lights to explore the eastern end of High Street, gloriously dominated by Magdalen College (founded by William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, in 1458) and its soaring bell tower (1492–1509). The Library on your left, occupying the site of the Greyhound Inn (1526–1845), and St Swithin's Quad (1880–4, Bodley and Garner) are set back behind lawns. Then comes an ornate gateway (1885, Bodley and Garner) on the street frontage with fine statues of St Mary Magdalen, William of Waynflete, founder of the college, and King Henry VI in the niches.<sup>207</sup> Beyond the lodge,

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<sup>202</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245628-30](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245628-30) ([9-12, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047216 | Historic England](#)) – ([13, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1325970 | Historic England](#)) – ([14, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369410 | Historic England](#))

<sup>203</sup> Oxf CC 68/19709/AA\_H

<sup>204</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245623-7](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245623-7) ([1-3, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047212 | Historic England](#)) – ([4, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047213 | Historic England](#)) – ([5 AND 6, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047214 | Historic England](#)) – ([7, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1106303 | Historic England](#)) – ([8, LONGWALL STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047215 | Historic England](#))

<sup>205</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/244993](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/244993) ([MAGDALEN COLLEGE, THE NEW SCHOOL ROOM, Non Civil Parish - 1283219 | Historic England](#))

<sup>206</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245504](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245504) ([MAGDALEN GATE HOUSE, Non Civil Parish - 1047287 | Historic England](#)), [245506-11 \(62, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1320418 | Historic England\)](#) – ([63, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047288 | Historic England](#)) – ([64, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369364 | Historic England](#)) – ([65, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1115465 | Historic England](#)) – ([66-68, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047289 | Historic England](#)) – ([69 AND 70, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1115468 | Historic England](#))

<sup>207</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/244990](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/244990) ([MAGDALEN COLLEGE, ST SWITHINS QUADRANGLE, Non Civil Parish - 1046707 | Historic England](#)), [244992 \(MAGDALEN COLLEGE, GATEWAY WEST OF RANGE ON HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1369635 | Historic England\)](#), [244995-6 \(MAGDALEN COLLEGE, WALL FRONTING THE HIGH STREET BETWEEN LONGWALL](#)

you reach the 15<sup>th</sup> century front range. The College inherited the buildings and endowments of the Hospital of St John the Baptist (founded c.1180) which had been granted the site by Henry III in 1231. This institution had a chapel on High Street, a hall and a two-aisled infirmary and was, in a sense, the medieval equivalent of today's John Radcliffe Hospital. A blocked doorway west of the bell tower survives from the hospital chapel and, inside the college, the junior common room occupies part of the hall.<sup>208</sup>

Magdalen College tower provides the focal point for Oxford's magical May Morning ceremony when thousands of people gather below at 6 a.m. to hear the college choir sing the 'Hymnus Eucharisticus'. The ceremony perhaps originated as a joyous greeting to Spring from the new tower but it was later overlaid with a religious significance, particularly from the 1840s when choristers were deterred from dropping rotten eggs on to the crowd beneath.<sup>209</sup> Early in the Civil War, in September 1642, the Royalists envisaged pelting Parliamentary attackers with stones from the top of Magdalen Tower.<sup>210</sup> At the foot of the tower, notice the now rather scabrous Chancellor's milestone, probably dating from the 1700s, which marked your arrival in Oxford during the turnpike road era.<sup>211</sup> The eroded text advises you that you are 54 miles from London and 8½ miles from Woodstock. Beside the tower, a slope leads down to a popular punt station but which formerly served a horse ford across the river Cherwell.

Continue on to Magdalen Bridge, which crosses the various branches of the Cherwell that we saw earlier in the walk. The Holywell millstream emerges beside college buildings on your left and rejoins the main channel at the south end of the Magdalen College water walks. In summer, you may see punters here making their first tentative attempts to propel their craft. Next, you are looking down on the vast green field still called Angel and Greyhound Meadow because those Oxford inns once leased the land from Magdalen College to provide hay for customers' horses.<sup>212</sup> Beyond the meadow, the bridge crosses the branch of the river which flows past King's Mill and through St Clement's.

Retracing your steps, you have fine views of Magdalen Tower and an opportunity to study the bridge itself. The present Magdalen Bridge (1773–9, John Gwynn) was widened by twelve feet on the southern side in 1882–3 to accommodate growing traffic and particularly the horse trams which had just been introduced.<sup>213</sup> Excavations around this time found a high status Viking burial, suggesting that there was some Danish settlement east of the

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[STREET AND THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE, Non Civil Parish - 1369636 | Historic England](#)) – [\(MAGDALEN COLLEGE, WALL BETWEEN FRONT WALL ON HIGH STREET AND EAST WING OF ST SWITHINS QUADRANGLE, Non Civil Parish - 1283187 | Historic England\)](#); Pevsner, 149-55; JOJ 17.10.1885

<sup>208</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk 244978 \(MAGDALEN COLLEGE, RANGE ON THE HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1199656 | Historic England\)](#); Tyack, 22

<sup>209</sup> C. Bloxham, *May Day to Mummers* (2002), 72–8; *Oxf Encyc*, 246

<sup>210</sup> A. Clark, ed., *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood . . . vol. i*, *Oxford Historical Society*.19 (1891), 55; D. Eddershaw, *Civil War in Oxfordshire* (1995), 41

<sup>211</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk 245258 \(STONE ON THE EAST CORNER OF MAGDALEN TOWER, IN THE HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1184726 | Historic England\)](#)

<sup>212</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 18

<sup>213</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk 245494 \(MAGDALEN BRIDGE, Non Civil Parish - 1369360 | Historic England\)](#)

Saxon town in c.1000.<sup>214</sup> There has been a bridge here since at least 1004, known sometimes East Bridge or as Pettypont (little bridge) to distinguish it from the Grandpont across the Thames flood plain south of Oxford. Gwynn's elegant stone bridge with large semi-circular arches and plain balustrades replaced a decayed medieval and later structure.<sup>215</sup> Its appearance was much enhanced (1989–93) when an Oxford Preservation Trust fund-raising campaign enabled Oxfordshire County Council to renew cast concrete balusters in natural stone and lay stone paving.<sup>216</sup>

Returning to the corner of Longwall Street, cross at the traffic lights to the south side of High Street and head back towards Carfax. The north-west corner of High Street and Longwall Street was set back and rebuilt in neo-Georgian style for Magdalen College (1935–6, J.E. Thorpe) while the ashlar stone fronts of the next two properties (nos. 57–58) mark late 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding after the demolition of the East Gate (1772).<sup>217</sup> No. 58 was the headmaster's house and boarding house for Magdalen College School between 1849 and 1894 and boarders also occupied no. 57 from c.1861.<sup>218</sup> You are now level with the former East Gate and, above your head, a cartouche at first-floor level on the Eastgate Hotel shows the gate as it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The property opposite (nos. 55–56) takes in part of the site of the East Gate and the roadway inside the city wall which New College took over in 1379. It was an accomplished brick building of c.1870 with an elaborate eaves cornice, which was rigorously modernized with canted bay windows and roughcast in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. No. 56 was a photographic studio for many years, occupied by Jules Guggenheim and James Soame in Victorian times and by Gillman & Soame between c.1939 and 1970.<sup>219</sup> Next comes a large-scale essay in the Elizabethan style (nos. 49–54: 1901, E.P. Warren). Built for Magdalen, the gabled building bears the college arms and the date 1901. Other shields record that St Edmund Hall took it over in 1952, using its share of a benefaction to the University by the French shipping magnate Antonin Besse in 1950.<sup>220</sup> The central archway formerly led through to the Masonic Buildings (1909, George Gardiner) which incorporated a fine restaurant with a French chef. The buildings were converted into a military hospital during the First World War, part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Southern General Hospital based in the Examination Schools. Older Oxonians will recall their later use as a popular restaurant and dance hall, The Forum, in the 1950s and 1960s, which gave way to a new building for St Edmund Hall.<sup>221</sup> Continuing west, no. 48 has an early 18<sup>th</sup> century stuccoed front with a fine eaves cornice; the shop-front is 19<sup>th</sup> century and an engraved panel in the door recalls that William Morris ran his cycle and motor cycle business from here between 1898 and 1910.<sup>222</sup> Next door, St Edmund Hall secured additional student accommodation in a restrained four storey building (1975,

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<sup>214</sup> J. Blair and B. Crawford, 'A Late-Viking Burial at Magdalen Bridge?' *Oxoniensia* 62 (1997), 135–43

<sup>215</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 287–8

<sup>216</sup> Oxford Preservation Trust, *77<sup>th</sup> Annual Report* (1993), 7

<sup>217</sup> Pevsner, 155; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245492 ([58, 58A AND 59, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047283 | Historic England](#)); OHC City Engineer's Plan 7141 New Series

<sup>218</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>219</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>220</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 3540 Old Series

<sup>221</sup> OHC City Engineer's Plan 1006 New Series; OJI 20.10.1909, 6; OHC photos; T. Hayward, *Rocking in Oxford* (2009), 32–3; Pevsner, 194

<sup>222</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245490 ([48, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1115601 | Historic England](#))

Gilbert Howes) which preserved the continuity of the street frontage; this is followed by the college's late 18<sup>th</sup> century style block (1968, Marshall Sisson) on the site of nos. 44–5 which has canted bays, sash windows and an eaves cornice. Norman Minty (1860–1934) opened his furniture business at no. 45 in c.1885 and prospered by supplying 'Varsity' wicker chairs to undergraduates. The firm later expanded into no. 44, with a factory in St. Clement's, and it retained a shop here until 1966.<sup>223</sup> Queen's College adapted or rebuilt the remaining buildings between here and Queen's Lane to form the Queen's Lane Quad. The first property (nos. 42–43) is a single timber-framed building of the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century which has a stuccoed front, 18<sup>th</sup> century bay windows with earlier window heads and cornices; the doorway has a rose in each spandrel. The corner property (nos. 39–41) was completely rebuilt in 1967–8 behind its early 18<sup>th</sup> century stuccoed timber-framed façade to provide extra space for Queen's College.<sup>224</sup> Queen's Lane Coffee House occupies the ground floor, on or near the site of Oxford's second coffee house established by Cirques Jobson in 1654.<sup>225</sup>

Beyond Queen's Lane, if not before, you can see why Pevsner described High Street as 'one of the world's great streets' and Wordsworth praised 'The stream-like windings of that glorious street'.<sup>226</sup> Set on a slight curve, High Street presents an ever-changing vista of colleges and churches, set off by more modest houses and by the famous sycamore tree which overhangs All Souls' College wall. In medieval and later times, college and university buildings were far less prominent and the halls of medieval undergraduates were for the most part situated behind the shops and houses of the townsfolk. As late as 1627, Hutten could describe High Street as having citizens' houses on both sides throughout its length,<sup>227</sup> but the expansion of Queen's, Brasenose and Oriel Colleges on to the street frontage and the building of the Examination Schools decisively shifted the balance from Town to Gown.

The Queen's College (founded 1340) is the major focal point, having expanded onto High Street during the rebuilding of 1672–1760. The screen and domed gatehouse containing a statue of Queen Caroline were built in 1734, the west range in 1709–11 and the east range between 1735 and 1760.<sup>228</sup> When the National Agricultural Society held its first show in Oxford in July 1839, The Queen's College staged a banquet for invited guests under a temporary roof in the Front Quad. The leftovers or 'fragments of the dinner' were later distributed to the poor from the nearby Angel Inn.<sup>229</sup> Queen's has been described as 'the grandest piece of classical architecture in Oxford'<sup>230</sup> and it is a little unfortunate that this magnificent building now forms the backdrop to what must be one of the world's most

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<sup>223</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>224</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245488-9](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245488-9) (39-41, HIGH STREET, 2, QUEENS LANE, Non Civil Parish - 1047280 | Historic England) – (42 AND 43, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047281 | Historic England); Pevsner, 190

<sup>225</sup> N. Aubertin-Potter, *Oxford Coffee Houses 1651–1800* (1987), 26

<sup>226</sup> Pevsner, 307; William Wordsworth, 'The River Duddon', 1820, quoted in Jan Morris, ed., *The Oxford Book of Oxford* (1978), 185

<sup>227</sup> H. Hurst, 'Oxford Topography: An Essay', *Oxford Historical Society* 39 (1899), 170

<sup>228</sup> Pevsner, 187

<sup>229</sup> H. Paintin, 'Articles on Oxford and District' (c.1930), v.2, 54

<sup>230</sup> Pevsner, 187–8; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245092](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245092) (THE QUEENS COLLEGE, SOUTH RANGE, Non Civil Parish - 1183496 | Historic England)

beautiful bus stops. The domestic scale of the adjoining buildings only serves to emphasize the grandeur of the college. Nos. 37–38 High Street, next to the College, were built as one house in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century and are of stuccoed timber framing with two gabled dormers. The ground floor has shopfronts of at least two periods, and bay windows were inserted on the first floor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the dormers, casements have replaced mullioned windows, but they are still supported by carved wooden brackets reminiscent of 35 Holywell Street. The adjoining property (nos. 35–36) is a four storey late 18<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting of a timber-framed house built before 1600. Its canted bays are followed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century roughcast front of no. 34, which has three sash windows on each upper floor. The Oxford photographer, Henry Taunt, had his city centre shop here between 1896 and 1906. No. 33 next door is tiny by comparison, an 18<sup>th</sup> century re-fronting of a 17<sup>th</sup> century house which has an early 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront, lacking only its glazing bars. To the right of the frontage, a side passage led to Drawda Hall, a late 17<sup>th</sup> century gabled and timber-framed house which contains traces of an earlier building.<sup>231</sup> The unusual name is derived from William of Drogheda who held the property in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>232</sup> Beyond no. 33 comes the sycamore tree, probably the result of chance germination rather than deliberate planting around 200 years ago. The tree, described by Thomas Sharp as ‘one of the most important in the world’, plays a crucial part in views of the High Street.<sup>233</sup>

All Souls' College (founded 1438) has a long facade on the High Street, beginning with the Warden's Lodging (1704–6, George Clarke; re-fronted 1826–7, Daniel Robertson). The six bay façade is of ashlar stone with a rusticated ground floor and sash windows set close together; originally it was embattled to match the rest of the college. A Gothic addition to the west (1858) is followed by a 1553 extension which kept to the pattern of the 15<sup>th</sup> century front. The gate tower includes two renewed statues of the founders, Archbishop Chichele and Henry VI, and a relief of the Resurrection (1940, W.C.H. King).<sup>234</sup>

Beyond Catte Street, St Mary the Virgin Church claims attention with its soaring spire (c.1315–25), pinnacled chancel (1463) and nave and south aisle (c.1485–95). St Mary's is first recorded in 1086 and became the University church at an early date. Congregation met here from at least 1252 and, on the north side of the church, Congregation House (c.1320) was the university's first purpose-built building.<sup>235</sup> University ceremonies were held in the church until 1669 and, after serious Town and Gown rioting on St Scholastica's Day 1355, the Mayor, bailiffs and 60 citizens had to attend there annually to swear to observe the University's privileges.<sup>236</sup> In 1555, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was tried for heresy at St Mary's and in March 1556 he dramatically confirmed his faith here before

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<sup>231</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245484-7](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245484-7) ([33, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047277 | Historic England](#)) – ([34, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047278 | Historic England](#)) – ([35 AND 36, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1047279 | Historic England](#)) – ([37 AND 38, HIGH STREET, Non Civil Parish - 1116054 | Historic England](#)); [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>232</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 350

<sup>233</sup> S. Huxley, *Oxford Trees* (2009), 15; T. Sharp, *Oxford Replanned* (1948), 23; *Encyc Oxf*, 461

<sup>234</sup> Pevsner, 91, 97–8

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 283–5

<sup>236</sup> *VCH Oxon iv*, 56, 159–60, 246; W. A. Pantin, *Oxford Life in Oxford Archives* (1972), 102



being hurried to the stake.<sup>237</sup> Notice the exuberant south porch (1637, Nicholas Stone) with its twisted columns and statue of the Virgin and Child. Iconoclastic soldiers shot the heads off these figures in 1642, but the damage was later restored.<sup>238</sup> Beside the porch, a propped-up almond tree is a beautiful sight when it flowers in early Spring.

Cross High Street at the pedestrian crossing opposite St Mary's and head back towards Queen's Lane. As you pass the narrow entrance to Catte Street, it is worth reflecting that this was only closed to traffic in 1973.<sup>239</sup> Notice as you walk beneath the All Souls' sycamore tree, a 1930s K6 phone box and a large X in the stone wall. The X is a parish boundary mark, noting the former boundary between the parishes of St. Mary the Virgin to the left and St Peter in the East to the right.<sup>240</sup> Buildings on the other side of High Street will be covered in detail later in the series but you can't fail to be attracted by the lengthy façade of University College along the way. A copper-roofed dome behind a stone wall houses the memorial to the poet Shelley who was briefly a student at Univ. Then comes the Front Quad (1634–77, Richard Maude), which has a statue of Queen Anne (1700) in a niche in the gate-tower. Pevsner remarked that she strikes 'a decidedly Baroque pose' and, given the long struggle against traffic in High Street, it is tempting to conclude that she is shaking her fist at passing vehicles. The adjoining Radcliffe Quad (1717–9, Bartholomew Peisley and William Townesend) respected the style of the earlier quad and a statue of Queen Mary stands in the corresponding gate-tower niche.<sup>241</sup>

Turn left into Queen's Lane, noticing the old cast iron street-name plate (c.1850) on the side wall of no. 39 High Street. The road leads away enticingly between The Queen's College on your left and the modest façade (c.1635) of St. Edmund Hall (founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and a college since 1957).<sup>242</sup> Beyond this front, you have a glimpse through a gate of the former St Peter in the East Church (founded 10<sup>th</sup> century; converted into St Edmund Hall library in 1969–70, Kenneth Stevens Partners).<sup>243</sup> Notice the seated life-size statue of St Edmund of Abingdon (2007, Montgomery Architects), installed to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of collegiate status.<sup>244</sup> St Edmund was a scholar and teacher at the University in c.1200 who is thought to have lived and taught nearby.<sup>245</sup> Across Queen's Lane, the apsidal east end of The Queen's College chapel (1714–19, William Townesend) soars above the pavement and it is followed by the earlier Williamson Building (1671–2, Christopher Wren), erected before the college shifted its centre of gravity to High Street.<sup>246</sup> On your right, you pass the 14<sup>th</sup> century rubble stone tower of St Peter in the East

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<sup>237</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 243–4

<sup>238</sup> Pevsner, 285; *VCH Oxon* iv, 393; A. Clark, ed., 'The Life and Times of Anthony Wood . . . vol. i', *Oxford Historical Society* 19 (1891), 63

<sup>239</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 72

<sup>240</sup> [www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)

<sup>241</sup> Pevsner, 208, 212; Tyack, 158–9

<sup>242</sup> Pevsner, 192–3

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.* 295–6; *Encyc Oxf*, 420–1

<sup>244</sup> Oxf CC 07/00061/FUL

<sup>245</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 389

<sup>246</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245091 ([THE QUEENS COLLEGE, NORTH RANGE \(INCLUDING HALL AND CHAPEL\), Non Civil Parish - 1046674 | Historic England](#)), 245094 ([THE QUEENS COLLEGE, EAST RANGE, Non Civil Parish - 1183514 | Historic England](#)); *Encyc Oxf*, 348–9

Church<sup>247</sup> and get an enticing view of the battlements in the south-east corner of New College's Garden Quad (1707), with the first datable use of sash windows in Oxford.<sup>248</sup> Queen's Lane turns sharply left at this point – beware of bikes! – and you will see a locked door – known appropriately as the Non-licet (no entry) Gate – in the ancient New College boundary wall. It is opened at least every three years when the Lord Mayor and an official civic party come to inspect the city walls in the college and check that they are still being maintained as promised in 1379.<sup>249</sup> The old rubble stone wall reinforced with iron spikes and the converted Victorian gas lamp standard give real character to this corner.

Now you are heading west through a narrow defile between the north range of The Queen's College North Quad (c.1707) and the soot-stained Long Room of New College (c.1400).<sup>250</sup> The latter was built as the college garderobe or toilet block and originally its only windows to the street were the narrow ones on the upper floor. In 1675, Robert Plot described it as 'a Stupendious Piece of Building never emptied and never likely to need emptying'. Unfortunately, college accounts prove that it was occasionally cleaned out!<sup>251</sup> Putting aside any squeamish thoughts, you pass the monumental Queen's College Library (1692–5) on your left above and behind the wisteria-topped wall to the Provost's Garden.<sup>252</sup> On the right, a stone wall and flowering trees lead the eye up to the south elevation of New College Great Quad (c.1380). Originally two storeys high, it was raised to three in 1674, and the top storey on this side was re-faced (1907–8, Nicholson & Corlette) because the Headington stone was so decayed.<sup>253</sup> Note the wonderful array of grotesques along the band at second floor level. Across the road, the Provost's Lodging for Queen's College (1957, Raymond Erith) was a fine neo-Georgian addition to the scene.<sup>254</sup> The street frontage has a smooth ashlar stone front with just three small windows above a rusticated stone ground floor which echoes the rubble walls all around.

As you approach another sharp turn – to the right this time – you have an unparalleled view of historic Oxford buildings above a rubble stone wall, coloured in Spring by wallflowers; another former gas lamp standard lurks in the corner. From left to right, the main elements of the scene are the twin towers of All Souls College North Quad (1716–20, Nicholas Hawksmoor), the east end of the Codrington Library (1716–50, Nicholas Hawksmoor) and the east end of Hertford College chapel (1904–6, T.G. Jackson). You can also see the Bodleian Library's Tower of the Five Orders (1613–24) rearing up behind Hertford.<sup>255</sup> Once round the corner, glance up at the side elevation of the Great Quad where the original two storey roof line is still very obvious. The Warden of New College's garden lies behind the wall to your left and the bridge across the road (1676, William Bird) provided an all-weather link between his lodgings and the garden as well as access to the

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<sup>247</sup> *VCH Oxon* iv, 400

<sup>248</sup> Pevsner, 174

<sup>249</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 275

<sup>250</sup> Pevsner, 173, 185–6

<sup>251</sup> Buxton, *New College*, 184

<sup>252</sup> Pevsner, 186

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* 168–9; Buxton, *New College*, 209; OC 11.10.1907, 9.10.1908

<sup>254</sup> Pevsner, 189

<sup>255</sup> *Encyc Oxf*, 14, 183; Pevsner, 95–6, 140, 260–1; Tyack, 162, 275

Warden's Barn. The latter, which you'll see to better advantage in a few moments, was built in 1402 to stable horses and house produce from the college's rural estates.<sup>256</sup>

Passing under the bridge, you emerge in New College Lane and Oxford's most evocatively medieval setting. If you walk a few paces to the left and then look back, you have a wonderful view of New College gate tower framed by the sooty outer wall of New College Cloister (left) and the equally blackened wall of the Warden's Barn. New College, founded by William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, in 1379, was the first Oxford college to be conceived and built as an architectural whole and it served as a model for later collegiate building.<sup>257</sup> William of Wykeham was able to secure the very spacious site because the Black Death (1349) and Oxford's economic decline had left the area largely desolate and uninhabited, 'a receptacle for malefactors, whores and thieves' according to Anthony Wood.<sup>258</sup> The building of New College completely altered the topography of this part of Oxford, obstructing the circuit of roads within the town wall and creating the twisty layout which we are now exploring. The three storey gate tower kept the world at bay and the room above the gateway formed part of the Warden's Lodgings, enabling him to monitor the comings and goings of visitors and college fellows. Notice the three niches on the upper floor, containing statues of the Virgin Mary, an angel and the kneeling founder.<sup>259</sup>

Now turn round and follow New College Lane – a 'grim ravine' in Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*<sup>260</sup> – towards Catte Street. At first, the soot-stained rubble stone walls channel you towards the back of Hertford College or, more correctly, towards the largely 17<sup>th</sup> century east range of the earlier Hart Hall.<sup>261</sup> This range, like the New College walls, has not been cleaned and the whole ensemble is a stark reminder of the extent to which coal smoke from domestic fires polluted Oxford before the 1950s. A sharp right turn breaks the overwhelming sense of enclosure, revealing the garden of no. 8 New College Lane on the next bend. This three storey house has a fine red brick front with stone dressings and a stone doorway with scroll bracketed hood; a rainwater head formerly bore the date 1795. The adjoining house is probably of 17<sup>th</sup> century origin but it was re-fronted-in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a plaque beside the door records that the famous astronomer Edmund Halley (Savilian Professor of Geometry, 1703.48) lived here. The windowless and formerly gabled structure on the roof was built as his observatory in 1705.<sup>262</sup> Next comes an ashlar stone building which is two storeys high and has mullioned and transomed windows with traceried heads. The arms of New College are a reminder that the building was erected for New College School in the 1860s when the ancient choir school (founded c. 1380) was re-established for choristers and fee-paying pupils (as we discovered earlier, the school

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<sup>256</sup> Pevsner, 166–8

<sup>257</sup> Tyack, 40–1

<sup>258</sup> A. Clark, ed., 'Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford . . . by Anthony Wood, vol. i', *Oxford Historical Society* 15 (1889), 108

<sup>259</sup> Tyack, 41–2

<sup>260</sup> M. Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson* (1911), 237

<sup>261</sup> Pevsner, 140

<sup>262</sup> [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245674-5](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245674-5) (6 AND 7, NEW COLLEGE LANE, Non Civil Parish - 1369401 | Historic England) – (8, NEW COLLEGE LANE, Non Civil Parish - 1047197 | Historic England)

moved to Savile Road in 1905).<sup>263</sup> Before reaching Hertford's covered bridge, notice a three storey early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick house with a sash window on each floor; brick gives way to cheaper rubble stone on the side elevation.<sup>264</sup> Beyond the bridge, you are back to the starting-point of the walk with views of the refurbished Weston Library, the former New Bodleian (1937–40, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott; refurbishment, 2011–15, Wilkinson Eyre Architects)<sup>265</sup> away to your right. Here, in the very heart of Oxford, there are countless further options for exploration and opportunities for much-needed refreshment.

### 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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<sup>263</sup> VCH Oxon iv, 444; [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) 245673 ([NEW COLLEGE ROOMS \(HALL NEXT EAST OF NUMBER 5\), Non Civil Parish - 1323171 | Historic England](#))

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