

Oxford Heritage Walks Book 4

On foot from Paradise Square to Sheepwash

by Malcolm Graham

© Oxford Preservation Trust, 2016

This is a fully referenced text of the book, illustrated by Edith Gollnast with cartography by Alun Jones, which was first published in 2016. Also included are a further reading list and a list of common abbreviations used in the footnotes.

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

Contents:

Paradise Street to Osney Abbey	1-10
Osney Cemetery to Sheepwash Channel	10-17
Rewley Abbey to Quaking Bridge	17-21
St. Thomas's Street and Church	22-28
Tidmarsh Lane to Railway Station	28-34
Abbreviations	34
Further reading	34-36

Chapter One – Paradise Street to Osney Abbey

The walk begins in Paradise Street, beside St. George's Tower and the Castle Mill Stream, a branch of the river Thames that brings nature into the very heart of the city. You are standing just outside Oxford Castle, a motte and bailey castle built by Robert d'Oilly in 1071 just five years after the Norman Conquest. The castle was used as a gaol as early as the 12th century, and prisoners continued to be held in the later County Gaol and HM Prison until 1996.¹ You are also outside the West Gate of medieval Oxford which stood further along Paradise Street near the junction with Castle Street until the mid 17th century.² Paradise Street and the nearby Paradise Square are named after the Paradise garden of the Grey Friars who became established in St. Ebbe's during the 13th century.³

St. George's Tower, massively built of rubble stone, is traditionally dated to the establishment of St. George's in the Castle as a college of secular canons in 1074⁴ and regarded as an integral part of the Norman castle. Late Anglo-Saxon burials nearby confirm that there was an earlier church on the site, however, and it is now thought that St. George's Tower might have been built before 1066 as a watchtower

¹ Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vol. 4: the City of Oxford* (1979) – hereafter *VCH Oxon iv*, 296-9

² *Ibid.*, 303

³ *Ibid.*, 367

⁴ Christopher Hibbert, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (1988) - hereafter *Encyc Ox*, 393-4

guarding the western approach to Oxford.⁵ It is in any case a remarkable defensive structure, rising in four slightly receding stages with a later diagonally set staircase in one corner. In the early 19th century, lower rooms in the tower were still providing decidedly cheerless accommodation for prisoners.⁶ St. George's Tower was beautifully renovated during the Oxford Castle development (2004-6), and a viewing platform was added behind the parapet.

Two sluice gates at the foot of St. George's Tower mark the site of the Castle Mill, needlessly demolished in 1930 when one critic lamented the loss of 'by far the oldest working institution in Oxford...one of the picturesque gems of Oxford and one of the curiosities of England.'⁷ The mill had been established by 1086 and it was in dual ownership for centuries. The town probably acquired a half share in 1199; the other half share passed from royal hands to Osney Abbey in 1386 and was finally purchased by the City in 1591. In 1597, a new cut was formed beside St George's Tower to power a third wheel and a fourth was added by 1623. The handsome mill buildings, rebuilt shortly before 1781, were 3 storeys high and of brick and stone dressings under a slate roof. The principal range extended out into Paradise Street from St. George's Tower and a south wing covered the 1597 millstream.⁸ A Swan pub stood behind the mill until 1893.⁹

St. George's Gate (1995, Marcus Beale Architects) was built to the north of the tower. The building provided St. Peter's College with 30 student rooms and was said to restore 'a semi-industrial corner of the city to the more salubrious architectural fold of the University.'¹⁰ A house with two gabled dormers formerly occupied the site, and may have been the home of the prominent 17th century Anabaptist, Richard Tidmarsh, after whom Tidmarsh Lane is named. According to tradition, Tidmarsh carried out baptisms in the millstream.¹¹ By 1871, Joseph Round, a coal merchant, occupied premises on the site and Boreham's, electrical engineers, were there from the 1930s.¹²

Now walk down towards Castle Mill Bridge, sometimes called Swan Bridge, a structure of two stone arches which was rebuilt in 1895.¹³ Enjoy the high-quality black brick pavement, formed during the Castle development. Black brick pavements were once ubiquitous in back street Oxford, becoming the City's preferred option for paving working class areas by 1879.¹⁴ Look out for mallards and, perhaps, a heron in the stream below. The neighbourhood now seems quite peaceful, but the City set up a Cucking, or Ducking, Stool by the Castle Mill in 1647, which was used to dunk

⁵ Daniel Poore, Excavations at Oxford Castle: Oxford's Western Quarter from the mid-Saxons to the 18th century, *Oxoniensia* 74 (2009), 1, 6; Julian Munby, *Oxford Castle medieval and later buildings* (2000), 2

⁶ James Neild, *State of the Prisons in England, Scotland and Wales...*(1812), 465

⁷ Bodleian Library, MS Top Oxon d. 505 – hereafter Minn, 18

⁸ *VCH Oxon iv*, 328-9 ; T.W. Squires, *In West Oxford* (1928) – hereafter Squires, plates 87-90

⁹ Squires, 137; Minn, 11

¹⁰ www.spc.ox.ac.uk; www.marcusbealesarchitects.co.uk quoting Architect's Journal, 7.12.1995

¹¹ Minn, 8-9

¹² Julian Munby & Anne Dodd, 'The Architecture and History of Oxford's Western Suburb', *Oxoniensia* 71 (2006) – hereafter Munby & Dodd, 476-7

¹³ OT 12.10.1895

¹⁴ Malcolm Graham, *The Suburbs of Victorian Oxford* (1985) – hereafter Graham (1985), 372

female offenders in the river.¹⁵ More recently, undergraduates occasionally disrupted life here with rowdy duck or rat hunts.¹⁶

Cross Paradise Street with care, and note the iron bollard signed 'Lucy & Co Oxford' at the north-west corner of the bridge. It is now marooned in the pavement, but formerly protected the parapet from damage caused by vehicles turning into the Swan Brewery. The low-lying land here was long known as the Swans' Nest after the local herd of swans that were bred for the Corporation table. In 1578, the keeping of the swans was leased for 20 years to Thomas Smyth who undertook to provide "yearelie fower fatt fedd signetts" and to leave at the end of his term "twelve olde breaders".¹⁷ The Swan, or Swans' Nest, Brewery is first recorded on the site in c. 1700, and a three storey brewer's house with a date-stone 1730, later known as Westgate House, was built facing Paradise Street. The brewery passed into the hands of the Treacher family in the 1750s and became the property of William Hall in 1807 following the death of his business partner, Alderman Sir John Treacher. The firm prospered in the late 19th century, taking over several Oxford breweries, and becoming Hall's Oxford Brewery Ltd., in 1896. Hall's soon moved its brewing operation to the City Brewery behind Queen Street where Modern Art Oxford now flourishes, and these premises became Weeks' Swan Bakery until the 1960s.¹⁸

Westgate House was demolished and the site cleared for Telephone House (1965, Donald Rowswell & Partners). The only surviving remnant of the Swan Brewery is on the other side of Castle Mill Stream, an irregularly shaped rubble stone building with a slate roof (c.1830) which was part of a malthouse complex; it was converted into three flats in 2015.¹⁹ Empress Court (2005, PRP Architects) replaced Telephone House with classy apartments as part of a welcome trend to bring people and life back to the city centre.²⁰ The building is named after Empress Matilda, who famously escaped from the siege of Oxford Castle by King Stephen in December 1142 by climbing over the wall and heading down the frozen Thames to Wallingford.²¹

► To go straight to St. Thomas's Street, go to p. 22

Head west along Woodin's Way towards a footbridge over the Wareham Stream. The street-name commemorates Mike Woodin (d. 2003), a Green city councillor and an enthusiast for urban regeneration who died at a tragically young age.²² To your left, decorative ironwork (2009, Jon Mills) displaying swallows in flight enlivens the window openings of Empress Court's ground floor garage. Downstream from the footbridge, you have a pleasant view towards the junction with Castle Mill Stream with yellow flag irises in Spring. Upstream, you can see the retained Morrell's Brewery waterwheel beside The Lion Brewery development of apartments which followed the closure of the business in 2002. The ready availability of water to power machinery had been crucial to the growth of breweries in St. Thomas's, but Morrell's

¹⁵M.G. Hobson & H.E. Salter, *Oxford Council Acts 1626-65* (1933), 147

¹⁶Kelly's Oxford Directory; Minn, 11, 26; Squires, 127

¹⁷W. H. Turner, *Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford...[1509-1583]* (1880), 397

¹⁸Brigid Allen, *Morrell of Oxford* (1994) – hereafter Allen (1994),138; Minn, 9

¹⁹OCC photo; Oxf CC 12/02807/FUL; OS 1:500 Oxfordshire XXXIII.15 (1876)

²⁰www.prparchitects.co.uk

²¹Squires, 58

²²Ann Spokes Symonds, *The Origins of Oxford Street Names* (2010) – hereafter Spokes Symonds, 218

introduced steam power in the 1820s and the tall brick chimney retained among The Lion Brewery apartments was erected to disperse the smoke from two new boilers.²³ The chimney bears the date 1901 and the names of H. M. Dowson, manager and H. Haslett, brewer. Away to the left, a large brick and slate building is another reminder of old St. Thomas's, built as a Hide and Skin Market (1927, J.R. Wilkins).²⁴

Emerging in Osney Lane, you have a splendid view of Christ Church Old Buildings (1866-8, E.G. Bruton), a 3 storey tenement block of red and cream brick with open staircases to access the upper floors. The development was a response to concerns about housing standards expressed after the 1854 cholera epidemic.²⁵ The block is in the form of a 3-sided quadrangle, enclosing a drying ground which was also to serve as a children's playground. It provided 12 2-bedroom and 12 3-bedroom flats for families and 6 1-bedroom flats 'for those artisans and labourers whose families consist entirely of one sex, or whose children have grown up and left their homes.'²⁶ Christ Church planned a number of tenement blocks in St. Thomas's, hoping to make a modest return from tenants' rents. In fact, the returns proved too modest and few local residents were able to pay a premium rent for better class accommodation.²⁷ Note beside Staircase 3 a blue plaque to Olive Gibbs, née Cox (1918-95), politician and ardent campaigner who lived here until 1942.²⁸ Nos. 1-7 The Hamel (1868, E. G. Bruton), 2½ storey red brick 'cottages' similar in character to Christ Church Old Buildings, were added away to your right but the college waited over two decades before building another tenement block further down Osney Lane.²⁹

Nothing about Osney Lane today suggests great antiquity but a Bronze Age Beaker burial site with associated occupation materials was excavated in The Hamel in 1975, proving that the Thames flood plain was then dry enough to permit permanent settlement.³⁰ The present street plan dates back to the late 12th century when Osney Abbey, probably in association with the lords of North Osney, seems to have developed the area as a suburb. Plots were laid out in The Hamel, an unusual name meaning 'hamlet', and in St. Thomas's Street, some of these backing on to Osney Lane. Water management was crucial in this low-lying area and a stream ran along the northern edge of Osney Lane which you crossed by a footbridge to reach The Hamel. In medieval times, Osney Lane led directly to Osney Abbey, and its buildings would have been a spectacular sight viewed across meadows from this point.³¹

According to tradition, Editha, the wife of Robert d'Oilly the second, enjoyed regular walks around the meadows below Oxford Castle and she kept seeing a group of chattering magpies. Her chaplain interpreted them as souls in purgatory crying out for the prayers of the faithful, and he suggested endowing a church or monastery on the site. Editha duly persuaded her husband to found the Augustinian Priory of

²³ Allen (1994), vii-viii, 18, 99-100

²⁴ OHC City Engineer's Plan 3906 New Series

²⁵ H.W. Acland, *Memoir on the Cholera at Oxford in 1854* (1856), 46-8; Squires, 144-6; Graham (1985), 123

²⁶ JOJ 19.10.1867

²⁷ Christ Church Archives V.B.I, 1869-73, 1-3

²⁸ <http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/gibbs.html>

²⁹ JOJ 17.10.1868; *infra*, 5-6

³⁰ Nicholas Palmer, 'A Beaker Burial and Medieval Tenements in the Hamel, Oxford', *Oxoniensia* 45 (1980), 124, 131

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136-9

Osney in the meadows in 1129 and it was raised to abbey status in 1154.³² The abbey buildings were away to the west, but the monks established a circuit of waterside walks through the low-lying meadows we know generically as the Oxpens. Christ Church acquired Osney Abbey's land and properties in St. Thomas's after the religious house was dissolved in 1539, and continued to rent out the meadows for pasture, preserving its ancient walks and watercourses. Civil War earthworks were constructed through this landscape in the 1640s, but no trace of them survives above ground.³³

The coming of the railways drove a wedge through the meadows, separating the Oxpens from the site of the abbey. Oxford's first railway station, opened in 1844, lay to the south-west of Folly Bridge, but the Oxford & Rugby Railway Company – ultimately the Great Western Railway Company (GWR) - acquired Christ Church land to continue the railway north towards Banbury, and built today's main line in the late 1840s.³⁴ The GWR relocated its goods station from Grandpont to Osney Lane in 1873,³⁵ and this had long-term consequences for the area as extra sidings and depots came to be built and postal services developed. In about 1865, Christ Church was considering laying out the Oxpens with streets which would have provided links between St. Thomas's and St. Ebbe's and created plots for almost 400 houses. Nothing came of that scheme or of a similar proposal in 1891,³⁶ and the meadowland south of Osney Lane continued to contrast hugely with the tightly-packed streets of St. Thomas's and St. Ebbe's.

The building of a new St. Thomas's School (1904, P.A. Robson) opposite Christ Church Old Buildings marked the beginnings of change.³⁷ The old school buildings clustered around the churchyard were condemned in 1902, and the premises were designed as 'the best possible Schools without any extravagance in the character of the structure or internal decoration.'³⁸ They provided accommodation for boys, girls and infants and you can see the separate entrances for 'Boys' and 'Girls' in the largely single storey façade. Delightful Art Nouveau inspired railings separate the playground from the street. Olive Gibbs once trapped her head in these railings! She attended the school from the age of 2½ until she won a scholarship to Milham Ford School.³⁹ The school closed in 1971 but the building was subsequently used by the nearby College of Further Education and is now used by Aspire Oxford as a training centre.⁴⁰

Note the tree-lined pathway (closed 2015) between the former St. Thomas's School and the old hide and skin market. This was formed in 1910 to provide access to a newly-established St. Thomas's playground, a much-needed facility leased from

³² Squires, 85-6

³³ R.T. Lattey, E.J.S. Parsons & I.G. Philip, 'A Contemporary Map of the Defences of Oxford in 1644', *Oxoniensia* 1 (1936), 165

³⁴ *VCH Oxon* iv, 294-5; Graham (1985), 121; OHC PD2/21 Oxford & Rugby Railway deposited plan, 1844; Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 18

³⁵ OC 13.9.1873; OHC 20078-88, Great Western Railway, Oxford Goods Shed plans, 1872-3

³⁶ Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 25 (c. 1865), 31 (1891); OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 4286

³⁷ *VCH Oxon* iv, 453; OHC City Engineer's Plan 497 New Series

³⁸ Bodl G.A. Oxon b.153, 68

³⁹ Olive Gibbs, 'Our Olive': *the Autobiography of Olive Gibbs* (1989) – hereafter Gibbs, 34-39

⁴⁰ *VCH Oxon* iv, 453; www.aspireoxford.co.uk

Christ Church by the City Council.⁴¹ Olive Gibbs remembered the 'rec' as having a shelter, two sets of swings and a maypole with heavy chains. She and her mates enjoyed many activities there, making tents of sacking against the railings, fishing for sticklebacks in Castle Mill Stream, eating summer picnics and building the community bonfire for Guy Fawkes' Night.⁴² As local people were re-housed elsewhere, use of the recreation ground diminished, and the College of Further Education took over the site in the late 1960s.⁴³

Continuing along Osney Lane past the school, you pass the site of a corrugated iron building erected in 1908 as a miniature rifle range after being used as a temporary St. Andrew's church in North Oxford.⁴⁴ An oil depot, conveniently placed for deliveries by rail, took over the site in the 1920s.⁴⁵ Christ Church had built their second tenement block, Christ Church New Buildings (1893, E. Hoole)⁴⁶, on the opposite corner of Osney Lane, and this four storey building remained a local landmark until the 1980s when the inconspicuous two storey Richard Gray Court (1989) replaced it.⁴⁷ South of New Christ Church Buildings, the GWR built stables for the railway horses that delivered goods around the City by 1898.⁴⁸

Coherent planning of the Oxpens area might have been expected following the City Council's purchase of the remaining 16 acres from Christ Church in 1923 for £9,600. Councillor the Rev. J.M. Campbell hoped 'to provide one of the most beautiful parks in the City within a few minutes' walk of the Friars',⁴⁹ but the Council had no such vision for the area. The top priority was Oxpens Road, a new link between St. Thomas's and St. Ebbe's which opened in 1931.⁵⁰ Oxpens also provided space for the City's Cattle Market which moved from Gloucester Green in 1932, giving the pathway beside St. Thomas's School a new role as a footpath into the market.⁵¹ Land beyond the market on the north-east side of Oxpens Road was raised by rubbish dumping for car parking and an abortive housing scheme, quickly displacing the allotments and playground for St. Ebbe's residents which the popular rector, the Rev. J.S. Stansfeld, had secured in 1921.⁵²

The area continued to evolve formlessly, creating what Bill Bryson dismissed as 'the bleak sweep of Oxpens Road, with its tyre and exhaust centres and pathetically under-landscaped ice rink and car parks.'⁵³ On your left as you head south along Oxpens Road, notice Falklands House (1996), the headquarters of Oxford University Officers' Training Corps which occupied the site of the oil depot.⁵⁴ Across the road, Kings Mead House (1988, Peter & Diane Bozeat Partnership) provided new

⁴¹ OC 14.10.1910

⁴² Gibbs, 9-10

⁴³ Minn, 314

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97

⁴⁵ OS 1:2500 Oxfordshire XXXIII.15 (1938)

⁴⁶ OHC City Engineer's Plan 2160 Old Series

⁴⁷ OxfCC 89/00353/NF

⁴⁸ OHC City Engineer's Plans 2058A & 2519 Old Series; OS 1:2500 Oxfordshire XXXIII.15 (1898)

⁴⁹ Minn, 310-2

⁵⁰ Victor Sugden, *An Oxford Diary* (2009), 348-9

⁵¹ *VCH Oxon* iv, 307

⁵² OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 337, 8554, 15010; OJI 5.1.1921, 27.4.1921, 4.5.1921

⁵³ Bill Bryson, *Notes from a Small Island* (1995), 155

⁵⁴ OxfCC 96/01258/CF ; <http://www.oua.ox.ac.uk/holdings/Officers%20Training%20Corps%20OT.pdf>

premises for the Post Office when the Becket Street sorting office closed.⁵⁵ Further along, you pass 1980s buildings of the City of Oxford College, the former Oxford College of Further Education (CFE), which extended on to the site of the Cattle Market after that closed in 1979.⁵⁶

Turn left into the original CFE campus (1965-71, City Architect's Office/Douglas Murray)⁵⁷ which was an ambitious development, originally bisected by the Castle Mill Stream. The concrete framed buildings are faced with the buff bricks resembling stone that were so fashionable in Oxford at that time. Determined explorers can head off through the college car park to view the bright south-facing classrooms of the former St. Thomas's School and the surface air raid shelter (1941) in the playground, a rare wartime survival.⁵⁸ Otherwise, turn right at the end of Dorn Building (refurbished by ADP, 2013),⁵⁹ and follow the signs past the Waterside Restaurant – open for lunch on weekdays – to the Castle Mill Stream. Enjoy the bosky view upstream towards St. George's Tower before turning right along the stream, ignoring a footbridge to St. Ebbe's and Westgate.

Approaching Oxpens Road, you glimpse Oxpens Bridge (1931), built on the site of a kink in Castle Mill Stream known as Whirlpool Stream in the 1830s. The bridge has two arches and its concrete parapets incorporate vestigial cutwaters and quirky arrowslits. It formed the vital link in what was initially known as The Oxpens Bypass, funnelling traffic into St. Ebbe's where a new road was already envisaged.⁶⁰ Cross Oxpens Road at the traffic lights, and walk into the recreation ground beside the ice rink. Notice the plaque on a stone which records that Oxpens Meadow was designated a Field in Trust to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012.⁶¹ The five acre field, well-known as a venue for circuses and other events, is the remaining portion of the City's Oxpens Recreation Ground, laid out in the 1920s, which incorporated the earlier St. Ebbe's recreation ground and bathing place.⁶² By 1938, some of the land nearest Oxpens Road had been raised above flood level and surface air raid shelters were built here during the War for users of the nearby Cattle Market.⁶³ These shelters were removed in 1947, but the two-masted Oxford Ice Rink (1984, Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners)⁶⁴ later occupied the site and sits beached in the meadow like an inland *Cutty Sark*. Use of the recreation ground diminished as the city centre population declined, and part was lost to a coach and car park. A commercial leisure village, dubbed 'Shed City' by opponents, was proposed and rejected in the 1990s,⁶⁵ Local campaigners fought off proposals that threatened much of the remaining open space, and the City Council's Oxpens masterplan, approved in 2013, retains the meadow while envisaging the building of around 300

⁵⁵ OxfCC 88/01455/NF

⁵⁶ OM 14.11.1978, 25.10.1979, OT 3.12.1982

⁵⁷ OCA City Engineer's Strongroom Roll 8304 A-B

⁵⁸ OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 5136

⁵⁹ OxfCC 13/00583/FUL

⁶⁰ OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 6292

⁶¹ <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Oxpens-Meadow> ; OM 16.7.2013

⁶² OCA City Engineer's Strongroom 15010; OS 1:2500 Berkshire VI.3 (1919 & 1938)

⁶³ OS 1:2500 Berkshire VI.3 (1938); Oxford City Council, Council Reports, 1942/3, paragraph 1148

⁶⁴ Philip Opher, *Oxford Modern; a Guide to the New Architecture of the City and University* (2001), 34; Oxford City Council, Council Reports, 1946/7, paragraph 1396

⁶⁵ OM 29.8.1994, 21.2.1995, 9.12.1995; information from John Ashdown

houses, offices, student accommodation and a hotel between the river and Osney Lane.⁶⁶

Walking through the meadow beside Castle Mill Stream, you are enjoying a surviving fragment of the landscape which Editha and the monks of Osney Abbey knew centuries ago. Until the mid 20th century, there was a river channel across the meadow which linked the main river to Castle Mill Stream and created a small island – known as George Island - at the southern end.⁶⁷ Hart's Sconce, an outlying fort in the City's Civil War defences was built here in the 1640s, and a boom was fixed across the main river to control river navigation.⁶⁸ In 1846, the channel was adapted to create St. Ebbe's bathing place, accessed by a footbridge from Blackfriars Road. This was the City's first rate-supported river bathing place, and marked the beginnings of public recreational access to the Oxpens area. Its main purpose was not to amuse however but to reduce the number of drownings in the main river and curb indecent nude bathing by men and boys.⁶⁹ By 1900, the City's Playgrounds Committee had negotiated with Christ Church to use of the rest of the island as a playground for children from the crowded streets of St. Ebbe's beyond Castle Mill Stream.⁷⁰ The bathing place closed in 1938 because the flow of water was insufficient, and the former island became part of Oxpens meadow.⁷¹

Nearing the river Thames, you will glimpse the retained Gasworks Bridge (1886-7, Thomas Hawkesley) just below the junction of the main river and the Castle Mill Stream. The Oxford gasworks had been established in a remote corner of St Ebbe's in 1819, but gradually expanded from small beginnings to occupy both sides of the river. The bridge provided a rail and road link between the two sites, and enabled coal to be delivered directly into the works by rail. Enormous gasholders loomed over this area from the 1880s until they were demolished in 1968.⁷² Turn right on to the riverside path which follows the north bank of the river towards Botley Road. The towpath for horses (and men) hauling river barges was on the south bank and this route was only created in the 1980s.⁷³ The path leads past the ice rink and then beneath two railway bridges, the first of which was built for the gasworks siding in 1886. Don't miss the view across the river towards Boney's Bridge, a footbridge which carries the towpath across Pot Stream, one of many branches of the Thames in West Oxford. An obelisk beyond the bridge commemorates Edgar George Wilson (d.1889) who drowned while rescuing two boys who had fallen into the river.⁷⁴ The path turns sharply right, heading north between boats in Osney Marina and trains on the nearby railway line. You emerge at Gibbs Crescent (1985, Berman & Guedes), a Cherwell Housing Association development of 86 flats built on the site of Osney

⁶⁶ OM 16.2.2012, 4.12.2012, 14.11.2013

⁶⁷ OS 1:2500 Berkshire VI.3 (1919)

⁶⁸ Lattey *et al*, *op.cit.*, 167-8, 171

⁶⁹ JOJ 20.6.1846, 25.7.1846

⁷⁰ OC 12.10.1900

⁷¹ www.oxpensmeadow.org

⁷² *VCH Oxon* iv, 356; OC 16.10.1886, 15.10.1887; James Dredge, *Thames Bridges: from the Tower to the Source* (1897), 189

⁷³ OM 25.2.1982, 7.1.1984

⁷⁴ <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/> 245911 ([MEMORIAL 300 YARDS SOUTH OF OSNEY LOCK, Non Civil Parish - 1049076 | Historic England](#)); JOJ 22.6.1889; Andy Panton, *Farewell St Ebbe's* (1980), 20-1

Abbey fishponds.⁷⁵ The three storey red and cream brick buildings are set in linked blocks around a well-planted central garden and parking area. The development was named after Olive Gibbs, and a plaque beside the staircase to flats 3-8 records that she was both a Councillor and Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council when she opened the flats on 3 May 1985.

Continue north towards Mill Street, passing Millbank (1994),⁷⁶ warehouse style apartments on your left beyond the gate to Osney Marina. They occupy the site of the Cadena Bakery, described as 'one of the most up-to-date [bakeries] in the country' when it was rebuilt in 1964. The bakery supplied the much-loved Cadena restaurant in Oxford and many other shops and cafes as far afield as Reading and Leamington.⁷⁷ Away to your right, Osney Cemetery was one of three parochial burial grounds consecrated in Oxford in 1848 to deal with a drastic shortage of space in central churchyards; it served Christ Church and populous parishes in the south and west of the City.⁷⁸ In Spring, you will see impressive clumps of snowdrops and daffodils from here.

Osney Cemetery occupied a field still known in the 1840s as The Churchyard and the local historian, Herbert Hurst (1833-1913) spent 25 years examining archaeological remains excavated by gravediggers to plot the outline of the Abbey Church. The west front lay just inside the cemetery wall and the great building extended east for 332 feet across the railway to what is now Oxford Business Centre.⁷⁹ The church had been rebuilt on a cruciform plan in the 13th century with two towers, a central one at the junction of the nave and transepts and a taller west tower. Substantial buildings for the abbot and canons were grouped around the church and the abbey precinct was extended to the south and west in the 13th century to enlarge and rationalize the site and improve the drainage. The abbey mill, first recorded in the 1180s, was probably moved to the present site of Osney Mill at this time.⁸⁰ Important Councils were held at Osney Abbey and Parliament met there in 1330. At Christmas 1265, Henry III was entertained in the abbot's guest hall with 'great revellings and mirth.'⁸¹

Osney Abbey was surrendered to Henry VIII's commissioners in 1539 and its church briefly became the cathedral of the new Oxford diocese in 1542 with the dean and chapter taking over the residences of the abbot and canons.⁸² The bishopric was transferred to Christ Church in 1545 and Christ Church acquired the lands and property of Osney and Rewley Abbeys in St. Thomas's parish. The abbey mills and other buildings were leased to William Stumpe, a Malmesbury clothier who was to find work for 2,000 people 'for the succour of the Cytye of Oxenford and the contrey about yt...'⁸³ Nothing came of this scheme and the abbey buildings were gradually quarried away as an easy source of ready-cut stone. Most of the above-ground

⁷⁵ OxfCC 81/00239/NFH; Jonathan Sharpe, 'Osney Abbey, Oxford: Archaeological Excavations, 1975-1983', *Oxoniensia* 50 (1985), 106

⁷⁶ OxfCC 94/00413/NFZ

⁷⁷ OM 24.9.1964

⁷⁸ *VCH Oxon* iv, 364

⁷⁹ Squires, plate 64; *Oxf Encyc*, 296-7

⁸⁰ Sharpe, *op.cit.*, 95-136; *VCH Oxon* iv, 330

⁸¹ Squires, 91

⁸² *Ibid.*, 95-6

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 102

remains were demolished to create a clear field of fire for the Royalist garrison during the Civil War and Osney Mill was used as a gunpowder mill. Samuel Johnson was up at Oxford in 1728-9, and when shown the few surviving ruins, he remarked: 'Sir, to look upon them fills me with indignation.'⁸⁴

Across the road from Osney Cemetery, a former Pickford's depository was transformed into apartments as Bishop's Gate in 2013. Turn left beyond this building towards Osney Mill, passing Trajan House (2011, Towle Spurring Hardy), a study centre for Bellerby's College, on your right.⁸⁵ Osney Mill continued to flourish after the dissolution of Osney Abbey, powered by water from the millstream which the monks had constructed in the late 12th century.⁸⁶ Steam power took over in the 19th century when the red brick mill building, now converted into flats, was built; the top storey was added in 1905.⁸⁷ The mill was a flour mill by 1876⁸⁸ and, in the early 20th century, Foden steam wagons were delivering flour to bakeries within a 30 mile radius. A serious fire brought milling to an end in 1946, but Osney Mill was eventually converted into apartments (2012, Oxford Architects).⁸⁹ There is no public access to the site, but, from the gateway, you can glimpse the only surviving above-ground portion of Osney Abbey, part of a minor domestic building which formerly extended south alongside the millstream. A stone archway of c.1500 leads to a rubble and timber-framed building of similar date with a splendid queen-post roof truss. Beside the archway, there is a section of medieval walling with a blocked, 2-light window and a plaque commemorating Haggai of Oxford, a Jew martyred in 1222.⁹⁰ To the right of the mill, notice Osney Mill Cottage beyond the millstream. It is an early 19th century house with a modern tiled roof and brick chimney stacks.⁹¹

Chapter 2 - Osney Cemetery to Sheepwash Channel

Heading into Mill Street, turn right almost immediately into Osney Lane to explore Osney Cemetery. The timbered gateway is the only surviving structure, both the chapel (1848, H. J. Underwood) and the lodge (1867) having been demolished.⁹² The lodge stood to your right, at the corner of Mill Street and Osney Lane; the site of the chapel is picked out by a group of Irish yew trees. Most of the cemetery's pre-1920 graves and later kerbstones were regrettably removed in the 1960s to simplify maintenance.⁹³

Christ Church burials were to the west of the chapel and there are notable memorials to Kenneth Escott Kirk (1886-1957) **1**, Bishop of Oxford, William Bright (1824-1901) **2**, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Walter Lock (1846-1933) **3**,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 97; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14918?docPos=4>

⁸⁵ OxfCC 09/02034/FUL, 13/01934/B56; OM 11.2.2011

⁸⁶ Mary Prior, *Fisher Row* (1983) – hereafter Prior, 45

⁸⁷ Malcolm Graham, *The Changing Faces of West Oxford* (1998) – hereafter Graham (1998), 76; OHC City Engineer's Plan 852 New Series; OxfCC 03/02502/FUL

⁸⁸ *VCH Oxon* iv, 330

⁸⁹ Graham (1998), 76-7, 87

⁹⁰ <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245670> ([OSNEY ABBEY, Non Civil Parish - 1369400 | Historic England](#))

⁹¹ <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245671> ([OSNEY MILL COTTAGE, Non Civil Parish - 1120787 | Historic England](#))

⁹² JOJ 16.9.1848; OHC R.5.2, 417

⁹³ Oxford City Council, *Osney Cemetery: Grave Details Required for Faculty* (1964), *passim*

Warden of Keble College. There are a few war graves here and there, commemorating, for example, Private M. Wilmott of the Royal Defence Corps (d. 28.9.1917) **4** and Private A. Jacobs of the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (d. 10.7.1919) **5**. A stone cross near the railway commemorates the mason and builder, Thomas Axtell (d. 1901), his wife Eliza (d. 1893) and their daughter Ann (d. 1893) **6**. Back near the cemetery gate, there is a much-damaged memorial with three steps remembering James Richard Banting, Mayor and Alderman (1824-1905), his wife Ellen (1830-89) and their son Richard (1854-90) **8**.

Emerging from the cemetery, notice Abbey Walk, a 1990s addition to your right, and Cherwell House (2012, Paul Brookes Architects), student housing for Cherwell College with a succession of south-facing windows.⁹⁴ When the railway was first built, Osney Lane was retained as an ancient right of way, but you had to cross the tracks on the level. The opening of the GWR goods station to the south of Osney Lane in 1873 made this much more dangerous, and a footbridge was provided.⁹⁵ Local children apparently dared each other to walk along the narrow parapets from one end to the other.⁹⁶ The present footbridge (2009)⁹⁷ is a fine vantage point for train spotting and you have excellent views north towards St. Thomas's Church and the Saïd Business School and east towards the castle mound and Oxford's Dreaming Spires. To the south and west, you can only imagine the former magnificence of Osney Abbey.

► **To go straight to Becket Street and St. Thomas's Church, go to p. 25**

Retrace your steps to Mill Street, and turn right. The road was pushed westward to its present course in 1852 when Christ Church sold more land to the GWR,⁹⁸ but it was still just a country lane. Across the Thames, George Parsons Hester, Oxford Town Clerk and a local solicitor, launched the development of Osney Town on freehold land in 1851 to meet the anticipated demand for artisan houses near the City's two railway stations.⁹⁹ By 1861, Osney Town housed 795 people in 141 inhabited houses, and Christ Church was encouraged to lay out the Mill Street area on 80 year building leases. Mill Street's terraced houses were built between c.1866 and 1882¹⁰⁰ and most are flat-fronted and built of red or cream brick. The 26 terraced houses in Barrett Street and adjoining properties in Mill Street were a postscript to the development of what became known as New Osney, built in 1879-80 by Thomas Barrett, a local timber merchant.¹⁰¹ Note the large ground floor windows of the former corner shop at no. 46 Mill Street on the corner of Barrett Street. The Mill Street houses on your right as you head north are set back behind front gardens while those opposite are mostly built on the pavement edge. Nos. 50-51 retain a faded plaque at first floor level bearing the name Arrandale Cottages and nos. 52-59 are unusual in being built as a block with a gabled house at each end.

⁹⁴ OxfCC 11/02382/FUL

⁹⁵ OC 13.9.1873, 29.11.1873

⁹⁶ Gibbs, 18

⁹⁷ <http://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/archive/2009/05/15/4373107>

⁹⁸ Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford St Thomas 17

⁹⁹ OC 12.7.1851, 2.8.1851, 13.9.1851

¹⁰⁰ Graham (1985), 121-2; OHC R.5.2-9, *passim*

¹⁰¹ Graham (1985), 130-1; OHC City Engineer's Plan 441 Old Series

Beyond another old corner shop at no. 67, the Kite pub (1900, William Drew & Sons)¹⁰² replaced an earlier pub of the same name built in c.1866. It is a splendid three storey building of red brick and stone dressings with Dutch gables. A stone panel and the pub sign feature a bird of prey which is once again visible above the streets of Oxford, but the pub name may recall a craze for kite flying in the 1860s!¹⁰³ Samuel Robinson obtained permission to lay out Russell Street in 1869, and land west of Arthur Street became a convenient riverside builder's yard.¹⁰⁴

Terraced houses were built in Arthur and Russell Streets between 1869 and 1890¹⁰⁵ but their outlook soon changed after the Oxford Electric Light Co., Ltd., chose the adjoining builder's yard for their electricity works in 1890. The riverside location ensured a constant supply of cooling water for the steam condensers and boats could deliver coal directly into the works. The new generating station designed by A.P. Brevitt opened in June 1892 and inspired Hilaire Belloc to poetry:

Descend, O Muse, from thy divine abode,
To Osney, on the Seven Bridges Road;
For under Osney's solitary shade
The bulk of the Electric Light is made.
Here are the works; from hence the current flows
Which (so the Company's prospectus goes)
Can furnish to subscribers hour by hour
No less than sixteen thousand candle power...¹⁰⁶

The works initially supplied just a few street lights, colleges and public buildings but householders in North Oxford soon adopted electric lighting and the area supplied steadily increased.¹⁰⁷ Later additions soon dwarfed Brevitt's original building, and the attractive façade of structural polychrome brickwork is now best appreciated from across the river in East Street. That view includes a 2 storey brick extension to the north (1904-5, Herbert Quinton) which features an oriel window lighting the engineer's office.¹⁰⁸ The expanding power station cleared most properties on the west side of Arthur Street and houses on the east side lie in the shadow of a massive brick building punctuated by large iron-framed windows. Soot stains beneath the sills of some of these windows are a reminder that the power station was a polluting and noisy neighbour until it closed in 1969.¹⁰⁹ Oxford University's Department of Engineering took over the building in the mid 1970s and used it for significant hypersonic research until 2010.¹¹⁰ A walk to the end of Arthur Street emphasizes the gargantuan scale of this relic of Oxford's industrial past. Notice no. 17 (1984, J Tilbury & Associates),¹¹¹ a modern end terrace house in the Victorian idiom.

¹⁰² OHC City Engineer's Plan 3391 Old Series

¹⁰³ OC 21.2.1866

¹⁰⁴ Graham (1985), 124

¹⁰⁵ OHC R.5.4-12, C.5.5, *passim*

¹⁰⁶ Hilaire Belloc, *Complete verse* (1970), 155-8

¹⁰⁷ Graham (1998), 77

¹⁰⁸ OHC City Engineer's Plan 1771A Old Series; Pike, *Views & Reviews Oxford* (1897); Liz Woolley, 'Industrial Architecture in Oxford, 1870-1914', *Oxoniensia* 75 (2010) – hereafter Woolley (2010), 73-4

¹⁰⁹ *VCH Oxon iv*, 357; OT 16.8.68, 3.10.69

¹¹⁰ <http://www.eng.ox.ac.uk/thermofluids/about-the-lab/osney-lab-history>

¹¹¹ OxfCC 83/00985/NX

Return to Russell Street where a polychrome brick wall displaying the details RH-7-8-1987-GW introduces a fine council housing development (1987, City Architect's Office/Roli Huggins)¹¹² which echoed the design of the nearby power station. Walk to the end of Russell Street where there are great views across the river to East Street and upstream to Osney Bridge. The Russell Street houses were an exuberant addition to the scene, a gabled row of buff brick houses with red brick dressings and patches of white-painted render; round-headed 2-light windows maintain the Victorian theme. Beyond this row, a distinctive orange brick house with a domed copper roof, no. 81 Mill Street (1996, Adrian James)¹¹³ catches the eye. Now proceed north beside the river and turn right through an archway between nos. 5 & 10 Russell Street. This brings you out into a surprisingly enclosed space, originally a builder's yard for George Jones who developed the block of land which fronted Botley Road and Mill Street between c.1869 and 1873;¹¹⁴ Jones & Co., later bottled mineral water at their Osney Works here.¹¹⁵ To your left, nos. 79a-e Mill Street (2004, Adrian James)¹¹⁶ are ingenious timber-clad houses on buff brick bases. Beyond them, notice the copper-roofed annexe to no. 81 Mill Street (2001, Adrian James)¹¹⁷ and the tall rear elevations of nos. 3/17 Botley Road, some of them built of stone.

Emerging in Mill Street, turn left towards Botley Road. The One restaurant (1850, H. J. Underwood) opposite was built as a toll-house for the Botley and Newland Turnpike Trust to replace one demolished during the building of the railway.¹¹⁸ The imposing nature of the stone building, with bay windows either side of a central doorway, may reflect generous compensation from the railway company. The building was only used as a toll-house until the end of 1868, and soon became the Old Gatehouse pub. The single storey bar to the right was added by J. R. Wilkins (1902).¹¹⁹

Turn left into Botley Road which attracted the grandest houses in New Osney at a time when the road was much quieter than it is today. Nos. 3/15 (c.1873) are tall 3 storey brick or, in the case of nos. 11/15, stone houses. They were known originally as St. Frideswide's Terrace, doubtless because the nearby St. Frideswide's Church (1872, Samuel Sanders Teulon)¹²⁰ had just been consecrated. Hudson's newsagents and general store was at no. 3 for many years and continued to ignore decimalization until it closed in 1979.¹²¹ At the end of the row, the River Hotel (c.1873), formerly Bridge House, was the home of Alderman Thomas Henry Kingerlee (1842-1929) between about 1889 and 1905. He was a prominent builder who was Mayor of Oxford in 1898 and 1911, but failed in his bid to become Liberal

¹¹² OxfCC 85/00614/GR

¹¹³ OxfCC 95/01154/NF

¹¹⁴ Graham (1985), 125

¹¹⁵ Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

¹¹⁶ OxfCC 00/00486/NF

¹¹⁷ OxfCC 04/01632/FUL

¹¹⁸ Graham (1998), 6

¹¹⁹ OHC City Engineer's Plan 3223 Old Series

¹²⁰ Jennifer Sherwood & Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (1974) – *hereafter* Pevsner, 334; *VCH Oxon* iv, 408-9

¹²¹ OM 18.9.1979

M.P. for Oxford in 1895. His firm built many West Oxford houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹²²

Botley Road only became a major route in the 18th century, but travellers were fording the Osney Abbey millstream at Wereford by 1210, long before Hythe Bridge *alias* Osney Bridge is first mentioned in 1465. The hythe or wharf used by Osney Abbey probably lay to the south-east of the bridge in an area still known as Cannon or Canon's Wharf in the 19th century. Beyond the Hinksey turn, today's Ferry Hinksey Road, Botley Road was probably little more than a footpath until the 16th century, when a causeway was built by John Claymond (d.1537), President of Corpus Christi College and improved by John, Lord Williams (d.1559). Botley Road was turnpiked and Osney Bridge rebuilt following an Act of 1766, attracting much more traffic during the coaching era. Part of the 18th century bridge collapsed in December 1885¹²³, and a temporary wooden bridge was erected between East Street and Russell Street. A lengthy dispute between the County and Oxford Local Board ensued, 'both parties energetically declining to undertake the work of reconstruction.' Eventually, the County contributed a one-off payment of £2,000 and the Local Board built a new Osney Bridge, designed by City Engineer, William Henry White.¹²⁴ You can see the coat of arms of the Oxford Local Board, a joint City and University body, on the ornamental railings which are signed 'Macfarlane & Co Glasgow'. When the bridge finally opened to traffic on 31 December 1888, the first vehicles to cross were cabs bearing local dignitaries 'then came two coal carts, a donkey and cart, then a mineral water van, and other vehicles, the great utility of the thoroughfare being in a few moments amply demonstrated.'¹²⁵

Return to the pedestrian crossing opposite the One restaurant and cross today's more hectic Botley Road. The buff brick three storey Oxford Youth Hostel (2001) currently dominates the scene to your right, but is threatened by plans to rebuild the railway station.¹²⁶ The former Mick's Café in the foreground, a West Oxford institution for many years, occupies the site of a shelter for cabmen working at the GWR station.¹²⁷ The railway bisected North Osney, the area around Rewley Abbey, as well as the site of Osney Abbey. Initially, there were still meadows west of the GWR station opened in 1852, and the tollhouse stood alone on this side of the road. In the early days of the Old Gatehouse pub, there was space to play cricket behind the pub.¹²⁸ That changed after 1877 when the surveyor and developer, John Galpin, agreed with Christ Church to develop Cripsey Meadow on 80 year building leases and erect 68 semi-detached houses.¹²⁹ The plan envisaged grander houses than those in Mill Street, the estate being described as 'capitally situated for businessmen to whom time is an all-important object... , half a minute would suffice to catch a

¹²² Graham (1998), 77-8; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*; W R Williams, *Parliamentary History of the County of Oxford* (1899), 141;

http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/1836_1962/kingerlee_thomas_1898_1911.html

¹²³ *VCH Oxon iv*, 284, 288

¹²⁴ OC 9.4.1887; Dredge, *op.cit.*, 193

¹²⁵ *VCH Oxon iv*, 288; JOJ 5.1.1889

¹²⁶ OxfCC 98/01772/NF; *OM*, 4.8.2014

¹²⁷ *OM* 1.3.2013; Malcolm Graham, *Oxford in the Great War* (2014), 132

¹²⁸ OS 1:2500 Berkshire II.14 (1876); Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 2, 6; OC 25.8.1877

¹²⁹ Christ Church Archives Estates 78/290

train.’ The first houses were built in 1878 and these included nos. 4/10 Botley Road as well as the larger semis at the beginning of Abbey and Cripsey Roads¹³⁰

Nos. 1- 8 Cripsey Road are tall houses of cream brick with stone dressings. They are set back behind small front gardens and each house boasts a ground floor bay window and a dormer window in the roof lighting the second floor. Their situation today is enhanced by a row of mature lime trees opposite but, in the age of steam, the railway was a noisier and more obtrusive neighbour. After Galpin’s bankruptcy, Thomas Kingerlee completed the Cripsey Meadow development on a smaller scale with two storey terraced houses in Cripsey Road and Abbey Road (1886).¹³¹ Notice the cast iron street nameplate, unusually signed ‘Lucy & Co Oxford’, on the corner of Cripsey Place.

Reaching Abbey Road, you can continue to the end and turn left to join the Thames towpath, or turn left down Abbey Road towards Botley Road. The alternative route takes you past the picturesque red brick and tile-hung house, no. 29 Abbey Road (1886-7, C. C. Rolfe), built for the Rev. W. H. Smythe, Warden of the Sisterhood of St. Thomas.¹³² Further along, smaller semi-detached houses (1880) were the last gasp of Galpin’s original Cripsey Meadow scheme.¹³³ Turn right down a passageway between no. 9 Abbey Road and a former riverside timber yard occupied by Kingerlee’s from the mid 1880s until 1960.¹³⁴

Turn right along the towpath which was formed after 1790 when a pound lock was built at Osney and the former abbey millstream from Medley to Osney became what it is today, the main navigation stream of the Thames.¹³⁵ On your left, across the river, you have a view of sheds, greenhouses and fluttering flags on allotments which were created on Twenty Pound Meadow in 1890. Flooding there remains a threat but Councillor Hugh Hall proved unduly pessimistic in predicting that ‘for half the year the river would run at the bottom of the allotments, and for the other half the allotments would be at the bottom of the river.’¹³⁶ On the right, you pass the backs of Abbey Road houses as you approach a broad expanse of water called Four Streams and a footbridge over a side channel, still known from its rural past as Sheepwash Channel.

Four Streams marks the junction of today’s north-south Thames navigation stream with the 17th and 18th century east-west route which looped around West Oxford via Sheepwash Channel to your right and Bullstake Stream, almost hidden in the willow trees across the river. Sheepwash Channel continued to be an important link between the river Thames and the Oxford Canal, but a low wooden towpath bridge at this point made life very difficult for boatmen and a high iron footbridge replaced it in 1866.¹³⁷ The present bridge was erected in 1982,¹³⁸ and provides excellent views of trains entering or leaving Oxford Station.

¹³⁰ OC 13.7.1878, 5; 12.10.1878, supplement

¹³¹ Graham (1985), 129-30

¹³² OHC City Engineer’s Plan 1133 Old Series; JOJ 16.10.1886; OC 15.10.1887

¹³³ OHC City Engineer’s Plan 492 Old Series; OC 23.10.1880

¹³⁴ OC 22.12.1877, 5; Graham (1998), 76-7

¹³⁵ Mark Davies, *A Towpath Walk in Oxford* (2001) – hereafter Davies (2001), 77

¹³⁶ JOJ 13.4.1889

¹³⁷ Davies (2001), 73-6

¹³⁸ OM 19.11.1982

Descending from the footbridge, turn right beneath railway bridges over the Sheepwash Channel, noting warnings about the low headroom! Boats could still pass beneath the GWR line but the Buckinghamshire Railway Company, forming its own station in Park End Street in 1851, had to provide a swing bridge across the channel. Henry Taunt recalled an incident in 1853 when a locomotive plunged into the river, narrowly missing a boat, because the driver had failed to notice that the signal was set against him.¹³⁹ The swing bridge continued to serve a coal yard on the station site until 1984.¹⁴⁰ Now long disused and disconnected from the rail network, the structure is in poor condition, but there are plans to restore it as a significant industrial archaeological relic.¹⁴¹ The footpath bends around the swing bridge and heads past 3 and 4 storey red brick houses (1998, Towle Spurring Hardy)¹⁴² built on the site of London and North Western Railway Company (LNWR) engine sheds and sidings¹⁴³ in an extension of Rewley Road beyond the Sheepwash Channel. An area once full of smoke, steam and the sounds of shunting had largely reverted to nature before undergoing this latest transformation. At the Rewley Road bridge, continue straight ahead past Snakes Island, a retained wild area where grass snakes used to be seen.¹⁴⁴

This brings you to Castle Mill Stream with views of Isis Lock and residential boats moored on the Hythe Bridge arm of the Oxford Canal. The path crosses Castle Mill Stream by a bridge which the LNWR built in 1851 for boat horses passing from the Oxford Canal to the Thames towpath as part of a deal with the Thames Commissioners which enabled them to build the swing bridge. The railway company also built a siding down to Castle Mill Stream, presumably to facilitate transshipment of goods between rail and water.¹⁴⁵ Traces of this siding survive behind the houses in Rewley Road.¹⁴⁶ Beyond this bridge, turn right on to Oxford Canal bridge 243, an elegant wrought iron roving bridge (1844, Frederick Wood) which carries the canal towpath over Isis Lock. The first link between the Oxford Canal and Castle Mill Stream was a single-gated lock just north of Hythe Bridge, but a wide pound lock was built here in 1796 to cater for river barges passing to and from the canal wharf. The lock chamber was narrowed in 1842-4 to save water and presumably because barge traffic off the Thames was already diminishing as the railway network grew. Isis Lock is a modern, more appealing name for a structure which, for no very obvious reason, had become known as Louse Lock by the 1850s.¹⁴⁷ From this point, you can continue along the towpath to Hythe Bridge, enjoying the spectacle of residential boats and their canal-side gardens against a background of billowing horse chestnut trees on the Worcester College boundary. Here again, the view has changed considerably over the years, with the towpath kept free of all vegetation until horse-drawn traffic ceased. Nature then took over the

¹³⁹ OHC Taunt 47, [4]; Davies (2001), 74-5

¹⁴⁰ Davies (2001), 74; R.A. Cooke, *Track layout diagrams of the G.W.R. and BR W.R., section 27: Oxford*, 2nd ed (1987), 27

¹⁴¹ Oxford Preservation Trust, Annual Report (2011)

¹⁴² OxfCC 95/00487/NFH

¹⁴³ Bill Simpson, *Oxford to Cambridge Railway in Profile, volume 1: Oxford to Bletchley* (2006), 18-24.

¹⁴⁴ Davies (2001), 73

¹⁴⁵ Hugh Compton, *The Oxford Canal* (1976), 119

¹⁴⁶ Information from Tom Hassall

¹⁴⁷ Davies (2001), 42-6; Compton, *op.cit.*, 64; Berkshire Record Office D/EX 1457/1/83

towpath for several decades until residential moorings were authorized here in 1989.¹⁴⁸

Chapter 3 - Rewley Abbey to Quaking Bridge

To explore the Rewley Abbey area, return from Isis Lock to the Rewley Road bridge, turn left across the bridge and left again on to the footpath which follows the Castle Mill Stream towards Upper Fisher Row. To your right, tall neo-Victorian houses of red brick with stone dressings (1998, Towle Spurring Hardy)¹⁴⁹ occupy an area north of Rewley Abbey which included the abbey fishpond and, during the Civil War, an outlying sconce or fort in the City's defences.¹⁵⁰ Rewley Abbey was founded in 1280 by Edmund, Earl of Cornwall as a place of study for Cistercian monks. The name derives from the French 'roi lieu', meaning king's place, and refers back to Edmund's father, Richard, King of the Romans (d.1272). The church was dedicated in December 1281 and the surviving foundation stone, unearthed in the early 18th century, confirms that 'Ela Longspee, Countess of Warwick, made this chapel, whose reward be Christ in glory. Amen.' Rewley Abbey was much smaller than Osney, having just 15 monks at its foundation and 21 when it was dissolved in 1536.¹⁵¹ The abbey buildings included a cruciform church, a cloister and the usual domestic buildings and, on this low-lying riverside site, they were surrounded by water.¹⁵² You entered the complex from the south through an outer and inner gate along what is now Rewley Road.¹⁵³

Continuing along the footpath, you have views across Castle Mill Stream to moored boats on the slightly higher Oxford Canal. The path curves round to the right, marking the site of Rewley Abbey's northern boundary stream, and you see the abbey precinct wall. This rubble stone wall, punctuated by a 15th century doorway – the Water Gate - is the only above-ground relic of the abbey.¹⁵⁴ Some abbey buildings were destroyed soon after the dissolution but others were converted for residential or industrial use. Timothy Bourne (d.1732), a maltster and saddler who was Mayor of Oxford in 1696 and 1707, lived on the site at Rewley House and, since 'He loved to talk of Antiquities,' he must have found it a very congenial spot.¹⁵⁵ The after-life of the abbey came to an abrupt end in 1850 when the LNWR acquired the site from Christ Church for its railway station and sidings. Rewley Road soon acquired an industrial aspect, leading past coal merchants' premises to railway yards.¹⁵⁶ The coal yard was finally abandoned in the 1980s and the area has since been redeveloped. Rewley Abbey Court (1993, Oxford Architects Partnership)¹⁵⁷, a range of three storey red brick buildings behind the precinct wall, was part of that process. The area between the wall and the Castle Mill Stream was formerly known

¹⁴⁸ Davies (2001), 39

¹⁴⁹ OxfCC 95/00487/NFH

¹⁵⁰ Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 2 & 6

¹⁵¹ Squires, 112-4 & plate 69

¹⁵² Edward Biddulph & Anne Dodd, eds., *From Studium to Station: Rewley Abbey and Rewley Road Station* (2007), 9-33; Andrew Clark, ed., 'Survey of the City of Oxford, by Anthony Wood, vol.ii', *Oxford Historical Society* 17 (1890), 290

¹⁵³ Minn, 280; Squires, plate 65

¹⁵⁴ http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1047151&resourceID=5

¹⁵⁵ Minn, 282; Squires, 29

¹⁵⁶ OS 1:2500 Oxfordshire XXXIII.14-15 (1919); Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 18

¹⁵⁷ OxfCC 93/01151/NFZ

as the Ham, and Beesley's osier works were located here in the second half of the 19th century. Employees peeled willow rods from nearby osier beds and wove them into hampers, baskets and fish-traps. Rushes were also cultivated to make such things as chair seats and rush baskets.¹⁵⁸

At the end of the precinct wall, turn right down a path beside Rewley Abbey Court which leads to a mini-roundabout on Rewley Road. Turn right here and cross the road to view a Rewley Abbey interpretation panel on the brick boundary wall of the Saïd Business School. The buried remains of the abbey lie beneath the garden which you can see through a narrow viewing gap in the wall. Now return to the mini-roundabout and back down the path beside Rewley Abbey Court. Nearing the riverside footpath, notice through foliage to your right a backstream fed by a sluice gate from the Castle Mill Stream. Formerly known as The Lasher, another name for a weir, this inconspicuous watercourse was part of a centuries' long dispute over control of the local water supply. This battle, principally between owners of the Castle Mill and Osney Mill, involved the cutting and re-cutting of many streams through St. Thomas's parish largely to improve the flow of water to one or other mill.¹⁵⁹

Upper Fisher Row, which you are now entering, and Fisher Row beyond Hythe Bridge were developed on the Wareham – weir meadow - Bank thrown up when the Castle Mill Stream was dug in the 11th century.¹⁶⁰ Rewley Abbey constructed a forerunner of The Lasher in 1423 as a flood management measure but it was forced to block it up after complaints that the new channel was taking water away from the Castle Mill. Christ Church managed to reinstate The Lasher in 1576, presumably to improve drainage on the Rewley Abbey site which it now owned.¹⁶¹ The City acquired the Wareham Bank north of Hythe Bridge by 1583 and regularized the wharf there first mentioned in 1282 which received boatloads of hay, wood, stone and slate from the river Thames above Oxford.¹⁶² House-building in Upper Fisher Row north of the wharf began in the 1620s and a community developed here which largely relied on the river and later the canal for its livelihood.¹⁶³

The Beesley family became prominent in Upper Fisher Row from 1789 not least for disputes with the Bossoms which led the two families to be described as the Montagues and Capulets of the Isis.¹⁶⁴ Old properties in Upper Fisher Row went long ago and houses in Stein's Yard, at the north end, were among the last to be cleared in 1914.¹⁶⁵ Nos. 16-17 Upper Fisher Row (1920) are a pair of cement-rendered semi-detached council houses built on the site.¹⁶⁶ Nos. 10-13 are two brick and rendered blocks of two storey flats (1909-12, G.J. Ashley), unusual in contemporary Oxford; Ashley also built no. 8 (1908) with a 2 bedroom flat on each floor. No. 9 (1896, G. Dancey) is a 3 storey red brick house with a sideways which led originally to a stable; further along, nos. 2-7(1884, William Kerby) are also 3 storeys high with windows in

¹⁵⁸ Prior, 266, 332-3; Davies (2001), 70-1; Squires, 164 & plates 93-94

¹⁵⁹ Prior, 29

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 40

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 48-54

¹⁶² Ibid., 108-16

¹⁶³ Ibid., 125-9

¹⁶⁴ Davies (2001), 67; W.E. Sherwood, *Oxford Yesterday* (1927), 84

¹⁶⁵ Minn, 267-8

¹⁶⁶ OHC FF.1.1, Housing Committee minutes, 155, 158, 169; OT 5.12.1919

little gablets lighting the top floor.¹⁶⁷ From about 1899 to 1923, no. 4 was the home of Abel Beesley (1851-1921), a fisherman and waterman who was punt-racing champion of England for six consecutive years in the 1880s.¹⁶⁸

As you near Hythe Bridge, glance across the river at the early 19th century brick outfall weir which releases surplus water from the canal into the Castle Mill Stream. It occupies the site of the original flash lock which proved unsatisfactory and wasteful of water. A Boatmen's Floating Chapel (1839, John Plowman) was moored just north of the weir, providing weekly religious services and schooling for boatmen's children. Henry Ward (1781?-1852), a coal merchant and canal boat owner, paid for the splendid vessel which was designed 'in the Egyptian style' and the Bishop of Oxford congratulated him on providing for 'that neglected and too often depraved class, the boatmen on your canals.' Beside the weir, you can see a capstan-like structure (1993, William Bird) which belatedly commemorated the bicentenary of the Oxford Canal.¹⁶⁹

The first known Hythe Bridge, probably of wood, was built in the early 13th century and this was rebuilt in stone, with three arches, between 1373 and 1403. The present Hythe Bridge (1861, John Galpin) is an iron structure which replaced the medieval and later bridge.¹⁷⁰ It was no doubt needed because of increasing traffic between the railway stations and the city centre. The nearby wharf was originally an open space extending west to the Wareham Stream; as ever, security could be a problem and this area was long known as Thieving Corner.¹⁷¹ A pub later known as the Running Horses had occupied the area nearest the Wareham Stream by the 1820s and the three storey brick terrace, nos. 43-46 Hythe Bridge Street (1874) took over the whole site once commercial traffic had ebbed away from the upper river. The Running Horses pub was transferred to no. 46, on the corner of Upper Fisher Row, until it closed in 1938.¹⁷²

Cross Hythe Bridge Street at the pedestrian crossing and turn left past the brick-built Oxford Retreat pub (1939, J.C. Leed), formerly the Nag's Head. The present building faces the main street, but the old Nag's Head, so-called by the 1820s but a very much older hostelry, faced Fisher Row and served that lively waterside community for generations.¹⁷³ Turn right down steps between the pub and Castle Mill Stream into a pocket park between Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street. Until the 17th century, this area was probably used for storing boats and drying nets, an essential facility in 'a wild, amphibious region where a boat was an important piece of equipment' and probably more useful than a cart.¹⁷⁴ Christ Church began leasing sites south of Hythe Bridge in 1621 and there were houses here by 1675.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁶⁷ OHC OCA4/2/A5/3 Vellum Book 3; Oxford City Council, Schedule of City Property (1923), 6-7; OHC City Engineer's Plans 1415 New Series; 934 & 2711 Old Series

¹⁶⁸ Davies (2001), 71; Prior, 298, 304-5; Squires, 123; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*;
http://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/distRICTS.pl?r=146336803:9201&d=bmd_1428911698

¹⁶⁹ Davies (2001), 50-4

¹⁷⁰ *VCH Oxon* iv, 288

¹⁷¹ Squires, 123; *A Report...into the State of the Sewerage, Drainage and Water Supply of the University and City of Oxford* (1851), 59

¹⁷² Minn, 224; JOJ 24.10.1874; P.J. Marriott, *Oxford Pubs Past & Present* (1978), 39

¹⁷³ Davies (2001), 66; OCA City Engineer's Plan 755/9469 New Series, held in Town Hall; Marriott, *op.cit.*, 28

¹⁷⁴ Prior, 124-5

¹⁷⁵ Prior, 125-6; *VCH Oxon* iv, 92-3

properties were small and crowded and no space was wasted; vegetables were grown on the opposite bank of Castle Mill Stream where willow trees now flourish.¹⁷⁶

The building of the New Road, including Park End Street, in 1769-70 sliced through Fisher Row at Pacey's Bridge, effectively creating a Middle and a Lower Fisher Row. The original hump-backed Pacey's Bridge provided pedestrian access between the two parts of Fisher Row, but the present concrete bridge (1922, City Engineer's Office/ J.E. Wilkes)¹⁷⁷ forces you to climb steps, cross Park End Street and descend again to reach Lower Fisher Row. The park here was re-planted during the development of the adjoining Stream Edge apartments (2005, Oxford Architects), creating a completely new urban environment,¹⁷⁸ but retaining the waterways that were so vital in past centuries. The sluice just south of Park End Street, known as The Lock, was originally constructed in the late 12th century to transfer surplus water from Castle Mill Stream into the Wareham Stream and thus regulate the flow of water to the Castle Mill. Osney Abbey briefly set up a rival mill on the Wareham Stream in the mid 14th century, creating a western Back Stream as a relief channel which survived until the early 19th century.¹⁷⁹

The first houses in Fisher Row were built south of The Lock in the 13th century¹⁸⁰ and three fishermen were living there in 1278.¹⁸¹ Locally-caught fish were an important part of people's diet, especially when fast days were still observed, and the 15 different types of fish supplied to Archbishop Cranmer in prison before his execution in 1556 show how much variety was available. Fishermen also cultivated osier beds for basket-making and supplemented their incomes by wild-fowling.¹⁸² From the late 16th century, boatmen appear in Fisher Row, a handy location for navigation on the Thames above Oxford and for the Oxford Canal after 1790.¹⁸³ By 1578, there was a small terrace of houses south of The Lock and contemporary inventories show that some families here were living in modest comfort.¹⁸⁴ Fisher Row went into a decline as commercial fishing and boating lost their importance, but artists and photographers were increasingly drawn to the area. In 1885, D.S. MacColl described the row 'of low houses — some new, some old, and one or two remarkable — (straggling) along a narrow quay, arched over by the bridges. In the doubled stream, where it fronts the houses, fleets of old punts lie moored to their poles among the choking weeds; not the varnished toys of the Cherwell, but the craft native to these shallow standing waters, as the gondola to the lagoons of Venice.'¹⁸⁵ The last of these 'low houses' were cleared in 1954, and replaced by a public garden, thus turning 'one of Oxford's minor eyesores into a modest beauty spot.'¹⁸⁶ Further along, Angevins House (1965) was built as flats for police officers, and it was originally named Clement Burrows House after the City's last Chief Constable.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁶ OHC OCL 3172

¹⁷⁷ Minn, 239, 244

¹⁷⁸ OxfCC 02/00798/FUL

¹⁷⁹ Prior, 47-8

¹⁸⁰ Munby & Dodd, 479

¹⁸¹ Prior, 2, 46

¹⁸² Ibid., 55-70

¹⁸³ Ibid., 105

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 90

¹⁸⁵ *The Royal River: the Thames from Source to Sea* (1885), 34-5

¹⁸⁶ Prior, 326-7; OM 25.9.1959

¹⁸⁷ OxfCC 65/17040/A_H

Across the Castle Mill Stream in Malthouse Yard, you used to see a statue of a dog re-housed from the Botanic Garden in the 1960s. Its eroded partner, a boar, needed replacing and the decision to remove both statues gave this 19th century canine, a copy of an original in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, a change of scene. The dog ended up here because the Old Malthouse was sympathetically converted into the University Surveyor's Office after a serious fire in 1956.¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, the elements took their toll on the dog, and the repaired statue is now safely indoors, but visible from Tidmarsh Lane.¹⁸⁹

The 1956 fire destroyed the steep-roofed tower and ventilators which were a feature of the St. Thomas's skyline and had been part of the remodelling of Fox's malthouse by Stopes & Co., in 1883. Fox had rebuilt the malthouse in 1824 including the stone building with three malting floors near Quaking Bridge. Brewing or malting on this site dates back to 1452 when Osney Abbey agreed to build a brewhouse. Edward Tawney leased the property to work it as a maltster in 1760 and Morrell's Brewery owned the malthouse from the 1790s until the 1950s.¹⁹⁰

Fisher Row concludes with two fine Georgian buildings, the first being former almshouses built and endowed by Edward Tawney (d.1800), a brewer and maltster who was Mayor of Oxford in 1772, 1784 and 1797. The three storey red brick premises were to house three poor men and three poor women who 'should be of good fame and character, who had lived well, and been reduced in circumstances, single and unmarried, and of 50 years of age at the least,... should be of the established church, and regularly attend divine worship at the parish church of St. Thomas.'¹⁹¹ Next door, no. 1 Fisher Row was Tawney's own house (c.1797), across the river from his malthouse and a few paces from the brewery which he ran in partnership with Mark and James Morrell until 1798. Members of the Morrell family later occupied the house and Thomas Sherwood, brewery manager, lived here for many years from 1857.¹⁹² His son, William, recalled growing up in the area in the 1860s when the University still ran Oxford's night-time police force, and a constable was stationed, and often slept, in a sentry-box across Quaking Bridge from their house. Thomas was forced to employ a special constable to keep the peace and enable his children to sleep in their nursery overlooking the bridge!¹⁹³

From here, you have an excellent view of Quaking Bridge and St. George's Tower. The name Quaking Bridge, perhaps a description of its precarious state, is first recorded in 1297. The present iron bridge dates from 1835¹⁹⁴ and you can see the name of the founders - Cort & Co., Leicester- beneath the north parapet.

¹⁸⁸ Pevsner, 272; OxfCC 57/06429/A_H

¹⁸⁹ Information from Annette Cunningham, Oxford University Estates Directorate, 1 May 2015

¹⁹⁰ Allen (1994), ix, xvi, 25, 78-9

¹⁹¹ http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/1714_1835/tawney_edward_1772_1797.html ; *An Abstract of the Report of the Commissioners for inquiring concerning the Charities of the City of Oxford...*(1823), 61

¹⁹² Allen (1994), xix-xx; Prior, 151-2

¹⁹³ W.E. Sherwood, *Oxford Yesterday* (1927), 8

¹⁹⁴ *VCH Oxon* iv, 289

Chapter 4 - St. Thomas's Street and Church

Walk into St. Thomas's Street through a narrow defile between Georgian and Victorian red brick towards the former Morrell's Brewery. Brewing created this townscape, and the first brewhouse on the Morrell's site was built in 1563. Thomas and William Kenton were brewing here from 1718 and, in 1745, Richard Tawney established the business which his son, Edward, handed over to Mark and James Morrell in 1798.¹⁹⁵ Morrell's brewery expanded hugely in Victorian times as output increased and, walking along the street, you pass a series of buildings designed by the local architect, Harry Drinkwater. First comes a single storey building erected as a hospital for the firm's dray horses (1887) and then the Brewery Gate, the former Marlborough Arms pub (1896). Bookbinders' Bridge (c.1858) is disguised on the south side by a high brick wall, but there are interesting views opposite along the Wareham Stream towards The Stream Edge development. Beyond the bridge, Morrell's tall tun room (1896) is followed by the splendid Lion Brewery gates (1877, Lucy & Co.), the two-gabled brewery offices (1892) and a store-house (1878?). Notice the brass tablet just inside the gates commemorating the nine Morrell's employees who died in the First World War. The brewery stables, later the surveyor's office and works yard, were across the road where the Bookbinders Court (2005) development retained the old rubble stone frontage.¹⁹⁶ 'The nourishing, malty smell of brewing',¹⁹⁷ the last and probably the most welcome of Oxford's industrial aromas, continued to waft regularly into the city centre until Morrell's Brewery finally closed in 2002.¹⁹⁸ Key façades and the brewery chimney were retained in the Lion Brewery development (2003, Jewell & Co.) which provided apartments and student rooms on this historic site.¹⁹⁹

Beyond the Lion Brewery, St. Thomas's Street suddenly widens at the point where a small bridge crossed the western Back Stream until that watercourse was filled in and built over in c.1800²⁰⁰ What you see from here is the culmination of a regeneration process which has, since the 1980s, put life back into St. Thomas's after decades of slum clearance and commercial redevelopment had virtually depopulated the parish and turned it into 'a formless industrial area.'²⁰¹ The brick or rendered frontages of the buildings on the north side of the street, some with gables, recapture something of the look of old St. Thomas's which Osney Abbey, probably in partnership with the lords of North Osney, began to develop as a suburb in the late 12th century. Tenement plots were laid out in what became St. Thomas's Street, The Hamel and Osney Lane and these streets were soon densely filled with houses and people. By 1279, the parish contained about 200 properties and the 1381 poll tax recorded 90 people, most with decidedly urban occupations.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Allen (1994), vii, xiii-xxi

¹⁹⁶ Allen (1994), 75-6, 85-6; *VCH Oxon iv*, 289; OHC Sale Catalogues: Kinglerlee, *Bookbinders Court* (2005); OxfCC 02/00798/FUL; Woolley (2010), 79

¹⁹⁷ Allen (1994), 1

¹⁹⁸ Woolley (2010), 79

¹⁹⁹ OHC Sale Catalogues: Kinglerlee, *The Lion Brewery Oxford: the Apartments* (2003); OxfCC 02/00268/FUL

²⁰⁰ *VCH Oxon iv*, 289; Andrew Norton, 'Excavations at 67-69 St Thomas' Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia* 71 (2006), 347-9

²⁰¹ Munby & Dodd, *op.cit.*, 343

²⁰² Nicholas Palmer, 'A Beaker Burial and Medieval Tenements in the Hamel', *Oxoniensia* 45 (1976), 137-9; *VCH Oxon iv*, 278

The availability of water attracted industries such as milling, cloth-making, brewing, malting and tanning and proximity to Osney Abbey meant a ready market for specialist trades and crafts, including perhaps the bookbinders of Bookbinders Bridge, which was first recorded by name in 1377.²⁰³ Geoffrey Chaucer may have been aware of what was sometimes called Oseney-town when he made John the over-credulous carpenter an employee of Osney Abbey in his bawdy *Miller's Tale*. The Dissolution of local monasteries in the 1530s caused major upheaval and a high turnover of population and former house sites were still vacant in St. Thomas's Street and elsewhere in 1578. By 1675, the increase in Oxford's population had led to a flurry of house-building, not only filling gaps in St. Thomas's Street frontage but also creating considerable back-land development. The building of courts and yards intensified from the 1780s during another period of rapid population growth.²⁰⁴

St. Thomas's became very much the engine room of the City and a first port of call for newcomers and immigrants such as Irish navvies and travelling German or Italian musicians.²⁰⁵ In 1848, the parish was said to contain 'some of the worst habitations and the poorest inhabitants in Oxford'²⁰⁶ and most of the 55 cholera cases in the area in 1854 occurred in the overcrowded courts and yards behind St. Thomas's Street. Christ Church subsequently closed some of the worst properties on college property and built model lodging-houses and 'cottages'.²⁰⁷ Later, the City Council began to issue closing orders on insanitary yards and, in the 1930s, it established slum clearance areas which destroyed historic houses as well as sub-standard properties.²⁰⁸ In 1962, a gabled three storey timber-framed house of 17th century origin, nos. 64-66 St. Thomas's Street, was the last old property to be demolished.²⁰⁹ Pubs also vanished – there were ten in St. Thomas's Street in 1875,²¹⁰ but none remain open today. The timber-framed former Plasterers' Arms had become a lodging-house for single men run by the Italian Anna Farina (d. 1941) before it was pulled down in the 1930s.²¹¹

Olive Gibbs noticed that much of the character of St. Thomas's disappeared when 'lively colourful families' were re-housed to Rose Hill and Barton in the 1930s.²¹² It had been 'a tough but full-blooded area, a close-knit community within the City',²¹³ where local children always stood ready to defend their corner against rivals from the Friars or Osney who derided them as 'Tomrags'.²¹⁴ There was a definite social hierarchy in St. Thomas's based on where you lived – the terraced houses were best, then Christ Church Old Buildings and the New Buildings with the courts at the bottom of the heap. Everyone was poor to differing degrees but there was a kind of welfare system 'and we shared each other's happiness and sorrows. We shared our

²⁰³ *VCH Oxon* iv, 289

²⁰⁴ Palmer, *op. cit.*, 141-4

²⁰⁵ Liz Woolley, *Disreputable Housing in a Disreputable Parish: Common Lodging-Houses in St Thomas', Oxford, 1841-1901* (2009) – hereafter Woolley (2009), 53-4, 66; Minn, 35; Allen (1994), 64

²⁰⁶ W.P. Ormerod, *On the Sanatory Condition of Oxford* (1848), 20, 24; *VCH Oxon* iv, 236

²⁰⁷ H.W. Acland, *Memoir on the cholera at Oxford in 1854* (1856), 37; Squires, 144; *supra*, 3-4

²⁰⁸ Minn, 46, 56-7

²⁰⁹ Woolley (2009), 27

²¹⁰ Squires, 127

²¹¹ OHC OCL74/156; Carol Newbigging, *Changing Faces of St Ebbe's and St Thomas's, Book 2* (1997), 72

²¹² Gibbs, 74

²¹³ Arnold Mallinson, *Quinquagesimo Anno* (1974), 41

²¹⁴ Prior, 33; Gibbs, 20

food when it was needed and, if the necessity arose, we shared our homes.’ Corner shops provided a daily community focus and Cooper & Boffin’s Bakery had a similar role on Sundays when people brought their Sunday joints to be roasted in the ovens.²¹⁵

One of Cooper & Boffin’s buildings was retained behind the Old Bakery development at nos. 54-57 St Thomas’s Street (1992, Gray Baines & Shew).²¹⁶ Other properties on the north side of the street include student housing for St. Peter’s College (2005, Anthony Ricketts Partnership), St Thomas’s Mews (1996, Towle Spurring Hardy) and Castle Mews (1991).²¹⁷ Opposite, Jackson Cole House (1979) is an old people’s home built on a site which included a former Baptist Mission Hall (1893) and the vehicle entrance to The Hamel.²¹⁸ Late Victorian terraced houses, the cream of the crop in the old social hierarchy, begin at no. 20 and, two doors along, at no. 22, two large ground floor sash windows survive from what used to be Butt’s general shop.²¹⁹ Turn left into Woodbine Place, formerly a narrow yard which was extended through to Osney Lane when Christ Church Old Buildings was erected in the 1860s. The picturesque name, referring perhaps to a honeysuckle, belied the lack of growing space in St. Thomas’s, but an observer in 1851 noted one couple’s hanging garden of plants in old pots and pans.²²⁰ Christ Church Old Buildings dominate the left hand side of Woodbine Place, still more so since the building of Staircase 5 (1998, The Oxfordshire Practice) which is a clever update of the tenement theme.²²¹ This block hid the drying ground behind the Old Buildings which served also as a children’s play space. As a child in the 1920s, Olive Gibbs was forbidden to play there because ‘Some feckless families made a habit of tossing old food, bones, bottles and indescribably filthy clothes into it.’ The ban did not stop Olive and her friends from stealing washing lines from the area, tying the door knobs of adjoining properties together, knocking on the doors and then scarpering.²²²

Until the 1890s, there were still many old properties west of Woodbine Place. Christ Church then redeveloped the area with small houses, and extended Hollybush Row south from St Thomas’ Street to Osney Lane as a first step towards providing a link between St. Thomas’s and St. Ebbe’s.²²³ Nos. 2-7 Woodbine Place (1894)²²⁴ are characteristic terraced houses, but no. 1 was originally the Oxford Creche and Invalid Kitchen (1893, Symm & Co.), a facility for working mothers funded through a legacy left by Miss Mary Jephson (1823-92) of Gunfield, Norham Gardens. She had previously been helping to run an infants’ nursery in the area.²²⁵

²¹⁵ Gibbs, 6-8

²¹⁶ OxfCC 92/00350/NF

²¹⁷ OxfCC 91/01391/NF; 96/01563/NF; 97/00243/NF; 03/00999/FUL; www.spc.ox.ac.uk

²¹⁸ OxfCC 79/00065/A_H

²¹⁹ Gibbs, 12-13

²²⁰ *A Report...into the State of the Sewerage, Drainage and Water Supply of the University and City of Oxford* (1851), 78

²²¹ OxfCC 98/01557/NF

²²² Gibbs, 5, 18

²²³ Christ Church Archives Maps Oxford (St Thomas) 25; Christ Church Archives MS Estates 78/301-2; JOJ 17.10.1891, 12.10.1895

²²⁴ OHC City Engineer’s Plan 2311 Old Series

²²⁵ http://www.stsepulchres.org.uk/burials/jephson_ann.html ; JOJ 6.2.1892, 14.10.1893; Bodl G.A. Oxon b.153,

Turn right into Osney Lane, and walk down to Hollybush Row where two finely-carved stone heads, perhaps from Osney Abbey, were among the finds unearthed when the road was extended.²²⁶ Cross Hollybush Row by the pedestrian crossing, and turn left, passing Rowland Hill Court (1999) which occupies the site of the Community of St. Thomas the Martyr, founded in 1847 by the Rev. Thomas Chamberlain (1810-92), vicar of St. Thomas's. This was the second High Anglican Sisterhood to be established in England, and it grew from small beginnings to become a significant force in the parish, helping with house to house visiting and running schools, an orphanage and an industrial training home for girls.²²⁷

Walk round into Osney Lane where the large horse chestnut tree formerly stood near the Community's infirmary. The vehicle entrance to Rowland Hill Court provides an early glimpse of St Thomas's Church. Turn right into Becket Street which was laid out by Christ Church in 1882 to improve access to the GWR goods station and provide industrial sites near the railway.²²⁸ Simonds', the Reading brewers, established a depot on the corner of Osney Lane and Becket Street, and Hanley's City Brewery built a huge malthouse (1883) south of St. Thomas's Church which had three malting floors and two upper floors for barley storage. Hanley's malthouse became part of the Hall's Oxford Brewery empire in 1896, and was seriously damaged by spectacular fires in 1902 and 1921.²²⁹ The Post Office took over these industrial sites near the railway for its Oxford Sorting Office in 1930²³⁰ and, after the Community of St. Thomas the Martyr closed in 1958,²³¹ it expanded on to that site as well. For many years, Post Office employees ferried sacks of mail every day between Becket Street and the railway station. The Oxford Sorting Office moved to new premises in Cowley in 1998²³² and Rowland Hill Court was built on the site. The name recalls Sir Rowland Hill (1795-1879) who campaigned successfully for reform of the postal system and the introduction of the penny post in 1840.²³³

Once dwarfed by Osney Abbey and, in modern times, by industrial buildings, St. Thomas's Church is now more prominent. There is a story that the church was founded in 1142 by local people unable to reach their parish church, St. George's, while King Stephen's forces were besieging the castle. In fact, Osney Abbey only acquired the site in the 1180s, and it seems almost certain that St. Thomas's Church was founded as a chapel of the abbey in c.1190, the dedication being a popular one following the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1170.²³⁴ During the 13th century, St Thomas's superseded the less accessible St George's as the parish church.²³⁵

The late 12th century chancel with three heavily restored windows may belong to the original church. Other external features of interest include the West tower of c.1540

²²⁶ Bodl MS Top Oxon c. 313, 135

²²⁷ *VCH Oxon iv*, 405; Squires, 22; OxfCC 98/01373/NF;

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp00827/thomas-chamberlain>

²²⁸ JOJ 14.10.1882

²²⁹ Minn, 104-12; Woolley (2010), 82

²³⁰ Victor Sugden, *An Oxford Diary* (2009), 347

²³¹ *VCH Oxon iv*, 405

²³² OM 12.2.1998

²³³ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13299?docPos=4>

²³⁴ *VCH Oxon iv*, 403; Palmer, 137; Squires, 1-4

²³⁵ *VCH Oxon iv*, 381

and the South porch which was built in 1621 by the curate, Robert Burton (1577-1640), author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, whose arms you can see on the gable. The main body of the church was substantially rebuilt in 1825 and 1846-8 because the flood-prone building was in a dilapidated state and more seats were needed for the growing population.²³⁶ The church - not usually open - lost its medieval glass during the Civil War, some of it when around 300 Parliamentary soldiers were imprisoned in the building during February 1642.²³⁷ Principal features of the interior include the chancel ceiling decorations (1914, M.S. Hack), a fine brass chandelier (1705) and Victorian stained glass windows by O'Connor and Clayton & Bell. The oldest church bells date back to 1706 and they were famously rung in January 1790 to celebrate 'ye coals coming to Oxford to ye New Cannal Wharf.'²³⁸

From the 16th century until c.1850, St. Thomas's Church stood out on a limb at the western edge of Oxford, and the churchyard was described in 1773 as being 'encompassed with streams and rivulets and ornamented with shrubs and flowers, thus resembling a garden...' In the 19th century, it was still 'the favoured spot of many birds, whose songs are a great delight to early worshippers,' and even now it retains to a surprising degree what Thomas Squires described in the 1920s as 'the quiet and seclusion of the country.'²³⁹ Local children sometimes disturbed the peace, however, and Olive Gibbs recalled games of Cowboys and Indians in the churchyard when cowboys would 'ride' the tombstones as if they were horses!²⁴⁰ The churchyard retains many memorials including a tall granite cross in the south-west corner of the churchyard commemorating the Rev. Thomas Chamberlain (1810-92), vicar of the parish for 50 years from 1842. Below a Sheldon family wall tablet on the South Aisle, there is a kerbed memorial to Felicia Skene (1821-99) who, inspired by Chamberlain's example, worked tirelessly in the parish during the 1854 cholera epidemic and became involved in teaching, nursing, temperance and rescue work. She visited women prisoners in local prisons, and was the first woman in England to be officially appointed as a Prison Visitor.²⁴¹ Just outside the priest's doorway (c.1250) in the South chancel wall, which retains fine contemporary ironwork, an elaborate chest tomb commemorates Timothy Bourne (d. 1732) and his wife Martha (d. 1736)²⁴² who lived at Rewley. Note also an eroded consecration cross on the buttress at the south-east corner of the chancel, and the wayside crucifix east of the chancel (1905; statue replaced 2008, John Bye).²⁴³

North of the churchyard is the former St. Thomas' vicarage (1893, C. C. Rolfe), now offices, a delightful red brick house with stone dressings, a tiled roof and brick chimney stacks.²⁴⁴ In the south-east corner of the churchyard, Coombe House is a

²³⁶ *VCH Oxon* iv, 405; Squires, 15-18;

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4137?docPos=1><http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4137?docPos=1>; <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245883> ([Church of St Thomas the Martyr, Non Civil Parish - 1047122](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245883) | [Historic England](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/245883))

²³⁷ Squires, 9-10

²³⁸ *VCH Oxon* iv, 405-6; Squires, 14, 26, 30-1

²³⁹ Squires, 37

²⁴⁰ Gibbs, 16-17

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 144-8; <http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/skene.html>

²⁴² Squires, 29-30

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29, 37, 48; <http://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/2355883>

²⁴⁴ Andrew Saint, 'Three Oxford Architects', *Oxoniensia* 35 (1970), 102; OHC City Engineer's Plan 2061 Old Series

remarkably unaltered early 18th century charity school, a two storey stone building with a stone slate roof containing two (of the original three) gabled dormers. An inscription panel on the north elevation set between original casement windows states that the school was built in 1702 by 'Mr. John Coombe, Citizen and Plaisterer of London, borne in this Parish and free of this City...' He intended the schoolmaster to teach ten poor boys of the parish 'reading English writing and Arithmetick.'²⁴⁵ After St. Paul's parish was carved out of St. Thomas's parish in 1837,²⁴⁶ a new boys' school was built behind Coombe's school and this building, complete with the plaque 'Built by Subscription 1839', is visible over the churchyard wall. This school became redundant when the new St. Thomas's School opened in Osney Lane in 1904, but the Community of St. Thomas the Martyr bought the old buildings in 1922 and gave them to St. Thomas's Parochial Church Council in 1958. The blackened state of much of the stonework of Coombe House is testimony to smoke pollution from domestic fires and the nearby railway and electricity works.²⁴⁷ Leaving the churchyard, glance right along the former Church Street, a road linking St. Thomas's Street with Osney Lane which was part of the original layout of the suburb in the late 12th century.²⁴⁸ The building of the Hollybush Row extension made Church Street redundant and it was closed in 1892.²⁴⁹ At this end, it continued to serve as the approach road to the Community of St. Thomas the Martyr, and the Victorian gateway (1886, C.C. Rolfe)²⁵⁰ is the only Sisterhood building to survive. Notice also the pedimented doorway to Coombe House which originally led straight into the schoolroom.²⁵¹

Walking towards Hollybush Row, you have a good view along St. Thomas's Street framed by a sycamore tree in the grounds of the former St. Thomas's girls' school (1842). The girls' school too was built as a result of the division of St. Thomas's parish in 1837²⁵² and the choice of this site meant the destruction of a splendid timber-framed 'Wealden' house that has been dated to around 1459.²⁵³ The school is a two storey rubble stone building with mullioned windows and a central gable. It retains a contemporary iron boundary fence and gate signed by the founder, [Nathaniel] Dean of Abingdon.²⁵⁴ The building has been incorporated into Hollybush Lodge, graduate accommodation for Brasenose College (2008, Oxford Architects)²⁵⁵ which claimed the adjacent parish hall (1891), built by the Rev. Thomas Chamberlain to mark the 50th year of his incumbency.²⁵⁶ Across Hollybush Row, the former Chequers pub (1914, Wilkins & Jeeves; converted into flats, 2015) on the corner of St. Thomas's Street was a rebuilding of an earlier Chequers.²⁵⁷

²⁴⁵ Images of England 245882 ([COMBE HOUSE, Oxford - 1343630 | Historic England](#)); David Clark, 'Changes through time', *Oxoniensia* 72 (2007), 19-20, 27-8

²⁴⁶ *VCH Oxon* iv, 453

²⁴⁷ Clark, *op cit*, 20, 30-4

²⁴⁸ Palmer, 136

²⁴⁹ Squires, 42

²⁵⁰ Pevsner, 329

²⁵¹ Clark, *op cit*, 25

²⁵² *VCH Oxon* iv, 453

²⁵³ Julian Munby, 'A Dated Wealden House', *Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1974), 26

²⁵⁴ Images of England 245884 ([THE LODGE, Oxford - 1067794 | Historic England](#))

²⁵⁵ www.bnc.ox.ac.uk information in Brasenose 2008, 13; OxfCC 05/02545/FUL

²⁵⁶ Squires, 26

²⁵⁷ Minn, 62; OHC City Engineer's Plan 2214 New Series

The first houses in Hollybush Row were built on the east side in the 13th century and archaeologists in 1989-90 found the seal of Roger of Cumnor (fl. c.1260), an early property owner, in a stone-lined water channel. These houses and others on the north side of St. Thomas's Street passed from Rewley Abbey to the Dutton family at the Dissolution and never formed part of the Christ Church estate. The east side of Hollybush Row was largely rebuilt in the late 17th century, but the last of these older properties, at the corner of Park End Street, were demolished for road widening in 1960.²⁵⁸ The Adventurer, originally the Albion pub (1911)²⁵⁹ replaced another of the houses in this block. Water management was crucial to keeping this low-lying area habitable and a stream ran along the western edge of Hollybush Row until the mid 19th century.²⁶⁰ The land behind the former girls' school then became a nursery garden²⁶¹ and eventually, in 1925, the site for an extension to Frank Cooper's Victoria Works.²⁶² The multi-coloured glass stair tower of Brasenose College's Hollybush Lodge now provides quite a stylistic contrast with the former Jam Factory.

Cross Hollybush Row with care, and walk back up St. Thomas's Street to Quaking Bridge, following the curve which gradually reveals The Lion Brewery buildings, St. George's Tower and sycamore trees on the castle mound. St Thomas's Street was known as High Street, St Thomas's until the 1950s,²⁶³ and the ever-changing view echoes, in a modest way, the more famous curve of Oxford's High Street.

Chapter 5 - Tidmarsh Lane to Railway Station

Cross Quaking Bridge and turn left into Tidmarsh Lane, noticing that the modern black brick pavement gives way to an older one. To grasp how this area looked in medieval times, you need to imagine away all of today's buildings and envisage Tidmarsh Lane as a roadway leading from the west gate of Oxford Castle to a western barbican near the present junction with Park End Street. There would have been tenements backing on to the Castle Mill Stream on your left and the castle moat to your right.²⁶⁴ The road was variously known as Tidmarsh or Titmouse Lane from the 18th century, and the latter spelling became usual, recalling perhaps the parties of blue and great tits you may still see foraging along the Castle Mill Stream. In 1953, the City Council agreed that the street name should officially honour the memory of Richard Tidmarsh, the tanner and Anabaptist whom we noted earlier.²⁶⁵

You walk towards Park End Street between two very different buildings, the former Fox's malthouse on the left and the Brutalist concrete and glass Macclesfield House (1968-9, County Architect's Office/R.C. Biddiscombe) on the right. Note the dog statue inside the Old Malthouse as you go along. Macclesfield House was built as County Council offices and named after Lord Macclesfield, Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council from 1937 to 1967. It was the first stage of a redevelopment scheme that would have obliterated all the prison buildings and concentrated the County's

²⁵⁸ M R Roberts, 'A tenement of Roger of Cumnor', *Oxoniensia* 61 (1995), 181

²⁵⁹ OHC City Engineer's Plan 1875 New Series

²⁶⁰ *VCH Oxon* iv, 192 reproduces Hoggar's plan, 1850; Squires, 128-9

²⁶¹ OS 1:500 Oxfordshire XXXIII.15.21 (1876)

²⁶² Brigid Allen, *Cooper's Oxford: A History of Frank Cooper Limited* (1989) – hereafter Allen (1989), 100

²⁶³ Spokes Symonds, 190

²⁶⁴ Paul Booth, 'The west gate of Oxford Castle', *Oxoniensia* (68), 2003, 363-5, 370; Munby & Dodd, 474-6

²⁶⁵ Spokes Symonds, 58-9; *VCH Oxon* iv, 477

central offices on the castle site.²⁶⁶ Beyond Macclesfield House, Oxford Register Office (1911-12, W. A. Daft)²⁶⁷ was built as County Offices on the site of St Peter le Bailey School (1849) and a pound for stray animals. The building was needed because of the County Council's growing responsibilities, especially for schools since 1903, and, with Macclesfield House, it long served as the headquarters of the Local Education Authority. It is an attractive two storey building of white limestone with yellow sandstone dressings which makes good use of a difficult corner site.²⁶⁸

The 19th century Lighthouse pub in Park End Street terminates the view at the end of Tidmarsh Lane. Latterly known as the Duke's Cut, the pub was originally the Queen's Arms.²⁶⁹ Cross to the north side of Park End Street at the traffic lights and turn left. New Road and Park End Street are surprisingly modern additions to Oxford, built by the Botley and Newland Turnpike Trust in 1769-70 as a new western exit from the city centre. The road crossed Fisher Row by means of Pacey's Bridge, named after a Mr Pacey who had property north-east of the bridge in 1772.²⁷⁰ This was the first in a series of bridges which led to Botley Road sometimes being called the Seven Bridges road. The new road to Hollybush Row provided key development sites and, by 1829, there was a wharf south-west of Pacey's Bridge receiving coal brought from Parkend in the Forest of Dean via the Thames & Severn Canal.²⁷¹ The wharf was sold for development in 1880,²⁷² but improbably gave its name to the street. Park End Street became an important business district but a source of despair for writers of historical guidebooks shepherding folk quickly from the railway stations towards more picturesque Oxford.

As you head west, cross the entrance to the Worcester Street car park carefully and notice a tall engineering brick gate pillar (1852?)²⁷³ beside the Lighthouse pub; this is the only surviving structure from the canal wharf on the site of the car park. Walk across Pacey's Bridge, noticing a plaque on the parapet recalling Richard Tidmarsh and the tradition that he baptized people in the Castle Mill Stream. To north and south, you have views of trees and public gardens along the millstream, and it is hard to believe that generations of people occupied small houses along Fisher Row and made a living from the river.

In the first half of the 20th century, Park End Street's position astride a busy main road so encouraged the development of garages that it was described in 1935 as 'The Street of Wheels.'²⁷⁴ Garages and car showrooms have long migrated to the ring road and beyond, but many buildings survive from that era. The former Layton's garage (c. 1928 - 56)²⁷⁵ on the corner of Tidmarsh Lane is now a night club. Beyond

²⁶⁶ OxfoCC 67/18303/AB_H; OM 4.1.1966, 1.8.1966, 22.1.1968, 2.1.1970, 22.9.1975

²⁶⁷ OHC City Engineer's Plan 1738 New Series

²⁶⁸ Donald Insall Associates Ltd., *The Magnet Oxford Historic Buildings and Environmental Report and Heritage Proposal for Science Oxford* (2013), 18-19; *VCH Oxon* iv, 452

²⁶⁹ P.J. Marriott, *Oxford Pubs Past and Present* (1978), 36

²⁷⁰ Julian Munby & H.M. Walton, The building of New Road, *Oxoniensia* (55), 1990, 123; Squires, 140; *VCH Oxon* iv, 289

²⁷¹ Prior, 213

²⁷² JOJ 3.7.1880

²⁷³ Oxford Archaeology, *Castle, Canal & College* (2008), 13

²⁷⁴ *Oxford Monthly*, May 1935, 51-5

²⁷⁵ Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*; OHC City Engineer's Plan 3614 New Series

Pacey's Bridge, Coxeter's garage (c.1911 - 73)²⁷⁶ inherited the site of the Park End Wharf and the Tower Brewery (estab. 1885).²⁷⁷ The building became an antiques centre before giving way to a large mixed development (2003, Oxford Architects)²⁷⁸ which includes restaurants, offices and student accommodation and the Stream Edge apartments in Fisher Row. Further on, Cantay House (1894-1909, H. J. Tollit/Tollit & Lee)²⁷⁹ was built as a furniture repository for Archer, Cowley & Co. Archer, Cowley's former office in Park End Place retains a splendid etched glass advertisement window of 1909.

On the north side of Park End Street beyond the Wareham Stream, the initial letter N high up on the side of nos. 4-6 (1925, G T Gardner) recalls Nicholl's, a boot-making business here between c.1926 and 1936.²⁸⁰ Further along, at nos. 11-12 (1924-7), a W at second floor level recalls Ward's popular furniture, pram and toy business which flourished here from 1919 to 1972.²⁸¹ Hartwell's Garages Ltd., (estab. 1919) developed quickly at no. 14 from 1920²⁸² and their premises are now a Staples store; you'll see the name Hartwell's in the terrazzo floor of the vehicle entrance and the façade above incorporates an H for Hartwell's. The Kwik-Fit Tyre and Exhaust Centre next door occupies the former King's Motors showrooms (1936, J.C. Leed)²⁸³ and maintains a link with the motor trade. The old name is still visible on the terrazzo floor of the vehicle entrance but attractive etched glass panels depicting earnest young motorists and motorcyclists in the 1930s countryside were removed from the front windows to the National Motor Museum. Mike Hailwood (1940-81), world motorcycle racing champion, was the son of the managing director of King's and worked here briefly in the 1950s.²⁸⁴

Back on the south side, King Charles House (1990, Covell Matthews Wheatley Architects Ltd.)²⁸⁵ is an office block worthily faced in red brick and artificial stone but lacking ground floor shops which might have enlivened the street scene. This section of Park End Street formerly included a blacksmith's forge, the Eagle Brewery (estab. 1839), more recently used as a depot and offices by Hall's Oxford Brewery Ltd., and Ind Coope Ltd., and Saunders' furniture depository.²⁸⁶ The north side of Park End Street ends with the Royal Oxford Hotel (1935, J. C. Leed),²⁸⁷ a neoclassical building in Temple Guiting stone. This stands on the site of the Hollybush Inn, best known for its role as a guard-house during the Civil War when 'Young scholars, keeping company with soldiers in the guard-rooms, learned to drink and game away their time.' At other times, however, drunkards were thrown out and the inn became a people's university with organized discussions and formal debates.²⁸⁸

²⁷⁶ Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

²⁷⁷ William Page, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 2 (1907), 264; Woolley (2010), 79-82

²⁷⁸ OxfCC 02/00798/FUL

²⁷⁹ OHC City Engineer's Plan 87 New Series; OC 8.10.1909; Woolley (2010), 90-1

²⁸⁰ OHC City Engineer's Plan 3356 New Series; Minn, 143; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

²⁸¹ OHC City Engineer's Plan 3373 New Series; Minn, 151-2

²⁸² OHC City Engineer's Plan 2559 New Series; Minn, 170-2

²⁸³ OHC City Engineer's Plan 8244 New Series

²⁸⁴ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31188> ; OM 19.4.1958, 2.10.1959, 31.3.1962

²⁸⁵ OxfCC 89/00473/NF

²⁸⁶ Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*; William Page, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 2 (1907), 264; Woolley (2010), 78-83

²⁸⁷ OHC City Engineer's Plan 6986 New Series

²⁸⁸ Squires, 128

Cross the road with care to reach Frideswide Square, named after Oxford's patron saint. This new urban space was formed by road widening in 1999-2000 when the former London & North Western Railway (LNWR) and London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS) station (1851, Fox & Henderson; closed 1951) was controversially dismantled. The station was built with the same prefabricated cast iron components as Joseph Paxton's famous Crystal Palace in London and it was therefore listed Grade 2*. The building languished as a tyre depot for many years while development schemes for the area came and went until the Saïd Business School (1999-2001, Sir Jeremy Dixon & Edward Jones) was finally approved. The station building was re-erected at the Quainton Railway Centre near Aylesbury in 2000 and the Saïd Business School is now the main architectural focus of Frideswide Square.²⁸⁹ The recessed glazed entrance in the ashlar stone façade almost suggests the approach to a railway station, but you can usually see students hard at work on computers upstairs. The green copper ziggurat on the tower at the south-west corner of the building was a restrained addition to Oxford's famous skyline.

The initial layout of Frideswide Square, with a profusion of traffic lights, never found favour and the area was expensively re-configured in 2015 with three roundabouts and more public space. The south side of the square, a continuation of Park End Street, features an impressive row of late 19th and early 20th century buildings. Nearest to Hollybush Row, no. 27 Park End Street (1902-3, Herbert Quinton; extended east to Hollybush Row, 1925) was built as the Victoria Works to increase production of Frank Cooper's Oxford Marmalade and other preserves.²⁹⁰ The original building is of red brick and stone dressings in what was described as a debased Renaissance style. The central gateway retains a decorative iron gate and the façade appropriately includes sculpted Seville oranges. Cooper's moved west along Botley Road in 1951,²⁹¹ and the old Jam Factory has since had many and varied uses. The other buildings in the row are also of red brick and stone dressings. No. 23 (1888, E. G. Cobb), with an attractive capped tower in French style, was formerly the Castle Hotel, handy for travellers arriving by train. Wrapped around it, nos. 26-24 and nos. 22-18 (1897, H.W. Moore) brought a touch of North Oxford respectability to the area.²⁹² No. 26 became George Walklett's chemist's shop and post office by 1907, hence the pillar box outside, and it retains a fine contemporary shop front with a mosaic tile entrance.²⁹³ Frank Cooper's adjoining factory was slightly later and some of the detailing on no. 26 had to be shaved off to make room for it. Nos. 21-18, built in the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, are still identified high up as Victoria Buildings. Nos. 20-21 were Joseph White & Son's greengrocer's shop from c.1905 until 1976.²⁹⁴

Cross Becket Street, and head up the signed pedestrian and cycle route to Oxford railway station. This approach formerly led to a level crossing which provided an alternative route across the railway for high vehicles and, at flood times, for all traffic. The route leads you on to a footbridge across Botley Road from which you can look

²⁸⁹ OxfCC 98/01430/NF; Edward Biddulph & Anne Dodd, eds., *From Studium to Station: Rewley Abbey and Rewley Road Station* (2007), 64-105

²⁹⁰ Allen (1989), 100; Woolley (2010), 91-4

²⁹¹ Allen (1989), 119

²⁹² OHC City Engineer's Plan 2714 Old Series

²⁹³ OHC City Engineer's Plan 1110 New Series; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

²⁹⁴ Kelly's Oxford directories, *passim*

back across Frideswide Square towards the Royal Oxford Hotel. Behind you, the Botley Road railway bridge still challenges high vehicles, but it ceased to decapitate double-decker buses after the clearance was raised to 13' 6" in 1979.²⁹⁵ Previously, passengers in buses that were too high were advised to warn the driver if he or she was heading for the bridge!

The Great Western Railway (GWR) reached Oxford from Didcot in 1844 with its first station in Grandpont near Folly Bridge. The line was extended through west Oxford in the late 1840s, initially towards Rugby and then instead to Birmingham. Services between Oxford and Banbury began on 2 September 1850, but it was only on 1 October 1852 that the GWR moved its passenger station to the present site.²⁹⁶ The 1852 station was a largely timber structure with a roof covering both platforms and tracks. The overall roof was removed and the platforms were extended in 1890-1, but the buildings were otherwise little altered for decades.²⁹⁷ Max Beerbohm remarked in 1911 that undergraduates in their tweeds or flannel 'struck a sharp note of incongruity with the worn boards they stood on, with the fading signals and grey eternal walls of that antique station, which, familiar to them and insignificant, does yet whisper to the tourist the last enchantments of the Middle Age.'²⁹⁸ In 1948, Thomas Sharp envisaged a grand new railway and bus station.²⁹⁹ Railway nationalization, also in 1948, led to the closure of the adjacent LMS station in 1951, and the concentration of all passenger services at the former GWR station. A new era seemed imminent but the old GWR station lingered on until it was replaced by an economy-minded British Rail building (1971-2). This gave way to a slightly more ambitious building in 1990 which, with further improvements in 1999, offered better passenger facilities and a sizeable forecourt for taxis and some local bus services. A larger station is now planned because of growing passenger numbers and new rail services.³⁰⁰

From the railway station entrance, you have a good view of the stripy side elevation of the Saïd Business School and the ziggurat nearest to Park End Street. Away to your left, the Thatcher Business Education Centre, named after the former Prime Minister, was a later addition (2013, Dixon Jones).³⁰¹ Follow the pedestrian crossing through the bus and taxi stands to admire the statue of the Oxford ox (2001, Olivia Musgrave).³⁰² Turn right and go round to the front of the Saïd Business School where you will find a plaque set in the pavement depicting the design of the LMS station. Further along, Rewley Road now leads to Oxford City Fire Station (1971) and modern housing on the site of Rewley Abbey. Hythe Bridge Street is an ancient road dating back to at least 1233, but only the name hythe – Old English for a wharf - hints at its age today.³⁰³ The concrete and glass Beaver House (1971-2, Oxford Architects Partnership) was built as offices for Blackwell's on the site of tall brick houses of c.1870 which included the Great Western Hotel (1868).³⁰⁴ Antiquity Hall

²⁹⁵ Graham (1998), 46

²⁹⁶ Laurence Waters, *Rail Centres Oxford* (2005), 9-11

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-9

²⁹⁸ Max Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson*, Penguin edition (1952), 7

²⁹⁹ Thomas Sharp, *Oxford Replanned* (1948), 120-2

³⁰⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_railway_station ; OM 18.6.1999

³⁰¹ OxfCC 07/01746/FUL

³⁰² Oxford City Council, *Discover Oxford's Public Art* (c.2010)

³⁰³ *Oxf Encyc*, 190

³⁰⁴ Pevsner, 324; OHC OCL 27650; OxfCC 70/19764/A_H

was a 17th century pub on the other side of Hythe Bridge Street near the vehicle entrance to Staples. The gabled stone building was set back from the road behind a high stone wall and, although the pub sign showed Dick Whittington and his cat, it was also known as the Hole in the Wall. It probably acquired the nickname Antiquity Hall because it was the favourite hostelry of the Oxford antiquary, Thomas Hearne (1678-1735), and his friends. On one occasion, Hearne was persuaded that the pub floor of sheep's knuckle-bones was a Roman mosaic pavement, fell to his knees and kissed it. After a few more tankards of ale, he was apparently 'obliged to repose' on the floor for much of the evening!³⁰⁵

Continuing along Hythe Bridge Street, the Bangkok House restaurant occupies the much-altered St. Nicholas' Chapel (1869, E.G. Bruton) which replaced the Boatmen's Floating Chapel. The building continued in use as a school and chapel until about 1902 and was St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic chapel (c. 1912-4) before becoming Ward's furniture store and later a restaurant.³⁰⁶ Just opposite, the Glee Club occupies an unusual brick and stone building (1912, J.R. Wilkins) which originated as an ice factory for the Oxford Cold Storage & Ice Co., Ltd.³⁰⁷ Little Hythe Bridge (rebuilt 1874)³⁰⁸ takes the road over the Back Stream and taller people at least can look over the parapet towards the backs of houses in Upper Fisher Row. Cross Hythe Bridge Street at the traffic lights, and turn left past the Oxford Retreat pub towards Worcester Street. On your right, there are the lowered remains of the rubble stone wall which surrounded the canal wharf, and you have good views of Nuffield College, the Register Office and the castle mound. On the other side of Hythe Bridge Street, Stockwell or Plato's Well was one of a series of springs on the western side of Oxford, providing fresh water from the gravel terrace on which the city is built.³⁰⁹ Drainage operations finally put paid to Plato's Well in the early 20th century³¹⁰ and the site is now occupied by Worcester College buildings. You pass Linbury Building (1991, Maguire & Murray) which ascends in stages towards the five storey Casson Building (1961, Sir Hugh Casson) and the Wolfson Building (1971, Peter Bosanquet) which shrinks away from the busy Worcester Street corner.³¹¹ In quieter times and before this corner was widened, the Rev. Charles Daniel (1837-1919), Provost of Worcester College from 1903 to 1919, lived here in Worcester House and operated his famous private press here.³¹² Your view ahead is dominated by the three ornamental corner towers of the office complex that marks the western edge of the Gloucester Green development (1987-90, Kendrick Associates).³¹³ The building rises five storeys from the pavement edge and the polychrome effect of stone and variegated brick colours makes it almost a latter-day Keble College.

Turn right into Worcester Street, and glance across to the neo-Georgian Nando's building (c. 1930). At first floor level, notice a re-set 1828 parish boundary stone with the initials of two churchwardens. The car park to your right occupies part of the Oxford Canal basin. The canal crossed the site from a bridge under Hythe Bridge

³⁰⁵ Squires, 129, 158

³⁰⁶ Squires, 24; Prior, 324; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

³⁰⁷ OHC City Engineer's Plan 1907 New Series; Kelly's Oxford Directories, *passim*

³⁰⁸ *VCH Oxon* iv, 288

³⁰⁹ Squires, 131

³¹⁰ Davies, 50

³¹¹ Pevsner, 323; Tyack, 340; Philip Opher, *Oxford Modern: a Guide to Recent Architecture* (2001), 36

³¹² Squires, 132

³¹³ Tyack, 335-6

Street just east of Hythe Bridge to a hump-backed bridge in Worcester Street on its way to the Coal Wharf in New Road. This area was the Merchandise or Goods Wharf with a monumental warehouse (1795) built over the canal to house dry or vulnerable cargoes.³¹⁴ The warehouse was demolished in 1954 when the local architect Thomas Rayson bemoaned ‘the loss of one of Oxford’s finest buildings. A great brick and stone structure standing on noble arches has been swept away to form a car park!’³¹⁵ Lord Nuffield had bought the entire canal wharf for his proposed engineering college in 1937 and early designs for Nuffield College envisaged buildings on the car park site.³¹⁶ Only the New Road side was developed, however, and optimists still dream of a new canal basin here. Walking towards New Road, you have fine views of Nuffield College (1949-58, Harrison, Barnes & Hubbard)³¹⁷ which has many echoes of the Cotswolds and a splendid tower and spire which make a positive contribution to the Oxford skyline. The cupola, stone slate roof and attic dormer windows of the Register Office are attractive features on the corner of New Road and Tidmarsh Lane.

Cross Park End Street at the traffic lights and enjoy the view of St. George’s Tower as you walk down Tidmarsh Lane. Brutal as it may seem, Macclesfield House was sensitively set back in the 1960s to preserve this view.³¹⁸ At the end of the lane, you have the option to carry straight on into the castle for refreshments and a visit to Oxford Castle Unlocked.

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

Further reading

H.W. Acland, *Memoir on the Cholera at Oxford in 1854* (1856)
Brigid Allen, *Cooper’s Oxford: A History of Frank Cooper Limited* (1989)
Brigid Allen, *Morrell’s of Oxford* (1994)
Max Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson* (1911)

³¹⁴ Oxford Archaeology, *Castle, Canal & College* (2008), 11

³¹⁵ Bodl MS. Top. Oxon., d. 489, 44

³¹⁶ Compton, 145; Howard Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983), 168-75

³¹⁷ Pevsner, 235-6

³¹⁸ OM 2.1.1970; Donald Insall Associates Ltd., *The Magnet Oxford Historic Buildings and Environmental Report and Heritage Proposal for Science Oxford* (2013), [59-61]

Edward Biddulph & Anne Dodd, eds., *From Studium to Station: Rewley Abbey and Rewley Road Station* (2007)

James Bond and John Rhodes, *The Oxfordshire Brewer* (1985)

Paul Booth, The west gate of Oxford Castle, *Oxoniensia* 68 (2003)

Andrew Clark, ed., Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford, by Anthony Wood, vol. 2, *Oxford Historical Society* 17 (1890)

David Clark, Changes through time: John Coombes' Charity School, *Oxoniensia* 72 (2007)

H.M. Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983)

Hugh Compton, *The Oxford Canal* (1976)

R.A. Cooke, *Track layout diagrams of the G.W.R. and BR W.R., section 27: Oxford*, 2nd ed (1987)

Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vol. 4: the City of Oxford* (1979)

Mark Davies and Catherine Robinson, *A Towpath Walk in Oxford* (2003)

James Dredge, *Thames Bridges: from the Tower to the Source* (1897)

Olive Gibbs, *'Our Olive': the Autobiography of Olive Gibbs* (1989)

Malcolm Graham, *The Changing Faces of West Oxford* (1998)

Malcolm Graham, *Oxford in the Great War* (2014)

Malcolm Graham, *The Suburbs of Victorian Oxford* (1985)

Alan Hardy, Archaeological Excavations at 54-55 St Thomas' Street, Oxford, *Oxoniensia* 61 (1996)

Christopher Hibbert, *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (1988)

M.G. Hobson and H.E. Salter, *Oxford Council Acts, 1626-1665* (1933)

Donald Insall Associates Ltd., *The Magnet Oxford Historic Buildings and Environmental Report and Heritage Proposal for Science Oxford* (2013)

Kelly's Directory of Oxford, Abingdon, Woodstock and Neighbourhood

R.T. Lattey, E.J.S. Parsons & I.G. Philip, A Contemporary Map of the Defences of Oxford in 1644, *Oxoniensia* 1 (1936)

D.S. McColl, *The Royal River: the Thames from Source to Sea* (1885)

Arnold Mallinson, *Quinquagesimo Anno* (1974)

P.J. Marriott, *Oxford Pubs Past & Present* (1978)

Henry Minn, *North-West Ward* (Bodleian Library MS Top Oxon, d.489)

Henry Minn, *St Thomas's Parish* (Bodleian Library MS Top Oxon, d.505)

Richard Morris, Farewell, Cousin to the Crystal Palace, *British Archaeology* 38 (1998)

Julian Munby, A Dated Wealden House, *Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1974)

Julian Munby, *Oxford Castle Medieval and Later Buildings* (2000)

Julian Munby & Anne Dodd, The Architecture and History of Oxford's Western Suburb, *Oxoniensia* 71 (2006)

Julian Munby & H.M. Walton, The building of New Road, *Oxoniensia* 55 (1990)

James Neild, *State of the Prisons in England, Scotland and Wales...*(1812)

Carol Newbigging, *Changing Faces of St Ebbe's and St Thomas's, Book 1* (1997)

Carol Newbigging, *Changing Faces of St Ebbe's and St Thomas's, Book 2* (1997)

Andrew Norton, Excavations at 67-69 St Thomas' Street, Oxford, *Oxoniensia* 71 (2006)

Philip Opher, *Oxford Modern: a Guide to The New Architecture of the City and University* (2001)

W.P. Ormerod, *On the Sanatory Condition of Oxford* (1848)

Oxford Archaeology, *Castle, Canal & College* (2008)

Oxford City Council, *Discover Oxford's Public Art* (c.2010)

Oxford City Council, *Osney Cemetery: Grave Details Required for Faculty* (1964)

Oxford City Council, *Schedule of City Property* (1923)

William Page, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vol. 2* (1907)

Nicholas Palmer, A Beaker Burial and Medieval Tenements in the Hamel, Oxford, *Oxoniensia* 45 (1980)

W.A. Pantin, Fisher Row, *Oxoniensia* 25 (1960)

Andy Panton, *Farewell St Ebbe's* (1980)

W.T. Pike, *Views & Reviews Special Edition Oxford* (1897)

Mary Prior, *Fisher Row* (1983)

A Report...into the State of the Sewerage, Drainage and Water Supply of the University and City of Oxford (1851)

M R Roberts, A tenement of Roger of Cumnor, *Oxoniensia* 61 (1995)

Andrew Saint, Three Oxford Architects, *Oxoniensia* 35 (1970)

Thomas Sharp, *Oxford Replanned* (1948)

Jonathan Sharpe, Osney Abbey, Oxford: Archaeological Excavations, 1975-1983, *Oxoniensia* 50 (1985)

Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (1974)
W.E. Sherwood, *Oxford Yesterday* (1927)
Bill Simpson, *Oxford to Cambridge Railway in Profile, volume 1: Oxford to Bletchley* (2006)
T W Squires, *In West Oxford* (1928)
Ann Spokes Symonds, *The Origins of Oxford Street Names* (2010)
Victor Sugden, *An Oxford Diary* (2009)
W.H. Turner, *Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford...[1509-1583]* (1880)
Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford: an Architectural Guide* (1998)
Laurence Waters, *Rail Centres Oxford* (2005)
W R Williams, *Parliamentary History of the County of Oxford* (1899)
Liz Woolley, *Disreputable Housing in a Disreputable Parish: Common Lodging-Houses in St Thomas', Oxford, 1841-1901* (2009)
Liz Woolley, *Industrial Architecture in Oxford, 1870-1914, Oxoniensia* 75 (2010)

<http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/campaigns/oxon/oxford/oxpens>
<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx?cpage=1>
<http://www.eng.ox.ac.uk/thermofluids/about-the-lab/osney-lab-history>
<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Oxpens-Meadow>
<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>
<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>
<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk>
<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections>
<http://www.oua.ox.ac.uk/holdings/Officers%20Training%20Corps%20OT.pdf>
https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/153/oxpens_masterplan_spd
<http://www.oxforddnb.com>
<http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk>
<http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/>
<http://www.stsepulchres.org.uk/burials>
<http://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/archive>

www.bnc.ox.ac.uk
www.marcusbealesarchitects.co.uk
www.oxpensmeadow.org
www.prparchitects.co.uk
www.spc.ox.ac.uk
www.wikipedia