Oxford Preservation Trust
Oxford City Council

The Heritage of Oxford

A Preliminary Statement
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The Heritage of Oxford: A Preliminary Statement

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'The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground: yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

1.1.1 A Heritage Statement for Oxford is a necessary preliminary to the preparation of a Heritage Plan, which Oxford City Council has undertaken to produce. It has been prepared in the belief that our 'heritage' is our present city in its natural setting. It encompasses what is inherited from the past and in the present, how we use it today, as well as the heritage in the making of the developing city, all of which we share with long and short-term visitors. Oxford is an iconic place amongst the top rank of European cities, famous for learning, its green setting and its historic buildings and institutions. It has all the qualities of a World Heritage Site, and would certainly rank high as a European Heritage Site.

1.1.2 The Heritage is much more than these high-ranking assets, for it also includes local places, features and associations: minor buildings, paths and open spaces, viewpoints and events. This history and heritage is of significance for the local communities of people who live and work in the city and feel a sense of belonging and ownership, which is reinforced by the continuity of experience that the heritage provides.

1.2 Commissioning

1.2.1 This preliminary statement on the Heritage of Oxford was commissioned from Oxford Archaeology in November 2010 by Oxford City Council and the Oxford Preservation Trust. The aim was to produce an initial statement as a starting point for comment and expansion by others. The purpose has been to take a broad look at the shared heritage of the city, allowing views of others to help shape this. A draft version of the Statement was discussed at a consultation event on 28 March 2011, and this version takes account of comments made on that occasion.

1.3 Basis and Structure

1.3.1 This report describes in outline the principal aspects of the heritage of Oxford, in an aspirational broad sweep of topics. It is intended to become a publicly-owned statement of both obvious factors and unspoken assumptions about Oxford's 'sense of place' and the shared heritage of the town. It reviews the character of the heritage assets and aspects under the following headings:

- Nature
- History
- People
- Mind
- Places.

1.3.2 It considers their significance, and suggests the values that people put upon these aspects, and may suggest issues and opportunities relating to them, but not attempt to propose actions or policies.

1.3.3 As a broad overview of Oxford's heritage assets, the Statement does not seek to be comprehensive, and indeed even an outline listing would be an interesting task, for it would have to go well beyond the existing standard works of reference.[1]

2 HERITAGE DEFINITIONS AND POLICY

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The Heritage has recently been defined by English Heritage as 'All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility'.[2]

2.1.2 These resources may be physical, and related to specific places, or intangible but also contributing to a 'sense of place'. Less tangible aspects may include Literature, Art, Music and Dance, and the everyday experience of the

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1 E.g. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Inventory of Oxford* (1939); A. Crossley et al., *V.C.H. Oxon. IV, City of Oxford* (1979); N. Pevsner & N. Sherwood, *Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (1974); C. Hibbert et al. *Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (1988).

2 *Conservation Principles: Policies & Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 2008).

environment as well as special events. The 'Common Ground' movement has expressed this approach in its manifesto, *England in Particular*.[3]

> *'This…. is about the extraordinary richness of our everyday surroundings; the landscapes, buildings, people and wildlife that give meaning to the places we know.*
>
> *It is about the commonplace; for us to value it, a creature does not have to be endangered, a building does not have to be monumental, a prospect does not have to be breathtaking. A place may not even be 'ours' for us to feel attached to it. We just need to know something of it; it has to mean something to us.'*

2.1.3 While looking very broadly across the range of heritage assets,[4] it remains the case that the management of the heritage sector will most often relate to the fabric and setting of historic buildings, historic landscapes, and both visible and buried archaeology. Responsibility for other assets is more generally shared (see **2.3** below).

2.2 Unesco/English Heritage Definitions[5]

2.2.1 English Heritage definitions relating to varieties of 'heritage' can usefully be drawn from their *Conservation Principles* (2008) and include, e.g.

> **Heritage**: All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility;
>
> **Cultural Heritage**: Inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others;
>
> **Natural Heritage**: Inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms, including those in and under water, to which people attach value;

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3 S. Clifford et al, *England in Particular. A Celebration of the* commonplace, *the* local, *the* vernacular *and the* distinctive. (Common Ground, 2006).

4 'Heritage assets' is a convenient term used in the government's *Planning Policy Statement 5: Heritage and Planning* (2010).

5 This section has been drawn from Paul Drury Partnership, *Enfield Heritage Strategy* (London Borough of Enfield, 2008), and the Glossary of *Conservation Principles*.

Historic Environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora;

Place: Any part of the historic environment, of any scale, that has a distinctive identity perceived by people;

Value: An aspect of worth or importance, here attached by people to qualities of places.

2.2.2 UNESCO has provided definitions of 'intangible cultural heritage' in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003). This is taken to mean the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. These may include:

a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

b) performing arts;

c) social practices, rituals and festive events;

d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;

e) traditional craftsmanship.

2.3 Scope of 'Heritage'

2.3.1 A 'Heritage Statement' should address the widest aspects of 'heritage' that form part of people's life experience, and not just restricted to the historic environment. Some of these will be the responsibility of national government or bodies such as English Heritage and Natural England , some will be areas of concern for the County Council and some for the City Council. Others will fall within the purview of the two Universities, voluntary organisations and local groups. Some aspects (e.g. sport, leisure, transport) may not be immediately apparent as heritage concerns, or not be subject to protection or consideration as part of environmental policy-making.

2.3.2 No matter what areas are drawn into the City's Heritage Plan, it will be important to take the broadest look at what is the City's heritage to understand what contributes to Oxford's local distinctiveness and 'sense of place'.

3 THE HERITAGE OF OXFORD

3.1 Environment

3.1.1 GEOLOGY

The geology and soils of Oxford and its immediate environs have been a significant factor in the selection of the site and the persistent occupation of the area. The gravel terraces and alluvial valleys have provided the essential basis for secure settlement and the variety of terrain suitable for agriculture, with access to woods and water, and abundant grassland. The Corallian hills around Oxford have provided building stone, also extracted from Headington Quarry, clay deposits have served the Roman pottery industry and modern brickworks, and gravel has been dug for building. The rivers and historic river crossing, the hills and the landform that gives Oxford its topography and visual setting are dependent on the underlying geology and geological processes.

The study of Oxford's geology goes back to the 17th century, and Oxford's role in the advancement of the science in the 19th century was notable (especially in the discovery and identification of dinosaurs). The geology collections in the University Museum are a notable attraction that is enjoyed by many.

3.1.2 *NATURE*

Oxford has a green setting that is of visual and historic interest, and also of considerable significance for nature conservation. The Thames and Cherwell river valleys have very extensive meadows and grasslands of historic and ecological interest that give Oxford its special character; winter flooding is an historic process not without ecological significance, but the control of water and floods remains an issue today.

Woodlands in the valleys and surrounding hills add considerable variety to the local ecology, and remnants of other habitats (e.g. heathlands) are also to be found, while nature in the City is an important part of the continuum between the centre and the green fringe. Important links between ecology and landscape history have shaped both the ecological interest of the city and the variety of landscape character represented in the City today. Rivers and canal are important for recreation as well as ecology, while trees and open spaces are much valued by Oxford's inhabitants and visitors, and access to them is seen as an important issue.

Oxford has a long tradition of the study of ecology, which includes the Wytham Woods 'laboratory'.[6] The flora and fauna include urban foxes, rare wetland plants, and birds visiting Port Meadow. In addition to Shotover Country Park there are twenty smaller nature parks and reserves in the City. Pixey Mead, Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common have European recognition as the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and there are twelve Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated by Natural England. Local designations include fourteen Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Planned landscapes include the University and other City parks, the many historic gardens (of which fifteen are Registered Parks and Gardens), and many private gardens. More than 250 trees are subject to tree preservation orders

[6] A.H. Church, *Introduction to the Plant Life of the Oxford District* (Oxford 1922-25) was a pioneering study in ecology; P.S. Savill et al., *Wytham Woods: Oxford's Ecological Laboratory* (Oxford, 2010).

(TPOs) and there may be up to 90,000 trees in the city. To an unusual degree the countryside approaches the centre of the city through the suburbs, with 'green fingers' of park and meadowland coming within 400 m. of the centre of the city at Carfax.

Green spaces are in public and private ownership, and responsibility for managing natural resources is widely distributed between private owners and public bodies, and with Natural England as a leading player, and also involving the City, County and local voluntary bodies.

3.1.3 SETTING

The green setting of Oxford is one of its most renowned features, that has been enjoyed by inhabitants and visitors throughout history. The parks and gardens in both the city centre and its suburbs make Oxford an unusually green city, offset its architectural treasures, contribute to the of its picturesque landscape suburbs and the rural character 'villages within the city' and make an important contribution to quality of the environment across the city. The River Thames and Cherwell and their valleys provide space for leisure and reflection, while the hills, walks and woods around Oxford have always been used for pedestrian recreation. Views both in and out, views across the city, and views of streets and buildings in conjunction with trees, gardens, water, and open spaces are an essential aspect of Oxford's character; while access to open spaces and routes across them remains an issue in some areas.

The character of the urban centre as a low-rise city punctuated by towers and spires has meant that since the 16th century views of Oxford from the surrounding hills have become an important part of the national and international image of Oxford. Local artists like J-B Malchair and William Turner have celebrated the distant views of Oxford, while JMW Turner made the Oxford view his own. Writers have described the approach to Oxford, and walking in the hills. With Matthew Arnold's poetry the western hills of Oxford achieved iconic status, and led to the growth of Boar's Hill as a place of literary resort and inhabitation.

The setting of Oxford has been vigorously protected by the Oxford Preservation Trust amongst others, working towards the safeguarding of open space and views, the amelioration of intrusive features and increasing opportunities for access into Oxford's green environs. The control of high-rise and intrusive buildings in Oxford's setting has generally been successful, while the continuity of variety in the skyline rather than uniformity is seen as important.

3.2 History

3.2.1 ARCHAEOLOGY

The archaeology of Oxford has been studied for over a century, and the continuing discoveries suggest how much there is yet to be found. Seen as a standard Upper Thames peninsular site, Oxford has its share of prehistoric settlement and a sacred landscape, with the Keble Henge and surrounding barrow field). As a rural Roman landscape between the towns of Alchester and Dorchester, Oxford was perhaps just a minor river crossing, but the development of a major pottery industry in East Oxford (centred on the Churchill Hospital) was a significant event.

The origins of Saxon Oxford are bathed in sacred legend, but the appearance of a settlement by the church and river crossing at St Aldate's/Grandpont (one of the candidates for the 'Ox-ford') made it a site worth defending in the late-Saxon period. The regular street plan of the 9th/10th century fortified town established the infrastructure of the later medieval walled centre, surrounded by floodplain, and other river crossings at Ferry Hinksey (the other candiate for the 'Ox-ford') and Magdalen Bridge. Beyond were a ring of Anglo-Saxon and medieval villages with their fields, pastures and woodlands, a royal vill at Headington and Royal Forest at Shotover.

The growth of the town, and the appearance of houses, a castle, numerous churches and monastic sites, and then the university with its colleges has added to the rich diversity of the archaeological record. The impact of institutional land-ownership has contributed to Oxford's unusual and interesting

topography, and has also had the effect of preserving much of the archaeology of the medieval town under college quadrangles and gardens.

More than a century of excavations and exploration have uncovered remains of buildings, streets, domestic habitation, artefacts, and environmental data, and evidence of human life, diet and death. Oxford pioneered the study of medieval (and post-medieval) archaeology on Oxford sites and finds, and the particular interest in the archaeology of Oxford buildings, which has a long history. Oxford's history is presented in the displays of the Museum of Oxford, and only partly in the Ashmolean Museum, while discoveries continue to be made that are not reflected in these exhibits; the archaeology of Oxford has been well published but its public access to the finds is consequently limited, and the story of later times is barely told.

Oxford's archaeology is recorded in the city's Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) and the county's Historic Environment Record (HER); it is protected by national and local policy, and a small number of Scheduled Monuments, including Port Meadow, one of the largest scheduled monuments in the county. Development in recent decades has been matched by a vigorous archaeological response to recover information about Oxford's early history, though the industrial archaeology of more recent periods has been less regarded.

3.2.2 BUILDINGS

The comparative interest of Oxford's built heritage was accurately reported by Baedeker over a century ago. The city contains many outstanding buildings from the late-Saxon era to the 21st century, and has been fortunate in the high quality of many modern additions to the scene. The castle, walls and churches account for much of the medieval interest in a city that has few early houses, and most notable domestic architecture dates from the 16th century and later.

The collection of medieval and later academic buildings is notable, especially for specialised structures such as halls, chapels and libraries. The collegiate centre of 'dreaming spires' is noteworthy for its range of date (13th to 21st century), building types and architectural character, its compactness, and the creation of magnificent urban spaces that fairly ranks it with the finest historic cities of Europe. The building materials (often limestone of local and regional origin; and later brick) have contributed to the Oxford's architectural character, while the spires, towers and domes of churches and institutions have given it a unique skyline.

The role of minor architecture in offsetting the major buildings has long been recognised, while the local architectural heritage of the whole urban area contributes to its heritage interest, including parts outside conservation areas. The gentry suburbs, working class suburbs, the surrounding villages and settlements each have an architectural character and tradition, with their own buildings of distinction and local interest, while the sequence of 19th-20th century suburban growth is an instructive aspect of urban development. The varying materials, details, and building types reflect their distinctive stages of development, degree of planning, and industrial activity.

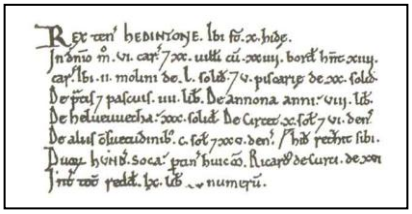
The city's streetscape, internal city views, and spaces between buildings are often a key part of the architectural appreciation of Oxford, and have a fragility at risk from traffic, insufficient pedestrian areas, and the accumulated clutter of signage, lighting and miscellaneous installations.

Oxford has a wide variety of building types, with buildings of the Colleges and University contrasting with those of the town; and distinctive buildings that illustrate the life and working of the town (railways, canal, Covered Market), religion (churches and other places of worship), and leisure (theatres, cinemas, ice rink). Often minor and 'unknown' buildings have a history and significance at more than local level.

The conservation movement was active in Oxford from the early 20th century, and local lists were prepared in advance of state listing; despite some notable conservation successes, there have continued to be unfortunate losses. The total of 1551 Listed Buildings in Oxford reflects its interest, but cannot be seen as a finite group, and the list is now recognised as being in need of revision. More general protection is achieved with the designation of 16 Conservation Areas.

There is a continuing accretion of modern and previously unknown buildings being added to the List, and the potential of local listing has yet to be explored, though it is not certain how effective this would prove.

3.2.3 *HISTORY*



Oxford might only have been a modest provincial town were it not for the University and motor industry. However, its history has always tended towards the national stage, especially in its role as a place for meetings of national councils and parliaments, its position as a favoured place for peripatetic Norman and Angevin Kings to rest *en route* to Woodstock. Queen Elizabeth I made notable visits, and Charles I made Oxford the Royalist capital in the Civil Wars. The presence of the university attracted scholars of international repute and led to importance discoveries in science and learning being associated with the place (from 14th-century mathematics to 20th-century pharmacy). Oxford has been the home of national movements such as Methodism, the Oxford Movement and Oxfam.

Oxford's almost unique range of documentation in written records (from the 11th century), and maps and views (from the 16th century) has allowed a detailed understanding of the topography and growth of the historic centre, though much remains to be done. There is much to study in Oxford's diverse communities, that have much to offer (and a firm basis in a very rich archival resource), with topics such as industrial and transport history, and the life on the river and canal and the rural fringe, commercial activities of shops, pubs and inns, and the lives of citizens, visitors, travellers and immigrants. The ever growing bibliography of university, college and local history (often produced by voluntary publishing societies) demonstrates the vibrancy of interest, reflected in the use of libraries and archives, and the involvement of individuals and groups in exploring the City's past. Exploration of the city's heritage through guided walks, and the annual Oxford Open Doors (and the opening of Oxford castle) has continued to improve access to visible areas of Oxford's heritage. The exploration and study of local history has long been a feature of

adult education in Oxford, especially in the University's Continuing Education Department.

3.2.4 *Museums, Libraries, and Archives*

The presence of the university in Oxford has encouraged the growth of museums and libraries of international reputation, occupying buildings which themselves make major contributions to the architectural heritage of the city. In the foundation and subsequent growth of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford has both the oldest public museum in the country (1683) and collections of archaeology and art, eastern and western, of national and international value. There are in addition, in the colleges and other institutions of the city and university, superb assemblages of European and international fine and decorative art, and a wide range of antiquities and curiosities of all periods.

With the 19th-century expansion of the university's collections and museums into the human and natural sciences on a global scale, Oxford now reflects the heritage of the whole world and of all ages. It now also represents the history and traditions of its more local communities, in a diverse group of small and medium sized museums and in the furnishings and monuments of its historic churches. Alongside all the museums and collections are rich documentary resources housed in university and college archives and in the public record collections of the city and county, with the Bodleian Library as one of the world's greatest custodians of archival heritage.

Oxford collections include:

- Ashmolean Museum
- Museum of the History of Science (Old Ashmolean)
- University Museum of Natural History
- Pitt Rivers Museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology
- Bodleian Library
- Christ Church Picture Gallery and other collections in colleges and city churches, and Oxford Town Hall
- Modern Art Oxford
- University and College Archives

- The archives of the City (Town Hall) and County (Oxfordshire Record Office).
- Local studies collections (the former Centre for Oxfordshire Studies) now in Oxfordshire History Service at the Record Office, Cowley.
- Local museums – Museum of Oxford, the Oxfordshire Museum (and Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre), Oxford Castle - Unlocked.

The collection and curation of art, artefacts, books and archives remains important, while the provision of funding for staff and premises is increasingly difficult; yet it is recognised that the interest of inhabitants and visitors in using these facilities and having them maintained is considerable. Local collections of materials, drawings and archives are divided between University, College, City and County institutions, some easily accessible and others lacking even accessible finding aids. Concerns over the care of existing records and collections also extends to the capacity for future collection and care of contemporary materials (often in digital form).

3.3 People

3.3.1 INHABITANTS

Oxford had an estimated population of *c*.150,000 in 2009.[7] Around 26% of this number is formed of students (24,000 at Oxford and 18,400 at Oxford Brookes). The city has traditionally been thought of as 'town' and 'university' communities, though this is no longer so true as it may once have been; there is however a long tradition of cultural and ethnic diversity, and acceptance of incoming communities for the city's industries and universities, and a tolerance of transient people and refugees. The city's population is increasing in its ethnic diversity and more than 30 different languages were spoken by state schoolchildren in 2007.

Oxford is a centre of intellectual life and has been the place of education for notable scholars since the 12th century who have made great contributions to science, literature and learning. The presence of the universities has attracted others to Oxford: writers, artists, and musicians; and both City and university

[7] At the 2001 Census, Oxford's 'usual resident population' was estimated to be 134,248. Since then it is estimated to have increased to 149,300 by 2009. [Oxford City website] http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Population_statistics_occw.htm

have historically welcomed political and intellectual refugees, while many national political and public figures have trained in Oxford.

Oxford has been the birthplace of famous people from King Richard I to Stephen Hawking; some like Anthony Wood and T.E. Lawrence were educated here, and some like Lord Nuffield and Basil Blackwell have lived and worked here and left their mark through creating businesses and benefaction. Music groups from Oxford like Radiohead, and authors such as Iris Murdoch, Colin Dexter and Philip Pullman have continued the array of creative Oxford people of renown.

The former inhabitants of Oxford are to be found in graveyards, on memorials, and in the extensive records of historic populations (from parish records and the Census to newspapers). Their histories, like those of many communities and minorities, notable individuals and eccentrics remain to be studied.

3.3.2 ALUMNI AND BENEFACTORS

There may be over 300,000 alumni of both universities, in Britain and overseas, who recall Oxford with affection. The tradition of benefaction has supplied Oxford with libraries, colleges and museums.

Kings, bishops, noblemen and men of commerce have founded colleges and institutions. Notable benefactors like Thomas Bodley and Dr John Radcliffe were educated here, and returned thanks to their place of learning with enduring institutions. William Morris (Lord Nuffield) gave his fortune to Oxford medicine, the University and his College. Individuals have continued to support new foundations and institutions.

Donations of land have helped to protect Oxford's setting, and museums have benefitted from bequests and donations to enlarge their collections and buildings. Charitable giving for external causes is represented by The Oxford Committee for famine relief, which has grown to be an international body, while the Children's Hospice Helen and Douglas House has inspired others to follow its pioneering work.

3.3.3 *EMPLOYMENT*

Education, Local Government and Health are major areas of employment in Oxford. Motor manufacturing and transport are also significant, while publishing, and research in science and technology are important.

Oxford has:

- Two local authorities
- Two universities
- 38 Colleges of the University
- Numerous schools and other educational establishments
- Hospitals and scientific laboratories
- Motor industry
- Publishing and research firms.
- Numerous small, independent and entrepreneurial businesses and start-ups based on Oxford's special intellectual economy and diverse community.

Many of the employers in the city are themselves historic institutions with long associations with local people and (as with the motor industry) a major contributor to the increase and diversity of Oxford's population. Some companies and products have a world reputation (Morris/Mini, OUP), while others (Oxford marmalade) no longer have any connections with Oxford.

3.3.4 *TOURISM*

Tourism is a major contributor to Oxford's economy. Some 9.5 million tourists (in 2007) were reckoned to have contributed £736m to the economy (in 2006), yet many of the buildings remain inaccessible offering only external viewing of very interesting buildings and places. The majority of visitors continue to be for short-term day-visits only. Recent destination management has recognised the value of tourism to the city and has included improvements to public realm and encouragement of economic development. The places that are accessible or have properly organised access (e.g. the Ashmolean, the

Bodleian Library, Oxford Castle and Christ Church) offer a high-quality visitor experience, and the free access to Oxford's remarkable museums is a major contributor. Shops, pubs and restaurants (many of them of their own historic interest) are also part of the cultural experience for visitors.

3.3.5 SPORT AND LEISURE

Sport has played an important part in the life of town and gown. There may be as many as 100 public, school and college sports grounds in the city, in addition to facilities for swimming, athletics and indoor games. University sports include famous events on land and water, and famous people and sporting records (e.g. Bannister's four-minute mile).

A number of sports have a particular association with Oxford, such as rowing (with its associated barges and boathouses) and the annual cycle of competition between colleges and universities. Locally distinctive sports like Aunt Sally have been popular in the environs of Oxford, while Real Tennis is just one of the historically interesting sports that have a long tradition of participation in Oxford.

Oxford United is the only professional sports team in the city and is a focus of great pride for many people, with a dedicated following of 5 to 10,000 fans. Amateur teams in many other sports provide spectator events for their followers.

Historically, leisure activities like punting have always been popular, and are now an integral element of the city's image. River swimming, particularly from public bathing places, was also common in the past, but has now mostly vanished and been replaced by indoor pools. Cycling and walking are popular and there is every opportunity to practise them.

3.3.6 EVENTS

The city and universities have an annual cycle of events that has become part of the tradition of Oxford life. The University's Encaenia ceremony is one of several events which provides a public spectacle with a procession, and at one time other University occasions such as the end of examinations and degree days also provided an amusing spectacle for visitors. The annual cycle also includes Mayor-making, processions, Christmas lights and 'Fun in the Parks' events.

Special events associated with Oxford include the May Morning celebrations at Magdalen College, which have always attracted a large amount of interest in City and University despite continuing problems of access, while the annual St Giles Fair in September has always been very much a city and county occasion.

Community and Arts events include e.g. the Cowley Road Carnival, Oxford Folk Festival, Contemporary Music Festival, and the Oxford Literary Festival. The presence of conferences and summer schools in vacations has also had a profound change on the annual cycle of work and study in Oxford.

3.4 Mind

3.4.1 LITERATURE AND ARTS

Oxford has both featured in literature and has been a home for writers, painters and composers. The Oxford landscape has been renowned at least since the poetry of Matthew Arnold, and the University has been evoked by Wordsworth, Trollope and Hardy in more or less recognisable form. Oxford of the early 20th century has been celebrated by Beerbohm, Waugh and Betjeman, and then rediscovered in the late 20th. Oxford has been the home of renowned children's writing (Lewis Carroll and C.S. Lewis), imaginative fiction (Tolkein) and detective stories (Colin Dexter), who has made its townscape

familiar by word and image in Inspector Morse books and their television adaptation. The place continues to be an important source of inspiration, as it is for Philip Pullman's books. In publishing, the Oxford name has long been renowned for Bibles and Dictionaries, and more recently for a wide range of works of reference.

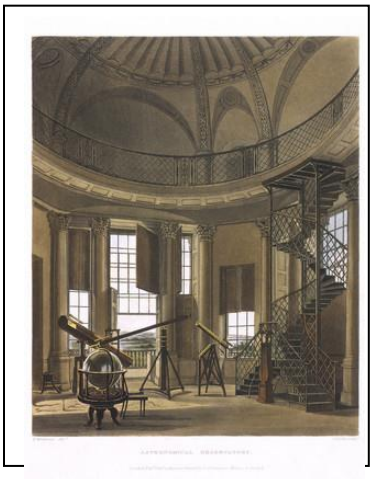
Many artists have drawn and painted Oxford in the last 400 years, and these have included memorable images that define the city, notably by JMW Turner. A flourishing local art 'school' from the late 18th century, first under J-B Malchair encouraged many amateur (and professional) artists to draw buildings and landscapes (notably J.C. Buckler), creating a large body of important images of vanished parts of Oxford and its countryside. This tradition developed with the photography of Taunt, Minn, Spokes, and Thomas, and continues down to the present day in both painting and photography.

Music performance was well established in Oxford even before the creation of 'the oldest Music Room in Europe' at Holywell in 1748. Music groups and orchestras, church, college and other choirs have made Oxford a renowned centre for listening to and participating in music, and especially for choral singing, and also in popular music.

Morris dancing was associated with English folk music, and it was Cecil Sharp's visit to Headington Quarry in 1899 that led the way to the revival of Morris, which is such a familiar aspect of Oxford arts and leisure. Folk music and live music performance continues to be an important leisure activity particularly in certain venues and some public houses.

3.4.2 SCIENCE

Science has always been a significant aspect of intellectual endeavour at Oxford, and in its various forms has come to be important in the life and economy of the modern city.



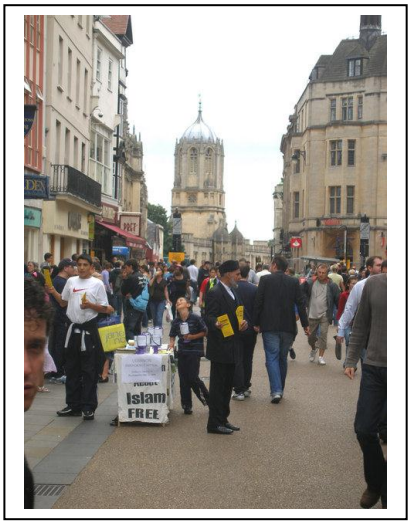
From the medieval base of innovation in mathematics, physics and astronomy, Oxford was to play a major role in the

scientific revolution of the 17th century. While many areas of science were not part of the formal curriculum until the 19th century, the provision of chemical laboratory, anatomy school and observatory in the 17th and 18th century reflects the continuing interest in study and informal demonstration.

With the building of the Museum in the mid-19th century the University had the basis of the present Science Area, which has been the home of teaching and research; likewise the Radcliffe Infirmary and its successors have been the location for medical practice and research.

From the development of optics in the 13th century, geology in the 19th, penicillin in the 20th and DNA in the 21st century, Oxford has been at the forefront of scientific discovery and innovation. The buildings and collections associated with this are an important part of Oxford's heritage, while scientific work continues to be a major aspect of academic work and employment today.

3.4.3 *RELIGION & BELIEF*

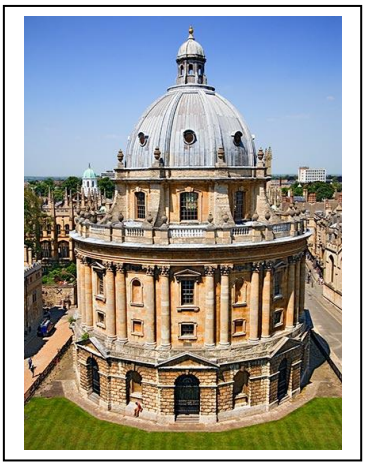


Oxford was a notable centre for Christian activity from earliest times, as testified by the large number of parish churches, friaries and monasteries that existed until the Reformation. A vibrant Jewish community was present in the 13th century prior to expulsion in 1290. The University was for long synonymous with the established church, with restricted access for non-Anglicans until the Test Acts were abolished in 1871, but Oxford also has important associations with developments in nonconformity (the establishment of Methodism) as well as the 'Oxford Movement' in the established church.

Oxford has seen its share of martyrs executed for their faith by those of alternative persuasions, but the city has always been home to non-conformists and other faiths, welcomed religious refugees and tolerated non-believers. Today the city caters for many faiths with numerous places of worship, including Mosques, a Synagogue, Hindu Temple, Sikh Gurdwara and Buddhist

centres. The Oxford Centres of Hindu and Islamic Studies continue a long tradition of academic interest in the study of religions.

3.4.4 LIBRARIES



Oxford has been a place of book production, circulation and collection for centuries. It now has over 100 libraries and around 10 million books. These libraries include many unique and special manuscripts and rare printed books.

The Bodleian Library and Oxfordshire History Service (in Cowley) contain the most important collections of published material about the City and University. Specialist research collections are not necessarily accessible to all, and the local library service remains a vital resource for recreation, discovery and life needs for all those who wish to visit the libraries. The establishment of local reading rooms and libraries in the City has a long tradition, and there is a concern that these should remain open and accessible.

While access to electronic resources is seen as increasingly important, the access to the printed word and other materials remains a very important part of the Library service, and the use of e.g. Music and Local Studies collections reflects the vital role that provision of these services continues to play.

Oxford has always been the home to publishing firms, and is well provided with bookshops, though somewhat fewer second-hand shops than it once had.

3.4.5 EDUCATION

The changing nature of the University has been marked by the development of an international centre of excellence from its origins as training ground for Church and State, through its phase as an elite finishing school to a more accessible place of learning.

The presence of the University has fostered the appearance of schools and other places of instruction in Oxford including the second university of Oxford Brookes. The medieval grammar schools and choir schools have survived in recognisable form. Parish schools and city schools for boys and girls, including boys and girls grammar schools have formed the basis of the present-day local authority schools.

Preparatory schools such as Summerfields and the Dragon have gained a national reputation, and a series of private secondary schools are also well known. Other kinds of educational establishments providing tuition in languages, business and law have appeared in recent decades, alongside those offering private tuition in school subjects and international studies. Together these are an important part of the local economy.

The University through its programme of continuing education provides a range of courses in adult education and access to university degrees for part-time students. Summer Schools in Oxford colleges are offered by the University and other organisations, including overseas universities running their own summer programmes in Oxford. More than one American university has a campus base in Oxford for teaching its European programmes.

Oxford's 'new' University (Oxford Brookes) has a history that goes back to 1865 as the Oxford School of Art, providing further education for the people of the City. It became the Oxford City Technical School under the City Council's administration in 1891, and only coming to occupy its Headington campus in 1963 (as the Oxford College of Technology), became Oxford Polytechnic in 1970, and in 1992 achieved university status.

The non-university educational sector has become a prominent feature of Oxford's life and work, and also brings large numbers of visiting students to Oxford.

3.5 Place

3.5.1 CENTRAL OXFORD

Within the relatively small area of the historic core, a magnificent concentration of buildings, representing nearly a thousand years of lavish architectural style,

makes Oxford one of the great cities of Europe and the world. The built heritage of the city, now characterised by the products of centuries of bountiful patronage and the growing importance of the university, has a context and background in the relics of the older town: the early-medieval street pattern, the part-survival of the medieval walls, the ancient churches and the survivals of the Norman and later-medieval castle.

Although there are superb set pieces (Magdalen College and the sweep of High Street; Radcliffe Square with the Camera, Bodleian Library, St Mary's Church, All Souls and Brasenose colleges; Christ Church and Merton from Christ Church Meadow), many of Oxford's visual and architectural pleasures, unlike those of Cambridge, are internal, within college quadrangles and gardens, and in smaller scale relationships. The older and new buildings of the university, of great architectural splendour, are set off and enhanced by green spaces and trees, and by the surviving streets of modest vernacular houses which represent the city.

3.5.2 HISTORIC SUBURBS

The historic suburbs were of limited extent, and contained the development of Oxford until the early 19th century. On the north the streets ringing the city walls were infilled first, while outside in St. Giles was Oxford's agricultural suburb, with farms and open fields. Although the fields are long built on, the street and church retain something of their ancient setting. Holywell was more a village than a suburb, but the street of early modern houses is a remarkable survival of this separate 'liberty' that lay outside the city.

On the west St Thomas's was a compact street leading to its church, in a busy but less prosperous quarter, in the shadow of Oseney Abbey. This suburb has been developed, cleared, industrialised and now once more inhabited with housing, while the ancient routes out to Binsey and Ferry Hinksey can still be followed. To the south, St Aldate's was one of the historic lines of approach to the walled city that was also a busy suburb that has been mostly cleared and rebuilt with a wider road replacing the narrow street framing Christ Church's Tom Tower. Even so, it is strong in elements of heritage significance which remain to be valued: Folly Bridge on the line of the long Norman causeway of Grandpont, and in the surviving indications of riverside activity.

The south-west area was once the 'Friars' - a typical location for the medieval houses of the Blackfriars (Dominican) and Greyfriars (Franciscan) that are known from excavations, whose sites became gardens from the 16th century.

Transpontine Oxford started with a modest, possibly Danish suburb on the east side of Magdalen Bridge (Pettypont) centred around the church of St Clement at the junction of the roads to Headington, Cowley and Iffley, and of modest extent until its surrounding fields were enclosed.

3.5.3 HISTORIC VILLAGES

The modern expansion of Oxford has been accomplished by the inclusion within its bounds of the historic village centres of Wolvercote, Marston, Headington, Headington Quarry, Cowley, Iffley and Littlemore. These were wholly rural parishes with their own fields, commons and pastures, and villages of modest size with small parish churches. Their inclusion in the city was largely through boundary extensions in 1889 and 1929, and some later additions.[8] Wolvercote follows the edge of its green at the north end of Port Meadow, and is now bisected by the railway. Marston also retains its rural setting, with extensive meadows in the Cherwell valley. Headington, once a royal vill that may have included the site of Oxford and Shotover Forest, occupies the large hill to the east of the City, astride the road to London. With one village centre around the church in Old Headington, there was another busy settlement at Headington Quarry, that produced so much of Oxford's building stone for many centuries. Cowley, with its extensive marsh and common linked to Bullingdon Green, had two small centres at Church and Temple Cowley, and its open fields, interlinked with those of Iffley, reached down to St Clements. Iffley commands another hill above the Thames, with its church one of the finest and most significant small Norman buildings in the country. Beyond it is Littlemore, a more recent addition to the City, that like Iffley has a long straggling village street. The hamlet of Bartlemas lies hidden amongst the green spaces of East Oxford and provides an unusual and precious survival of a small medieval settlement set round a former leper hospital and its

[8] E.W. Gilbert, 'The Growth of the City of Oxford', in A.F. Martin and R.W. Steele, *The Oxford Region* (BAAS, 1954), 165-73.

chapel. Finally to the west is Binsey, a tiny village built round a green on an island in the floodplain, with its church further down its remote lane.

The heritage character of the old villages has often been maintained, with their churches and modest cottages so typical of the local vernacular styles, a few gentry houses built within reach of Oxford in the 18th and 19th centuries, and varied additions to the village centres in response to 19th-century population growth. The villages maintained some of their social character long after Oxford's growth around them, be it in music, dance, and the authentic speech of Oxfordshire surviving amongst so many incomers to the motor industry.

3.5.4 SUBURBAN GROWTH IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The confinement of Oxford's growth within the historic envelope was partly due to the availability of backlands for expansion (e.g. the yards of St Aldate's and St Thomas's), and partly to the surrounding fields. To north and east the enclosures were followed by a period of population growth and rapid urban expansion. The terraced houses in Beaumont Street and St John's were built in the 1820s, on the very edge of the old town, like London Place in St Clements. Mass housing for workers and artisans appeared in after the 1830s in Jericho, ranged between Walton Street and the canal, and in the 1820s in St Ebbe's on the former gardens leading down to the gasworks. Following the arrival of the railway further housing areas arose in New Hinksey and Osney Town, while Summertown was already developing as a roadside settlement in the north fields. The subsequent building of the north suburb was carefully controlled by the predominant landlord (St. John's College) with areas of middle-class housing around the Woodstock and Banbury Roads clearly separated from artisan dwellings on Kingston Road and Walton Street.

The regulated growth of North Oxford was in contrast with the area east of the river Cherwell and beyond St Clements, where the large and extraordinarily varied area of East Oxford developed on freehold land, acquired as parts of streets or small plots, and gradually overwhelmed the fields and villages of Headington and Cowley. Similar growth took place around Summertown and then along the Botley Road.

The variety of experience in the 19th century is reflected in the huge architectural diversity of character, albeit in the prevailing medium of brick and slate, with large villas in a spacious landscape of large gardens and trees contrasting with small terraces with polychrome brick, often decorated with sculptured stone elements, with small front or back gardens. Churches, schools, and public houses followed in the wake of housing, creating a multitude of localities with their own diverse experiences and character, while allotments, parks and fields were never far away. Much of this character survives and is valued by local communities, whether of not it has the protection of a Conservation Area.

3.5.5 INDUSTRIALISATION

The industrialisation of Oxford was largely a 20th-century phenomenon, with the growth of the motor industry from Morris's humble origins as a maker of bicycles. Older industries, such as paper-milling to feed the University Press, Gas production in St Ebbe's, Lucy's ironworks, Salter's boatyard and Cooper's Marmalade, were on a relative modest scale, and did not have much local impact, despite their reaching national (and international) markets. The development in transport and communications with the creation of new turnpike routes to replace the medieval routes into Oxford over the hills, also had an impact in the town centre, which was transformed by the removal of medieval gates and bridges, the paving of the streets, and the building of the Covered Market in the 1770s. The later arrival of the Oxford Canal in 1790 and the coming of the railways to new stations on the edge of the town in the 1840s and 50s made a cumulative change that affected the development of Oxford.

With the growth of the motor industry (and war-time production) Oxford grew to accommodate its new population, with a great influx of workers from across England and Wales, and the new housing they required. With the re-structuring of the motor industry much of the original Morris factory was removed in the late 20th century. Indeed, much of the physical remains of Oxford's industrial heritage has been lost and survives in the smaller buildings and places, in the folk-memory of those who were devoted their lives to industrial production, and in archive and image collections.

3.5.6 20TH-CENTURY GROWTH

The modern character of Oxford has been formed by new housing for the growing of population, the use of the motor car and the expansion of education. In addition to the houses required for the motor industry, the by slum-clearance of St Ebbe's, St Aldates and St Thomas's led to the provision of new council and private housing estates in specially acquired areas such as Blackbird Leys, and expansion within Marston, Cutteslowe, Headington, Barton and Cowley. These form designed landscapes with a more or less successfully established architectural character, networks of planned streets, local shopping centres and public open spaces. A series of by-passes led to the building of the ring-road between 1932 and 1966, which includes the arterial routes of the A40 and A34. Consequent management of traffic within the city resulted in damaging proposals for routing traffic though the historic centre, later abandoned for less intrusive forms of control.

Although modern development has all but overwhelmed the older village centres, the pattern of the local topography and the constraints of the river system have often retained the structure of the earlier land uses, with reminders of the heritage elements of the medieval and post-medieval landscape and settlement surviving in some of the most diverse, cosmopolitan and energetic parts of modern Oxford.

New building, especially for the expanding universities and colleges, has provided Oxford with some exceptional examples of modern architecture, and the growing attempts at environmental improvements have sought to ameliorate the damaged areas of urban neglect.

3.5.7 ENVIRONS OF OXFORD

The immediate environs of Oxford include open spaces that were either common grazing land or pastures and hay meadows along the Thames and Cherwell valleys. These had considerable economic value in the days of horse transport, but are now most important for their contribution to the leisure resources of the city. Where accessible, they are much used for sport, walking and other recreation (on land or water). On the west the broad sweep of meadows of Oseney, Medley, Binsey and Botley, were divided by the various arms of the Thames. Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common are an unusually

large example of ancient urban common, and the pastures of historic institutions in Grandpont and Christ Church Meadows have preserved the narrower green gap on the south side. To the east the Cherwell valley has preserved meadows and pastures in Holywell, the University Parks, and Marston meadows, while the acquisition of Headington South Park by the City ensured its preservation as open space. The former open fields of Headington, St Clements, Cowley and Iffley have left traces in both public and private green open spaces in the east of the city, such as Bury Knowle Park, the Southfield Golf Course, and the allotments and sports fields surrounding Bartlemas.

These open spaces, only partly traversed by public rights or way, are variously accessible for sport and recreation, as are the rivers and canal that pass through them.

3.5.8 THE GREEN FRINGE

The outer green fringe of Oxford countryside is often outside the City boundary, but makes a major contribution to its setting. It has also historically been the leisure resort of students and citizens in the days before the motor car, when walking from the centre to Wheatley or Cumnor was not thought to be strenuous. The Oxford countryside provided a locus for a series of views of Oxford as it was approached by travellers, just as it was a place to go out and find views of the city to enjoy and commemorate in verse or watercolour. Much of this historic sense of the place can still be appreciated despite all the changes in the city and its surrounding roads. Approach roads on Wytham (west), Hinksey (south-west) and Shotover (east) provided classic views of Oxford. At Elsfield (north-east) the spires could be seen from a rural retreat, also once experienced on a grander scale from the terraces at Nuneham Courtenay (which was located precisely for that view). Perhaps most famous were the series of views of Oxford from the west, from Cumnor, Hinksey and Boars Hill, celebrated by Matthew Arnold and visited by literary pilgrims.

The green fringes of Oxford are much used for walking, cycling and the enjoyment of nature. Important areas have been protected from development from the early 20th century by the Oxford Preservation Trust and others, while maintaining the balance between tree-growth and maintaining historic views, controlling unsuitable development and improving access remain active concerns in the early 21st century.

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