Walking Oxford

A romance
by
JTW

2019

Before departure

...the fate of learned ambition is a proper subject for every scholar to consider; for who has not had occasion to ... observe the inaccuracy and deficiencies of works left unfinished by too great an extension of the plan?
Johnson – Rambler No.17

As with walking, so writing; it is better to start than to suffer from some anxiety about the overall plan, or the sense that the journey is too much to be accomplished. For without setting out the enterprise is defeated.

> O Bold Knights!
> Today you never leave.
> Knowing all quests end where they begin,
> geometry wins. You get your kicks
> lumping on the city steps,
> discoursing cartographics.

So, in starting out, I aim for no more than to record personal reflections[1] on walking in Oxford: observations and thoughts stimulated by the itineraries, suggestions and remarks upon possible pathways; you can come with me if you like, and we will see where we get to.

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A couple of introductory notes. 'AEFTR' is 'An Exercise For The Reader': I don't have all the answers. Or am maybe too lazy to nail down every red herring. Or accept that Oxford's deep leaf-mould of history and ensourcelled geography cannot be completely explored, least of all in a slim volume.

And, I've tried to give sources for my information, but am aware that the interweb-thing, convenient (and oft-used) reference[2] that it may be, is a transient, shifting sand on which to base anything. 'It was there when I looked', is all I can say; and the similarity with Oxford itself is striking – even mid-way through writing this, both sources and things described have changed.

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1 Many of these, like walking over time, go in several different directions. If you don't like footnotes to include afterthoughts or caveats, it might be better to stop now. I *like* footnotes :)

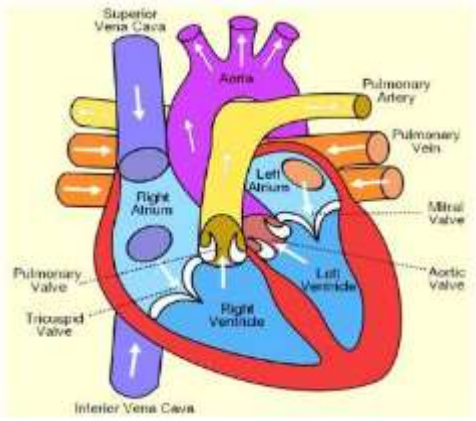
2 Most footnotes are just source-references though. I've included them as hyperlinks in a way that may be helpful for readers of an electronic copy of this. One way or another though, there they are, easily checked at the foot of the page.

Chapter 1 – The Port Meadow Walk

Port Meadow is 'the largest area of common land in England below 1,000 feet'. So they[1] say, but if you get into it, and start worrying about Oxford and Wolvercote commoners (historically separate groups with separate areas even if to the casual eye both part of one whole), and registered and unregistered commons (under the 1965 Act), doubt creeps in. And when you discover that the New Forest and Epping Forest are exempted from the Act, but recognised as common land... New Forest, at 21,995ha, is over 100 times larger than Port Meadow's 178ha (440 acres).[2] Perhaps 'in Oxfordshire' (a claim agreed by local websites)? Or 'under 100 feet'?

What *is* certain is that when you first see Port Meadow spread out before you, perhaps best from Wolvercote road bridge with its relatively high point of view, but stretched out flat otherwise from wherever you have encountered it, the impression is one of grandeur and scale. Considering that you are still in a city – (!)

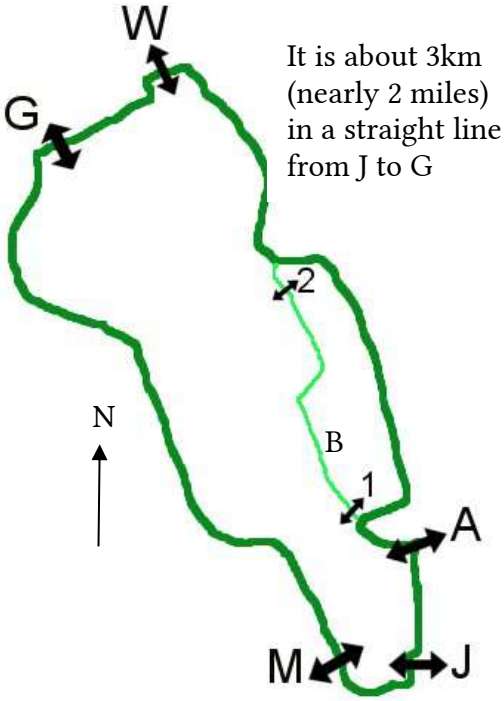
The suggested walk starts at Walton Well carpark, but could equally (being circular) begin at the carpark at Wolvercote – no charges there, as opposed to the former (£2 for 1-3 hours,[3] which should cover the walk unless you plan to stop for a drink at the Trout or Perch) – or, of course at any of the other access points.



Actually, there are relatively few access points to the Meadow. It looks a bit like a heart[4] – topologically, at least, and metaphorically this is appropriate too: Port Meadow and its occupancy long predates the upstart city a mile to the south-east.

Perhaps more usefully for walk-planning, here is a diagram of Port Meadow itself, with access points –

G – Godstow (car park)
W – Wolvercote
A – Aristotle Lane
J[5] – Jericho (Walton Well car park)
M – Medley Boat Station
This last joins to the Thames Path, and Binsey.



It is about 3km (nearly 2 miles) in a straight line from J to G

Allowing for a different entrance and exit, and equating G with W – just along the road, belike – this only gives six different ways of traversing the meadow – a remarkably small number, given its size!

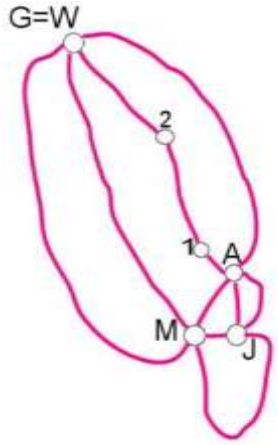
The diagram shows Burgess Meadow, the area 'B' on the right, which only has two entrances. Use of B1 – and so, after a bit, B2 – is pretty much mandated most of the year due to flood water near that point if you want to get from the south to the north, or vice versa.

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1 OK, that's what *I* say. Or said. Damn but this writing stuff is educational.
2 http://www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk/the-commons-lands-of-great-britain
3 As at time of writing, June 2018, at least
4 Picture from http://didier-chantier.com/labeled-diagram-of-heart/labeled-diagram-of-heart-project-awesome-contemporary-art-sites-with-labeled-diagram-of-heart/
5 Couldn't have another 'W', could we?

(There is, in fact, an additional access point between G&W, a footpath between houses in Wolvercote. And there used to be another one half-way between W & B2, across the railway where a bridge crosses the canal too, but the H&S chaps have fenced off the whole railway now as if it was the last line of defence against terrorism. Or immigrants, which some Saxon peoples seem to have got confused about.[6] This former-crossing, by the way, explains the straight way that follows a redundant diagonal across the meadow to the railway from W.)

On the other hand, we have to allow external but proximate loops (like the heart's circulation...), thus G & M are joined by the Thames Path; W, A & J by the canal; and J & M by a combination of canal and Thames path, and these add considerable interest, even if (for practical walking purposes) G and W are pretty much equivalent.



	G≡W	B2	1	A	J	M	Σ
G≡W	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
B2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
1	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
A	0	0	1	0	2	1	4
J	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
M	2	0	0	1	2	0	5

And yes, yes, this plan[7] of 'Port Meadow' includes Wolvercote Common in an indiscriminate way. This is to tease a long-standing bone of contention between Oxford and Wolvercote commoners – "In 1892, an attempt to reduce Wolvercote Common by a few feet along its southern boundary led to an outbreak of violence now known as 'The Battle of Wolvercote'. As recently as 1993, Commoners successfully resisted an attempt to take the commons into the ownership of Oxford City Council."[8]

In the Oxford Mail of 17 August 1955 John Owen records an event that took place at this stone when the Mayor and his party rode the franchise on 17 August 1892:

The halt was only a short one, however, and the civic peregrination was resumed to Port Meadow, following the ditch which divides the famous open space from Wolvercote Common.

When the boundary stone was reached it was discovered that it had been overthrown. Standing by it were a party of 40 to 50 residents of what was then Wolvercote village. They included the Vicar and another gentleman in clerical attire. The Vicar protested to the Mayor against the procession walking on the Wolvercote side of the ditch. The Mayor replied, somewhat brusquely, that it might be imagined he knew nothing about the question.

"There seemed at this point to be a general rush to prevent the Mayor proceeding", the narrator of these stirring scenes goes on, "but a man in the crowd shouting 'Forward Oxford!', there was a move forward and the Wolvercotites had to retire."

While the police were "endeavouring to prevent anything in the nature of a struggle" the mace and flag were placed on the stone "amid cheers" and the flute and drum obliged with a rendering of the National Anthem.

The unnamed cleric with the Vicar was, however, roughly handled; we are informed that "his tall silk hat assumed a concertina shape" and he laid about him with his umbrella in self-defence. He was doubtless regarding his battered headgear when the procession moved off to a marquee which had been erected for lunch nearby to the strains of "See the Conquering Hero Comes".[9]

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6 Remember St Brice's day: 13 November. We're all incomers, except possibly the Red Lady of Paviland.
7 We'll come back to the maybe mysterious table of numbers in ch.2, hopefully. Or work it out yourself...
8 http://www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk/?page_id=7
9 http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/streets/wayside_stones/boundary/index.html - Stephanie Jenkins

You can find the boundary marker at which the 1892 incident took place near 'G'. Other boundary markers – gently tapering dark metal square columns about the size of a trig-point – run along the middle of the ditch curling east-west, the one the two little bridges span. (In winter, of course, this ditch is deep water. Possibly this covers the markers, as I don't remember noticing them as I have this dry summer!) There are similar markers for the Oxford boundary, both here on Port Meadow and elsewhere – eg a short step beyond the rainbow bridge in the University Parks; those Victorians[10] were dogged in marking – but these explain they are the Wolvercote boundary in writing on their north side.

Those little bridges, incidentally, are supposed to be those built to facilitate the horse-racing that took place on the Meadow in the 17th and 18th centuries. I can believe this of the one on the eastern side, but the other has large concrete pipes as conduits under it, so at the very least has been completely reconstructed. The horse racing was popular:

> Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach (1683–1734), a German traveller and collector of books and manuscripts, visited the races on September 17, 1710, and described them thus: "There were many booths set up, where beer was sold, and each one had its sign, a hat, or glove or some such matter. Nearly everyone from the City was there and many visitors, some on horseback, some in coaches, some in boats. The horses that had to run were six in number. They had to run twice round the meadow, five English miles, which was done within ten minutes."
>
> The next day he wrote that he did not want to go again because "when you have seen it twice you get no more enjoyment out of it unless you are an Englishman, fond of torturing horses and take pleasure in overdoing the poor animals."
>
> But he added: "Still, we would have gone out again, if there had been this time, as is usual on the third day, a Smoake-race (Smock-race) where the women folk run for a prize in petticoats and low necked shifts, and the men folk in breeches without shirts. This time however it did not take place."[11]

The way you go around the proposed walk should be determined by prevailing wind – often strong on Port Meadow – and the strength and direction of the sun. And, possibly, by whether you mind going widdershins or not.

Things to look out for on Port Meadow include (in particular, as you'll not find it anywhere else – except possibly one other unnamed site – in the UK) –

creeping Marshwort, *apium repens*:



– not to be confused with look-alike fool's watercress *apium nodiflorum* of course.

"Formerly recorded in scattered localities from East Anglia and Oxfordshire north to Fife and Kintyre. The plant is now confined to Oxfordshire, where it occurs on a grazed flood-meadow near Oxford, and at a second, smaller site. The number of individuals in the larger population has been monitored over several years and fluctuates annually, with wet springs and summers apparently favouring the plant. It is listed as Critically endangered in Britain."[12, 13]

To be honest, you're unlikely to recognise it even if you happen to have it below your foot, but Port Meadow is nevertheless an IPA – an "Important Plant Area" :) – and there is a lengthy list of

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[10] Often Mssrs Mallam and Wyatt.

[11] https://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/lifestyle/history/9175091.Port_Meadow__A_city_landmark_for_a_thousand_years/

[12] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/species.asp?FeatureIntCode=S1614

[13] Picture from http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/161949/1 - additional info here too; luckily the UK isn't its last habitat.

plants you should learn to recognise (sometime) – in appendix 2. For the walker, different seasons offer striking carpets of yellow or white, both of various heights. I particularly like the bright yellow haze of what I take to be kingcups that come up to one's knees in late spring.

Bird life on the meadow, especially for those which can benefit from the seasonal flooding, is rich and diverse. A year-list on Port Meadow birding blogspot[14] exceeds 130 species; recent sightings (by myself in 2018) include a kingfisher, a pair of great white egrets, buzzard, red kite,[15] and kestrel; the birders recognise many more, especially those various ducks and gulls out there on the water, and (rather more interestingly) they say they've seen a Barn Owl too.



For the botanically or ornithologically illiterate, Port Meadow is home of the most visible prehistoric remains in Oxford. Actually, even this is stretching it a bit, as 'Round Hill' is more prominent on OS maps than in the wild – it took me years to find it – and the numerous other items (Atkinson lists nineteen[16]) can only be identified from aerial photography[17] and probably only then in a good season (certainly not when the meadow is flooded). Round Hill itself is mysterious, possibly hinting at multiple periods of use. Atkinson's diagram (right) illustrates it well; he describes it as:

> ...a low irregular mound, 1½ ft. high and 115 ft. in diameter, somewhat disturbed on the E. side. Round it is a circular ditch, which shows on the ground on the S. side only; the complete circle has been proved by probing. Placed on the W. edge of this mound, and overlapping the ditch, is a second, smaller mound, some 45 ft. in diameter, with steep sides rising to a height of 4 ft. above the surface of the Meadow. At the top is a small crater, traces of a previous opening about which nothing is known.
>
> It seems probable that the primary mound and the ditch together form a platform-barrow. The secondary mound appears to have been made by scraping up material from the opposite side of the barrow on which it stands. Its date and purpose are both unknown; it may possibly have been made in recent times to enable owners of cattle grazing on the Meadow to inspect them from a distance; it is certainly the only elevated point on the whole Meadow.

The official archaeological record held by Historic England lists Round Hill as "a circular ditched enclosure with a later Bronze Age burial mound".[18]



This is Round Hill seen from Mr G's satellite: it looks more like tumour than tumulus, perhaps.

To get to it (from the south), wait until most flood water has gone from the meadow; circle up the east side of the Thames (ie round any residual water in the centre) and then turn east towards Burgess Meadow at about half-way up. From this approach the 'Hill' is actually visible against the bank behind. It is not really visible from a north or south approach until just about on top of it to its east (and the south is almost always blocked by water anyway[19]).

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14 http://portmeadowbirding.blogspot.com/p/port-meadow-year-lists.html

15 These of course are not rare in the area any more. Their piercing cry and sinister banking turns overhead give rise to many a cry of 'kite alert!'

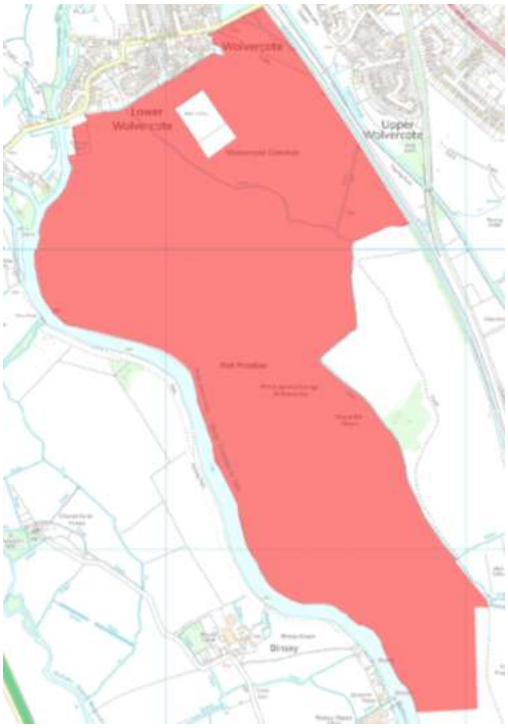
16 R.J.C.Atkinson, *Archaeological Sites on Port Meadow*, Oxoniensa vol 207 – oxoniensia.org/vol%207/Atkinson.doc

17 Photography was by Major George Allen (1891-1940), who was one of the first people in Oxfordshire to own an aeroplane - a De Haviland Puss Moth, named 'Maid of the Mist' - http://britisharchaeology.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/aerial-photos/allen-index.html supposedly provides access to the collection but the Ashmolean end doesn't seem to be working at present :(

18 https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1010717

Despite the underwhelming appearance both here and on the ground, if you find it, this is the oldest sign of human activity in Oxford – might one stretch a point and say, 'the oldest building'? – and so justifying such lengthy consideration here.

Historic England only list 15 sites on the Meadow, and one of those is the "late 17th century racecourse (SP492091)"[20] – so some of the marks investigated by Atkinson obviously didn't make the cut.



I am mindful that archaeologists sometimes get over-excited by things that have casually dropped out of recent memory – the lengthy exercise in magnetometry and soil resistivity deployed by the English Heritage geophysics team on the river bank opposite Bossom's Boatyard in 2004 concluded that the buried bit was very like the boat-part that was visible, and all the metal detected "tends to suggest that it dates from the relatively recent past, probably within the last 200 years".[21] As I write there is another boat left high and dry by spring floods some way into the Meadow, wreathed in weeds and peered into by horses, that will be a similar enigma after not very many years.[22]

That aside, the Historic England listing – the area is shown in brick-red on their map, right – summarises it thus:

> Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common[23] contain evidence for consecutive periods of human activity covering the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Well-preserved sites of this type are rare in Britain especially where evidence for habitation, burial and farming are found in association and occasionally overlap. Potential for the preservation of organic remains at this site is very high. Early excavations yielded animal and bird bones while the survival of pollen would allow reconstruction of the environment at the time of later prehistoric settlement. This combined with the settlement evidence will provide an unusually complete insight into later prehistoric. occupation of the Thames valley.[18]

So, as you walk across Port Meadow in summer, or around the edge in winter, half-close your eyes and ponder those who chose this plain to settle on in maybe 1,500BC and since. I like to imagine that our antecedents probably had the sense to live on stilts, as at the Bodensee lake-village;[24] but I could be out, as far as water-levels go. Certainly within the historical period the Thames was far other than the tamed and largely fixed channel now; for example, in Saxon and early Norman times, there was a channel of the river at the bottom of St Aldates, flowing more or less through where the law courts (formerly Morris Garages) are now, as well as under what is now Folly Bridge. But more of that anon.[25] Meanwhile, why did they choose the Meadow – why not further

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19 I did achieve this on a late summer evening after lengthy dry weather. The low light meant that Round Hill was in fact clear. Moreover, the drought had turned most vegetation biscuit colour, except for in the encircling ditch. See photo at end of this chapter.

20 C19th OS maps show it, seemingly separate from the bridges despite suggestions elsewhere.

21 http://research.historicengland.org.uk/Port_Meadow_Binsey,_Oxford_Report_on_Geophysical_Survey [note, this isn't the actual link but a shorter form; though from the Word doc at least the real link is available to click into]

22 Or not. After a summer puzzling horses and passers-by it was rescued or otherwise 'disappeared' by early October 2018.

23 Note the politically correct distinction!

24 http://www.reidsguides.com/destinations/europe/germany/baden-wurttemberg/bodensee/unteruhldingen.html

25 See ch.2, Oxford not Venice.

up the slightly higher gravel bank? Were there others 'up there'?[26] *Did* the river provide watery protection as well as edible riches? And did they make many other tumuli on flat ground elsewhere, that have been long lost under the plough, or was Round Hill unusual even then?

The other exercise in historical imagination to carry out when in the middle of the Meadow is a Civil War recreation of 1644, when "on June 3 at about 9pm the king and some 2,500 musketeers managed to march out of the city to Port Meadow where 3,000 horses were drawn up."[27] The King was fleeing the Royalist city in the face of Parliamentary intent. I like to put the Parliamentarians up the other end, facing off indecisively, but since they were (historically) apparently ignorant of this manoeuvre maybe they were hunkered down over the other side of the north Oxford gravel bank in Marston, where a blue plaque commemorates Cromwell's presence.

Fast forwarding to the next war to afflict the United Kingdom mainland (discounting the Jacobite rebellions and other miscellaneous terrorisms[28]), an experimental flying school was established here. A recent marker (2018) records the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) Port Meadow up by the northern car park – and an older one, on the road bridge in the same place, commemorates the deaths in 1912 of Lieutenants Bettington and Hotchkiss from a flying accident.

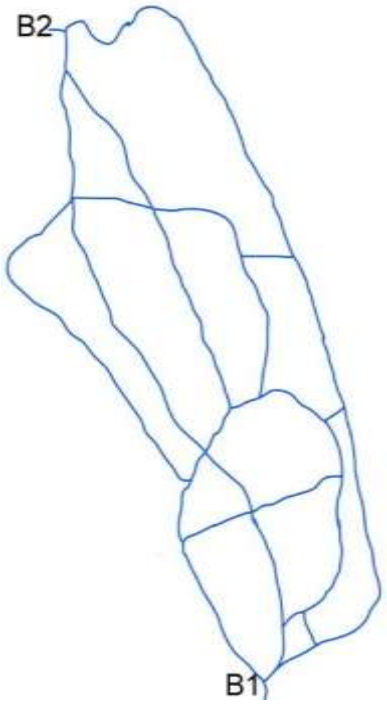
Many visitors to Oxford are in pursuit of Lewis Carroll, and they will be pleased to be told that the boat-trip in which Wonderland originated supposedly rowed up the Thames to Binsey (the treacle-well is at the church), ie up to the south-west edge of Port Meadow.

And train-buffs can rest on the bridges at Walton Well and Aristotle Lane and do whatever they do with the engines passing beneath; alas the loss of Port Meadow Halt just to the north of the latter bridge.[29] Sadly the opportunity to reopen this useful station wasn't taken with the new line to Bicester and Marylebone – surely more frequent stops would boost train use, and ticket-business can now be handled by robots? Perhaps the clue is in the life-span of the original – only about ten years.[30]



26 Well, yes there were: see ch.2 again.
27 http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/lifestyle/history/9175091.Port_Meadow__A_city_landmark_for_a_thousand_years
28 Historical winners are allowed such disparaging terminology.
29 OS 6 inch map: Berkshire II revised 1911 published 1922.
30 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Meadow_Halt_railway_station

One can't leave Port Meadow without thinking about Burgess Field – you are likely to have passed through it between B1 & B2 on my original diagram... Burgess Field was one of the City Council's open landfill sites "until the early 1980s"[31] – strange that the historical detail has been lost already, when I just about remember seeing large earth-moving equipment in the area – and is now a pleasantly screened-off area, somewhat above the level of the flood-plain (because of the rubbish below, you see) and pleasingly up-and-down over lumps and bumps. Grassy pathways have been made around and across the area, often accompanied by hedges, and these provide a sub-network of perambulatory choices...:



The external circuit is favoured by dog-walkers and joggers, so is best avoided unless it is particularly sunny, when the western-most side affords decent shade (contrariwise, this is often damp in winter). Rabbits are common in the middle-top-right area (themselves avoiding the joggers). The central route B1–B2 is, after the first section along the left-hand side, easier to find than the diagram might suggest. It is a pleasant grassy walk, slightly up-and-down over the old dump-bumps, by wild[ish] hedgerows of hawthorn and bramble, with occasional views across the rest of the 'field' but scarcely a hint of Oxford.

Incidentally, OS maps perhaps didn't recognise dumps as such; there are no indications on any such thing at either this site or at Aston's Eyot on any 6inch, 2.5inch or 1inch map up to 1960 or so. No historical help there, even if now the area is proudly labelled 'Nature Park'.

Are the similar lumps and bumps at the south end of the Meadow proper, where they are an obvious platform above the flood, further evidence of the former city dump? The City Council, of Burgess Field, say of it, "Similar to Port Meadow the site was once a landfill site...".[32] It is notable that the historical Listing excludes this southern area – if you look carefully the pink part levels off just below the rainbow bridge between Medley Boatyard and the marina – if this scrubby collection of vessels deserves that term – well north of the lumpy main path from J to M.

It has become clear that this text is more of a ramble than a precise guide.[33] Perhaps too soon? But the essence of a good walk is 'to see where you get to' – although it helps to have an overall idea of the topography, in between the odd turn here or there, chance and choice subject to gusts of wind, whims, sudden ideas[34] – should be given full rein to determine today's plan. However, practical hints, and some specifics about the walk along the west bank of the Thames, from which you have a good view of the meadow, and Oxford behind it:

Do not attempt to cross the Meadow within its bounds if lots of water is visible in the middle. You will get horribly muddy, if not just plain wet. The bridleway boldly shown on an OS map along the N-S edge of Burgess Field, but on Port Meadow proper and looking like a good way to Round Hill, is indeed there, but almost always blocked by water at B1. In winter even the 'dry' route through Burgess Field and onto the Meadow at '2' may well be blocked at the exit; and the path M

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31 http://friendsofburgessfield.co.uk/history.html

32 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/886/burgess_field_nature_park

33 Plenty of such things are readily available, for example the Royal Geographical Society's 'City of streams and spires' booklet, part of a 'Discovering Britain' series, at https://www.discoveringbritain.org/content/discoveringbritain/walk%20booklets/Oxford%20Waterways%20walk%20-%20written%20guide.pdf

34 Including avoiding or (more rarely) falling in with other people.

to W on the far side of the Thames, a walk that otherwise has much to recommend it, might benefit from stout footwear, especially just to the south of Godstow Lock.

This latter walk (G-M, exterior/ west) passes Godstow Nunnery. Here one thinks of Hamlet's advice – this would seem just about the right sort of a remove from the city, a couple of miles back – and indeed, the earliest still-visible walls only date from shortly before Shakespeare's time,[35] although it was a much earlier foundation. One also recalls 'Fair Rosamund', Henry II's mistress, who ended up buried here in about 1176. The visible bit is the "nun's inner court" and the largest bit standing was a chapel. They had a church too, but this is now under the trackway, just where it curves around and the footpath splits off for the road-bridge. This is the plan from the info-sign at 'you are here':



One wonders at this point about the twelth century Thames crossing here. The VCH has it that the abbey was 'on an island'; and that the later grange was built 'across Godstow bridge'. Nowadays (proceeding from the car-park) you will have squeezed over this bridge – or its descendent – after The Trout, hopefully not at the same time as vehicular traffic that does not always acknowledge *fussgangers*: I once had a mild altercation with a woman who claimed that since there was no footpath, pedestrians had no right to be there. So, is this bridge really that old? Probably not, but then, what did it look like back then?

Godstow's extent was greater yet. Medley Manor Farm, nearly two miles south, was the nuns' too, from 1147 when it was conveyed to them from Osney as a penalty.[36] Thacker imagines them[37] using it as a grange, an extramural place of mirth and pastime. But we haven't got there yet.

The lock-keeper[38] often posts useful advice on his blackboard, sometimes seasonally related such as 'Spring is springing – hurrah!'. At the start of March 2018, in the midst of terrible snow and blizzards, when it is unlikely that anyone without a 1920s fur-lined coat would have ventured past for several days,

Tues	Fresh...
Wed	Fresher....
Thurs	Freshest?
Fri	still Fresh



Once it was simply 'Carpe diem'. And other time, graphically:

Other than the possible interest of the signage, it is however usually preferable to skirt to the west of the lock (always subject to the mud underfoot where the fields join) so as to avoid the gates, and the endless health-and-safety and regulatory admonitions that are mandated by any interface with the feckless public.

As you proceed south (for it should be obvious that I am taking you that way), to the right you will notice, especially if it is at all wet, what I take to be medieval ridge and furrow patterns in the

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35 VCH: Site and remains of Godstow Abbey http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol12/pp311-313

36 Fred Thacker, The Stripling Thames 1909, quoted on Where Thames Smooth Waters Glide, http://thames.me.uk/thacker1909.htm#Fiddlersisland

37 Without much licence.

38 Or possibly his better half – I think I detect a feminine intelligence (if I may wave such a red rag in a footnote!)

fields.[39] Strange that this should remain still, within the city limits; but then, part of what makes Port Meadow itself, on the other side of the river, special is that it has *never* been ploughed. Even if 'never' comes with a qualifying definition of 'at least [not] for around 4,000 years'.[40]

If you can manage an old barbed-wire fence and a hedge, and there aren't many people (or cows) about, you can take a shortcut across the field to Binsey Church from about here. This is good, because otherwise getting to the treacle-well involves a tedious stretch of 'there-and-back', even if, obviously, bad, because this is not a public footpath at all. (Actually, this short-trespass[41] is probably better if you are going the *other* way, ie have walked up to Binsey Church and then conceive that you might want to continue to Godstow – and the way is certainly more obvious in this direction.[42] A digraph.)

The Perch extends an invitation to walkers a little further on, and if you are of the mind that a walk is about knowing where the good beer is, you'd better try this.[43] If other-minded, look the other way:

> At a quarter of a mile above Medley Weir is a once important crossing of the River known as Binsey Ford; a few yards above the causeway across Binsey Green. Hearne says this was the old ford from which Oxford has its name; but several other spots claim the honour; one by Folly Bridge, one over the old navigation, and others. All these last have fallen into disuse, but the Binsey ford is still clear to see, with its hard gravel foothold. It was in active use, indeed, within living memory...[44]

That living memory reached to 1909. But I have never noticed this crossing, and the 'causeway' from 'across Binsey Green' is not in fact shown on the 1887 (surveyed 1876) 6" OS map – it appears by 1898 – so any suggestion that it might contribute to the founding myth this ford might claim is beside the point,[45] and a river-crossing without a route to it is just a farm wade. Though Thacker boosts the claim with another: that the old road to Eynsham proceeded along past Binsey Church, "through Seckworth; and the remains of the ancient bridge by which it crossed the County Stream are still to be seen in the clear water".[46]

Well, you live and learn – this being part of walking about with your eyes open – and indeed one shouldn't forget about Seckworth, the village that vanished in about the fourteenth century, gouged through and largely paved over by the ring-road as it passes the eastern slopes of Wytham hill. It is now fossilised in the nodule of shopping and offices called 'Seacourt' in Botley: "It seems clear from the documentary evidence" writes R L S Bruce Mitford in 1939,[47] though without

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[39] I don't really know how to recognise if such a pattern is medieval or not, nor quite what period 'medieval' might mean in such a context. My assertion is supported only by a comment with respect to an aerial photograph of the Thames in flood at Aston's Eyot, where a similar pattern is identified as such opposite the Eyot: http://friendsofastonseyot.org.uk/eyot-images/floods-of-2007/

[40] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Meadow,_Oxford

[41] Without even the chance of mushrooms, a risk.

[42] From the church, the road back takes a lazy 'S' bend after a couple of hundred yards of straight. Once around this, a small bridge with white rails is visible a similar distance away at the end of the next straight section. Across this, a wide metal double-gate offers an easy climb into the field, and a pale wooden-barred section of fencing amongst thick hedges and barbed wire suggests of a stile the other side of this. It turns out not to be, but climb over anyway, pick your way through and under the thin white-thorn, and through the elderly and feeble three-stranded barbed wire the other side of the 'hedge' to emerge under a large oak on the far side of the ridge-and-furrow field that adjoins the river.

[43] I'm not. And the Perch probably doesn't feature highly on the CAMRA radar (if you care, you know what this is) but generally visitors seem to like the place, especially its large garden.

[44] Thacker 1909, http://thames.me.uk/s01820.htm

[45] I don't think Thacker *is* claiming a connection, to be fair, merely identifying the location by reference to contemporary features.

[46] Thacker 1909, http://thames.me.uk/thacker1909.htm#Fiddlersisland (para 'Frideswide'). He seems to be following T Wharton here, see p.11 below.

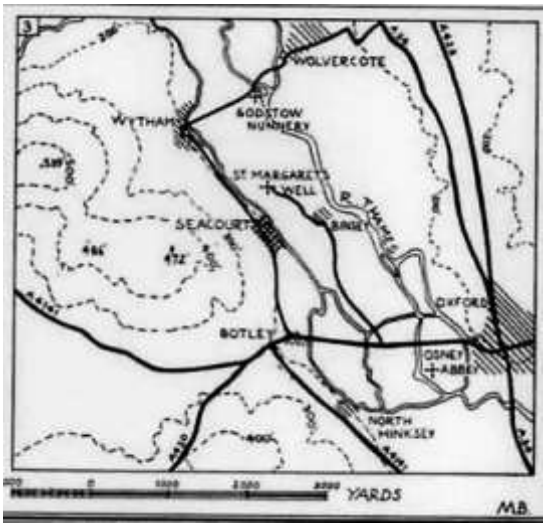
[47] The Excavations at Seacourt, Berks 1939: an interim report http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1940/brucemitford.pdf; see also http://britisharchaeology.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/highlights/seacourt.html

mentioning what this is,[48] "that the village was prosperous and important, partly as the terminus of a pilgrim's route to St. Margaret's well at Binsey, partly owing to its situation on what was at that time the main route into Oxford from Eynsham and the west."

The 1961 archaeological report by Martin Biddle, *The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire*,[49] remedies the issue of sources, and both clarifies and leaves doubtful the issue of this western route into Oxford. The question of a 'main route' into Oxford with respect to Seacourt turns on the location of a bridge together with the identification of a route running east from the village. There seemed to be two candidates for this, but both seem strangely tentative compared to the obvious primary north-south axis of the settlement.

The historical sources are Anthony Wood, *Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford* 1662–3, T Wharton, *Specimen of a History of Oxfordshire, Kidlington* (2nd ed 1783) and *The Register of Godstow*. The 'main route' out of Oxford is quoted by Biddle[50] as going "north from Oxford through Walton for about a mile; then turned west; crossed the main Thames at Binsey ford; and thence advanced across various branches of Thames by bridges, whose abutments remained till living memory, to Seacourt." It seems that the 'living memory' here is that of an editor of *The Register of Godstow* c1905 – which ties in with Thacker above – and Wood notes the remains of the bridge in the 1660s too; no-one, though, bothered to record its precise location.

Wharton describes a similar route from Oxford to that above, but includes a trajectory that "runs through Binsey churchyard... [and] winds up the hill towards the left, where stood the ancient village of Seckworth";[51] this takes in the current road to the church, necessarily an old route, and so gains plausibility, but a look at the sketch map[52] here shows that anything going past Binsey church is some way north of Seacourt, so requiring a left turn (on the precursor to the A34) to get to the village, effectively removing it from a position astride the route west out of Oxford.



All this does, really, is demonstrate the shifting miasma of layers that is Oxford; try to brush through one to get to the 'real thing' and you find further swathes, and whether the pattern on one layer is but a muffled echo of an earlier, or adds a new swirl, is perhaps not possible to tell – without real archaeology.

There does however appear to be sufficient smoke to claim 'fire!' with respect to this western route out of Oxford; and, given this, the section of road that suddenly aligns east-west along the house-fronts in Binsey is suggestive; and the eye is drawn across Port Meadow to the odd angle of Walton Well Road and curl of Walton Street, diverging from the north-Oxford gravel bank.[53]

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48 Biddle remedies this in 1961-2, see below. Perhaps in 1939 the general level of erudition was such that people were just expected to know.

49 Martin Biddle, The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire: Oxoniensa 1961-2 pp70 - 201 http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1961-2/biddle.pdf

50 Biddle, op cit, p77-8, but it is not clear which source is being cited.

51 Biddle, op cit, p78 footnote 44

52 Biddle, op cit, p72

53 The 1793-4 Richard Davis map ("Davis' map was the first ever large scale (2" : 1 mile) survey of Oxfordshire" and "the road system is extensively shown, right down to minor routes, bridleways and milestones" - as per https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/leisureandculture/history/collections/maps/countymaps.pdf alas does not help, both as too late to the debate, and as Oxfordshire stopped so abruptly once across the Thames. Earlier maps lack the necessary detail.

After such a diversion into history and its variations – perhaps we sat and paused to contemplate the view awhile, or stopped for that drink at the Perch after all – we can continue on our walk south.



From Medley Sailing Club and Bossoms boatyard (site of the oddly technocratic boat archaeology), you cross the 'new' bridge to Fiddler's Island:

Under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 Oxford was the only city, not a county of itself, to have a Sheriff. After a year or so the role was clarified to exclude the execution in the city of higher court writs, included in a 'real' county sheriff's job-description, and the chief role of Henry Grant's shrievality "was... keeper of Port Meadow and conservator of the city fisheries".[54]

Round about here you are at the site of the former 'Medley Weir', and it is salutary to ponder the ways across the river here, given the complete disappearance of this weir and the relatively modern 'new bridge' as above or the one you next cross.

You leave Fiddler's Island for Port Meadow proper across a wide and bouncy bridge – how it survives the joggers, who set up standing waves of oscillation, is a mystery. It is an example of the 'Bailey' type made famous from its use in World War II, and was erected in September 1947 to replace a wooden pedestrian bridge that had been washed away in the floods that March.[55] One of those stop-gap measures that long out-lives any longer-term hopes.

Leaning over the southern, downstream, edge of the bridge you can almost always see some fish playing beneath, at least in the clear waters of summer. They enjoy the flow over the lip of a flat bar across the water here. Anyway, the ones you see are probably orangey-finned roach. You might not be able to tell them from dace from above through the water, but presumably the Environmental Agency chaps, who count fish in all rivers every year can: their 2017 records for between Godstow and Osney[56] list the following, with their relative frequency:

Roach	Rutilus rutilus	209
Chub	Leuciscus cephalus	137
Bleak	Alburnus alburnus	49
Gudgeon	Gobio gobio	32
Pike	Esox lucius	28
Perch	Perca fluviatilis	16
Dace	Leuciscus leuciscus	15
Common bream	Abramis brama	6
Silver bream	Abramis bjoerkna	1

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54 VCH *Modern Oxford*, The Corporation 1835-89: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp181-259#h3-0011

55 https://sites.google.com/site/oxfordfreemen/home – this is the former site for the Freemen but will be replaced by https://www.oxfordfreemen.org/home in due course.

56 In amongst https://data.gov.uk/dataset/f49b8e4b-8673-498e-bead-98e6847831c6/freshwater-fish-counts-for-all-species-all-areas-and-all-years

On the hotter summer evenings, the fish may be disturbed by swimmers. Although the types who do this are rather less attractive than the fish, bear in mind that they have long been permitted: "Fiddler's Island was authorised for public bathing by the Oxford City Council in 1852".[57]

Normally they confine themselves to the pool below the bailey-bridge, but can occasionally be seen swimming up the Thames itself to the rainbow bridge, or even on the wider stretches adjacent to the meadow. They face dire hazards: 'open water swimming can increase the risk of gastrointestinal infections (diarrhoea and/or vomiting) as well as respiratory, skin, ear and eye infections'[58], as well as the dread Weil's disease, leptospirosis.[59] Oxford water-hazards also



include quantities of jettisoned bicycles, nasty things to tangle with underwater. A concerted trawl in the low water of the dry summer 2018 resulted in the display of many whitened skeletons of these things beside various waterways, displayed like the corpses of the executed for the warning of others.

Back on Port Meadow proper after crossing this bridge and looking at the fish (and maybe swimmers), take in the sweep to the north again and you will observe the normal denizens of the area, cattle and horses. Freemen of the City – called 'hanasters' – are allowed to graze animals without charge; others are illegal. A surprise annual roundup – led by the Sheriff – endeavours to police this but not very stringently, and, nowadays, with a degree of anxiety about upsetting the animals themselves.

Since 1900 the title of Freeman has been honorary, awarded by the Council for eminent service; but before the Municiple Reform Act 1835, being a Freeman meant being able to vote in Council

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57 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiddler%27s_Island, citing VCH Oxford vol 4 – Fiddler's Island was apparently the first such authorisation. This probably represents legislative over-reach, as it was not the first bathing place – St Ebbe's in Oxpens Meadow (see ch.3) opened in 1846, and the VCH as above pushes swimming back much further, citing Wood's *Life*, iii. 306 for the 17th century: 'undergraduates in the 17th century swam at Paten's Pleasure, known by the 19th century as Loggerhead, and in the 20th century as Parson's Pleasure.'

58 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guidance-on-reducing-the-risk-of-illness-when-open-water-swimming

59 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11625889

elections and being allowed to carry out a business within the city; you could become one by payment, by serving a seven years apprenticeship, or by being the son of a freeman.[60]

This society rather unexpectedly seems to be continuing, seemingly as a rather smartly-dressed club of burghers, still enrolling children of former Freemen, former apprentices to Freemen (now only two years servitude is required, though "is also necessary for the indentures to have been registered with the City Secretary and Solicitor within one year of their commencement"[61]), and allowing entry by marriage (to daughter or widow of a Freeman). A recent sharp break with tradition means that they now include women amongst their numbers.[62]

Also among their numbers are the 'honorary appointments', where well-known local figures are muddled in with corporate entities and unfortunate political awards (as in 'politically correct', which probably can be safely taken to mean something you will regret later). The most recent appointments are –

Lesley Dewhurst, 14 September 2016 – in recognition of her work with single homeless people in Oxford over the last 20 years

Professor Christopher Brown CBE, 2 July 2014, Director of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Oxfam, 23rd October 2012 – for its achievements in the city and across the world

Philip Pullman, 24th January 2007 – author of the His Dark Materials trilogy

Sir Roger Bannister, 12th May 2004 – the first man to run a mile in less than four minutes

Professor Sir Richard Doll, 16th September 2002 – one of the first two scientists to link smoking with lung cancer

Colin Dexter, 26th February 2001 – author of the Inspector Morse books

Aung San Suu Kyi, 15th December 1997 – pro-democracy campaigner and leader of the opposition National League for Democracy party (NLD) in Burma. Collected in person on 20 June 2012.[63]

It is hard to see how the corporations (further down the list Oxford's "twin cities" Bonn and Leiden are included, as well as, separately, Oxford Brooks and Oxford University – the former receiving the award, oops, 10 days before the latter) would exercise their right to graze animals. But I have strayed considerably from our path; safe to say you are unlikely to meet any of these grandees on the Meadow, and even ordinary commoners, tending their beasts, are infrequent. Much less infrequent – quite the opposite in fact – are pale and fleshy youth swimming on a hot summer's evening at Medley, or picnicing nearby in strange multiethnic groups at the south end.

Delights of Port Meadow are more usually found at less balmy times; include the way the flood-water in the middle catches the light in a winter evening; the uninhibited wind that can lash at you in the exposed centre; the long view across the level, always different with the changing weather, and the gentle kaleidoscope of where the horses and cattle graze.

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60 http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/government/1_freeman.html
61 https://sites.google.com/site/oxfordfreemen/what-is-a-freeman/order-for-admission-and-current-qualifications
62 www.oxfordfreemen/home as above.
63 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20002/your_council/334/freedom_of_the_city



Round Hill looking north. The most visible lump is the later barrow; the earlier disk was picked out in the dry summer when this was taken by thistles in the ditch, just visible above running off to the right in the middle-foreground. The trees behind are on the western edge of Burgess Field.

Chapter 2 - Oxford, not Venice

The motto of all the mongoose family is "Run and find out"; and Rikki-tikki was a true mongoose.

- Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Book

Oxford is no Venice, nor even Bruges, but water features disproportionately large considering its superficial obscurity to the modern eye – even if the causeway-like approaches to the city centre are largely responsible for the appalling traffic jams that feature in so many residents' daily lives. It would be instructive to test how many streams and rivers can be named – after Thames, Cherwell, and 'canal'.[1] Historically, of course, the clue is in the name – a river crossing.[2] And as a walker you have to plan to cross the rivers, and canal;[3] even smaller streams represent real obstacles, let alone, in winter, the sometimes extensive flooding on the low-lying ground.

Even mapping these multifarious obstacles is difficult; an exercise in fractal detail that calls for ever greater scales, until the overall picture is lost (and choose your season first). So too the names of the waterways vary, even 'Thames' morphing maybe to Isis,[4] and usage varying; even the main navigation way is uncertain, especially over time. Tracing the interconnected waterways (see map on page 18 below), there are several points where even the direction of flow is difficult to determine.

Topology is one of those overlapping subjects in maths where everything is connected. This is appropriate as the subject itself is about connections. Fittingly its beginnings may be traced to Euler's 1736 paper *Solutio problematis ad geometriam situs pertinentis*, on the Königsberg bridge problem:[5] similar problems pertain for the Oxford walker; though 'problem' is of course just another word for opportunity.[6]

The strange table or matrix in the previous chapter that abstracts Port Meadow connectivity is a bridge between topology as shape-of-things and maths. It counts routes between different points (with the usual minor puzzle as to whether going from A-to-A is no route at all, 1 because why, look, you've done it, or an infinity of routes, you teetotum you) and so can be used to work out pinch points and over-worked nodes (sum the row or column). And now it is in a tabulated numeric form, you can do maths on it too![7]

Such matrices turn up nowadays underlying social media computations and – beneath and supporting these – in the very interconnections that allow the internet to work. In early days of joining up computers, earnest discussions were had about the relative merits of star topologies and token ring networks (do you want speed *or* reliability?); nowadays the complexities are such that we usually let computers themselves solve such issues with fuzzy self-grown algorithms.[8]

Back to our immediate issue, the Oxford-bridge-problem can be couched in walking aesthetics, 'how can we plan a good route without repeating certain points too often?' – 'too often' being

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1 Appendix 1 lists as many as I could find.
2 We'll have more about this later – see p.86. What discussion of Oxford could not?
3 In the watery context, the railway, which also limits routeways, has to be an honorary canal. It was after all designed to compete, and practically obstructs the walker – especially as the H&S jobsworths have now fenced off the line so thoroughly, closing crossings (Aristotle Lane, Wolvercote) to improve their control.
4 This turns out to be a hum though. See p.89.
5 See, eg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Bridges_of_Königsberg
6 What management-idiot came up with this nonsense?
7 Alas, only if you can remember how, from those distant days of being taught about such things :/
8 I am rather asserting this from ignorance. Sorry!

defined as more than once, for those who don't like repeating their footsteps.[9] (Flexing this rule for those who appreciate that things look different depending on which direction you are going is allowed. This is particularly so with bridges, especially where the crossing from one area to another is significant. But this does not otherwise excuse a there-and-back route!)

From an historical point of view, the problem was much more pragmatic; how does one get into, or out of, Oxford, given all the waterways? Alice jumped over the little brook on the chessboard[10] at the start of her adventure through the looking glass, but it is usually best not to try this; the Oxford waters are usually foul, with clayey edges, and not infrequently spreading across their margins in an ill-defined way.

The point about the flood-plains is that they focus the traffic on relatively narrow causeways into the city: from the north, Woodstock and Banbury Roads along the gravel bank, from the west along the Botley Road, and Abingdon Road from the south. (To the east, once across the Cherwell at Magdalen Bridge and the Plain, the roads safely fan out above the waters.) Between these sclerotic roads, bane of Oxford commuters, are large lungs of green land on which to walk (when dry enough). Once you get there, over the bridges.

The dates of the various bridges, particularly those linking parts of the city and its surroundings to each other, will perhaps surprise:

Marston Ferry Bridge	-	1971	Cherwell	replaced ferry
Southern by-pass (Isis Bridge)	-	1965	Thames	Hinksey to Heyford Hill
North-western by-pass	-	1962	Thames	Botley to Wolvercote
Donnington Bridge	-	1962	Thames	
North-eastern by-pass	-	1930s	Cherwell	Headington to Banbury Rd
Footbridges too are recent:				
Gasworks pipe[11]	-	1990	Thames	St Ebbes/ Friars Wharf to Grandpont
Wolfson	-	c1974	Cherwell	Linton Rd site opened 1974[12]
Medley Weir bailey	-	1947	Thames	replaced previous wooden bridge
Mesopotamia Bridge	-	1926	Cherwell	from New Marston; replaced ferry
Rainbow Bridge (Parks)	-	1924	Cherwell	
Rollerway bridge (Parks)	-	c1887	Cherwell	replaced in 1950[13]
Medley Weir rainbow	-	1865	Thames	must have been a way across before?

The radial bridges – Magdalen to the east; Folly Bridge and/or Grandpont to the south; Botley causeway to the west – are older, of course.

Magdalen Bridge, 'Petty Pont' in juxtaposition to 'Grandpont', certainly existed in 1004,[14] with a probable earlier date in some form or other, not least because of the relative importance of

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9 Heraclitus can be summoned to help with this perhaps: see also ch.6, Mutabilitie.

10 Supposedly based on Otmoor; however, the rectilinear fields to the east side of the Cherwell opposite the parks offer a more likely source.

11 Apparently this is sometimes called 'Grandpont Bridge' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grandpont_Bridge) but that is a confusion of bridge with area and historical nonsense. It carried pipes for the gasworks in St Ebbes across the river from 1927 (probably more correct than Wikipedia's suggestion of '1930s') - http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/interesting-aspects-of-grandpont-and-south-oxford-s-history/st-ebbe-s-gasworks

12 The now-listed buildings include the bridge in the group, implying it was part of the original construction, even though Wolfson did not acquire the Meadows on the other side of the river until 1982 - https://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/history-heritage

13 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/history: "The most notable work carried out was the rebuilding of the bridge to a more slender structure in 1950. This was to a design by Alfred Goldstein. This bridge ... is thought to be the first pre-stressed fixed arch bridge in the world." The listing itself describes it as "a small, concrete single-span bridge... listed grade II" - https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001651

14 Jaine, T.W.M. (1971), *The building of Magdalen Bridge, 1772–1790* - http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1971/jaine.pdf

Headington Manor, which owned land not only in St Clements but on the west of the Cherwell too (Oxford itself, indeed, was carved out of Headington Manor lands).[15] A ford, used for driving stock to market, also existed on the north side of Pettypont,[16] which is surely indicative of the ancient nature of this crossing.

Folly Bridge – Grandpont – South Bridge – is the locus of the 'Eden myth' of Oxford, the origin of its name (in most accounts) and *raison d'être*. Its archaeology is complicated by shifting river lines; the 'Shire Lake Stream', former boundary between Oxfordshire and Berkshire and probable main branch of the river at one time, heads across Christ Church Meadow as little more than a ditch now, its earlier course covered by the Police Station and the Courts (formerly Morris Motors Showrooms), ie about half-way along the relatively low block of land from where the bridge is now towards where the road starts to rise up St Aldates towards Christ Church.[17] Archaeological evidence indicative of early bridges here is key in pre-dating Saxon Oxford itself after its relatively late documentary appearance in the tenth century;[18] the material accumulated by Dodd *et al* indicates much earlier settlement, eg 'above the clay...[where Thames Street now intersects St Aldates] was a rubble track or causeway. A piece of oak from the surface gave a dendrochronological date of AD 577 – 619.'[19]

In later, historical, times, "the bridge's position, wholly within Berkshire and partly within the city, led to much confusion over responsibility for repair;"[20] cue much issue (as indeed for other roads and bridges in and approaching Oxford) over pavage and pontage. (*Some* taxation has been simplified...) Grandpont was in fact more of a discontinuous causeway of crossings than a single bridge, and in the sixteenth century had more than 40 arches along the Abingdon Road.[21]

The Botley causeway can be dated to c1530[22] though as with the route east over Magdalen Bridge one can't help but suspect earlier versions.[23] Mr and Mrs Hall noted in 1859 that "our course [along the river] takes us... under a bridge on the highroad leading from Oxford to the west – a road which numbers seven bridges within a mile, and illustrates somewhat expensively the divided character of the Thames at this part of its course."[24] It was even called 'Seven Bridges Road' in the nineteenth century,[25] though I can only count six now; perhaps the transient bridge over the canal on its way to its terminus basin was included. AEFTR?

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15 'The *burg* of Oxford was established on land taken out of the royal manor of Headington, and references in Domesday Book and later sources identify this as the king's eight yardlands (*terra de Ehteard*), which continued to owe landgabel in the 12th century (VCH iv, 5-7)' – *Oxford Before the University [OBtU]*, ed Anne Dodd, p29.

16 *OBtU*, p87.

17 See also the diagram below on p.Thames channels Thames channels Thames channels 2-5.

18 "The earliest reference to Oxford is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 911-912 when Edward the Elder took possession of the town. Oxford is also listed in the Burghal Hidage, which dates to 914-919. It is listed as one of 33 fortified burhs created to defend against Viking raids." *OBtU* again. http://www.ashmolean.museum/ash/amps/leeds/AS_Oxfordshire/oxford/oxford-late.html

19 *OBtU*, p79 etc.

20 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp284-295

21 ibid.

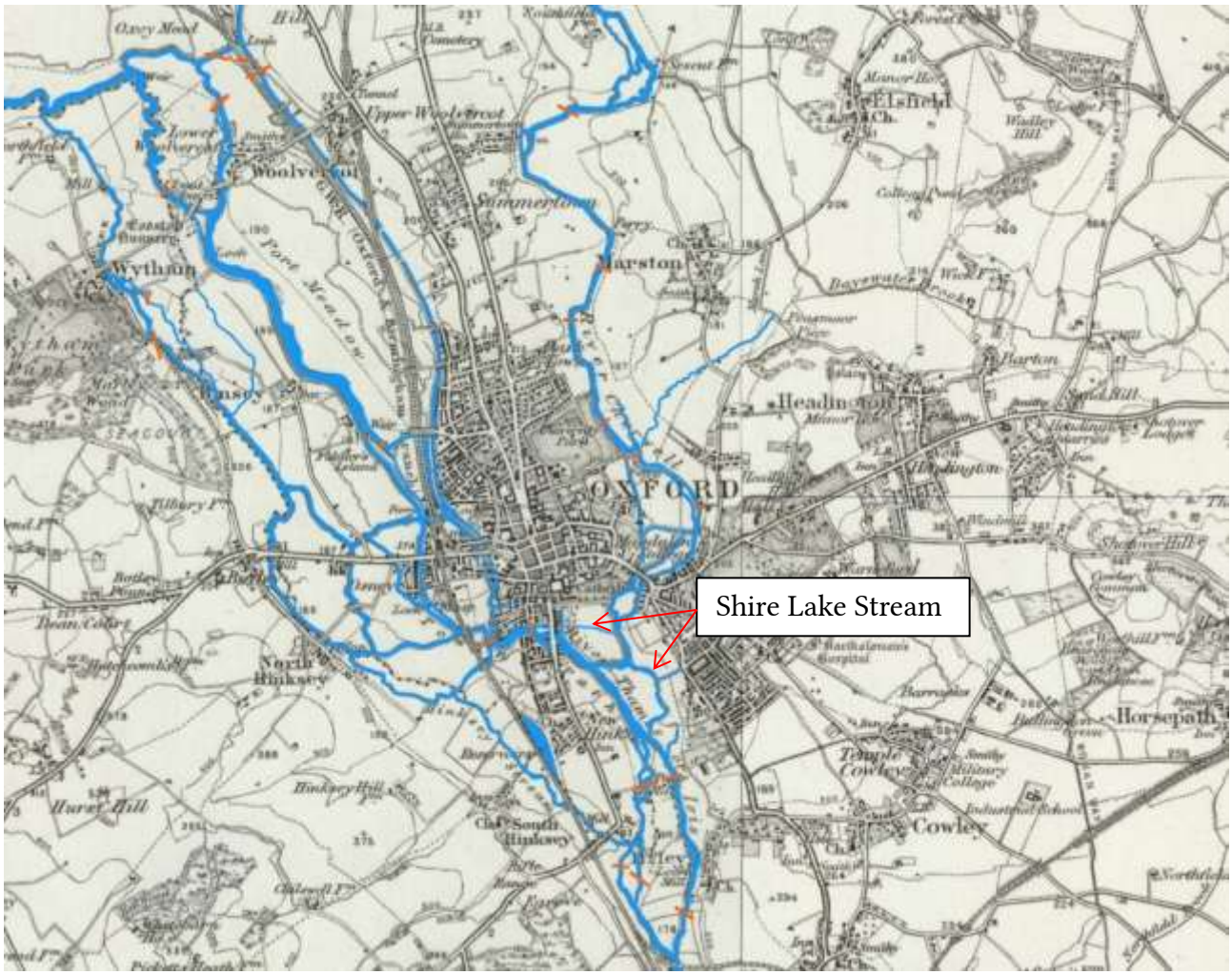
22 Biddle, *Seacourt* 1961 (as ch.1), citing Anthony Wood, *Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford* I, 437; he goes on to mention that 'there had been the beginnings of a road here since c. 1219: Dark Age Britain (ed D B Harden, 1956), 236 note 15.'

23 The contention by some authorities (see ch.1 p.10 etc) that the 'main route' west lay across Port Meadow might undermine this.

24 *The Book of The Thames*, Mr and Mrs SC Hall, quoted at http://thames.me.uk/ThamesHall.htm?#FOURSTREAMS - also available as a (very large) pdf of the original at http://www.archive.org/stream/bookofthamesfrom00hall courtesy of the University of Pittsburgh, the quote is from p82. The original really does say 'expensively', where we might have expected 'expansively'. The OED confirms that the diversion of meaning (cost v physical dimension) was indeed present in the C19th; might one hypothesise a typo in the original, or did the Halls really mean to quantify the bridge-requirements monetarily?

25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botley_Road

However, excepting these major crossings – and the walker prefers to avoid these anyway – other bridges were few and far between just a hundred years or so ago. This map, from the end of the nineteenth century,[26] highlights the rivers, and adds in red road and foot bridges built since.[27]



The Cherwell, in particular, has been made a lot more traversable! In terms of route planning, without the new bridges, Oxford would have been a completely different experience. For example, all routes from the northern edge of the city would have to pass through Holywell or the High to get over Magdalen Bridge for Headington or Cowley (or Wycombe); similarly, returning thence but hoping to get to south Oxford, the only option would have been to re-cross Magdalen Bridge and then Grandpont. Routes west were either through Botley or Wolvercote, unless you went up to Yarnton.

Incidentally, the river-map above, being based on the C19th ordnance, predates the 'new cut' of the Cherwell's end-join to the Thames, and so shows Shire Lake around Aston's Eyot more prominently than it is now. Just another example of mutability, but of waterways: they, as well as roads, change in time. Mills and competition between their owners for water in medieval times led to both shifts in the river and disputes:

> The building of early water-mills caused many changes in the branches of the river Thames close to the west and south sides of the town. Castle mill, probably in existence by the mid 11th century, was built on the easternmost stream, part of which, below the mill, turned eastwards along the line of the later Trill mill stream, passed under Grandpont at Trill Mill Bow, and flowed

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[26] From OS 1-inch maps revised 1893, published 1896, sheets 236 and 237, https://maps.nls.uk/view/101168483 and https://maps.nls.uk/view/101168489 - waterways and later bridges added by me.

[27] Roughly. Medley/ Fiddler's Island probably had bridges already. And never mind the ferries for now.

across the northern edge of Christ Church meadow to join the river Cherwell; in the section west of Grandpont it seems to have been an important branch of the river, its silt deposits covering an area over 150 feet wide. Running southwards from it, on the west side of Grandpont, was a mill-stream, apparently artificial, serving a mill, later Blackfriars mill, first recorded in the early 11th century. A parallel, perhaps natural, stream on the east side of Grandpont served Trill mill, which may also have existed in the 11th century. The provision of water to the two Grandpont mills presumably reduced the flow in the stream across Christ Church meadow, and one branch of it, beneath the wall of St. Frideswide's priory, seems to have silted up by the late 12th century. The rest of the stream survived, probably as a waterlogged ditch, until the 17th century, when it may have been destroyed by Civil War fortifications, or, if not, was certainly obscured shortly afterwards by the construction of Broad Walk. By 1279 Trill mill stream seems to have been canalized, and was 5 feet wide and 4 feet deep at Preachers Bridge.

The branch of the Thames passing beneath Oseney Bridge, in modern times the navigation channel, served Oseney mill; before becoming a mill-stream, probably in the 12th century, this branch may have been a natural stream, since it seems to have been called Aldee ('old river') in 1184 and later. After Oseney and Castle mills had closed off the two streams nearest to Oxford to river traffic the through route from Port Meadow to Folly Bridge was presumably down the Bulstake and Pot streams.

Another change in the river, of uncertain date, was the decline in importance of the Shire Lake stream, which branched north-eastwards from the main river before Folly Bridge, crossing beneath Grandpont at Denchworth Bow, and flowing across Christ Church meadow to the river Cherwell. Perhaps as a result of improvements to a branch of the Thames further south, the present Eights Reach, the part of Shire Lake stream in Christ Church meadow largely disappeared during the Middle Ages, although it remained the county boundary. By 1423 the road beside it seems to have been more important to the town than the stream itself, presumably for riding the franchises, and by the mid 17th century its course was marked only by boundary stones. A surviving drainage ditch in the meadow preserves part of its line.[28]

A map clarifies some of the above; this (on the next page), from *Oxford Before the University*, the Thames channels post-conquest, is particularly striking, not least in the fact that it is of the historical period. (Other maps illustrate the Saxon, Roman and prehistoric arrangements of the channels.)



Note in particular the prominence of watercourses to the north of the current channel, with the two mill-streams running north-south, and Shire Lake sweeping east across what is now Christ Church meadow. This photo shows what is left of this 'sweeping east...':

With respect to Trill Mill Stream, it is the stuff of legend (literally). It emerges into the memorial gardens at Christ Church, having disappeared near Oxpens College. Two anonymous web-sites provide charming detail, the first, https://trillmillstream.wordpress.com/, collates its documentary and literary history (the skeletons emerging on a punt *were* fiction), as well as providing a handy map;[29] the second, https://www.28dayslater.co.uk/threads/trill-mill-stream-oxford-

[28] VCH Oxford IV, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73

[29] This predates the Westgate redevelopment that finished in about 2017. Sometime in the progress of this the course of the culvert was moved, 'diverted to a route north of the basement structures' according to proposals – http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s17085/Report_Westgate.pdf , though I have been able to find neither confirmation nor map in the planning documents.

feb-2012.69114/, a photo-narrative of traversing most of the way along its underground length in 2012. The entrance is now[30] very thoroughly and aggressively fenced off, so the photos are invaluable.



As for the actual Trill Mill, its location is conjectural, even on the *OBtU* map; it seems it was last known of amongst the outbuildings of The Green Dragon, a pub that was erased to make room for Christ Church's memorial gardens. More puzzling yet to the modern eye is how this level area ever sustained an under-shot, let alone an over-shot, mill – or two, for don't forget Blackfriars' across St Aldates; however, it seems that there was a "substantial drop... to the south of the priory", ie what is now Christ Church, and that this was gradually filled in during the Middle Ages.[31]

But for now we must plan our walk across and along the rivers. The Port Meadow walk (ch.1) followed the Thames; we will now thread along the Cherwell.

Wolfson College, as sited at the end of Linton Road, was being built while I was at the nearby Dragon School,[32] being finished in 1974, though I was quite ignorant of it at the time. Unlike the older and more central colleges, it is most liberal and welcoming to visitors, and you may even park in their car-park before strolling around the gardens – a bark-covered path takes you around the back and over a bridge by a little water-feature – and so to their bridge over the Cherwell. Pause on the top to look back at the buildings before descending to a different world on the other side. (Note that there is a gate on the far side, which closes in the evening, at different times in summer and winter,[33] though not always punctiliously; but if caught out on the wrong side in the dark, the low gate is not a real barrier for the desperate.)

By the way, the east side of the Cherwell is not a place to be in winter or even early spring, not unless you've provided yourself with wellingtons – and there is a particular muddy-pinch point between fields, churned up by cattle, where even they may be inadequate in the wet!

The far side of the bridge has a useful sign explaining about the water-meadows, and how they are cut for hay on Lammas, and the 'aftermath' grazed until All Souls. Even the names of the dates speak pleasingly of a slower life, but most striking is the 'aftermath', a word I have used before without any knowledge of these roots. I suppose mowing - the 'math', of Germanic extract - is cataclysmic, but not quite so scorched-earth as 'aftermath' seems to signify now. You always leave the growing shoots to spring up again – and here they are, being grazed peacefully, as recorded from the ninth century.

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30 December 2018; I think this probably followed the re-opening of the path down past 'Oxpens College' after the construction of New Westgate. Ch.3's walk takes you down here.

31 *The Fate of the Trill Mill*, Tony Dodd and Julian Munby, Oxoniensa 2006

32 I was at the Dragon 1968 – 1973.

33 And it is closed all-day for several days around Christmas – eg 24 – 27 December 2018. And, it turns out, at Easter too (2019).

The Wolfson sign also asks that you 'keep to the footpaths' in their 'nature reserve', though doesn't indicate where these are, really. In fact, many of the fields this side of the Cherwell have paths around them, presumably some open-minded farmer's acceptance of the inevitable so close to – in fact, in the centre-of – a city. The *actual* public rights of way, drawn in pink on this satellite picture (on the next page), are poorly marked and not always congruent with the most obvious path. Green indicates some of the additional paths.

Unless you're heading for Old Marston ('marsh-town' – just showing as 'M' at the top right of the picture) or Headington, it's probably best to follow the river's edge, both aesthetically and for certainty of finding your way. (Though if *all* ways go *somewhere* with no cul-de-sacs, you can't really go wrong of course. But sometimes 'finding your way' means not spending hours and hours wandering about.)



In fact, it is only about 10 minutes from Wolfson to the Rainbow Bridge in the Parks, though it seems longer[34], passing as you do (on the opposite side of the river) the Cherwell Boathouse, the Dragon School and LMH before you reach the Parks, the path winding through bits of woodland, along the edges of the fields, and over little bridges (with gates neatly renewed in 2017). A slightly longer loop 'in-land' to the east can bring you back around to the Parks by the rollers[35] in the south-east corner.

Looking at this satellite map, do you see how the public right of way heading south-west at the bottom of the picture continues straight down and then stops at the river? This is the point where the ferry[36] used to be, until 1926,[37] before the bridge at this point. The determination of the south-west path is suggestive of an early direct route into Oxford from Marston, saving the loop south to St Clements and Pettypont, even if one is puzzled by this ferry; did it cross only to the centre of the Mesopotamian island (the higher mill-stream being of considerable antiquity, after all – King's Mill is recorded in Domesday[38]), or was there another part to it, conveying passengers to what is now St Katz?

Note that before the other bridges, at least two of which you have crossed, the next crossing north from here would have been just north of the area shown in the picture, another ferry to Marston. (Though it seems there may also have been another ferry near Rainbow Bridge during the

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34 Going slowly, in muddy conditions for example, it might be 15 minutes.

35 The 'rollers' are a weir-bypass for punts. They are most useful as an indication of how high the river is: often completely dry in summer, I have seen the rollers entirely hidden beneath a chocolate torrent. The footbridge nearby is listed in its current form, being an early example of pre-stressed concrete use.

36 Detail from OS six inch map Oxfordshire XXXIII, surveyed 1876, published 1887. https://maps.nls.uk/view/102346822

37 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia,_Oxford

38 ibid.

summer months.[39]) Remains of Marston Ferry – which, after all, was only superseded by Marston Ferry Road and bridge in 1971[40] – may be seen in a raised causeway running towards it across the field on the Summertown side of the river. (But not on this walk. And, without the ferry at the end of it, this causeway is one of those odd cases of a footpath that just stops, meaning it is a rather unsatisfactory 'there and back' outing.)

Even if you have done the extra 'inland' loop of the walk, you don't want to follow this straight path to the 1926 bridge, despite the attractions of Mesopotamia, a "quiet path, about a mile long, [which] leads across footbridges to Kings Mill and on to Marston Road. ...Milling is known to have continued in this spot until as late as 1825."[41] Incidentally, the Parks' History pages suggests that the use of 'Mesopotamia' as meaning a narrow area of land between two rivers, dates from 1854. The OED sort of bears this out, citing R. G. Latham Native Races Russ. Empire 177 "The Doab, Entre Rios, or Mesopotamia, bounded by the rivers Obi and Irtish" with respect to meaning "1. In the names of places likened in some way to Mesopotamia", subheading "a. An area of land between two rivers". However under this same 1a, it has from 1651 W. Jenkins Serm. 5 Nov. 5 "The Devil... is continually seeking wayes and means to offend Gods people, so that the Church of God is another Mesopotamia." Much as with old pathways and bridges, suggestive of earlier use even if not conclusive.

Instead, follow the cycle track as it curves with its elegant row of street lights across a rushy watermeadow across to the bridges by the rollers and thence to the Parks.



Most of the meadows you have walked through on the east side of the Cherwell are an SSSI, 'site of special scientific interest', cited as 'New Marston Meadows'. This map from Natural England[42] indicates the listed area. They were so listed in 1993, and "are a series of agriculturally unimproved neutral meadows on the flood plain of the River Cherwell which forms a natural corridor through the centre of Oxford. Within the floodplain calcareous clayey soils have formed on alluvium overlying terrace gravels. ... subtle changes in topography create conditions which support a range of swamp and grassland types which are of national importance." Apparently you may see lapwing, lesser spotted woodpecker and 'the specially protected' kingfisher here, though of these, I have seen only the latter.[43] The citation claims they breed in the area.

The Parks deserve their own section (see ch.5), but as you have sort-of ended here, whether taking in the extra loop or merely tackling High Bridge, a brief mention of the prehistorical significance of the area is timely. In part this archaeology, like that of Port Meadow, only survived

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39 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/history : "Time has rendered High [Rainbow] Bridge into a notable landmark which increased accessibility to the meadows on the east side of the river at a time when the southern part of the Parks was being built on. Earlier, these meadows could only be reached from the west by a foot ferry operating in the summer months."

40 I remember a teacher at the Dragon, D J F Longrigg, expostulating at the absurdity of the speed-limit after being caught exceeding it shortly after opening. Empty new roads are often enticing.

41 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/history

42 https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx and search Oxford.

43 https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1006612.pdf . I have added their lengthy technical descriptions of the grasslands flora to appendix 1 for its poetic qualities.

because of the long-term open space; and its ancient use has only been known from the latter part of the C20th. Now, however, we recognise

> a rich archaeological landscape, as identified from a series of aerial photographs which reveal remains potentially dating from the Neolithic onwards. Analysis of the photographs has identified an extensive ritual landscape comprising a possible Neolithic cursus and a series of Bronze Age barrows, superseded by a Middle/Late Iron Age to Romano-British settlement, comprising ditched enclosures. Recent excavation in the vicinity of the University Parks has identified a possible henge to the south-west and two Bronze Age barrows and a Romano-British settlement to the south of the Site.[44]

None of this is visible now though, unlike Round Hill on Port Meadow. Lewis Carroll's complaint about the proposed dominance of cricket in the Parks mentions lumps and bumps:

> Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
> And rude pavilions sadden all thy green;
> One selfish pastime grasps the whole domain,
> And half a faction swallows up the plain;
> Adown thy glades, all sacrificed to cricket,
> The hollow-sounding bat now guards the wicket;
> Sunk are thy mounds in shapeless level all,
> Lest aught impede the swiftly rolling ball...[45]

It is tempting, though sad, to speculate that some of the crop-marks were represented by more visible remains before the levelling in the name of sport. (That the mounds referred to might with more plausibility have been remains of the civil war defences is not, in fact, borne out by mapping of the same; they barely reached where the Museum of Natural History now is at their most proximate to the Parks.[46])

Such sadness, of course, is that of Mr Wimbush in Huxley's *Crome Yellow*, with his preference for the finished past:

> The spectacle of numbers of my fellow-creatures in a state of agitation moves in me a certain weariness, rather than any gaiety or excitement. The fact is, they don't very much interest me... It's appalling; in living people, one is dealing with unknown and unknowable quantities. One can only hope to find out anything about them by a long series of the most disagreeable and boring human contacts, involving a terrible expense of time. It's the same with current events; how can I find out anything about them except by devoting years to the most exhausting first-hand study, involving once more an endless number of the most unpleasant contacts? No, give me the past. It doesn't change; it's all there in black and white, and you can get to know about it comfortably and decorously and, above all, privately—by reading.

Although one rather sympathises with this attitude, change and all that, the way things bubble up and vanish, being so very tiring, walking should be an exercise in the present even if licence to rove through the past too. Cricket in the Parks is, like much in quirky Oxford, unique; "it is the only first-class cricket ground in the UK where spectators can watch free of charge".[47] My father remembered watching cricket there while at the Dragon School; somehow he acquired a bat which had been signed by the players in a match he watched – could it really have been the

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44 Rainwater Attenuation Scheme, Oxford University Parks – Wessex Archaeology 2011, https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/sites/default/files/71080_Rainwater%20Attenuation%20Scheme%2C%20Oxford%20University%20Parks%2C%20Oxford.pdf

45 The Deserted Parks, 1867.

46 A Contemporary Map of the Defences of Oxford in 1644, http://oxoniensia.org/vol%201/Lattey.doc - now https://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1936/lattey.pdf (sigh). See also ch.5 which shows an extract of the map.

47 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/buildings

English team? – which he subsequently gave to the Dragon for its Museum. The handle was tarry-sticky, I remember, the adhesive for the binding having leaked, and the ink of the signatures had blurred into the willow wood. The Museum was then turned into offices and its educational content bundled into archival boxes; I wonder if the bat could still be found.

As you exit heading back north towards Wolfson (where you left your car), leaving by the LMH gate you cross that college's new front, a curious neo-classical pincer-movement on the world. True, it presents a rather more inviting face than the former fairly-blank multi-story brick way with a little door[48] in it, as the architect John Simpson explained of his thinking:

> The area in front of LMH off Norham Gardens is currently neither part of the street nor part of the college but a jumble of cars and bicycles in front of the rather forbidding frontage of Wolfson West. The front of the LMH was never intended to be like this; Raymond Erith, the architect responsible for Wolfson West, envisaged his building as part of a new entrance quadrangle but after 1964 the work went unfinished. Now, we have the opportunity to complete the sequence of spaces that should form the entrance and transform the way the college is perceived. The new Porter's Lodge building on the left and the new Graduate Centre on the right will enclose a new open and welcoming quadrangle that frames Wolfson West. On the Norham Gardens boundary, a central gateway flanked by elegant cast iron screens will sit between two pedimented entrance lodges. The new three-sided entrance quadrangle will alter beyond recognition the experience of arriving at the College and will give it the appropriate public presence it deserves.[49]

Yet in my view the result demonstrates the bankruptcy of modern architectural thinking, that plunders the past to such poor effect. The would-be welcoming arms of the new quad are blocked out by in-your-face iron gates across the entrance, which would look more appropriate somewhere in the stockbroker belt of MacMansions, and the diminutive lodges on either side look like toll-houses with two outsize Doric columns each and then, oddly, square pillars. Perhaps the saving grace of architecture is that one gets used to almost everything over the course of its typical life; but, given that life-span, I do wish people would be a little more imaginative to start with. Amusingly, meanwhile, the same page as quotes the architect above also mentions that 'his designs for LMH showed great sensitivity to the college's fine group of late 19th and 20th century no-classical [sic] buildings'. Presumably the irony is unintended.



A little jink right and then left at the other end of Fyfield Road leads into School Lane along the edge of the Dragon and part of 'the North Oxford Cycle Route' (watch out for users of this). This lane was acquired by the school when it bought the freehold of its site, previously lease-held from St John's College. After purchasing it, the gate a little in from the north end was left open all of the time (as convenient for Dragon staff to drive through to park along the lane), and there was much debate in Governors' meetings about ensuring this gate was closed at least once a year to avoid creating a right of way. "Mr Caws reported that advice from Morgan Cole had been that closure although not strictly necessary (as the south end of the lane is always closed) was a sensible step, and that the Park Town Residents' Association, with whom he had met recently, also wanted it shut more. There was also

[48] Now set fully open in its portico and so looking somewhat less blank in the new scheme.
[49] http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/alumni/new-buildings-2007-2017/architect

uncertainty about ownership of the 'lay-by' off to the west side of the lane. Mr Jones gave instructions to close the gate once a year, on a date that would cause minimum inconvenience to the neighbours, and to minute the event."[50] However, as far as I knew it was never actually closed – certainly it was never minuted as such; nor did the Governors ever check. I don't believe that it ever is closed now: dealing with the residents of the Crescent, the back end of Park Town, who also liked being able to drive through, was just too difficult,[51] especially after the contention generated by the proposed music school developments which included the demolition of residential Lane House on the east side of the Lane before the main school buildings.

Public rights of way are very odd. In this case, code 320/50 on the map,[52] the '111m' of it are shown as a 'public footpath'[53] – yet it is a 'cycleway', indeed no less than part of national route 51, which "passes through Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Essex."[54] Yet there are no rights to cycle along footpaths; you need a bridleway:

"You can use:

- footpaths – for walking, running, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
- bridleways – for walking, horse riding, bicycles, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs",

says the UK government;[55] but the care required in dealing with this sort of thing is apparent in that (according to this) you may not *run* on a bridleway!

As for private roads, and the distinction between rights of passage over them for vehicles or otherwise, the Commons Library Briefing, 10 April 2018 on "Private, or 'unadopted' roads in England and Wales",[56] summarises the position as 'highly complex'. Rather despairingly it attempts to make things clear through Ladybird-book type headings, "2. What is a highway?" – only to admit that 'there is no statutory definition of a highway, only a common law one'. It quotes Halsbury's Laws:

> A highway is a way over which there exists a public right of passage, that is to say a right for all Her Majesty's subjects at all seasons of the year freely and at their will to pass and repass without let or hindrance. A highway may be dedicated subject to certain restrictions or obstructions; and it may be limited to a recognised class of traffic, that is it need not be a way for vehicles, as, if they are open to the public generally, footpaths, bridleways and driftways are highways.

The right of passage is independent of the duty to maintain, which depends upon whether the highway is 'adopted' (by the local council, that is). The Highway Act of 1959, superseding the Act of 1835 and other legislation, recognised those that were to be maintained at the public expense, those to be repaired by private individuals or corporate bodies, and those which no-one is liable to repair. Alas, this beautifully logical arrangement was flattened by the now-current 1980 Highway Act, which abolished the third classification; we now have simply the first category and 'other',

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50 GPC minutes February 2008.

51 Eric, long-standing maintenance man, confirmed this to me in January 2019. He said that the Park Town residents used to be provided with a key to the gate by the School, but kept losing them. Rather than endlessly replacing the keys the gate has just been fixed open.

52 https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Web/standardmap.aspx – as illustration on the previous page.

53 The key to the map also seems to omit the symbol used for the barrier at the south end of the lane; clicking on it in situ does bring up the explanation that it is a 'barrier/ vehicle (barrier)', AND a 'barrier/ staggered (barrier)'. Perhaps the first refers to the northern gate. This pop-up also says the lane is '108m' long now.

54 https://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/route/route-51. It starts at the west end of Broad Street, by Boswells. LDP2 in ch.7 uses some of it to the north.

55 https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-public-rights-of-way

56 http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00402/SN00402.pdf

which are 'unadopted'. The poor old local authority is obligated to keep a list of all the roads in the first category, ie those it is required to maintain.[57]

Further problems accrue as to whether your highway is a 'road' or not. If it is a road, then the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1988 will apply. This produces much weirdness; it seems you can have:

- Private roads which are highways for one or more classes of traffic, and so "roads" for the purposes of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and some other legislation which uses the same definition.
- Private roads to which the public have access and so also "roads" for the purposes of such legislation, but not (or not yet) highways.
- Private roads which are not highways, nor subject to public access.[58]

We have diverted considerably and not particularly conclusively as we proceed along Dragon Lane! Note the plantings and stones marking out areas on its Park Town side; these would seem to claim the unpaved territory, even though beyond the garden walls of the Crescent houses, as their own, although surely their property rights (except possibly of passage) stop at the wall? This would seem to be one of those instances where actual technical ownership is undermined by practical possession. Incidentally, the really quite large tree planted by one of these owners coincided with the dispute about the redevelopment of the Lane House site on the other side. It seemed to be some strategic block readied for the long-term, ie 'you can't do that because you'd damage my tree'.

With respect to the parking that has mushroomed along both sides of the Lane in a most ugly way since the north gate was left open, it seems that only the owner has a right; however, the Park Town lot would seem to have won an effective 'licence to park' by virtue of being tolerated. (Another example of the acquisition of rights by bare-faced behaviour.) And just to be clear while here, whether anyone else parking there is committing an *offence* or merely a *trespass* 'by parking on a private road to which the public does not have access' depends upon whether you drive less than 15 yards from a public road, with the intent of parking only – so that sorts that out![59]

Behind the School buildings on your right – you used to be able to peer through the pedestrian gate half-way along, when it was merely wrought iron; it is now a solid structure, heaven forbid that you might glimpse some *children* – is the Museum building where the cricket bat used to be housed. A small two-storey clapboard structure with external staircase, this is supposed to predate the rest of the school, being (reportedly) a structure from the time when the area was an orchard or market garden owned by Mr Gee.[60] This would be the same Mr Gee who in 1897 built what is now the glassy Gee's Restaurant nearby in the Banbury Road. "It was really the forerunner of the modern garden centre we would recognise today, selling indoor and outdoor plants, flowers, fruit and vegetables, often produced nearby at the Gee's nurseries in Norham Gardens."[61]

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57 Oxfordshire tells you how to apply to change the list, if you think it appropriate, but not how to see the list itself https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/street-maintenance-z/highway-record-map ...

58 Andrew Barsby, *Private Roads: The Legal Framework* (5th ed.), 2013, cited in SN004012.pdf as above.

59 Commons briefing SN00402.pdf as above.

60 *A Dragon Century 1877 – 1977*, C H Jaques p23 provides the information about the orchard, but in fact I have not been able to nail down the Museum's reported antiquity – something I was told, once, I suppose. It is clearly not of the same type as the brick purpose-built buildings all around it. However, the 1876-surveyed 6-inch OS map suggests the orchard might have been rather on the north side of the as-yet-unbuilt Bardwell Road, and the Museum is not shown at all.

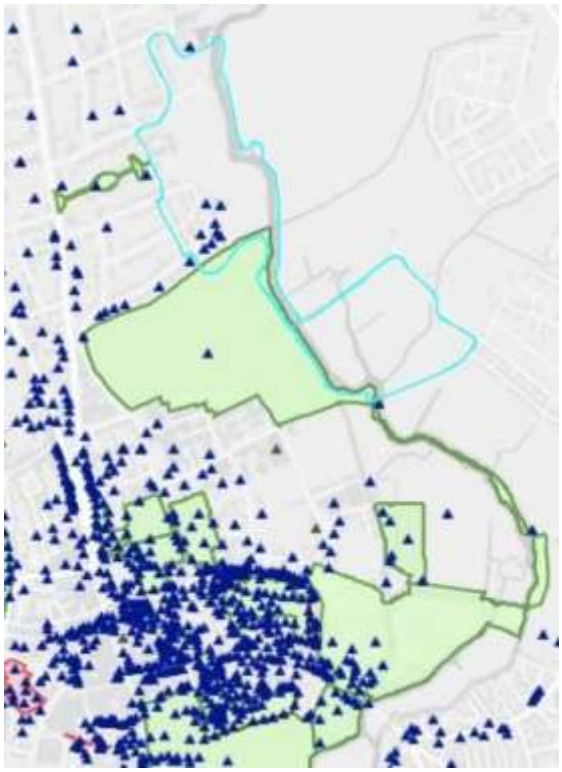
61 https://www.gees-restaurant.co.uk/gees-restaurant-bar-history/ The 'Norham Gardens' location for the nursery is not really borne out by the 1876 OS map either, as this part of the St John's suburb along the north edge of the Parks had already been built by that date.



Debouching into Bardwell Road, post-box on the corner with Charlbury Road, you should bear in mind that this is all very new development. The much-referred to 1876 6-inch OS map Oxfordshire XXXIII shows School Lane (perhaps surprisingly), and then nothing but fields, possibly traversed by tracks running east-west, until what is now Linton Road (at the end of which Wolfson lies). And the Davis map from the 1790s shows *nothing* in the area except a slope down to the east, not even field hedges – clear from St Giles' Church to Diamond House,[62] part of an area vaguely labelled 'St Giles's Field':

I suggest you turn right at the post box and so curve around the bottom of Bardwell Road (you are walking *through* the Dragon School here – children may be visible, avert your eyes) into Chadlington Road, where you pass the entrance to the Cherwell Boathouse. If you have planned this walk on a summer evening, and felt like treating yourself to a good (if expensive) dinner, an earlier booking here is recommended. Less so the actual punting that you can do, which (although something 'done' in Oxford) is both harder and less rewarding than it looks.[63]

And so back to Wolfson and its listed buildings. In fact, a surprising amount of what you have passed has been listed, one way or another – the whole of the Parks themselves, much of LMH, the Park Town crescent (the brick backs of which you saw from School Lane – the fronts at least pretend to be stone, though most of it is merely stucco), several individual houses in north Oxford neo-gothic. Even Wolfson's bridge is listed (specifically) – as you should have noticed when you paused at its top at the start of the walk, it "provides the final point or full stop to the fluid progression through the building".



It is nothing like the thick density of listed buildings in the centre of Oxford, of course, but given the somewhat unprepossessing red brick and concrete (and grass), a reasonable haul. Historic England's map-search gives this plot[64] – with the walk you might have followed overlaid, with optional loop.

The original intent of this chapter was to somehow abstract the bridges and connected areas of land in Oxford to another matrix that could be used to demonstrate *something*, but the messy complexity of real life has defeated me.[65] At least, so far, we haven't crossed the same bridge twice – is that consolation for failure?

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62 This is where the Marston Ferry Road now turns off the Banbury Road; the name is preserved in the modern old-people's home at the junction.

63 And at £18/hr (April 2019), of dubious value at that.

64 https://historicengland.org.uk/umbraco/Surface/NHLE/MapSearch?postcode=OX2%206SS&clearresults=True

65 Really it all got too much when the seasonal variations (let alone historical ones) in the watercourses came to be considered. Different summer and winter maps? As with walking, a flexible approach is necessary.

As an afternote on bridges, we have seen that these often have unexpected qualities as well as history – the prestressed concrete of the bridge near the rollers, for example. Similarly, across the other side of Oxford, Hythe Bridge Street by Upper Fisher Row conceals engineering glory. At the end of the twentieth century its then-125-year cast-iron beamed bridge with jack arches was deemed to have inadequate tensile strength, being rated for 7.5t only, and the problem was to strengthen it without lengthy road closures and without spoiling its aesthetic.[66] Remarkably all the challenges were solved by installing pre-stressed carbon fibre reinforced polymer plates from a scaffold deck over the river. The plates are all-but invisible, and increased the load-capacity to 40t; all for the remarkably low cost of £120,000.[67] "The team involved in the operation believes that this is the world's first such application of stressed carbon fibre. The technique appears to have very significant advantages for future projects such as the strengthening of underground railway covered way structures where clearances are very often critically tight."[68]

As for history, this Hythe Bridge is of course not the first:[69]

1200-1210: The first known Hythe Bridge, probably of wood, was built by Osney abbey.

1373-1403: Hythe Bridge rebuilt in stone, with three arches.

1861: Hythe Bridge was replaced by the present iron Hythe Bridge,[70] designed by a local engineer, John Galpin.

Galpin also designed many of the North Oxford houses of the sort you walked past after the Parks.[71] "Galpin was a colourful character in the business world of Victorian Oxford. By training a carpenter, he became a surveyor, auctioneer and a builders' merchant. In 1866 he founded the Oxford Building Company which became the biggest developer in the city before collapsing in bankruptcy which attracted a crowd of 6,000 people who planned to burn him in effigy."[72] Between founding the company and its bankruptcy in 1883, he was elected Lord Mayor of Oxford twice.[73]

Hythe Bridge was sometimes called 'High Bridge', and so labelled on Davis' 1790s map. Which is correct? The explanation that 'Hythe' means wharf is repeated often, eg in Wikipedia, "the name 'Hythe' is derived from the 'hithe' (wharf) that used to be located by the bridge. 'Hithe' is a Saxon word that means a landing place"; Occam's razor might shave this back to the simpler descriptive term – especially if the VCH (as above) is right about Osney and Castle mills closing off this stream to river traffic. Will we ever know for sure? The explanation seems pretty fixed now, anyway.

And, indeed, so too the Thames and its multifarious channels seem fixed. Here, though, we might be mistaken; ongoing work on flood alleviation is devising new channels south-west of the city (see outline on next page), continuing a gradual shift in that direction. 'If all approvals are granted

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66 A large pipe immediately in front of the north side of the bridge does that quite well anyway!

67 It is hard to judge the cheapness or otherwise of civil engineering works but this large sum was thought little at the time for bridge-strengthening. The only comparison I have is that at about the same time a humped zebra crossing – a mere bump of tarmac – in Bardwell Road cost about £30,000.

68 The New Civil Engineer, 21 Oct 1999 https://www.newcivilengineer.com/winner-small-project-sponsored-by-glenigan-hythe-bridge-strengthening-oxford/838278.article

69 This historical summary is from *Where Thames Smooth Waters Glide*, https://thames.me.uk/s01790.htm though it may also be found on Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hythe_Bridge

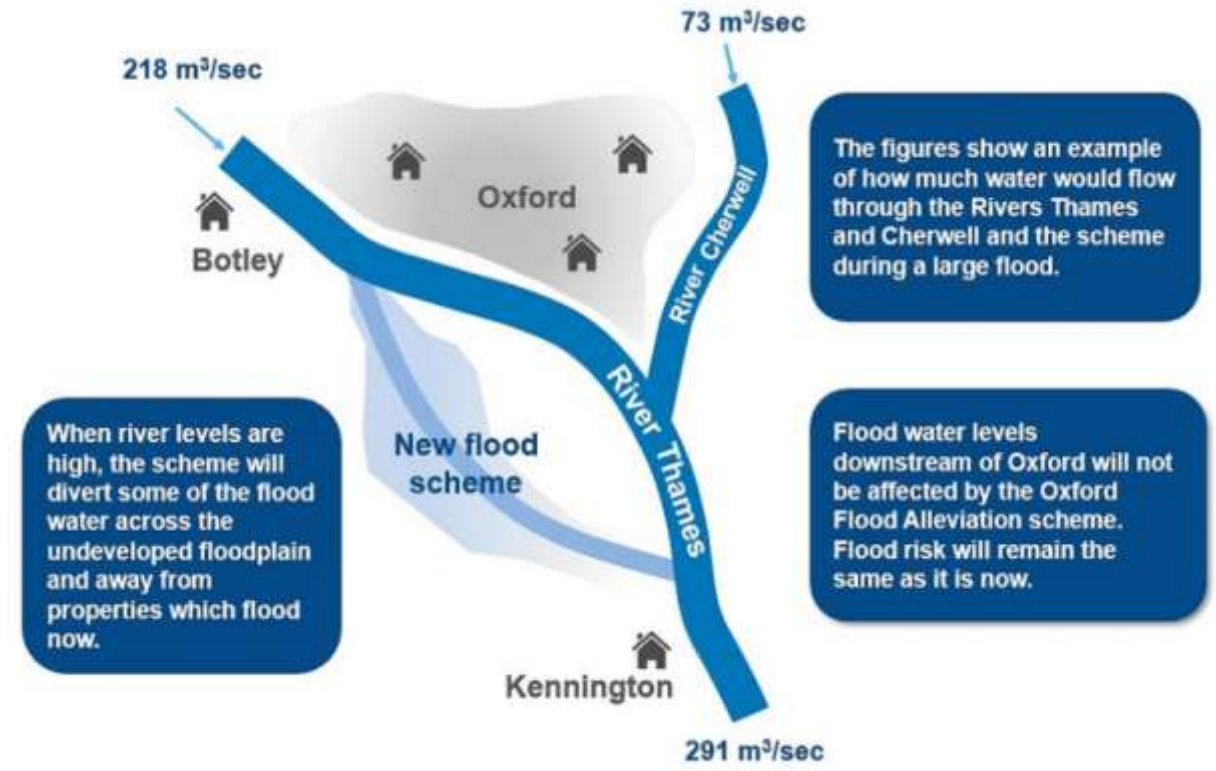
70 "Tender of £400 by Horseley Ironworks accepted by the Hythe Bridge Committee. However, the iron balustrades show the name of local ironfounder W. Lucy and Co." https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Hythe_Bridge_(Oxford) – which cites Oxford Journal, 4 May 1861 for the tender value. I have been unable to find the Lucy name on the balustrades.

71 He also designed, with George Shirley, numbers 19-33 on the east side of Warnborough Road; the Oxford Building Company built no.6 (together with numbers 1-5 and 33): Tanis Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford*, 1992.

72 http://www.kellogg.ox.ac.uk/discover/about-kellogg/25-years-of-kellogg-college/the-norham-manor-estate/

73 Stephanie Jenkins: http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/1836_1962/galpin_john_1873_1879.html

construction will start in 2019 and is expected to take 3 to 4 years', we are told with respect to planning applications submitted by the Environment Agency in March 2018.[74]



Oxford flood scheme

I like this diagram[75] in particular as it also gives possible flow volumes. Ever since when, as a child at the Dragon, I was asked to attempt to calculate the volume of flow in the Cherwell (without much success, and certainly without any possibility of verification), I have often looked at the speed of the current on this river and the Thames and wondered just how much water is going past. Not that I really know what 73m^3/s is, though I suppose at least one can say, 'about 1/3rd of 218m^3/s'...

I also wonder how long it is going to take for that water going past to get to London. Another difficult sum! Especially if your thought-experiment includes a yellow plastic duck, which might get swirled into a backwater. Perhaps many many plastic ducks?[76] Yet this perhaps confuses surface and sub-surface flow rates?

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74 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-flood-scheme/oxford-flood-scheme

75 Available at the moment (January 2019) from https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/contacts/alleviation-scheme/ as well as https://www.gov.uk/government/publications as above, these sites all promise updates as the work progresses and the content is probably only temporary.

76 Like the 28,000 lost at sea in 1992 - https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/what-can-28000-rubber-duckies-lost-at-sea-teach-us-about.



Maybe not Venice, but lots of water: gate off Binsey Lane

Chapter 3 – Old technology

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way – Matthew 7:14

The Oxford Canal lances into the city from the north along the edge of Port Meadow (ch.1) and in a way quite unlike all those wavery river channels (ch.2). It provides the surest and most direct walking route, delightfully away from the noise-to-tail fug of the internal combustion engine on the main roads, from Wolvercote, or even Kidlington or Shipton on Cherwell, past several North (west) Oxford locations and into the centre of town, or, with a short link along the Sheepwash Channel, to the remaining railway station. A jink beyond its terminus offers a continuation along the Castle Mill Stream to Paradise, past (old) Oxpens to the Oxford Ice Rink and so over Gasworks Rail Bridge and back to the Thames path.

And yet this handy pedestrian link is often surprisingly overlooked, even by those who have lived long in Oxford; Paul Armstead, who had lived in Osney for many years, was bowled over when I introduced it to him in January 2017, and the convenience of the connection to the railway station dismissed because of its 'difficulty' and 'danger'.

Not surprisingly with steam-punk tech, canals come with their own clouds of nerds, shading from bridge-buffs to lock-lovers, cruising-connoisseurs with their practical needs for information[1] and services to armchair historians of the industrial revolution and Victorian eras. Overlaid on the enthusiastic effusions of all these now is material from long-distance footpathers and geocaching types. Where to start?

Actually, the Oxford canal resisted the steam-punk, that was a loose and misleading epithet; the Oxford boatmen resisted steam[2] (and diesel) power in favour of horse-traction long after other canals had converted. "One narrowboat [called *Friendship*] carrying coal on the Oxford Canal was drawn by a mule until 1959 and was the last horse-drawn freight narrowboat in Great Britain."[3]

Given that the canal opened in 1790, this gives a life of about a century and a half. The Ford Model T, generally regarded as the harbinger of the ubiquitous motor car,[4] was first produced in 1908. One cannot but wonder – or hope? – that the internal combustion engine, at least, has no longer life than the canal system – perhaps being relegated to occasional leisure use![5]

The canal terminated just south of Hythe Bridge (the one reinforced with pre-stressed carbon fibre reinforced polymer plates, see ch.2 – prize winning!), in a basin and wharves where now the car-park opposite Nuffield College sits a little below the modern road surface. This dreadful loss of city-centre amenity and history happened in 1951, when William Morris of Morris Cars (ennobled as Viscount Nuffield), who had bought the site, filled it in and used part of it to build Nuffield College. The spare area he leased to Oxford City Council for the car-park.[6] The Friendship would have hauled its coals to a wharf in Juxon Street after that.

The linearity of the canal perhaps detracts from some of the pleasure of walking along it, but observe the geeky opportunities: every bridge is sequentially numbered – and every lock too. The

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1 eg "The maximum dimensions for a boat to be able to travel on the waterway are 70 feet long and 7 feet wide. The maximum headroom is 6 feet and 9 inches. The maximum draught is 4 feet and 5 inches" - https://canalplan.org.uk/waterway/b035

2 "Towards the end of the 19th century some companies began to introduce boats powered by steam engines. Fellows Morton & Clayton Ltd (FMC), who operated a large fleet of horse drawn boats, introduced steam powered boats from 1886." https://www.waterways.org.uk/blog/evolution_the_narrow_boat

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Canal#Decline

4 Though the layout of its controls was anything but standard and it would not be possible for a modern driver to simply get in and go. According to Top Gear (series 10 episode 8) the first to use a recognisable layout was the Cadillac Type 53 from 1916 which was then popularised by the Austin 7.

5 With pricey licence for eco-damage, perhaps.

6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Canal#Decline

canal was built north-to-south, and so the highest number bridge[7] is 243, a bit north of Hythe Bridge, an elegant lazy-s diagonal across the canal (and Isis Lock, number 46) with black-and-white painted iron railings.

This exceptional bridge is particularly odd, as the canal building programme had run into financial difficulties. "The stretch of the canal from Banbury to Oxford was built as cheaply as possible. Many economy measures were used. Wherever possible, wooden lift or swing bridges were built instead of expensive brick ones."[8] Whether this too was part of the economising or not, "much of the labour needed to build this final section of the canal was supplied by convicts from the nearby Oxford Castle Prison."[9] It turns out that bridge 243 was not a final flourish with whatever spare cash the canal prospectors found in the kitty at the end of the project, but in fact a later rebuilding, in 1844, when the lock here was redesigned.

The 'lazy-s' design is described as a 'turnover' in the Heritage Trail leaflet, but really it is a 'side bridge'. A turnover bridge enables the towing horse to switch sides of the canal without unhitching its rope, something achieved by having the ramps on the far side come back the same way as the up ramp, perhaps in a spiral – and then, obviously, having the towpath pass under the bridge. Bridge 243 has its ramps both pointing smoothly towards the centre of town, allowing the horse to cross the Isis Lock – the side channel – without unhitching or turning sharply, so as to continue on down the west side of the canal towards Hythe Bridge. The criss-crossed engineering bricks it is paved with were to help the horses get a grip, rather than the useful antislip measure for the modern pedestrian they are now.

The Isis Lock under the bridge was a key join in the route from Birmingham to London, and originally twice as wide (to allow river barges through). Immediately downstream is the long-unnavigable Castle Mill Stream, but running west is the Sheepwash Channel or Stream which flows[10] under the railway to the Thames, joining it 'where four rivers meet'.[11] The Sheepwash Channel is most 'famous' for its railway swing-bridge, rather a ruin despite Oxford Preservation Trust's seemingly annual resolution to fix it right up.[12] I remember the old station building this bridge led to, 'Oxford Rewley Road', inefficiently parallel to the station on the competing line that finally won out. I only remember the station building as a car-tyre and exhaust business – it has since been completely redeveloped as the Said Business School, with its strangely rectilinear design[13] – but it terminated the 'Varsity Line' to Cambridge, as well as a route to the Midlands and Scotland.[14] As such, it too represents 'old technology'; the fact that the station was built over where the once flourishing Rewley Abbey indicates again how nothing really lasts.

Alas, the Oxford canal was superseded as the best (fastest) route for the Birmingham to London commerce in 1805, only 15 years after being finished, by the Grand Junction Canal. However, the Oxford canal remained profitable into the twentieth century, helped by having the Grand Junction Canal pay compensation for lost traffic.[15] This is an interesting example of established technology

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7 There must have been a bridge next to Hythe Bridge itself to get to the wharves. Would this have been 244? Indeed, would this have been the 'seventh bridge' along the Botley Road? No trace remains.

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Canal#Construction

9 http://www.oxfordcanalheritage.org/sites/default/files/uploads/oxford-canal-heritage-trail-140503.pdf.

10 This is one of Oxford's many sideways channels. Working out which way it ought to flow from a map is a puzzle; and although my narrative takes it this way, in fact it goes the other, from Thames to Castle Mill.

11 OK, they don't actually meet; the Thames flows both in and out at this junction with Bulstake and Sheepwash Streams. But it is a nice name with its echoes of paradise.

12 This starts by spreading black polythene sheeting over the weeds around the base shortly before Open Doors day each year.

13 One has such trouble finding periphrases for 'ugly' when it comes to modern architecture. But surely there were opportunities to echo the historical associations of the almost organic ironwork of Victorian railway stations here, or to apply some hint of Gothic, given the former abbey on site (and other buildings in Oxford)? Or at least, with such scope, to produce *something* with a curve or hint of humanity?

14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Rewley_Road_railway_station

15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Canal#Commercial_use

achieving rents for non-use by better replacements; some (mis?)application of the idea of 'fairness', our not-infrequent response to the harsh competition of evolution in many cases.[16]

Should you walk north counting bridge-numbers, you will observe that many have suffixes indicative of later replacement and infilling: thus the Elizabeth Jennings Way bridge is 238B – a replacement for an electric lift bridge 238A, while the St Edwards School lift bridge a little further north is the original 238.[17] These variations rather confuse the counter, and it may take several walks (as it did for me), or one deliberately counting the bridges, before you notice that number 241 is missing.

Number 240 carries Aristotle Lane across the canal; number 242 Walton Well Road (both lead to Port Meadow from the city). Number 241 must have been somewhere in between! It was hard to track this down, and I'm still not sure of its location, but the Oxford Canal Heritage Trail[18] provided this information:

> ... What happened to [bridge] 241? It was recorded in the Oxford Canal Company archives as 'the Workhouse Bridge', and was a wooden lift ... The name 'Workhouse Bridge' links it with the City Workhouse, established on Rats and Mice Hill (now Wellington Square) in 1771. Until 1865 the Oxford Board of Guardians, who were responsible for the welfare of the workhouse inmates, managed a small mixed farm on the banks of the canal, on land known as Pepper Hills. This was where the Southmoor Road gardens ... now slope down to the water.

The only issue I have with this Trail guide, otherwise recommended if you want to find out more of the local history along the canal, is that it doesn't mention sources and I have been unable to double-check some of this information, eg about 'Pepper Hills'. 'Rats and Mice Hill' appears in a 1771 advertisement[19] in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* for a builder of a new workhouse, but as far as the bridge goes, 'links it with' would like a bit more corroboration! And we still haven't quite nailed its location... As for the 'hills' themselves, these might represent Oxford hyperbolic humour, but remember the overshot Trill Mill on what now seems flat land? I suspect slumpage and grading as the city sprawled.

Bridge numbering is just an example of the sort of train-spotting behaviour that seems to flourish with early industrial technology. I am not necessarily encouraging it as such – or not as something for itself, anyway – but it is this sort of detail that is key to a good walk. While looking out for bridge numbers one comes to appreciate (in best perambulatory fashion) the varied construction of the bridges themselves, and, unlike most Oxford bridges, this time from the seamy underside. On two or three of the north Oxford bridges, the undersides have been further enhanced by murals in recent years. The one on the west side under Elizabeth Jennings Way is particularly pleasing, being a mash-up of historical associations for the area: a Spitfire is seen flying over a clay pit, brick industries, canal activities and (in best Calvin-and-Hobbs imaginary way) a dinosaur:[20]



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16 Aww, does it only eat one thing which is dying out? Isn't it cute?

17 https://canalplan.org.uk/waterway/b035

18 oxford-canal-heritage-trail-140503.pdf as above.

19 Illustrated in http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Oxford/

20 https://oxfordcanalmuralproject.wordpress.com/murals/history-mural/ - the oxfordcanalmuralproject site also discusses the other murals and the thinking behind the project. But honestly, anything with dinosaurs, elephants or camels can't go far wrong.

Running along the section south of Walton Well Road are a series of blocks of flats built by Lucy & Co, who formerly had an ironworkers here. These themselves illustrate shifts in architectural thinking, at the Walton Well end being relatively modern and elegant, with curves and airy spaces, gradually getting older, blocky and functional (ugly) towards the Jericho bridge. I remember the factory from when it was functioning, with mysterious industrial sounds and lights (from furnaces) and a metallic tang, or perhaps more an unavoidable pong of corundum, in the damp air. There was a long decline, with less and less activity, and more and more broken windows; even when I visited the factory on a school trip in the late 1960s I think I sensed in the strangely dim spaces that there was more machinery and areas than were in use, though I was impressed by the furnace fires in the gloom, and vast scale of production. I long kept as a souvenir from this visit an acute triangular piece of copper about three inches long and maybe an eighth thick, a solid weight for its size, picked off a huge pile of such things, shiny and mysteriously pointless in its precision.



Pretty much the only trace left of the 'Eagle Ironworks', as it was called, is on the gateposts at the bottom of Juxon Street, adorned by iron eagles[21] – unless one sees some echo of them in the industrial scale of the flats that were built over the site, which indeed preserve in their encircling walls some of the closed-in atmosphere formerly provided by the factory to St Sepulchre's Cemetery. The Ironworks historically produced 'lamp-posts, manhole covers, ornamental ironwork and agricultural machinery'.[22] I remember being shown their imprint on the stacks under the Bod Quad,[23] and some manhole covers can still be found in Oxford with their name, even if I couldn't find it on Hythe Bridge (ch.2).

Lucy's UK activities in Oxford are now that of a property management company, and you sometimes see their little white vans, discreetly labelled, weaselling[24] about Walton Well. Some manufacturing must continue elsewhere in the UK, as their accounts mention £7.8M 'exports' from there; oddly enough however the auditors agree with the claim that 'it would be prejudicial to the interests of the Group to disclose a detailed analysis of turnover.'[25] (Sigh. Another example of 'we'll ignore the rules and see who calls us on it', like the Park Town Crescent houses encroaching on School Lane in ch.2.)

Most activity takes place abroad, I surmise: locations include 'Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, China, Thailand, Malaysia and India'[26] – rental activity achieving only £7.4M compared to sales of £175.8M (31.12.2017 group accounts again). I remember being surprised a few years ago to see a job advertised with them as based in Oxford and the Gulf States, thinking then that they had dwindled to what is still visible locally, a rack-renter of dubious repute.[27] Apparently the whole Group's headquarters are still in Walton Well Road, an interesting example of icebergs and their tips, and their continuing businesses indicative of the danger, perhaps, of pursuing a narrative (old technology overtaken by change) in advance of the facts!

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21 These have been rather oddly painted silver recently, which has not helped their rather anaemic appearance. However, identical but properly black ones *also* appear either side of an apparently unused pedestrian entrance to offices in Walton Well Road, and not far from these rather more vigorous-looking birds adorn a vehicle entrance.

22 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_Ironworks,_Oxford

23 On a tour led by Elizabeth Willmott.

24 This attempts to describe the rather stingy looking signage on the vans (greyish on white?), their small size, their general appearance of British Leyland workers – furtive appearance rather than productivity.

25 2017 accounts for Lucy Group Ltd company number 00051908 retrieved from https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/00051908/filing-history

26 https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapid=264285446

27 "in 2007 [Lucy's] demolished the Eagle Ironworks and redeveloped the site with apartment blocks, which it lets out directly to tenants, trading as Lucy Properties. This has been controversial for town planning reasons", says Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_Ironworks,_Oxford) in an unguarded (and unsubstantiated) moment.

Manholes, as were made by Lucy's,[28] offer another world of unexpected historical connections, usually overlooked ('overstepped'?). Most were made by businesses that no longer exist, yet still proclaim their original maker's name, and sometimes purpose. For example, 'Post Office Telegraph' appears several times[29] on Oxford streets (there's one in Leckford Road) and one has to think quite hard – like converting decimal currency back into 'old money' – to remember that the Post Office turned into British Telecom, and that the telegraph – before these covers protected electrical wires carrying messages in morse – were originally signal flags little more advanced than those optical semaphores employed by Roman signal stations. I liked 'Oxford Water' in Binsey Lane, largely because the idea of a locally-based company that could perhaps be held to local account is so attractive compared to the anonymous corporations of nowadays – remember Galpin and the plan to burn him in effigy? – and the difficulty in finding out, say, who will clear a blocked drain in the street.[30] Other covers simply display elegant patterns, of interlocking letter shapes or more abstract geometries; one suspects the most attractive are older, such as this coal-hole cover in Holywell:



As with canal-things, some of these pleasures are best sampled lightly and privately, lest you suddenly find yourself in unattractive company[31] – some people get obsessive, and passion may be interesting but obsession is not, and even with the former types, grubby anoraks can be off-putting.

But we digress from the canal and its towpath – few manhole covers here! – and need to continue along its needle-like thrust into the ball of wool that is otherwise Oxford.

Actually, once you've learned its utility as a behind-the-scenes route, it is more what it connects to that is of interest. It is rather disappointing in terms of birds: there are some greedy mallards that will scurry to anyone casting bread upon the waters, and you should look for a heron at the over-flow near the winding hole just above the Isis Lock and bridge 243, but otherwise (and despite one of the bridge murals which shows a kingfisher) more interesting fare is scarce. Similarly fish: minnows at most.



Heron where he's meant to be

After Hythe Bridge and trying to visualise the car-park as a canal terminus, crossing the bridge to the other side of Castle Mill Stream allows you to continue on south across the grain of the roads, across Park End Street and St Thomas' Street towards Paradise. St Thomas' Street features Quaking Bridge to your left and Morrell's Lion Brewery (now converted to flats) to your right. Quaking Bridge, wooden until replacement with iron in 1835, was used daily by 'the Canons of Oseney Abbey ... for services in St George's Chapel at the castle'.[32] No one has a better suggestion for its charming name than that it was probably descriptive.

The Lion Brewery flats are a useful reminder of a once-busy industry of which little remains:

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28 I can't tell if they still do. Their castings division claims to be a 'niche manufacturer or specialist aluminium and iron-based castings'; and although they also claim their vision is 'to have our products on every street around the world', that is with respect to their lighting division! (Quotes from 2017 accounts, again.)

29 More commonly you see 'Post Office Telephones' though, which comes from a later period of business.

30 City Council: try County. County Council: try Thames Water. Thames Water: try City. Citizen's Advice says (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/water/water-supply/sewerage/who-is-responsible-for-repairing-drains-and-sewers/) the water utility is responsible for the drain – but of course not for the *road* above it, and there's the rub I think, other than usual bureaucratic and budgetary ineptitude.

31 Mr Corbyn admits to the 'zany' interest of manhole covers https://news.sky.com/story/corbyn-yes-i-collect-manhole-covers-10339360 . https://www.ft.com/manhole provides a pleasingly international overview.

32 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaking_Bridge

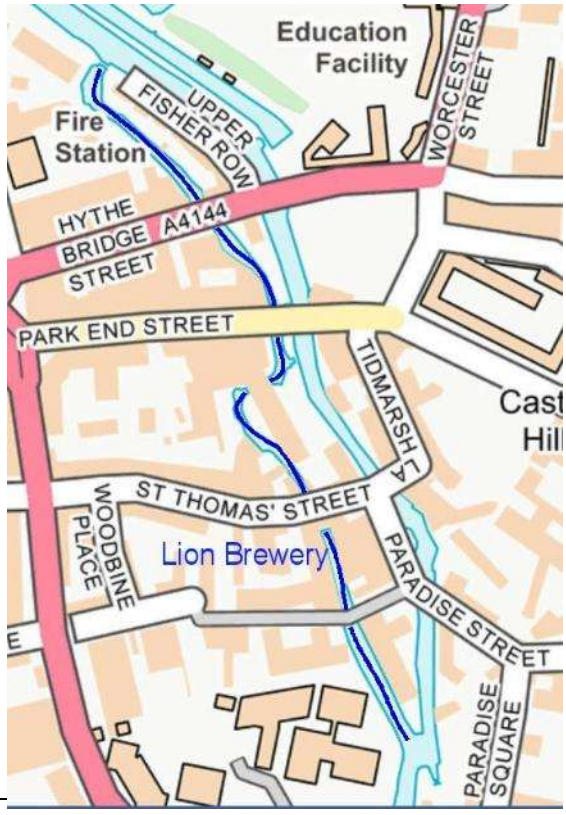
> By 1874 there were ...nine breweries [in Oxford]: Flowers & Co. in Cowley Road; Hall's St Giles Brewery; Hall's Swan Brewery in St Thomas's; Hanley's City Brewery in Queen Street; Le Mills's in St Ebbe's; Morrell's Lion Brewery in St Thomas's; Simonds's in Queen Street; Wootten & Cole's St Clement's Brewery; and Weaving's Eagle Brewery in Park End Street.[33]

I used to do the audit of the Museum of Modern Art in Pembroke Street, up on the top floor, in a library no-one used – it was for staff only – in a huge open space. It had paint-stained bare boards, and overflowing, chaotic shelves (their accounts were similarly presented) below a high ceiling. We were provided with plastic chairs and a trestle table, complete isolation and views over the rooftops to the unexpected proximity of Hinksey Heights and Boars Hill – contrasting greenly with the grey concrete in the foreground of what was then the Westgate multi-storey carpark. This building was part of Hanley's Brewery, a 'square room' (used for a specific brewing process[34]). 'Modern Art Oxford' – so rebranded now – is worth visiting for the architecture alone (or, often, 'only', though you don't have to avert your eyes from *all* their exhibitions).

Morrell's Lion Brewery included numerous buildings designed, with a bit of nominative whimsy, by Harry Drinkwater.[35] This architect lived at 1 Farndon Road, a modest cottage at the Kingston Road end of the street, in the latter part of the nineteenth century; he also designed Pip and Jim School, where his children were then educated, as well as the Museum of Modern Art building. He and his wife Rose are buried in St Sepulchre's cemetery, that aforementioned gloomy oasis behind Lucy's.[36]

The Lion Brewery used for water a specific off-take from Castle Mill Stream, to the west side above Hythe Bridge; it is hard to follow but offers charming back-of-block views (as here, looking north from St Thomas's Street) if you





[33] Liz Woolley, *Industrial Architecture in Oxford, 1870 to 1914*, http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/2010/Woolley.pdf . Brewing was a much more significant industry than it used to be, and this number of breweries in one city in the latter part of the nineteenth century was not unusual.

[34] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brewing_methods#Yorkshire_Square – probably too much information!

[35] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morrells_Brewing_Company

[36] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Drinkwater . Only graves from WW1 are indexed by the cemetery, and finding any other specific grave is a challenge. AEFTR.

trace its parallel course down to the Brewery. (On the way don't forget to count its usually-overlooked bridge as one of the many on 'Botley Road' as you cross Hythe Bridge Street – see ch.2). This is in fact the Wareham Stream, even if Google maps labels it as a second 'Castle Mill Stream', and fails to show it north of Park End Street!

Its purpose was to ensure that water could bypass the Castle Mill at times of high flow. It probably also enabled boats to do the same via an ancient forerunner of the sluice which links the two waterways.[37] More recently the Wareham Stream fed Oxford's last surviving brewery, Morrell's, which was located nearby.[38]

I am not clear whether 'fed' means that it provided water as one of the ingredients for the beer – *can* this have been true of the stuff straight out of the Thames?! – but have since learned that it was at least used to drive an undershot wheel, powering the brewery. The remains of the wheel may be seen from the bridge over the stream on Woodins Way (parallel to but south of St Thomas' Street), looking back north. It looks a bit sad; definitely 'old technology', and certainly not required by the new 'luxury flats'.

Tracing this stream, it is interesting to note the comparative size and flow of water at Hythe Bridge Street, a rather dirty narrow channel, to that under Woodins Way, now a swift coursing stream. There was another small intake opposite the castle tower (is that the 'ancient sluice'?), but surely more must have joined from somewhere. Some of Oxford's streams have been built over and maybe this suggests an example. Trill Mill Stream, forking off a bit further down-river, is certainly a well-documented case.

Just beyond Woodins Way the road crosses Swan Bridge ('Probably early C19. 2 stone arches with cutwater on North. Level roadway flanked by cast-iron railings' according to its terse grade II listing[39]), which is named after yet another brewery nearby, formerly the 'Swan's Nest Brewery' in the early eighteenth century, subsequently taken over by Hall's, Park End Street.

Following the ins-and-outs of these breweries and their names is like tracking members of rock-musicians and their bands. Or trying to follow the Thames through Oxford.

If, rather than crossing Swan Bridge, you follow the footway along the right (west) of the stream, along the edge of more modern flats, you will shortly come to another footbridge. On the other side of the stream here is a fine stone building; now two modern flats,[40] this is thought to have been used as a malt-house for the Swan Brewery, and is marked as such on old OS maps. However, a detailed pre-conversion study[41] concludes that it is not in fact the right form, perhaps instead having been a storehouse. The study places the construction as being in a style some 100 to 150 years earlier than its suggested 1830s date – it certainly looks eighteenth rather than nineteenth century to me – indicating, as the study goes on to say, either that its cited date is wrong, or that 'it could just be a reminder that traditional methods of construction often continue to be used long after innovations have been introduced elsewhere.' Proper old technology!

Turning right on the other side of the footbridge you approach another, albeit unnamed as such, 'four rivers meeting' place, as the Wareham Stream rejoins from the west and the Trill Mill Stream heads off east.

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37 I am not convinced by this utility. A mill-stream by-pass would likely be erratic of flow, and 'sluice' does not sound particularly boat-friendly. The VCH's declaration that 'Oseney and Castle mills ...closed off the two streams nearest to Oxford to river traffic' (see ch.2) seems authoritative.

38 https://www.discoveringbritain.org/content/discoveringbritain/walk%20booklets/Oxford%20Waterways%20walk%20-%20written%20guide.pdf

39 https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1047176

40 Nicely worked if rather constrained by the site (garden? parking?), I looked at their particulars at the time. Flat 1 sold for £930k in December 2016, Flat 2 for £975k in January 2017 - https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/OX1/Paradise-Street.html

41 https://library.thehumanjourney.net/1696/1/OX19PS13.pdfa.pdf documents the building before conversion as well as providing considerable background history on the Swan Brewery and brewing in Oxford.

The start of the Trill Mill Stream is in fact scarcely visible now, but looking south along the edge of Castle Mill Stream from the footbridge can be discerned on the left, especially in winter.

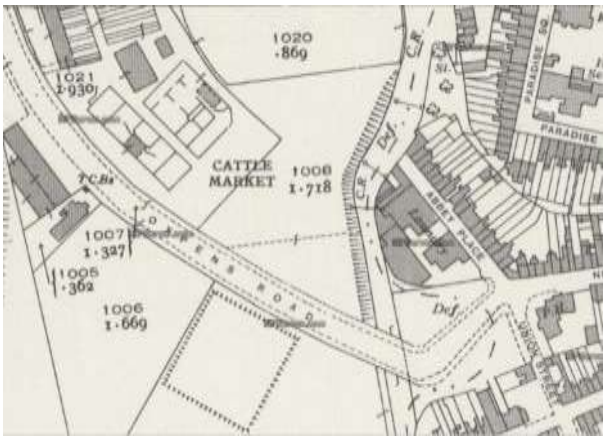
A Trill Mill Stream Diversion:

For advanced[42] walkers and paleocartophiles, it is educational to attempt to follow the Trill Mill Stream below the little backstreets of old St Ebbes. Talking of brewers, this area includes 'Brewer Street', even if you're actually going to take a parallel course along Rose Place, a bit lower down the slope; here at least is one place that you can be sure of being on top of the stream! You only see it again when it emerges in Christ Church memorial gardens.[43]

Mind, there may be a plot-complication to this challenge in that the new Westgate centre, slap bang over the historic culvert, including in its planning 'the diversion of the Trill Mill Culvert'[44] and maybe the otherwise unhistoric 'Trill Mill Lane' at the south end of the new Westgate centre, aiming directly at John Lewis from across the open plaza, is not actually misleading.[45] The original stream and culvert, anyway, was about a block to the north of this.

Maybe more satisfactory to do this virtually, as suggested on p.19.

I suggest for now that, unless a loo-break is needed in which case John Lewis, visible to your left, is both handy[46] and acceptable, turn right across a tan-coloured pathway around the corner of a building to find another bridge crossing the Castle Mill Stream. There might be a sign post indicating this as an acceptable route but, being knocked out of kilter,[47] it is not much help. Anyway, the bridge takes you to the Oxford College of Further Education, which I used to know as Oxpens College but apparently was never that, even if it has been a wide range of other names[48] and is now absurdly branded as 'Activate Learning'. Whatever it is now called, it was most certainly the site of the former Cattle Market (1932 – 1979[49]), as can be seen from this map extract,[50] and this gives a slight twist to the promise to find new jobs for its pupils ('we work directly with



[42] Here defined as those interested in cartographical challenges.

[43] Map provided by https://trillmillstream.wordpress.com/ might help, as mentioned in ch.2. Otherwise, the initial curve is visible in even not-very-old maps like the one shown above, and then drawing a line to the west end of Rose Place can't be too far wrong.

[44] Oxfordshire City Council, 'Response to consultation on the ...Westgate demolition and reconstruction' https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s24317/CA_FEB2514R03%20Annex%201_%20Westgate%20single%20response%20FINAL.pdf

[45] I wrote to the Westgate Press Office (faux de mieux) on 2 January 2019 to try to find out. I never heard back.

[46] Handy-*ish*; go through 'customer collections' on the corner facing you across Norfolk Street, then, unless you use the disabled, it's up to the top floor & through electronics. The British Toilet Association (no kidding) is trying its best but there are few alternatives – it estimates that 40% of public conveniences have disappeared in the last 10 years - http://www.btaloos.co.uk/?p=1981

[47] As at January 2019, anyway.

[48] It was 'Oxford College of Further Education' from 1960 to 2003. Subsequent names have been 'Oxford and Cherwell College', 'Oxford & Cherwell Valley College' and 'City of Oxford College'; I think it is still called the latter, underneath its absurd branding. Google Maps shows it as one thing at one scale and another if you zoom in a bit closer. At the largest scale offered Streetmap amusingly hedges its bets with 'Education Facility'.

[49] 'West Oxford Character Statement and Heritage Assets Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island' 2013, retrieved from https://www.oxford.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1600/west_oxford_character_assessment.pdf

[50] OS 25 inch surveyed 1939 published 1947, via https://maps.nls.uk/view/104195383; mind, Oxpens market itself was only a flicker in history – the version surveyed in 1873 shows neither market nor even Oxpens Road, the whole area to the west of the river there being but fields.

employers to shape our curriculum'[51])...

Meanwhile, it would seem from the picture-windowed studios (slightly tinted) that you pass that you might be able to get a cheap haircut here at the 'Oxford Lifestyle Centre'; resist the temptation[52] so as to press on across Oxpens Road (the continuation of Thames Street; never mind the traffic, a moment or two, if it really is flowing, will see it seize up again to permit a safe transit to the other side between the stationary vehicles). You are headed past the left-hand (east) edge of the Oxford Ice Rink, a strikingly ugly construction that you probably assumed, like me, was built perhaps as a temporary measure, a frolic, with reprieves from time to time on the basis of some enduring popularity.

You would be mistaken; this is the proud if very early product of Grimshaw, now an international firm of architects,[53] and it 'combines an inspired structural response: two 30-metre-tall masts that announce themselves to the historic city centre, from where the masts can be glimpsed.'[54] The text doesn't actually say what the inspiration was combined with, but never mind. Nicholas Grimshaw himself (Knight Bachelor for services to Architecture[55]) designed this. 'With a relatively low budget'[56] too, and perhaps not helped by the awful low-rise two-level flat-pack car-park[57] on the far side, we must learn to appreciate it for what it is,[58] and *look the other way*, across the green grassy meadow – we are aiming for the far corner.[59] This meadow is Oxpens Field:

A large green open space representing a surviving fragment of the flood meadows that once covered the area between the city walls and the River Thames. It includes the sites of the St Ebbe's Bathing Place (created in 1846[60]) and a Civil War fortification recorded in 1644 as 'Hart's Sconce'. The southern tip of the field was once an island, variously recorded as Oxpens Field, George's Island and Ham. The island became a recreation ground in the early 20th century to which the northern part of the field was added in the mid-20th century. It was registered as a Field in Trust to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012.[61]

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51 https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/

52 Complete absence of any visible activity inside probably helps, even if 'you can enjoy leading stylist expertise and a range of premium quality beauty treatments, all at great prices! Get yourself some serious pampering today!' http://www.oxfordlifestylecentre.co.uk/

53 '...with offices in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Kuala Lumpur, Doha, Dubai, Melbourne, and Sydney, employing over 600 staff' - https://grimshaw.global/practice/

54 A pity, really. Boast from https://grimshaw.global/projects/oxford-ice-rink/

55 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Grimshaw#Awards_and_honours

56 https://grimshaw.global/projects/oxford-ice-rink/ again. The low-budget bit isn't surprising, to look at it.

57 This structure was recent put up as a 'temporary replacement' for the old Westgate multistorey carpark that was demolished in 2015 (https://www.facebook.com/OxfordCityCouncil/posts/a-temporary-car-park-at-oxpens-has-now-opened-ahead-of-the-planned-closure-of-we/795499770497763/) , but immediately antiquated: 'Our parking ticket machines do not dispense change. A ticket can be purchased for a higher value but no refunds can be given. Alternatively you can use our telephone payment system if you have a valid debit or credit card' – https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/344/oxpens_car_park/category/53/city_centre_car_parks . Amusingly they had to reduce their charges because the new Westgate offered lower rates – https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15547334.car-parking-prices-will-fall-unless-you-want-a-short-stay-during-the-week/; and it seems the 'temporary' aspect has been forgotten. *** Update 6 Jan 2019 ***! Planning permission (to themselves?!) has expired and the upper level ('deck') is to be taken down, the Oxford Mail reports. Really unclear why they just didn't reinstate it as the former coach park once new Westgate parking came on line.

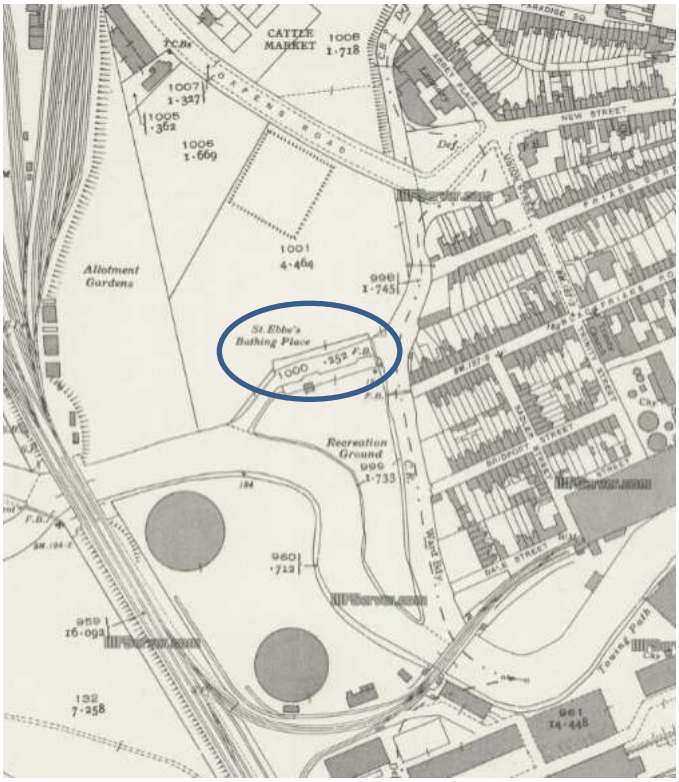
58 *WOCSaHA Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island* 2013 thinks it 'stands out as a building of high architectural interest', 'a landmark building ...unlike anything else in the city' (I can agree with *that*), and colours it bright red on their plans as a 'High Positive Contribution Building'. Mind, other red things include the handy but scarcely 'positive contribution' – we are talking about aesthetics, aren't we? – gas-works pipe bridge (see further, below).

59 If very wet, follow the path along the edge of the ice rink and cross the car park at the back to pick up the river-side walk.

60 This, obviously, predates the 'first' permission granted for the Fiddler's Island bathing on Port Meadow in ch.1. What can one say?

61 *WOCSaHA Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island* 2013 as above

The bathing place is just visible if you know where and when to look, but is clearer from the air (see map and satellite picture below[62]); it was abandoned in 1938. Nothing of the trenches remains, and hasn't for many a year; the 1790s Davis map only shows trenches to the east of







Castle Mill Stream.

Just before we get to the end of the meadow, note from this earlier map (surveyed 1873) how Castle Mill Stream used to meander here on the east side. It is suggested[63] that this might indicate that the stream was not just a canalised mill-stream, but had natural precedent. This would appear plausible; but on the other hand, of course, it could be that the millers just couldn't be bothered, once their water had run safely past their mill; or indeed that the main river's channels (suggested by Trill Mill, Shire Lake) ran closer to the south of the St Aldates slope than now.

Another little bridge – see how they focus a perambulation! this one postdates the maps, though is clearly visible at the bottom of the aerial photograph – carries you across the last of Castle Mill Stream as it rejoins the Thames onto what might be called Old Gasworks land. Now here's old technology for you! Hardly anything is left of it now, but it used to dominate this area, spreading on both sides of the bridge and approached on the land side by the brutally named 'Gas Street' – now lost, luckily, but an extension of Speedwell

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62 Map: OS 25 inch surveyed 1939 published 1947 as above; satellite image from Google maps Jan 2019. I'm sure they used to date their imint, but it just says 'Imagery © 2019 Google' now – and I *know* there hasn't been any sun yet this year (quite apart from the leaves on the trees in the picture)!

63 *WOCSaHA Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island* 2013 as above, again.

Street which does survive. Given the complete disappearance of this technology, you may be surprised to learn that 'the final gas light was ceremonially switched off in New College Lane in April 1979 by Fred Kane, the chairman of the city highways committee.'[64, 65]

You are actually at the foot of the 'Gasworks rail bridge', now merely a pedestrian route from the city to green spaces and the Thames path. It used to look like this:[66]



I think this must be a view from down-stream (given the gas-holder on the left, shown on the 1939 OS map above to be on the south-west bank of the river) so on the walk you are about to cross the bridge from right to left. The gasworks themselves were to the right of the picture (further along into St Ebbes than you have walked).

But what *is* this gas?

Coal gas was introduced in the UK in the 1790s as an illuminating gas by the Scottish inventor William Murdoch and became very widely used for lighting, cooking, heating and powering gas engines.

Coal was heated [without air] in a retort and the crude gas was passed through a condenser to remove tar and a scrubber to remove other impurities. The residue remaining in the retort was coke.[67]

The Oxford gas works provided gas from 1818 to 1960. As well as public lighting – with street lamps lit and doused manually every day[68] – the tally of the number of users demonstrates a steady growth[69] through to the mid-twentieth century. The industrial by-product of this by-now inner-city manufacturing was horrific; 'the poet WH Auden, an undergraduate at Christ Church in the mid 1920s, would bring visitors [to the gasworks site] to show them what he considered to

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64 https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/community/memorylane/9038453.Final_flickers_of_gas_lamps/?ref=arc

65 'The Civic Society, reflecting its founders' concern about erosion, went into action in 1970 when the old street lights in historic streets, especially the High, started to be replaced by modern lights shaped like pingpong bats. It formed a street lighting group and one member, the late Robert MacCoun, an American engineer, designed a special bracket for a modernised version of the traditional lantern which the city council was eventually persuaded to adopt.' *40 Years of Planning* by 'MB-W', https://www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Forty-Years-of-Oxford-Planning.pdf

66 'The completed bridge with a coal-carrying locomotive crossing it and one of the six gas holders behind, 1925. Image © Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire History Centre, ref: D254356a', retrieved from http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/interesting-aspects-of-grandpont-and-south-oxford-s-history/st-ebbe-s-gasworks produced by Liz Wooley for the South Oxford Community Association, Reg. Charity Number 304351.

67 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coal_gas#Manufacture

68 'In 1819 the gas lamps of Oxford were lit from sunset to sunrise, except during the three summer months. In 1833 there were 225 gas lamps in the then much smaller city. In 1931 out of the two thousand street lamps in Oxford, only a hundred were electric; and even as late as 1963 there were 1,820 gas lamps and 3,260 electric.' Stephanie Jenkins, http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/old_oxford/st_ebbes/stebbes_gasworks.html

69 Helpfully tracked together with the Works' business status by VCH Oxon vol 4, 'Gas Supply', https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp350-364#h3-0005

be the embodiment of 'The Waste Land' described in TS Eliot's poem of the same name, of which he was a great admirer'.[70]

The company's application in 1948 for an order permitting the enlargement of the works aroused fierce opposition in both city and university, strengthening the desire of both bodies to remove the 'blight' of the gas-works altogether.[71]

The gradually negotiated elimination of 'the blight', culminating in closure of the site in 1960, actually preceded the arrival of North Sea ('natural') Gas in 1965; coal gas came from Reading and Southampton in the interim. Where or how our gas gets to us now is like much of modern life, something just assumed to work.[72]

The point about this quick foray into industrial chemical history is to grasp the huge shifts in behaviour associated with 'old technology'. In its heyday the gas-works consumed vast quantities of coal, at first brought up river by barges ('wharves lined the bank of the Thames reaching up to Thames Street, with a large basin enclosed to the east by Folly Bridge, making this area of the river an inland port'[73]) and then on its own special railway spur over the 1886 bridge on which you are standing. By-products of the production process, coke, tar, sulphur and ammonia, were dispatched by the same way they had arrived.

All this of course required a lot of labour too, much of it housed in the St Ebbes area. The planners' blitzing of this 'slum' area of 'condemned housing', and the subsequent muddle, still visible today, is the stuff of Oxford legend and a salutary case study about changing complex systems without fully understanding them.

Throughout the 1950s and much of the 1960s, decentralization was actively encouraged by planning policies which favoured the comprehensive redevelopment of run-down areas of the inner city. Demolition in St Ebbe's began in 1962 and was completed ten years later, with its population being rehoused at Cutteslowe, Barton, Rose Hill and Blackbird Leys. The built environment in the two areas was very different. In the city centre areas, the houses were packed tightly together. Small terraced houses, with little private outside space meant the residents spent more time on the street. The community in the old areas was also stable with houses passing down the generations. Houses in the new estates were usually semi-detached with gardens to the front and back; which meant that physically the families were further apart.[74]



Pensons Gardens, St Ebbes

70 http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/interesting-aspects-of-grandpont-and-south-oxford-s-history/st-ebbe-s-gasworks - spelling of 'Elliot' corrected :) – & website owner grateful to have this pointed out!

71 VCH Oxon vol 4 as above.

72 https://www.nationalgridgas.com/land-and-assets/network-route-maps gives an indication. The nearest main gas grid-line to Oxford passes just east of Tiddington, about 8 miles to the east of Oxford; presumably smaller pipes bring it thence. The other end of the gas mains are eight terminals around the mainland coast. All of which makes it SEP...

73 *WOCSaHA Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island* 2013 as above

74 Angela Davis, *Destruction or reconstruction? Women's experiences of community and urban living in Oxford c. 1945-1970*, https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/urbanhistory/uhg/past-conferences/2006/davis.pdf

Feeling a loss, we perhaps romanticise the sense of community reported from such an area:

> "We didn't have much, but we were very happy."
>
> "The people of the Friars were a bit rough and tough, but we always looked out for each other."
>
> "You always left your door unlocked in the day, even when you went out shopping."
>
> "People shared what they had."

'Friars' was a name for part of St Ebbes parish, harkening back to the Grey- and Blackfriars of the area and echoed yet in some modern street-names such as 'Friars Wharf' and 'Blackfriars Road'. These are bits of oral report from those who used to live here;[75] such comments, and their collection, perhaps reflect more a nostalgia for somewhat mythological simpler times than a unique contemporary characteristic of place. The picture of Pensons Gardens,[76]



which the map[77] shows to be now the west end of the modern Turn Again Lane (the 'Charles Street' here being the east end), is not suggestive of great vibrancy. Henry Acland, FRCS Physician to the Oxford Local Board of Health in the cholera epidemic of 1854, wrote then of a house nearby (in Gas Street)

> Let it then only be repeated: this is not a bad house; not a bad locality, as houses and localities are counted bad; but it is a kind of house and a kind of locality, and this is a kind of life for those who live in it, which begat eleven cases of cholera upon two floors, built upon a piece of ground about 28' by 8'.[78]

By the early twentieth century cold running water and outside toilets had solved some of the problems and the housing in Jericho nowadays shows what can be done in the way of further updating, but re-imagining the street jammed with cars, our modern epidemic, poses some further questions for the conservation thought-experiment.

The point, however, is less the loss of the 'indigenous' housing – most of it poor quality Victorian terracing after all, scarcely rare and less than 200 years old, even if it could have been steadily

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75 Collected by Rachel Barberesi: 'I am an artist making work in response to architecture and urban space. I look at the designed environment, planning decisions and archives alongside ways people respond to and adapt their environments' - http://urbansuburbanoxford.blogspot.com/2016/05/the-other-oxford.html

76 Penson's Gardens photo © Oxfordshire History Centre from urbansuburbanoxford.blogspot as above.

77 Map: OS 25 inch surveyed 1873 published 1878, via https://maps.nls.uk/view/104195392

78 R J Morris *The Friars and Paradise: An Essay in the Building History of Oxford, 1801-1861*, https://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1971/morris.pdf

updated to provide modern comfort – than the awful lack of vision since. The houses (if not the flats) south of Thames Street deserve some muted praise[79] but in general 'the significance of the area is currently reduced by the delayed development and associated blight although recent redevelopment along St Ebbe's/ Littlegate Street has made a positive contribution to this streetscene.'[80]

The redevelopment included a grassy bank and trees, and greater attention to greenery in general; it predated the new Westgate. That vast construction might have been seen to offer another planning opportunity to improve the area; yet although its monumental nature perforce represents some form of unification– why, it occupies much of it! – alas it cannot be claimed as a great improvement to the 'streetscene', with its towering brick walls carelessly done in different bricks and textures, disconnected from function and aesthetically deficient. The brutal wall facing south, and the overshadowing of the little terraces to the east below it is more a realisation of some dystopian vision of the rich shutting out the deprived[81] than anything that could be described as sympathetic.

Mind, for walkers, the new Westgate offers the additional interest of a third dimension with its terraces and walkways on two floors above the lower Thames Street level, particularly as these are accessible all the time. I recommend visiting it at about 5am on a summer Sunday, when the escalators are stopped and it is devoid of all but yourself and the cleaners, who are wiping down floors and glass partitions in a desultory way.



That was a long long bit of backstory as we paused on the Gasworks Rail Bridge! Across on the other side of the river at last, there are good walking choices.



Left (east and south) along the bank eventually takes you to Donnington Bridge, via opportunities to bail out at Gasworks Pipe Bridge (for St Ebbes) and Folly Bridge (for St Aldates or Christ Church Meadow, accessed around the back of the Head of the River pub).

Right (west and north) takes you up to Osney, across Botley Road and up to where four rivers meet and choices of Port Meadow or back to the Canal.

Straight is what I recommend for now, because we are going to take advantage of the green corridor beside the railway to winkle our way down to the old Oxford Waterworks and the Hinksey Lakes. This is not along a recognised or mapped footpath, so here's a rather impressionistic guide based on Mr G's helpful satellite picture:

You have a choice of going right down to the

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79 *WOCSaHA Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island* 2013 as above: 'the north bank of the river retains the appearance of a formerly industrialised river frontage with open riverbanks retained by wharf walls, providing evidence of the former use of the river as an economically important waterway' and the buildings themselves incorporate appropriate and characterful suggestions of warehouses and mills.

80 ibid.

81 Though it also reminds me of the mud-walls around the city in the Stargate film – remember the sand storm rolling in towards them?

railway and then along a track, or – this is one of those Oxford-ditch-constrained choose-now things – through the trees and onto the north, squarish, playing field. If along the track, proceed until you come to a bridge over the railway. This leads to Hogacre, a community 'eco-park'[82] and an opportunity to get across to Hinksey Meadows but only by doubling back north somewhat to cross the Hinksey Stream that runs along its western edge. For now, turn left along the track leading away from the bridge. Look out for the first gap through the trees leading from the playing field that is now on your left – if you had walked through the field, this is where you would have come – and on the opposite side of the track is a narrow beaten path leading south through the woods on your right. This looks as if it might be a pure 'path of desire', ie one created by wish and use, rather than actually authorised, as it winds through the scrubby wood and between massed clumps of blackberry bushes, but as you emerge out the other side you'll find a sort of recognition in a pinch-point type of gate with a notice. You have emerged at the top left corner of the triangular meadow on the map.

Facing you across the meadow is an amazing row of house-backs, all developed and extended differently, many with little garden doors to the meadow, some even laying claim to extramural use of the public area with old garden chairs and tables laid out.



In pursuit of the old waterworks, you have to proceed to the south-eastern corner of the triangular meadow, which provides an exit next to a little bridge at the south end of Marlborough Road – along which those houses run – which leads in turn to Hinksey Park. (The sense that you want to just head south is thwarted before this by yet another not-so-little ditch.)

Incidentally, the excessively long straightness of Marlborough Road as evident both from the backs of the houses, and if you look along it, or just at the map (!) is due to it being what is left of the first railway line to Oxford, which ran along its course and terminated at the river from 1844 – 1872. This makes walking along it a *bit* more interesting – but not much. (The green back-route you have followed avoids it all.)

Notably, given the Oxford Canal's leverage over the Grand Union Canal above, even earlier proposals for bringing the railway to Oxford were defeated by objections from the City to the possible loss of tolls on the Abingdon Road, and similar issues for the Canals. The University too was anxious, but on moral grounds: easy access to London for undergraduates might allow 'improper marriages and other illegitimate connexions'.[83] Eventually the railway was permitted – the City made sure of its tolls by moving the toll-gate from the south end of Abingdon Road to Folly Bridge, to where it can still be seen as a little shop – and from 1844 early passengers proceeded from the station where Western Road now intersects Marlborough Road, across the toll-bridge and so up St Aldates into the city.

The fork off to the west that ran the railway to its current station on the Botley Road and so north happened not long after in the 1850s, at which point the Marlborough Road spur became redundant, and subsequently converted to the spine of the housing in the area that is now seen.

There is a further connection between this tale of expensive infrastructure trial and error and the lakes you find in and by Hinksey Park: these were formed when gravel was excavated for the railway embankment and water from Hinksey Stream seeped in. So, one thing led to another, in a veritable explosion of Victorian development and improvement.

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82 http://www.hogacrecommon.org.uk/: 'Formally the sports ground for Corpus Christi college, it has been leased to the community since 2011 for a jar of honey a year.'

83 Quoted on http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/interesting-aspects-of-grandpont-and-south-oxford-s-history/the-coming-of-the-railway-to-oxford, Liz Wooley, source of this railway history.



The pumping station in Hinksey Park, which is now the community centre, is a fine building (of the nineteenth-century brick type), even if at least one part of what is left looks rather sad:

The waterworks here represent at least the third incarnation of city water provision; earlier versions, from the river, were particularly hampered by 'the fact that the works were downstream of the St Ebbe's gasworks and at least five sewage outlets'.[84] Even the Hinksey Lakes supply was not particularly salubrious at first (from 1856), as

> the water was still unfiltered. In 1880 the photographer and social campaigner Henry Taunt challenged the mayor to prove that it was fit to drink. Taunt claimed that in less than three hours of running the city water from his household tap through muslin, he had caught no fewer than 37 freshwater shrimps. These he later displayed at the Town Hall under a microscope.[85]

Filtering began in 1883; the Oxford water supply continued to come from here until 1934.

I will abandon you here in Grandpont (with options for a *long* walk across the lakes and railway through South Hinksey, up Happy Valley to Cumnor Hill and so back into North Hinksey and Botley, or a medium walk to Donnington Bridge and back up the side of the Thames, or simply back up Marlborough Road to Folly Bridge) with reflections on the incredible explosion of activity in the city during the nineteenth century. The canal was a bit earlier, admittedly, but in a way triggered what followed by connecting Oxford to the coal and other industrial output of the Midlands; the railway, the breweries, the gasworks, the waterworks, all flourished vigorously for about 150 years.

And then, largely, they were gone. For all the snarks were boojums, you see. Tracing their history and rich interconnections is fascinating, but perhaps there is a bit too much[86] for me!

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84 Liz Wooley, http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/interesting-aspects-of-grandpont-and-south-oxford-s-history/oxford-s-waterworks

85 ibid.

86 Electricity supply? Telephones? Mills? Others have done all this better than me: try https://www.discoveringbritain.org/content/discoveringbritain/walk%20booklets/Oxford%20industry%20walk%20-%20written%20guide.pdf

Chapter 4 – snickets

tippets for mice and ribbons for mobs – Beatrix Potter, The Tailor of Gloucester

Snickets are short-cuts.[1] The canal of the last chapter might almost be a snicket in the way it joins unlikely bits of the town, excepting its length. I'm talking about handy little connections. Also, other little bits and bobs that need to be stirred into the mix, a rag-bag of tittle-tattle.

Bulwarks Lane is a lengthy snicket, curling up from the canal basin (sorry, car park) to the corner of Westgate. It, and George Street Mews with which it starts, is one of only four still-cobbled streets I know of in Oxford – Merton Street, obviously, is one, and Pusey Lane round the back of the Ashmolean (entrance from St John Street) another; Walton Lane the last. Sometimes you can see that other streets might be still cobbled, under their grey tarmacadam uniforms, such as at the corner of Church Walk and Winchester Road, or Jowett Walk and St Cross:



Bulwarks Lane is supposed to follow the line of the old city wall, but bulges oddly *into* the city rather than ballooning around it. Looking at plans of the castle suggests it is more of a curtain wall for that, its locus; presumably the rest of the castle's perimeter, around St George's Tower down by the mill, constituted the rest of the Norman circuit. The course of the preceding Saxon walls must remain uncertain here.

Snickets often represent paths-of-desire, routes that enough people want to take for a path to form. They can almost be predicted just by considering what people would want to do. There are two excellent examples on the north side of Gasworks Rail Bridge (as crossed in ch.3); whoever planned the layout overdid the fancy and forgot about what might be wanted:



The green dotted line is the 'official' route, very attractive on paper especially the gradual slope up round the nearly-full circle to the bridge. But cyclists arriving from the right (at 1) don't want to go around and under the bridge to get to the cross-roads (2) on the left – hence the turquoise line; and walkers from the cross-roads on the left don't want to go all the way around the circle to get up to the bridge; even though the bright green line is a bit steeper, it is a lot shorter.

In some contexts the absence of a path of desire is almost more surprising than their presence; some other powerful forces at work. For example, the housing around Blenheim Drive is cut off

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[1] According to the OED, this is Northern dialect. The OED has them specifically as little passages between houses and indeed the better ones are thus, though I've extended the use a bit.

from Wolvercote by the railway, and with what immense inconvenience those living there must emerge onto the Woodstock Road in order to go anywhere. In this case one assumes the railway preceded the development and either refused a bridge or the development was too mean to spring for one. The result is that anyone wishing to get to the canal from north Oxford must either settle for Elizabeth Jennings Way, or loop a long and tedious way up the main road to First Turn.

Some snickets exist only for restricted users. The most frustrating is probably the new bridge over the Cherwell from Christ Church Meadow (replacing an old punt-ferry that I remember from my time as an undergraduate[2]), which leads to the college's playing fields. It is called the 'Millenium Bridge' though in fact was opened on my birthday in 2004. It is blocked by a locked gate. Just think how convenient a link this would be the Iffley Road, where the playing fields' real entrance is![3] Instead you have to trudge along the edge of the Cherwell past MCS playing fields, up to and along the High Street past the Botanic Gardens, across Magdalen Bridge, across the Plain and some way up the Iffley Road before you get to the same place.

Also rather frustrating, but more understandable, is the back gate to the Magdalen College Fellows' Garden that is now strongly locked and fenced at Kings Mill in Mesopotamia. The Fellows' Garden links via a footbridge or two to Addison's Walk and so to the main area of the college and the bottom of the High Street. I remember when this could sometimes be found open, or otherwise easily climbed – such a nice route, interesting and beautiful and with a hint of magic in the connection, in contrast to the Marston Road![4]

Barred from the Fellows' Garden, as you walk from King's Mill around Marston Road (or better, jink into Headington Hill Park, with its lovely trees) and so to St Clements, look out for a memorial that says:

> We walked everywhere... we discovered places[5]

I haven't found it yet; but what an apposite sentiment. Places and things. That's what walking is about, and if you get some healthy[6] exercise at the same time, well and good! I am often reminded of a favourite book from when I was young, Geoffrey Grigson's *Looking and Finding*. It starts off with the story of the fisherman on the Isle of Lewis, walking the beach after a storm: he found a small square stone box in a hole eaten away by the sea. Looking inside he found a 'nest of demons' – which, after uxorial reassurance and persuasion, and re-examination, turned out to be the walrus-ivory chessmen that we can now see when we visit the British Museum or National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. The author continues:

> I used to look at them and say to myself, what luck! – and ask why everyone else had luck and found things, and why all the things worth finding were already on the other side of the glass where they couldn't be touched...
>
> But it wasn't luck, entirely. The fisherman was out on the beach after the storm. He was looking for things... He was out and about and deserved his luck.

This first chapter of *Looking and Finding* is called 'A Shelf of Maps', and, as well as teaching me about looking for things, I learned the use and wonder of maps; not just as a guide to where you are, but as time-machines, especially if you dig up old ones. Even not-very-old ones – copies I have bought of then-current maps – indicate how some roads have grown or shifted; 'proper' old

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2 Though I don't remember much evidence of the ferry actually being used back in 1979-1982.

3 Increased pedestrian footfall might also reduce the bridge's current primary use as a reredorter for gulls.

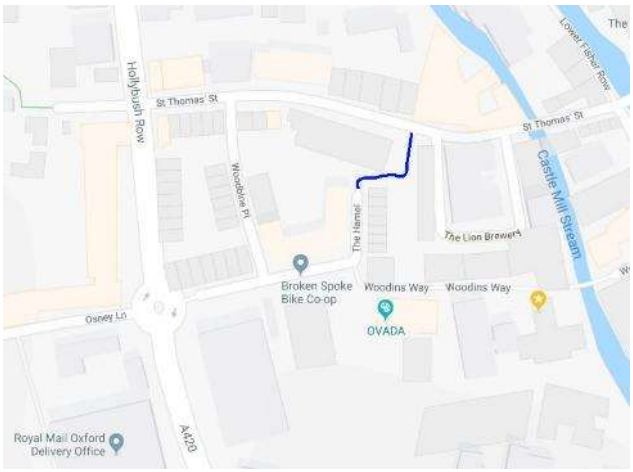
4 Of course there is interest in everything, really. That's what I'm trying to demonstrate...

5 https://existenceisweird.wordpress.com/

6 Whether walking is good for you or not depends on which week of the year you're in. Odd weeks it *isn't*, because it isn't 'aerobic' (or not enough); even weeks it *is*, because a little bit is better than none. See www.medicalfads.gov.uk/we-can't-make-up-our-minds

ones, such as I have often 'quoted' from the National Library of Scotland's very handy on-line collection, easily take you back 150 years.

City snickets don't usually get onto maps. They're too small, and are drowned by other detail. Mr G has a better track record with this sort of thing than OS or Bartholomew, especially if you supplement it with a look from his satellite.



Here are a few more or less useful ones:

Between Christ Church Old Buildings in The Hammel and St Thomas Street; useful for getting to the main post office in Oxpens Road, eg after walking down Lower Fisher Row.

If you're in this area and you want to head west, you can cross the railway without going up to the Botley Road; just head on down Osney Lane, as shown on this map, and then up the bridge at the end.



This too is shown by Mr G; not sure what the grey dots are, though.

You get an interesting view of the railway from this high and exposed bridge, and end up in a little-visited area down Mill Lane. Alas, if you really want to proceed west from here there is no option but to turn right and trudge up to the Botley Road after all, but there you go.



On the other hand, turning left and going all the way down Mill Street, it curves around into Gibbs Crescent and then there's a footpath – green dotted line here: – that will sneak you back under the railway to Ice Rink Meadow (properly 'Oxpens Field', ch.3). There isn't much virtue to this as a route though, because from the main Post Office you could have just walked on down Oxpens Road to get to the same place – except for the pleasure of an unexpected connection!

Note how here there is a long stretch of river, from the Botley Road to the Gasworks Rail Bridge, that lacks a crossing. If you could only cross with the railway, you could get through to Hinksey Meadows :/

If you'd turned right up Mill Street to Botley Road, you might have been heading for the Thames path along the river, or wanting a longer loop up to Port Meadow along Binsey Lane. Botley Road





being what it is, why not try the otherwise unvisited Helen Road a block before your turn, and then look for a cut through to the left?



This does *not* make it even onto Google maps! If you try down here, the back gate of one of the houses has the following amusing sign on it –
a good example of being out and about and *finding things* :)

The second part of this connection is through a car-park, which no doubt has some sort of shared or umbrella ownership arrangement, but what about the first part? Does it below to one of the houses you are creeping past?

Heading north from the car-park is a typical 'back-garden access' snicket – one that leads merely to garden gates. These are disappointing, appendix-like things, and not uncommon.

Back in central North Oxford, the opening of the new Ginko Gate to the Parks in 2018 led to no more than a conundrum; *why* was it here? No-one, other than a few scientists from buildings opposite, could get to it without passing either Keble Gate to the south or North Lodge at the other end of this edge of the Parks, so who would use it? Conversely getting out, with the added problem that were you to exit here, there is nothing to do except walk back past one of the other two gates.

Except that this is not quite the case! And prolonged closure of Keble Gate at the end of 2018 and into 2019 (due to problems with re-organising subsurface utilities – water I think) meant that one was in fact forced to use the Ginko exit, and so by golly, find out some purpose to it!

Mr G in fact shows the possibility that I found on his map. I've gone over it in blue below, but it is far from clear that you are necessarily welcome as a mere citizen, rather than a scientist. You have to march boldly past the Hume-Rothery Building entrance ('Materials') and past the odd vehicle on so as to pass underneath an overhead connection between two large buildings. Signs that say 'no cycling – pedestrian area' obviously confer legitimacy on you, and after a little left-right jink you pass the main entrance to 'Engineering' and emerge onto the Banbury Road.



The Banbury Road here is as awkward as Parks Road by Ginko Gate (ie, no connections east-west), and similarly to be defeated. Across the road and slightly right (north) is the entrance to 21 Banbury Road (listed, former Girls High School[7], former Nuclear

[7] Still shown as 'School' on 25-inch OS map revised 1939, published 1945

Physics, currently Materials Annexe). The brick pillars and metal railings discourage approach, but the entrance to the front is open (it is all just car-park) so try to look as if you know what you're doing and go in – following the red line here – and then to the left (south) edge of the building and so through (more 'no vehicular access' again encourages the *fuss-ganger*) to another car park at the back with an obvious exit to the Woodstock Road, a narrow bit of the old Radcliffe Infirmary building visible, straight ahead.

You'll see on the map that at the exit we have joined onto another line, purple, which runs behind houses on the Woodstock Road to then jink across parking for the Old Parsonage and IT Services. If you can't look smart enough for the OP (and signs reserving parking for named guests often offer snob nominative fun) then surely you can look like an IT-type? Anyway, this comes out a grassy-diagonal from Keble Road and so is a good hook-up.



Incidentally, if you had wished to proceed west once you had emerged onto the Woodstock Road, there is a nice (new) way into what is laughably labelled the 'Radcliffe Quarter',[8,9] just a few yards to the south. The map above shows it as a thin lane that stops, but it in fact goes on, and comes out behind the fine eighteenth century Infirmary[10] in open space with views of Freuds (Grecian-temple-style church,[11] now rather crumbling and a coffee-house) and the Blavatnik Building (curvy thing of three or four badly stacked cake-layers made of glass). The open space used to be a jumble of crumbling buildings, extensions of the Infirmary in the blitz style with cold leaking passageways connecting them and trying to reconcile different floor levels at the same time. In one of these I was seriously ill in 1972; I am not sad that it has gone,



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8 Sometimes 'Radcliffe Observatory Quarter' and sometimes 'Observatory Quarter'. Whatever, surely 'quarter' like this – since not any part of the old city – derives from OED 5a, 'to station, place, or lodge in a particular place. Frequently in passive: to be lodged, have one's quarters (at or in a place)'. Yet this is now primarily an area of business and study? The name smacks of cool marketing, rather than actual social use.

9 One of the places this name appears is on the 'live' bus-stop signs. Due to the length of the name it runs straight into the clock, so that it reads 'Observatory Quarter Time 18:56'; a nice twist from the days before the railways (until the 1840s), when Oxford was five minutes after London – see https://greenwichmeantime.com/info/clocks/oxford/.

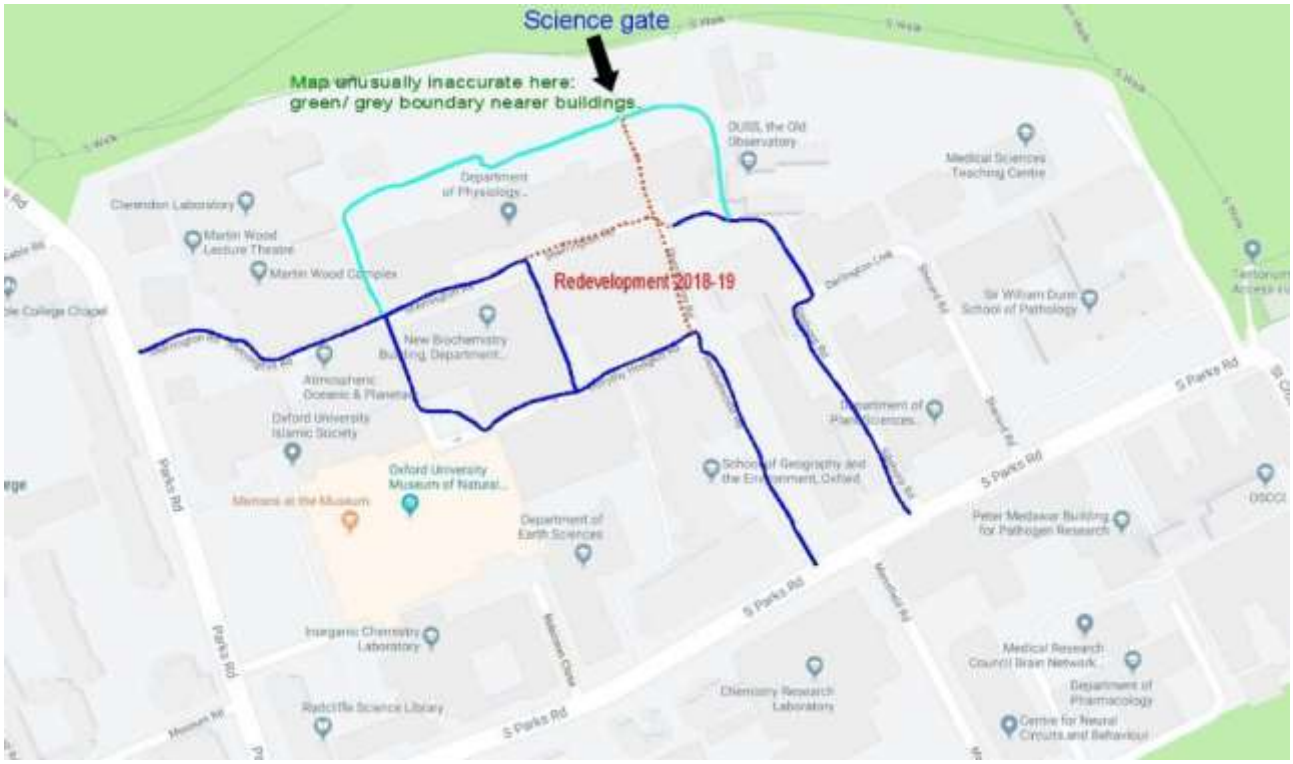
10 Opened in 1770 amidst the open fields of St Giles – see Davis map extract in ch.2 – and more about its history at https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/hospitals/jr/radcliffe-infirmary.aspx

11 Built 1836, in response to an outbreak of cholera in the area - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freud,_Oxford

though strangely puzzled by the absence of something that had been so important to me, like a tooth.[12]

The University Science areas provide much porous accessibility. I wonder whether they will be gated and guarded in a few years, as colleges are now? I remember being taken, in about 1970, through college alleys, passageways and quads from St Giles to Broad Street...

Recent[13] building works have blocked off the direct route from Mansfield Road through the Science area to the little south gate into the Parks. The powers-that-be have redirected foot traffic along the north side of the buildings, which I had discovered as a useful winkle between that gate and Keble Road (turquoise line):



The red-dotted lines are blocked off at the time of writing. Still good to go on the blue lines.

The whole of this area between Parks and South Parks Roads used to be part of the Parks when laid out in the mid-nineteenth century, with the Museum of Natural History standing alone amidst them. So you could see perambulation of these strange canyons between the unusually tall buildings (for Oxford) as just an exercise of one's old constitutional rights... though actually you are likely to just feel rather out of place.

The buildings are largely bland concrete, but there are weird cages of gaseous cylinders dotted about, and what windows you can see through reveal strange worlds, largely unpopulated other than by computers and, sometimes, seriously-industrial-sized equipment. Through the quiet lanes, at almost any day of the year, any time, like farmers, there are usually one or two scientists wandering about, presumably on their way to check their experiments – doing lonely scientific things, anyway, because they're unlikely to say 'hi', let alone attempt the dread passive-aggressive 'can I help you?'! Nor do the not-infrequent Security vans and their occupants[14] ever seem too

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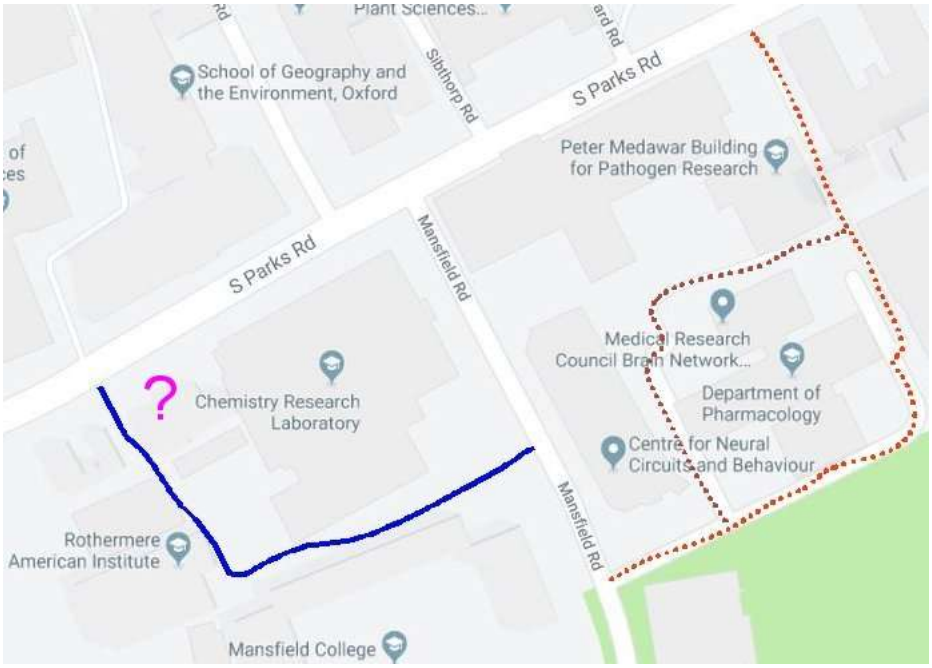
[12] It had other, better, claims to fame than my attendance: 'On 27 January 1941, the first dose of penicillin was given intravenously to man at the Radcliffe Infirmary, and on 1 July that year the first accident service in Great Britain began' - radcliffe-infirmary.aspx as above.

[13] Started just before Christmas 2018.

[14] These dwell in particular at the Old Observatory. The 'OUSS' on the map indicates their HQ.

bothered by someone walking as if they know where they are going, though I tend to avoid eye contact.

Just across South Parks Road here are further possibilities for snicket-taking. The red dotted lines offer a useful exploration, with some good modern structures to admire, especially unexpected back views of the Tinsley Building, which used to be the Institute of Virology but is now, as on the map, the 'Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour'. This is praised as one of a few buildings from the 1970s that turned the tide of modernist and brutalist buildings from the 1960s: the 'restrained brick elevations and pitched slate roofs are more humanely scaled and make less of an assault on the eyes'.[15] Picture below.



The blue line is perhaps less venturesome, but still opens interesting views on the back of Mansfield, and of the Rothermere American Institute[16] (not to mention providing a nice jink to limit walking exposure to the busy S Parks Rd). I think I remember when the building at '?' was a 'Graduate Centre' providing accommodation, and I visited a friend there in about 1980 – but I am not sure I really recognise it now! There was certainly a carpark out the back, as now, though it wasn't connected to Mansfield Road then.



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15 Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford An Architectural Guide*, OUP 1998 p333

16 "The Institute is housed in an award-winning modern building, designed by the international architects Kohn, Pedersen, Fox. It is constructed from the traditional Oxford materials of Bath stone, with American oak and zinc - a fittingly trans-Atlantic building for a project designed to strengthen old ties and create new ones. ... The RAI is committed to minimising its impact on the environment though energy conservation and efficiency. The Institute was built with environmental systems in place to lessen energy use: the building is naturally ventilated and designed to maximise air-flow within the library and its offices, and does not require air-conditioning." https://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/about/rai-building

This sort of useful short-cut is not limited to the old University. Up in Headington, Brooks allows a good connection between Headington Hill and South Park. Here Mr G has done the green-



dotted lines for us, even if, bizarrely, he has failed to colour either South Park or Headington Hill Park green (I've tried to outline them roughly in light green). The dotted line running left-right at the top of the map-extract is part of Cuckoo Lane, and connects the end of the lane from King's Mill (Mesopotamia) to the top of the hill. (Continue all the way along it to Old Headington if going that way...).

Noting the plaque about Joe's tree on the curving wall opposite as you emerge on Pullen's Lane,

> NEAR THIS SPOT STOOD THE FAMOUS ELM PLANTED BY
> THE REV. JOSIAH PULLEN ABOUT 1680 AND KNOWN AS JOE PULLEN'S TREE
> DESTROYED BY FIRE ON 13 OCTOBER 1909

turn right down here (bright green line) to the main road and then diagonally across to pick up the straight green dotted line running SSE through Brooks.

The turn back to the right (as you walk: NW, left on the map as you look at it) leading to Cheney Lane is a useful link returning you to Headington Hill Park, which, unusually, provides a few car-parking spaces and thus an opportunity for a short walk, but I'd suggest continuing straightish and then into South Park, more or less on the same line, and so across the corner (as I've marked) towards the exit on Warneford Lane and thence Divinity Road for Cowley Road or similar.

Other little snickets are there to be found. There's one at the bottom of Alma Place and Tyndale Road connecting you to St Clements. There's one between Bernard's Road and Leckford Place. Another between Plantation and St Bernard's Roads (which someone has amusingly labelled 'Diagon Alley'). The one from Osney West Street to Osney Mead (via Swan Street) opens up both Osney Island and Hinksey Meadows[17] (and is a useful back-way along the Botley Road). Church Lane behind St Peter's Wolvercote is useful; the lane from Plough Close to the Plough in the same area less so (only really useful if you live up in the Ulfgar Rd area). And of course, there's the

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[17] Maps label at least the first green patch as 'Oatlands Rd Recreation Ground'. I *ask* you! See also below.

wonderfully historical-atmospheric Hell's (now 'St Helen's') Passage from New College Lane, beneath the city wall, through the Spotted Cow (now 'Turf Tavern') and thus to Bath Place and Holywell.[18] And so on.

They don't always last: although you can still go around the back of the Park Town houses on their access lanes, you can no longer cut through a gate into Maison Français (you can see where by the newer brickwork).

Sometimes new ones appear: Kellogg College's acquisition of a building on Bradmore Road now allows you to pass through from there, through their other property, into the Banbury Road, as in yellow below:



The puzzle about these little pathways is of course who is responsible for them. The Helen Road – Binsey Lane alley is nicely paved: who paid? If there is an accident in one, whose insurance needs to be summoned up, like a genie? If someone decides to close one, is there any scope for complaint? And if so, to which authority? *Force majeure* seems to be difficult to overturn.



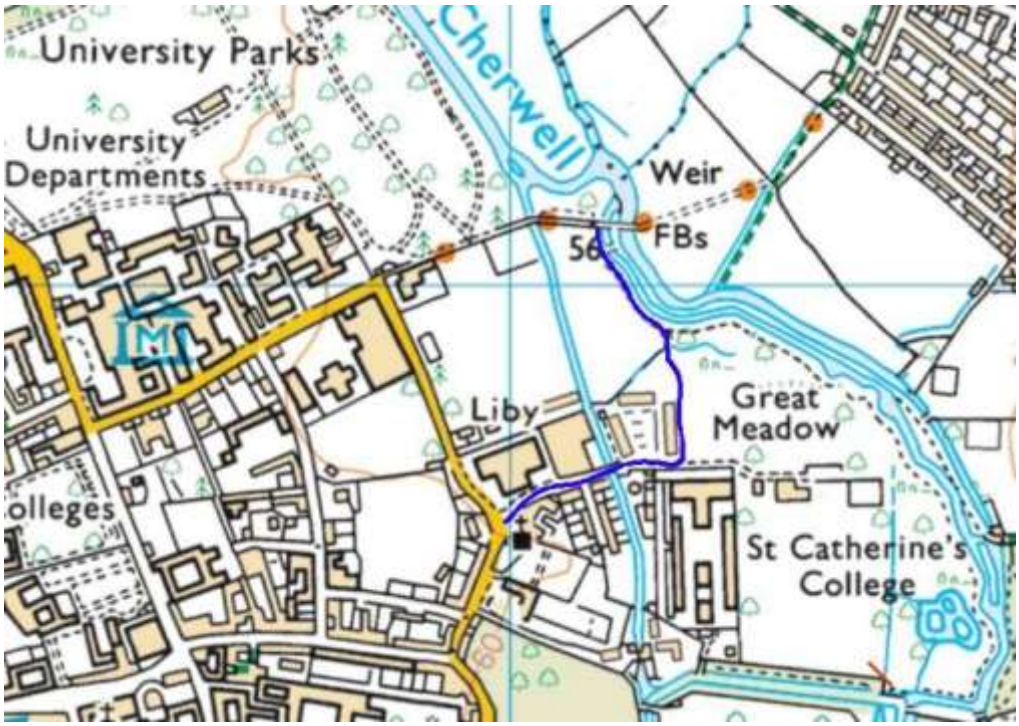
On whose say-so?!

And there's the old adage that unless the passage is blocked at least once a year (as advised with respect to School Lane in ch.2) some sort of permanent right of way may be created; but I have been unable to track this down (though *twenty* years was mentioned...) which is odd.

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[18] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turf_Tavern

A special mention should be made of St Catz for its liberal attitude to walkers. Much like the other modern college on the Cherwell, Wolfson (see ch.2) – and in sharp contrast to the gated and guarded older colleges – they have a pleasantly open-gate policy. Indeed, I don't think they even have gates! With an exit towards Mesopotamia and the Parks, they provide an attractive link to Holywell,[19] which I've highlighted in blue on the map[20] here:



Early on in my time as accountant at the Dragon, I took a call from the porters at St Catz who said they had found a punt of the School's. For reasons that wouldn't be apparent from any normal job description of a finance person, but indicative of the amateur can-do approach that used to be allowed (by the Dragon, at least), I ended up going down to the College to have a look at the problem.

How the punt had ended up where it was I had no idea at the time – though a glance at the map above, and primed by the 'not Venice' chapter, you'll see there's a straight channel running from the Cherwell down towards what is in fact Magdalen Mill (where the channel disappears briefly under a building at the bottom of the map). And I'm not sure I did any good, having confirmed that the punt was the Dragon's – I think the conclusion was that someone needed to come with a pole and take it back upstream![21]

Looking at the previous map, you can see a tempting black-dotted line running along the Cherwell around what is labelled 'Great Meadow'. Mesopotamia is just across the water there. The dotted-line is a good walk, and little frequented, but leads to a dead-end (which is why it is little frequented!); there no access across to Magdalen Mill (although I think I did achieve this once, it was uncomfortable; and now the Mill's approach lane from St Cross Road is seriously gated off). Slightly more do-able is to cut through thin woodland and nettles where I've drawn a little red line, and thus into the playing field there (which is in fact Merton's, though the 'St Catherine's College' label is blazoned across it on the map). This provides a much more satisfactory loop than retracing your steps, but should probably not be attempted in a skirt, and flipflops are a risk.

A lot of these jinks and short cuts come associated with a sense of illicit access. Few, if any, of those I've mentioned in this chapter constitute rights-of-way. Yet they are routinely used (not just by me). What is the risk?

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[19] Much more so than walking down St Cross Road, which has all the traffic (except buses) coming over Magdalen Bridge routed along it.

[20] Current OS 2.5 inch, extract thanks to www.streetmap.co.uk

[21] Perhaps this does sound like a finance job after all – quantify, evaluate, report – but do nothing.

Ownership of land does not always mean exclusive use. As with School Lane at the Dragon (ch.2), there can be a recognised public right of way. Other passageways can be more or less established but without rights. What if you are officially trespassing? The Ramblers Association has this to say:

Can you be imprisoned or prosecuted for trespassing?

That depends. In most circumstances trespassing is still a civil rather than a criminal matter. A landowner may use 'reasonable force' to encourage a trespasser to leave but not more than is reasonably necessary. Unless damage to the property can be proven, a landowner could probably only recover nominal damages by suing for trespass, although you might have to meet their legal costs.

A notice saying "Trespassers will be prosecuted" aimed at deterring people from using a private drive for instance is usually meaningless. Criminal prosecution could only arise if you trespass and damage property. Trespassing with the intent to reside may be a criminal offence under some circumstances. It is also a criminal offence to trespass on railway land and sometimes on military training land.[22]

As usual with the law, it is much more complicated if you dig into it – 'in most circumstances' above is a warning flag! Trespass – which by the way could include throwing stuff onto another's land, as well as interfering with stuff under their ground, or over it too (but not airplanes at a reasonable height) – is a tort actionable *per se* without the need to prove damage. (Nuisance – indirect interference with another's use and enjoyment of land – is a different matter, though it requires proof of damage to be actionable.) With respect to mere trespass, though, you can claim negligent or involuntary entry as a defence, as well as estoppel by acquiescence – and so on...[23] – but the main point is, as the Ramblers and others say, the possible cost (and so risk) is as low as the damage to the land that you may have caused. So other than the shivery sense of perhaps trespassing, I don't think you'll get into trouble from my snickets.

What is the attraction of these not-always-short-cuts? I suppose finding them, when poorly advertised (and mapped), is part of the fun. Sometimes they *are* short-cuts, or reveal some useful connection between one area and another – and on the assumption that locals will know about them already, you then realise that these locals probably have a different mental-map of their area than you expected. Which, of course, you can add to your own biological and technological distinctiveness...[24]

As well as snickets, I promised other little bits and bobs.

I thought I might be prescriptive and explain how to walk properly; but of course there isn't any 'proper'. Feel free to do what you like!

In my view you can spoil a walk by chatting about somebody's sister's husband's illness, or what a politician said, social media, injustice, global warming, or indeed pretty much about anything except what you can sense. Yes, there is a place for walking to have a particular talk with someone, when sitting down for it might be awkward; but generally, if you're going to natter, why are you out and about?

Talking on the phone is the same thing.[25]

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22 https://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/paths-and-access/england-and-wales/trespassing-in-england-and-wales.aspx

23 Law-stuff cribbed from https://www.lawteacher.net/lecture-notes/trespass-to-land.php

24 The Borg's *aims* weren't wrong. They just went about them rather inflexibly.

25 Anyone who thinks that using the phone when driving, even hands-free, is a good idea, should try to remember what they have seen when walking while talking on the phone.

Eating and drinking on foot in public is disgusting, and that's before you have to carry your greasy wrappings or use-once paper coffee-cup about in search of a bin. The habit is so prevalent that many don't bother with the second part, which is long-term revolting. Go ploggers! (Not many of them in Oxford.)

No, no, walking is – as I said – about looking and finding. I like going out to find a specific thing – a particular building one has read about, or (practicality is allowed) to recycle a used water-cartridge in Boswells – even if chance experiences *en route* are to be encouraged; or a planned route. (I've suggested a few, and will offer more. These seem to be particularly useful if with someone else, who might otherwise be nervous of what they're letting themselves in for.)

Specific things to find can be prescribed. In early spring, how about seeing how many magnolia trees you can find in bloom? (Not easily distinguished at a distance from the flowering cherries...). Other collections suggest themselves: types of lamp-post;[26] types of drain-cover;[27] types of brickwork (older Oxford seems to be more Flemish Bond; Victorian is English, though often with several rows of stretchers before the bonds, presumably both cheaper and weaker). How many types of windows can you see – and name? Really, anything that encourages you to look with new eyes...

However, my favourite sort of walk evolves as it goes along. Choices of direction offer later choices, branching dendritically, and leading me in an unplanned way to areas I hadn't thought of when setting out. (I am aware that 'unconsciously' I may well have in fact pre-planned the whole thing, or always would have chosen the options I did: the effect is that I *feel* as if I am reacting at least semi-randomly to stimuli, ideas as they arise, weariness, the weather...)

In the course of your perambulation, try to empty your mind of whatever mindy things you are currently bothered about; these ruin a walk as easily as random chat. Think about posture and breathing,[28] if you need distraction. Then keep your eyes peeled and your ears open (soundscapes offer rich rewards; the sudden relief from traffic sounds that you hadn't been aware of as you turn off a main road is an easy pleasure, but listen out for specific audibles; why, you can even amuse yourself trying to recognise the languages spoken by passers-by – at least half of them aren't English; and some of the English is so accented as to be a challenge too).

I like to think about *why* things are as they are: the most bizarre (and awful) results are usually the product of good intentions[29] (often committee-led, one suspects), or historical accident. Sources and processes are fascinating: *where* does the stone come from that this water-damaged wall was made from? Does it matter that all those wires in that phone-cabinet are exposed to air? Even buildings are like bubbles of the earth; if you're not out there, you won't see them.[30] Signs often provide unintended amusement.



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[26] Look out for the 'gas-lantern' types in the centre. North Oxford goes in for question-marks. In fact street-furniture generally is often of interest.

[27] Local manufacture gets bonus points of course, especially as they usually provide historical insight too: that G Wyatt & Sons produced metalwork from '67 S^{t} Giles, Oxford', for example, is unexpected. What is at no. 67 now? Nothing, in fact! 66 is the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, and the Ashmolean has swallowed up the rest of the numbering; looks as if 67 was where its back door is now.

[28] Using whatever system to which you currently subscribe!

[29] I think one has to assume this. To do otherwise is to subscribe to chaos. Though 'budget limitations' often appear to be a cloak for evil.

Ideal walking is also a sort of physical poetry, a movement through the landscape. As such I like to keep a steady rhythm, avoiding too many stops and re-starts: the approach to road-crossing is to be timed carefully (waiting for the green man is horrid), and dog-walking is a definite 'no', as dogs have their own horribly stochastic agenda. Photography, although admittedly a useful record of the unexpected, absurd or beautiful, should be minimised.[31] And what is it about walking in a group,[32] that forces adoption of not just the slowest, but a sort of lowest common denominator?!

When I first started walking around Oxford, having been a confirmed cyclist intent on getting to the next place in the shortest possible time during my working life (every tenth of an hour accounted for...[33]) I was surprised at how easy it was to get to things. I got into the habit with the help of practical destinations, you see: the Post Office, the central Sorting Office, Boswells (and other shops), the doctor; even the John Radcliffe hospital, up in Headington, was only a little more than an hour.

At the same time I found that walking required less immediate attention to trying to stay alive, as road use demands, and this allows you to look around and up and down and think about what you see. Even stopping is practicable.[34]

Predefined destinations can be like pilgrimages; something that has to be done. You might come to realise though that a pilgrimage is often less about the thing at the end, and more about the journey itself.[35] At this point, you should be receptive to the wider circular perambulation without specific object, avoiding 'there and back' duplications, and open to the idea of chance diversion and exploration.

Be prepared! The boy scouts were on to something. Comfortable footwear is particularly important if walking is not to be simply painful. Bear in mind that soggy Oxford has a tendency to mud: there are many *inappropriate* shoe choices. Relatively waterproof, and/or easily cleaned footwear, like flipflops or (in winter) wellies, should be on your short list.



Maybe not...

My view is that you shouldn't let bad weather put you off walking. You do have to be properly dressed though. Wear the right sort of clothes: good waterproof trousers are particularly helpful – soggy cloth flapping against your legs with every step is particularly wearing. If it really is raining, a proper waterproof top – not just 'showerproof', let alone anything more stylish – is what you need. And being too cold, or too hot, is also tedious ('layers!' is the cry).

The great thing about being out in all weathers – and indeed times of day – is the chance of finding odd things; relative emptiness, obviously, but also water flattened and tempered like pewter by rain, wet rooftops like silver in a gleam of light, dripping sounds. Noting who else is out is interesting in itself (though you do have to rather discount the dog-walkers) – at odd hours, very late or very early, they are often in black tie.

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30 Even building projects can surprise in their abruptness; one month, seemingly, there's a building, the next there isn't; or something else has appeared.

31 It occurred to me after writing this that perhaps my preferences for this sort of steady walking derive from bad knees. They don't like stopping and starting!

32 More than three is probably too many, unless the connection is allowed to be seriously elastic. Actually, even three can be tricky!

33 At Critchley Ward and Pigott, Chartered Accountants, anyway; that's six-minute intervals, rather unintuitively.

34 If discouraged! But other road use, car or bicycle, comes with a sort of hypnotic compulsion to *keep going* that walking largely avoids.

35 Chaucer demonstrated this, of course – his pilgrims never got near Canterbury.

Unless you are planning an all-day walk (some are suggested in ch.7), you do not need to carry food and water. You will not expire if deprived of sustenance for two or three hours. To see some people carrying their water bottles about you'd think that Oxford was the Kalahari, or their jog the original run from Marathon. I would caution against slaking your thirst with any of Oxford's wild water,[36] but you'd be hard pushed to find anywhere within the ring-road that is further than 15-20 minutes from a *barista* ready to craft your favourite coffee or other beverage.

The emphasis on getting through from one place to another in this chapter, and indeed the others, perhaps a product of the need to keep a steady rhythm and avoiding there-and-back routes, has its inverse. The land-locked blocks often have their own interest, not least because few people go up and down. Venturing into these areas is a declaration that you are exploring for its own sake, rather than making progress to somewhere else.

I was recently surprised when doing just this by the extraordinary variety of the backs of St John's Street houses when seen from cobbled Pusey Lane (north of Pusey Street). One of the characteristics of St John's Street is the uniform late-Georgian stone fronts of the houses; these are such that one hardly notices the variations between the houses. Seen from the back, though, these are as individual as a row of pensioners waiting for a bus, all different shapes and sizes and presentations.

And if you don't *try* the *cul de sacs*, you won't find the unexpected hidden exits, of course.

Looking and finding implies a constant search for novelty. Of course it is pleasant to welcome old friends too – like the Rev Pullen, walking up Headington Hill to admire the view, and to greet the ghost of his old tree – and one should do this in a conscious way. One should be as amazed as at finding the sun has come up on a new day!

We are of course primed to recognise change and difference; this can be turned to new insights. An unexpected angle of light, so that it slants across stonework. Or sudden understanding of probable reasons for things – such as the rather ugly section of rubberised pavement outside the Bird and Baby: it is not just there to catch the water between loose squares, so as to squirt it up your trouser leg if you tread on it thoughtlessly – no, it must be so that unloading metal barrels for the pub doesn't clang on the pavement. (Avoid the squares on the road-side if recent rain, anyway.)

'Hinksey Meadows' deserve more than the mere hint of access in the list of snickets. The fields here are as rich with paths, variously permitted and allowed, as at Marston Meadows, presumably for the same reason. Key points, roughly from north-to-south, numbers as on map:

1 There's a foot bridge across into the area from half-way into Minns Trading Estate at the west end of the Botley Road.

2 Exit to the north-east past the West Oxford Community Primary School, over a footbridge into Swan Street on Osney Island.

3 Exit for North Hinksey at the end of 'Willow Walk' over an old stone bridge. To continue on this route, which I believe is one of the earliest into Oxford, you have to jink around to get under the A34 on a pedestrian underpass (horse-riders should dismount; observe the mounting blocks), as the disjointed yellow lines indicate. I suggest a cut through Raleigh Park to 'get back on course' up Harcourt Hill.

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[36] Restrict this sort of experiment to National Parks in the west of England and Wales. And even then be mindful of sheep pasture or old mine workings up above.

4 It is not obvious, and lots of signs ask you not to camp in this area, but there's a cut through to the Thames Path (the blue line) if you follow the Bulstake Stream round the outside of Osney Mead Industrial Estate, coming out at what used to be Blackwell Scientific Publishing (BSP) and is now on offshoot of the Bodleian Library. I first learned about the Bulstake Stream when watching it rise and rise in heavy rain from the conference room window on the first floor of this building while doing the BSP audit.

5 A long straight trackway provides a sort of spine up through the centre of the area to



Osney Mead. There are fewer options down to the south of the area.

6 An attractive-looking trackway runs west from the south end of '5', but the actual footpath is over the gate. Signage at the west end of '6' indicates its use is discouraged by the owner.

7 If you go through South Hinksey, you have to jink north first before you can get back on track, just as at North Hinksey except that here you have to use the roadway to cross the A34.



8 The long-long bridge over first the railway (with its gravel yards) and then part of Hinksey Lakes (see ch.3 – turn north through the park to head back towards town.

However, recent[37] planning signs warn of closure of rights of way, so some of the above must be taken with a pinch of salt – certainly promises of 'diversion' and 'alternative' routes need to be. This is all about the Flood Alleviation Scheme works, as shown on the diagram at the end of ch.2.

As a last rag-tag for this chapter, and to counterpoint the birds and plants in earlier ones, animals! Actually, I mean larger mammals. Not such a rich vein, of course, but I have seen deer, badgers, foxes and rabbits. Others are apparently possible: 'evidence that Castle Mill Stream is well used by otter was recorded and a population of signal crayfish was also recorded within this watercourse,' one planning document for the Westgate redevelopment reported.[38] Evidence of moles abounds, of course. I've seen a few rats, too, especially down by Osney Weir, but fewer than their reputation for ubiquity might suggest.[39] Squirrels, luckily with fluffy tails, are plentiful – not as sweet as tourists feeding them think, but they do that shadow-thing with their tail so cutely, no?

Deer can be found most commonly in Marston Meadows. Strangely enough, because you'd think it cut off, they can also be seen in Christ Church Meadow (an answer to this was suggested early one summer morning when I found two running down the middle of Parks Road), especially when the grass is high; and occasionally on the edge of Port Meadow. The Christ Church ones are probably muntjac, given their size – those running down the road, clearly seen, certainly were. Others are larger; probably roe deer; they are shy, and hard to see – in a recent sighting at dusk I thought maybe it was a strange bush or tuft of grass in the field until it leapt up and was away - let alone photograph:



Foxes are pretty much urbanised now, and you're more likely to see them in a garden or street in day time as in any green space. They can be heard too, barking at dusk or in the middle of the night.



Badgers seem to have adapted to the suburban life as well, though they are horribly persecuted; a sighting is rare and special.

Rabbits don't much like the wet of the watermeadows, which means most of Oxford. They can be seen easily enough on the higher ground of Burgess Field (walk quietly through one of the central paths, not around the perimeter); and also along the western bank of the Thames as it passes Port Meadow.

Disappointingly, the 'biodiversity' sections of the Oxford City Council's Countryside and Nature Reserves pages (ch.5, Parks) do not add anything to my list of sightings, beyond a bit more specific about harvest mice and water voles at Magdalen Quarry. BBOWT reminds me that bats

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37 January 2019

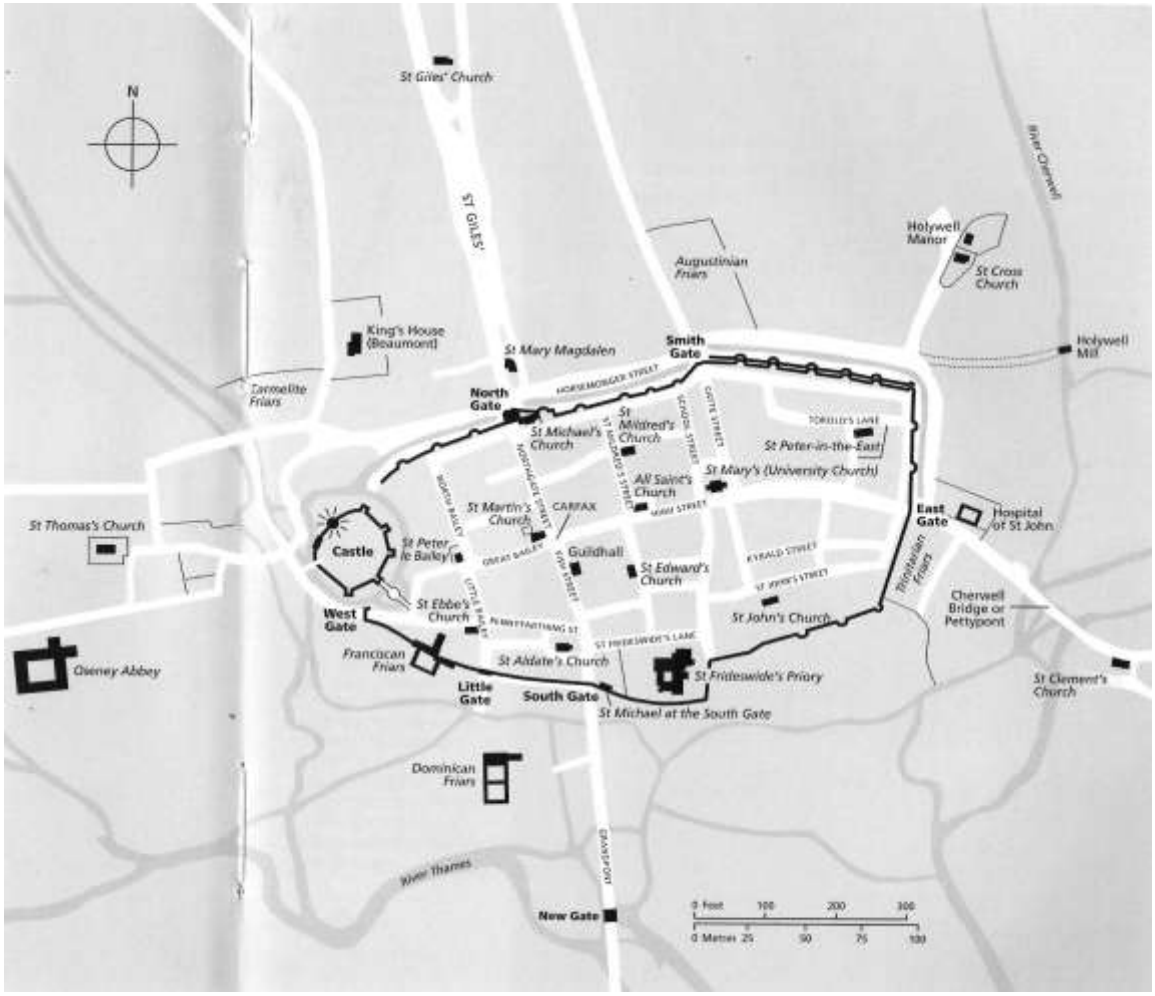
38 https://www.iema.net/assets/nts/Turley_Associates/Westgate_Development,_Oxford_NTS_September_2013.pdf. Not sure I want to see a signal crayfish – an invasive non-native creature: https://insideecology.com/2017/09/27/invasive-non-native-species-uk-signal-crayfish/ Hopefully otters like them!

39 The old chestnut of being always within six feet of a rat is revisited at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20716625 - a more informed calculation gives 164 feet, or 50 metres. In Oxford you're probably closer to a squirrel.

are mammals too – well, yes, I suppose so, and I *have* seen lots of those: most commonly over Port Meadow or Burgess Field. But I don't know what sort...

There are some special one-way snickets that I need to append. Between 13 and 14 Broad Street an alley through the buildings, and similarly from a bit further down at Morton's, gives onto the seemy-side of the street, back-parts often being more interesting; but also especially in this case, onto sections of the Oxford city wall. Oxford's wall is well hidden for the most part, nothing like the feature you find at Ludlow or Chichester, but in a way this makes finding the bits where it surfaces the more intriguing.

This of course is the Norman wall, contemporaneous with the castle; a previous Saxon wall probably followed much the same line, though probably cutting off about a third of the east end – I remember reading the suggestion that the kink in the High Street might indicate the former boundary/ gate. The VCH has it that 'the later street plan suggests that the first east wall ran east of the medieval Schools Street and Oriel Street and west of Catte Street and Magpie Lane', and adduces further if slim evidence for this.[40]



The map above – scanned as best I can from Tyack's book,[41] the clarity of the presention more than excusing the tight binding – shows the later wall, and the square plan of the early city typical of Saxon fortified towns can be discerned.

Another snicket off New Inn Hall Street leads down behind the History Faculty on George Street, and thus to the curve of wall coming around from Bulwarks Lane.

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40 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp300-304

41 Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford An Architectural Guide*, OUP 1998 – p2-3, 'Oxford c1250'.

The whole of the walls as remain may be taken in as a single walk with the sense of tracing a palimpsest; Stephanie Jenkins provides an excellent introduction in her virtual tour.[42]

[42] http://oxfordhistory.org.uk/city_wall/index.html

Chapter 5 – Parks

'The Parks' in Oxford means the University Parks, and why this single block of land is pluralised is one of those Oxford mysteries – ie lots of people have different opinions.

But there are many others; the City Council's web page of 'parks and open spaces'[1] categorises them thus, and my first reaction on finding these lists was 'golly, what a lot':

Parks	**Countryside and nature reserves**
	Barracks Lane Meadow
	Barton Village Nature Park
Blackbird Leys Park (F)	
Botley Park	
	Burgess Field Nature Park (F*)
Bury Knowle Park (F)	
	Chilswell Valley
	Court Place Farm Nature Park
	Cowley Marsh Nature Reserve
Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park (F)	
	Fiddler's Island
Florence Park (F)	
	Grandpont Nature Park
Hinksey Park	
	Iffley Meadows Nature Reserve
	Kendall Copse (F)
	Longbridges Nature Park
	Lye Valley Nature Reserve
	Magdalen Quarry
	Magdalen Wood West (F)
	Meadow Lane Nature Park (F)
	Milham Ford Nature Park (F)
	Peasmore Piece Nature Park
	Peril's Copse
	Port Meadow
Raleigh Park (F)	Raleigh Park (F)
South Park	

The index page offers additional links for Port Meadow and Shotover, though the former appears in the 'countryside and nature reserves' list too.[2] Similarly, the two appearances for Raleigh Park link to two separate pages.[3] I asked the Parks Service whether this represented jurisdictional overlap – maybe different work-groups manage the different categories – or administrative oversight on 23 January 2019. Not entirely to my surprise, I never heard back.



It would appear that this list is incomplete anyway (see picture). One wonders what the criteria are for inclusion – once one has got over being amazed at just how much of this sort of land the Council manages. As for this, 'F' on the list is where these areas are listed as having 'Friends' – see later. ('F*' has Friends but they are not acknowledged by the Council.)

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1 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/homepage/195/parks_and_open_spaces

2 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/902/port_meadow and https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20003/parks_and_open_spaces/823/port_meadow

3 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/903/raleigh_park and https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/359/raleigh_park

Before we dive into the council parks, '*The*' Parks. Their story is well-known, and well-documented, from the mid-nineteenth century: the University bought 20 acres from Merton in 1853/4,[4] and after some wrangling, established a quango to manage the area with the dual objectives of providing an arboretum and a place of recreation. The Parks' own website tells the tale.[5] Not reported in this summary is the usual to-ing and fro-ing of committee existence over many years, which tends to make for dry reading. Sufficient to note that the initial body, the Parks Delegates, resigned *en bloc* when their 1863 plans were rejected by Convocation. A new body was formed, the Parks Curators, and they more or less came up with the same plan, but much cheaper... They declared a policy of providing 'as many interesting trees as possible without detracting from the natural beauty of the indigenous by an excess of the exotic'.[6]



There used to be a handy tree-list leaflet back in the 1970s, but it's all interweb now and not so easy. You have to find out where you are on the map at
https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/trees-of-the-parks
and then pick the location from the menu on the left, eg Lazenbee's Ground to get
https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/lazenbees-ground
which lists the trees by tag. Thus LG2 is

LG2	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech

(An older indexing system is visible behind the LG2 tag. Ah, change.[7] In fact, rather more of the trees seem to have this type of older tag than sport the new ones.)

So far so good! But down the bottom of the Lazebee's Ground list the following are all simply 'LG': grey birch, Himalayan birch, round leaf European beech, manna ash, holly, white poplar and Italian black poplar. (OK, you can probably recognise *holly*...).

And some trees aren't tagged at all (though maybe that makes them plain 'LG'?).

As a 'cut-out-and-keep' service, I've produced a list of the trees in appendix 3. Yes, it's a snapshot at the start of 2019, but maybe as AEFTR it will provide some entertainment! I've additionally listed them by type as well as location, so that the true tree-geek can try to find (say) both Trees of Heaven (LG27, SW13).[8]

The Parks as an arboretum were all of a Victorian piece with the great efflorescence of science, backed by industrial wealth; you must imagine them being laid out with the contemporaneous Natural History Museum, which was to centralise the University's Science, alone in the south-west corner of the Parks.

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4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_Parks - the source for this is https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/introduction/ which only says '1853'. A further 72 acres towards the Cherwell and then the Mesopotamian 4 were bought by 1859. But see also footnote 14 below.

5 Rather illogically not as a first sub-section of their 'history' page, but after 'Features', 'Public Use', and 'Sport': https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/managing. A little more detail but essentially the same story can be found in Historic England's listing https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001651, and as often Wikipedia offers a very digestible overview https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_Parks.

6 Presumably from some form of governing document which I have not been able to find on-line and, as with many other of my 'researches' have been too lazy to look for in a library. It is quoted without source in Jan Morris's *Oxford* on p81.

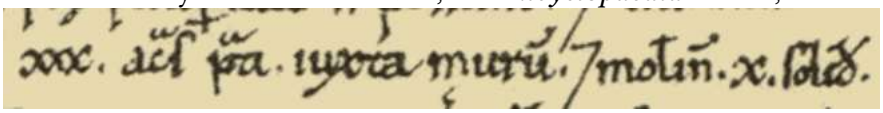
7 See ch.6!

8 In my ignorance I picked this off the list because the name looked nice; however https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ailanthus_altissima advises that it is classified as invasive in many places, and smells horrible, and is also known as "ghetto palm", "stink tree", or "tree of Hell".

Sir Henry Acland[9] initiated the construction of the museum between 1855 and 1860, to bring together all the aspects of science around a central display area. In 1858, Acland gave a lecture on the museum, setting forth the reason for the building's construction. He viewed that the University had been one-sided in the forms of study it offered—chiefly theology, philosophy, the classics and history—and that the opportunity should be offered to learn of the natural world and obtain the "knowledge of the great material design of which the Supreme Master-Worker has made us a constituent part".[10]

The other science buildings on this side down to South Parks Road (with all those snickets as in the previous chapter) have gradually encroached, as science itself expanded. But back in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a rural area. 'The meadow land adjacent to the river provided grazing for sheep and cattle and farmland surrounded the Museum.'[11]

In fact 'the Parks' started much nearer the centre of town. The *Encyclopaedia of Oxford* provides a pedigree of the land ownership: 'the land ...was held in 1086, according to Domesday Book, by Robert D'Oilly.' It was referred to, the *Encyclopaedia* claims, as



"30 acres of meadow close to the wall and a mill (rendering) 10 s".'[12] This is Holywell Mill, apparently; now Magdalen College graduate accommodation ('the location is extremely peaceful, with no traffic noise and beautiful surroundings'[13]), 'the Mill' is clearly shown on Davis's 1790s map (below).

'Holywell Manor was given to Merton College by Henry III in 1266,' continues the *Encyclopaedia*, in an access of plausibility – it was of course Merton that sold the block of land to the University in 1853 (or -4).[14]

My point, however, is that these original acres are not those on which the University's plans were laid out. Without getting into the variability of historical measurements, 30 modern acres is 145,200 sq. yards, which sounds a lot, but, if in a square shape, is about 381 yards x 381 yards; and the nearest part of the city wall (at Smith Gate[15]) is some 475yds[16] from the south west corner of the Museum plot, on Parks Road. The '30 acres' must be the area around and south of South Parks Road.[17]

This interpretation is borne out by Davis, whose detailed map of the City (extract on the next page) shows at least 'part of the Parkes' in this area. Sadly this is as far as he goes with the detail; the 2 inches to the mile scale with which he maps the whole county shows no boundary to the north of the city, as might indicate a limit to 'the Parkes', the whole being subsumed into 'St Giles's Fields'.[18]

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9 He diligently featured earlier in ch.3 too, reporting about cholera.

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University_Museum_of_Natural_History

11 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/guide

12 *Encyclopaedia of Oxford* ed Hibert and Hibert, under 'Parks, University', except I've replaced its translation with Stenton's from https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol1/pp396-428#h2-0030. The original Domesday is at https://opendomesday.org/media/images/oxf/09.png.

13 http://www.magdmcr.co.uk/PublicDownloads/MagdalenSingleAccommodation.pdf p150

14 I wrote to Merton Library to ask if they had any information, or knew of any college history, that might help track the college's land-holdings in this area, in January 2019. Julian Reid did eventually write back, and point out the patchwork history of Holywell Manor that I had overlooked, and sort of filled in the gaps for me. https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp265-283#h3-0014. Incidentally, he reckoned the earliest date for the conveyance of land for the Parks was in *1856* (qv footnote 4).

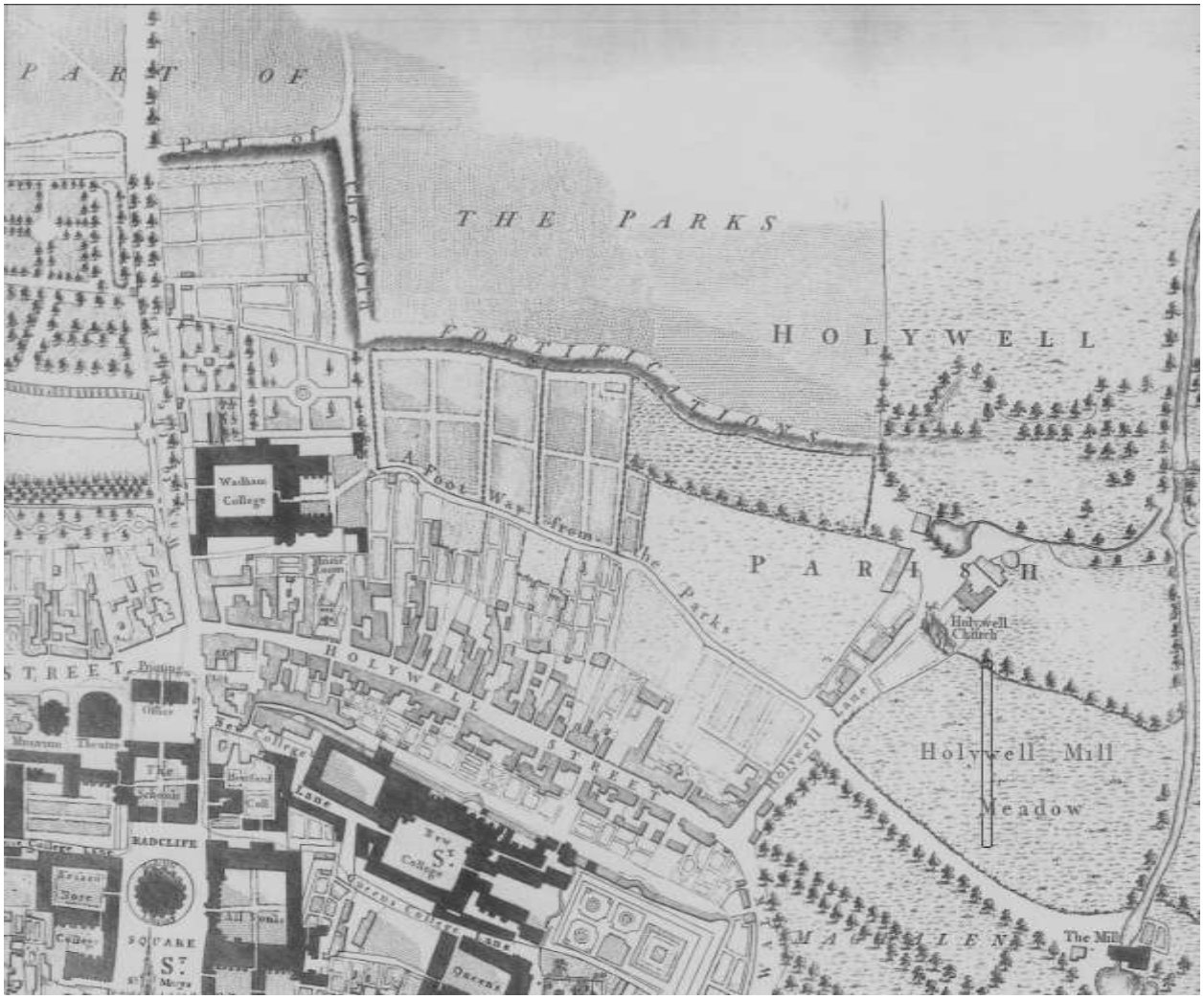
15 South of The Kings Arms.

16 435m - straight line measured on Mr. G's map.

17 The 1876 OS map shows 'Merton Cricket Ground' to the south of South Parks Road, west of the (recently extended) St Cross Road. This would seem to be the place!

18 Extract shown in ch.2.

On the map extract, note that the 'Part of' the Parks, right at the top, is to the west of our Parks Road – where Keble is now, heading towards 'St Giles his Church' (as Wood has it, below). The next 'Part of' below, part of 'the old fortifications' corresponds to the beginning of our South Parks Road, turning off Parks Road.



Just how far 'the Parks' extended into St Giles's Fields is hard to ascertain. Tracking down descriptions and usage prior to 1850 is a bit like searching for dark matter. And although it is commonplace to say that 'part of the area had been long used for the University Walks',[19] there are few contemporary references and they are vague as to precise area.

That the plural 'Parks' is an amalgamation of 'new' and 'old' areas is plausible if not particularly clarifying. Anthony Wood in the mid-seventeenth century has no 'old parkes', just 'new' ones – though that in itself indicates a dichotomy.[20] The modern Parks' map (in appendix 3) shows an 'Old Park' just to the north of the Science Area – though I don't think that helps much!

So, the *Life and Times*[21] has several references to the 'New Parkes', mainly as a focus for Civil War activity, including digging fortifications – but these did no more than cut across the corner where the Museum now is. On 20 August 1642 the Royalist trainees 'marched downe through Halywell; and so, thorough a gate neere Mr Napper's house, they entred in to Newe parkes'; later 'they returned entringe into the towne at St Giles his church'.[22] This entrance and exit would seem to

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19 eg in *The University of Oxford: A New History*, G.R. Evans, I.B.Taurus 2010; oops, forgot to note the page :/

20 Though it could instead indicate a sequence, I suppose.

21 Anthony Wood, edited Andrew Clark, 1891, Clarendon Press - https://archive.org/details/lifetimesofantho01wooduoft

22 https://archive.org/details/lifetimesofantho01wooduoft/page/54

suggest a triangular area not far from the fortifications mentioned in his other references; so, again, rather to the south of the current Parks.

Notwithstanding these quibbles, that the rural area to north of the city was used historically for walks is both plausible and indeed unsurprising: from the city, the west, south and east[23] points of the compass are given to water! And a longer walk into the fields is scarcely to be distinguished from a nearer perambulation. The odd contemporary, if variously rose-tinted, description helps set the scene:

Sir J Peshall, editing (and adding to) Wood's *Life and Times* in 1773:

> I should speak of a neat Terras Walk made round Part of a large Field, called the Park, adjoining to the North-East End of the City, extending about a Mile, which serves for a pleasant and wholesome Walk: whilst it opens to the Country, adorned with Hills, noble Seats, Spires of Churches, etc., on looking back on the City, there are viewed rich Domes, Turrets, Spires, Towers, etc., of the Colleges, Churches, etc., peeping over the Groves.[24]

And Mrs Gamlen wrote in her memoirs, seemingly before the University's lay-out:[25]

> Of course we went for walks. Sometimes in the Parks, then a grass field with a cart track across it from East to West, approached from St Giles by a footpath between hedges, where Keble Road now is.[26]

Often cited[27] to establish the length and popularity of use is the report that Charles II exercised his spaniels here when staying in Oxford in 1685. Since he died very early in February 1685 it seems but a narrow and wintry chance; but an article in the Spectator[28] about Martin Routh, an Oxford figure,[29] says that 'in 1851 he told a friend that he had talked with a lady whose mother remembered Charles II walking in the Parks at Oxford with his dogs.' It is just about possible I suppose, and other than the fallibility of memory and the ever-subversive wish for credit, why should one doubt it? Beyond wondering 'which' Parks?

But walking! This is meant to be about *walking!*

The Parks (by which I mean what we have for walking now) have nine gates – clockwise, North Lodge, LMH, Rainbow Bridge, Cox's Corner, cycle track, South Lodge, Science Area, Keble and the new Ginkgo Gate.[30] Discounting the last, as it is uselessly between Keble and North Lodge, and the cycle track entrance, also pointless between Cox's Corner and South Lodge, that leaves seven. Unlike Port Meadow, where connectivity is limited, you may readily walk from any one gate to another. Assuming you don't wish to enter and leave by the same gate, this means there are 7 * 6 = 42 possible ways of traversing the Parks. Plenty of scope!

The most interesting of these are those which contrast environments on entry and exit. Thus the LMH gate takes you into the North Oxford Conservation Area, gothic red-brick; Rainbow Bridge takes you into the SSSI of Marston Meadows; Cox's Corner offers more SSSI, or forking off a bit

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23 Across-the-Cherwell east.

24 Quoted in *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*, A D Godley, Methuen & Co 1908 p32.

25 But not long before, surely, as her memoirs only start in 1856.

26 Cited by *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford*, (which also has the Peshall description). The original is Florence Mostyn Gamlen, *My Memoirs, 1856-1952*, Oxford 1952. Note that Mrs Gamlen is approaching from the west of Parks Rd.

27 eg on p6 of *The University of Oxford: A New History*, G.R. Evans; or on p1 of *The University Parks*, *A* [sic]*Historical Guide* Oxford 1998, and of course *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford*. Not one has given an original (or, indeed, any) source.

28 http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/30th-september-1938/24/an-oxford-figure

29 1755 – 1854; latterly President of Magdalen College for 63 years: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Routh . 'Asked what he would say to a young don seeking advice: "You will find it a very good practice always to verify your references, sir!"'

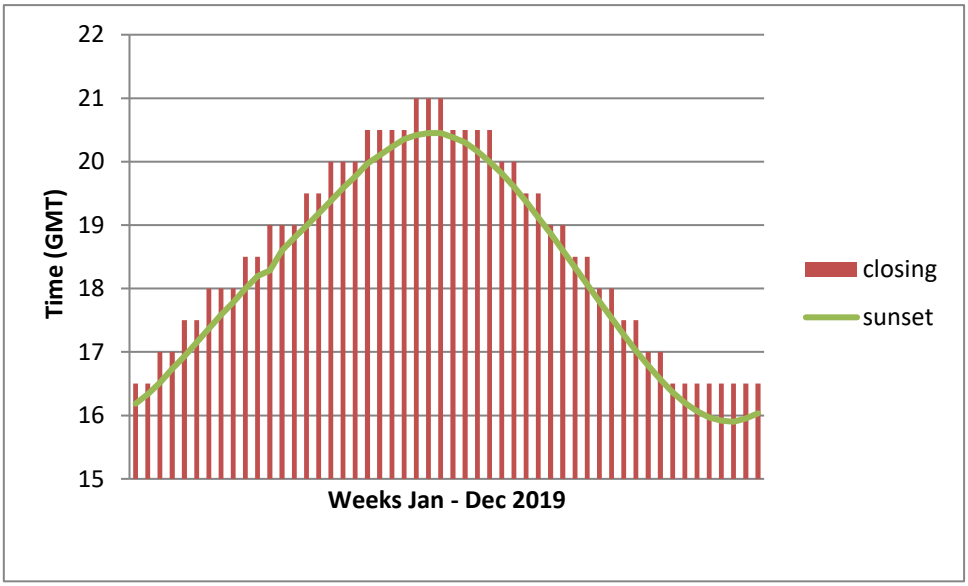
30 The official map in appendix 3 labels only two specifically, shows wheelchair symbols by 4, has a path over 'High Bridge', glosses over Cox's Corner and hasn't been updated for the new Ginkgo Gate. Rather unsystematic, then.

further along, Mesopotamia or St Catz. The Science Gate offers a weird canyon-land between 20th century science buildings. North and South Lodges and Keble gate are rather more functional exits onto busy roads – useful entrances, though!

Incidentally, should you get locked in at night, the remote Cox's Corner offers instructions on who to telephone. However, if you have got this far, this gate is in fact the easiest to circumvent: push through the sparse shrubs to your left, squeeze between fence and spiked semi-circle that sticks over the stream below, and the low bridge parapet is an easy leg-over. Failing this, the Science and LMH exits are fairly climbable but are perhaps more suited to relatively youthful musculature and energy.

The closing times change with the seasons. Noting the change of date as you enter is a good sign of the closing-in of winter, or, conversely, the spring exhalation. On a practical note, the Mesopotamia section closes half-an-hour earlier than the main area.

The shifts in closing time ought to present, if graphed, a blocky sine-wave pattern, but doesn't quite, as this chart[31] by week for 2019 shows:



The longer the red bar is above the green line (sunset), the longer you have to wander around in the penumbral gloom.

They are obviously hampered by only allowing themselves half-hour increments, which explains why some closing times seem earlier than actual dusk, and others later. However, in addition, they seem to have just given up in November!

The creation of the modern Parks came not only as the University was expanding Science, but as the rapidly expanding cities of the Industrial Revolution were waking up to their civic duties. They were set up in imitation of the private parkland of the country's larger houses, surrounded by railings and gates, with curling paths, promenades, vistas, and lakes; and designed to lure the working-class away from public-houses with exotic buildings, band-stands and galleries inside. There were worries about how the working-class might behave once inside though; various strictures are usually posted. The unwashed were still capable of annoying: Professor Max Muller, whose house bordered the Parks, complained of 'a seat that now stands very close to the paling of my garden':

> I should not mind the mere noise of children and nursery maids who congregate near the seat but the conversation that is occasionally carried on between the nursery maids and their followers is so loud that it can be distinctly heard in the garden and its character is sometimes very objectionable.[32]

Christ Church's Meadow may be seen as an antecedent of the Parks movement of the 1840s and 50s. There were five Christ Church men on the Select Committee on Public Walks who reported

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31 https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/opening-times - downloaded for 2019 on 31 January 2019; BST adjusted to GMT.

32 Quoted by John Steane in *The Oxford University Parks: The First Fifty Years* Garden History, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 87-100 published by The Gardens Trust – retrieved from JStor https://www.jstor.org/stable/1587315

to the House of Commons on 27 June 1833; they 'noted both how "that beautiful walk Christchurch Meadow" satisfied human needs, and how necessary it was for the urban poor to enjoy such health.'[33] As well as providing as it were a template for exercise, its rules were also perhaps a model: they still announce that 'The Meadow Keepers are hereby instructed to prevent nuisance and indecent, rude or disorderly conduct of every description'. They then list some specific nuisances, including 'persons carrying parcels or bundles so as to obstruct the walks' and 'flying of kites, throwing stones, throwing balls, bowling hoops, shooting arrows, firing guns or pistols.'[34] The moderation of walking (only!) is a wonderful quality.

The University Parks offers 'Rules and Advice' for users in a very modern confusion of policy and practice. You are told not to swim, jump, or dive into the river or pond, and then asked to note that the River or Pond (capitalised for this directive) 'have water of variable depth' – presumably in case you actually do any of those actions. I *have* seen ponds of uniform depth – the Boston Common Frog Pond, for example – but a river?

And apparently there is a risk of falling branches... Well, yes, there is always a risk, but is it worth using up sign space? Let alone reading-time? These should be rhetorical questions, but alas nowadays rhetoric is insufficient against the tide of jobsworth H&S crap, by which I particularly mean the mindless dissemination of rules-for-the-simplest-understanding, because we cannot rely on any higher degree of intellectual attainment. According to the Health and Safety Executive itself, in its *Management of the risk from falling trees*,[35]

> Each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed when trees fall on them. Thus the risk of being struck and killed by a tree falling is extremely low. Around 3 people are killed each year by trees in public spaces; but as almost the entire population of the UK is exposed, the risk per person is about one in 20 million.

We have to up the rate for mere injury of course, but the rate is still not going to be worth worrying about. You are twice as likely to be killed by lightning (no warnings about that), or six-hundred times more likely to be killed in a car accident...[36]



A slightly more reasonable approach is shown at Blenheim Palace with their sign – a particularly charming graphic illustrating the sheer malevolence of the natural world. However, they too are missing the point. As you can see if you look closely, in high winds you are at risk of being blown over even before the branch gets to you; and, other than serious thrill-seekers (who are not really going to care about warnings anyway), people aren't going to be out and about in that sort of storm unless they really have to be. (We will skip over just *what* we are meant to avoid in high winds...)

Rest assured that the dangers of walking in the Parks – indeed, in Oxford generally – are low. Yes, as the Parks again pedantically advise, 'some pathways have uneven surfaces': You Have Been Warned. Yet as Christ Church sensibly points out to those entering its Meadows, 'you do so entirely at your own risk' – is that not enough to say?

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33 ibid.

34 From sign at entrance by Folly Bridge.

35 Available to download from https://www.qtra.co.uk/cms/index.php?section=39. Admittedly this dates to 2007, and maybe there has been a sharp uptick in such deaths recently.

36 https://naturenet.net/blogs/2007/02/19/killed-by-a-falling-tree-what-are-the-chances/ Every road crossing should have warning signs. No, no, no – kidding. But that will probably be read as 'no kidding'...

The Oxford Council's webpage helpfully offers a link to 'Friends of Parks'. These groups are strange to my eye; they seem to demonstrate a failure in local governance, an additional layer to the Council's management – as our elected representatives, should they not act for and answer to us anyway? No, groups of agitators (sorry, 'friends') can get their hands on the levers (or shovels), and they each need their own web-page(s), members, meetings, minutes, funding... Not that they don't do good things, but it just seems inefficient and somewhat subversive of 'the system' – shouldn't we be trying to make *that* work, rather than going around it?

Anyway, the Council's list of Friends Groups amusingly indicate further incongruities – in addition to the above odd-ness: the Aristotle Lane Recreation site, the Kidneys (Aston's Eyot), St Mary and St John Churchyard, St Sepulchre's Cemetery and the Trap Grounds all have Friends, but are not listed on the main list of parks and open spaces (see the start of the chapter above). The Friends list omits Burgess Field, admittedly formed only a year or so ago; and, if including St Sepulchre's, why not Holywell Cemetery too? Aston's Eyot is owned by Christ Church (the Kidneys is an adjacent but different area); surely the Council have no responsibility for the former? Apparently, though, 'by agreement' with Christ Church, they mow the grassy pathways.

These overlapping and bifurcating lists are beginning to seem like the Oxford waterways, uncertain as to classification and difficult to identify exhaustively! Perhaps one should just be grateful that the mishmash of more or less working (some of those Friends groups are clearly moribund or merely hopeful) interests seems to work, most of the time.

The question arises, does Oxford boast more such open space than other similar cities? It feels like it... but what other cities are of comparable size, even? By area? Population? This turns out to be a much harder question than you'd think, largely because a 'city' is so ill-defined. 'Delineating and even defining the British urban areas is a very difficult exercise, insofar as statistical divisions often change, and even sometimes the names of the units', laments EPSON's Study on Urban Functions.[37] The easy historical question of fact 'does it have a cathedral?' would exclude Cambridge. And then you get onto boundaries, often subject to political pressures and not always corresponding to how you would draw the line if looking at a map: the Oxford City Council Boundary includes Cutteslowe and Sandhills, beyond the ring-road, but excludes North Hinksey (well within it) and Botley (beyond the ring-road but certainly reached without a break from the urban environment).[38] And so on. However, if we shut our eyes and trust others to have taken due diligence on this problem, the most similar UK cities by population[39] are these:

rank	name	population
49	Ipswich, Suffolk	164,331
50	Huddersfield, West Yorkshire	162,949
51	Dundee	160,309
52	Oxford, Oxfordshire	159,994
53	Doncaster, South Yorkshire	158,141
54	Chelmsford, Essex	157,072

And our question simplifies, given these comparisons, is Oxford unusual in its open spaces?

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37 https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2006/studies-and-scientific-support-projects/study-urban-functions - the download is fr-1.4.3_April2007-final.pdf; p118. Their lament about Britain is in contrast to their findings on continental Europe, where this sort of thing is better managed.

38 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1097/oxford_city_council_boundary_map

39 http://thegeographist.wordpress.com/2013/11/23/largest-cities-uk-population/ An earlier version (as referenced by Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford) commented 'This list is being continually updated. (Population figures are mostly from the 2011 census or 2012/2013 estimates)' - https://web.archive.org/web/20140129072718/http://thegeographist.wordpress.com/2013/11/23/largest-cities-uk-population/. You also have to wonder about seasonal variations – not only tourists, of course, but student cohorts; are their numbers included? Averaged? Statistics, eh; well, it helps to start with something.

(You have to feel that these near-sized cities are more twin-like than the absurd political 'connections' with Bonn, Grenoble, Leiden, Perm and Leon, Nicaragua that Oxford boasts, whatever reservations you might have about such a method of comparison.)

Cambridge came in next, at 55; would it be fair to assume that it might indeed be similar, due to unique historical factors? I think so. Then in terms of looking at the detail, let's exclude Dundee (*autre pays, autre moeurs*?), and there are two Yorkshire and two East Anglia, so pick just one of each. We're not quite 'left with' Ipswich and Doncaster, but that's the scientific method right there, sampling...

Ipswich Council usefully boasts that 'residents and visitors can access more than 500 hectares of green space and wildlife habitats across the town'.[40] Wait, is that a lot? It sounds it! They even have a map showing their overall location. Oxford merely offers little maps of each, without showing how they all relate to the overall area; though later I did find another overlapping page that said 'our Countryside team manages 900 acres of countryside'[41] – so there you go. Except that this metric appears in the heading to the 'countryside and nature reserves' page; does that mean it omits those items listed under 'parks'?

Some of Ipswich's parks look to be rather beyond what one might think of the city boundary – Orwell Park extends down the estuary; but then Oxford also seems to count[42] Shotover, so perhaps fair enough. After this quick look, one would have to say that Ipswich has at least as much parkland and similar as Oxford, by area, though they appear to be fewer and larger – more organised, perhaps.

Doncaster Council[43] divides their parks into 'major parks and outdoor spaces' (19 of those) and 'local parks and outdoor spaces', classified by area – you have to click into each to see what is available there. Easy links take you to reporting problems, asking for more information, and providing feedback about the page. No overall map, no quantification (though, to anticipate, it would seem that yes, Doncaster too has as many open spaces as Oxford), but someone has thought about what the users might want of these pages and the presentation is good.

In fact, looking at these other two Council's websites, I realise just how poor Oxford is in this respect; like the city's roads, bumpy, patched, only just-about working, ugly, it reminds me of the car-workers of the latter part of twentieth century, time-serving jobsworths, interested in their pay-packet and their rights more than actually caring for their work, their service... Oh dear. Still, reassuring to know that other cities also have their attractions! Ipswich, for example, can boast of being 'one of England's oldest towns, if not the oldest. At its core Ipswich was and is the oldest still continuing town to have been established and developed by the English. It has an unbroken history of community as a town since early Anglo-Saxon times.'[44,45]

Still later, by dint of drilling down into 'countryside and nature reserves', then into a specific one and clicking on 'boundaries: site boundaries map' (so a *third* and unlikely jump from the 'Parks and Open Spaces' front page) I also found an overall map – 'Oxford City Council Countryside - Nature reserves, nature parks, country park and common land owned or managed by Oxford City

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40 https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/parks

41 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory/25/countryside_and_nature_reserves; 900 acres are 364 hectares.

42 Not included in the 'countryside and nature reserves' list that is headed by the '900 acres' claim, but the Shotover page is on the other hand titled 'Countryside and nature reserves – Shotover Park'. It goes on to say that it is 117 hectares – a curious muddle of measurements.

43 http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/culture-leisure-tourism/parks

44 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ipswich

45 In case you're wondering, Doncaster is Roman, at least, being on an important route to York; and 'racing from Doncaster' includes 'the oldest continuing regulated horserace in the world', stemming from the town's stagecoach trade starting in the sixteenth century. The wildlife park has the only polar bears in England, and there are over 40 clubs and bars within 2 – 3 minutes of each other in the centre - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doncaster.

Council'. Comparison with the Oxford City Council Boundary map shows up that several of the areas are beyond the City's boundaries – Raleigh Park, Chiswell Valley, Shotover... So what's going on there? And Cutteslowe and Sunnymead would be outside the boundary too, but someone left it off the overall map. It's not the only one – Blackbird Leys, Botley Park, Bury Knowle, Florence Park, Hinksey Park, South Park are all missing. On the other hand, the map adds The Kidneys, River Mead, Rock Edge, Spindleberry, Trap Grounds Town Green and Wolvercote Hurst, which aren't listed as either 'parks' or 'countryside'...

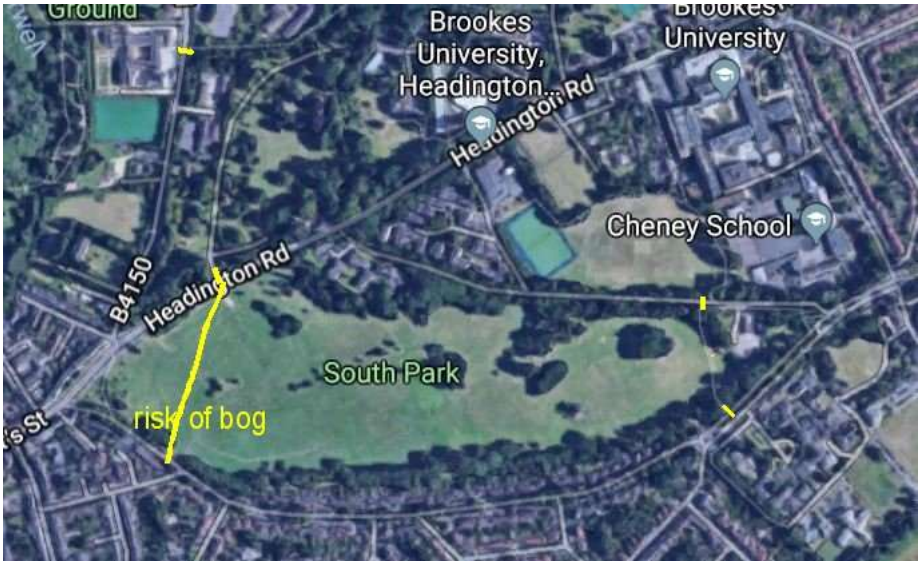
And, finally, missing from both map and listings is Headington Hill Park, which I walked through yesterday, and it definitely said 'Oxford City Council' on its signage. A web-search for it turns up a City Council reference in the description of the Headington Conservation Area, in which the 'southern part of the hill contains the *public parks* of *Headington Hill* and South Park'[46] (my emphasis).

Really, trying to piece together the whole story is like trying to mend something made of time-rotted fabric. You wonder how the Council manages? As in, allocates resources – *our* resources – between the various responsibilities, when it appears to have no overall idea of what these are.

* * * * *

And that is where I stuck in writing this, somewhat despairing of my ambition to collate a complete list of Oxford's parks, let alone actually visiting them, for a long time. The lack of overview seemed to undermine what was known; like the University Parks' tree index, it was inevitable that any question would fall upon the missing links. An incomplete list is worse than nothing, I felt. Other things intervened; a faint hint of futility, like dust, settled on the manuscript.

When I finally came back to the text, I thought that perhaps less bureaucrazy, more personal experience might side-step this slough or grimpen.[47]



South Park has few exits, inconveniently, here marked with yellow.

The one on Headington Hill is handy for crossing to and from Headington Hill Park, but beware the obvious diagonal (as marked) leading from here to Morrell Avenue (for Cowley and Iffley Roads) – drainage down the hill between long slight hummocks means this is often surprisingly slishy, especially towards the southern end. Yes, I know this sort of warning has featured too often! Indeed, when I showed a second-term Canadian philology student how to get to Wolfson – no path along the west bank of the Cherwell – I explained that there *was* a path on the other side but not one to be undertaken when damp underfoot or not without boots, she muttered, 'it is *always* damp here'.

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46 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/370/headington_hill

47 A grimpen is a bog. It is a word that is only known for being used by T S Eliot, really (in *The Dry Salvages*), though to a previous generation perhaps it meant Conan Doyle – '"That is the great Grimpen Mire," said he. "A false step yonder means death to man or beast"' – *Hound of the Baskervilles*. It is always salutary to observe how preferred paths diverge around such areas (or other obstructions, like a fallen tree) and start to become the 'main' path.

This was my second second-term graduate student in as many weeks. The first was studying at St Benet's, a charming man who complained of the cold – it had been 40° when he left Brazil – and was heading the wrong way down Farndon Road to get to his lodgings on the corner of Banbury and Rawlinson Roads. He had discovered the Parks but not Port Meadow, though closer to his lodgings down Rawlinson, Polstead and Aristotle Lane.

I used to get stopped for directions frequently, but the smart-phone has pretty much polished that off – though sometimes even they can't help, such as with the question a Chinese family asked me in puzzlement a year or so ago, '*where* is the University?!' (Answer: it's all around you... perhaps not helpful for sightseers. The historical answer, that it was a guild for better bargaining with the townsfolk, might be no better.)

Also on the etymological front, just what is a 'park'? The OED offers

> Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French, French *parc* large enclosed area of land or woodland where one keeps and raises animals for the hunt (1160–74), enclosed place planted with fruit trees, orchard (c1220–78)...

together with the probable currency of post-classical Latin *parricus* before the earliest use in English – which is in the combination of *parksilver*, 1222, a rent or tax for its maintenance, *parkbote* 1315 in other words. Thanks to the triumph of central taxation over hypothecation, Oxford parks are free for the user. Finding out how much they actually cost is so fiddly no one bothers; the Council used to publish an explanation of how one's tax was spent each year, a useful guide one would think, but the latest was for 2014-15,[48] and it doesn't help anyway: it says that the City Council get 17% of the tax collected, after the County (73%) and Police (10%); and then the spending is broken down by rather nebulous classifications such as 'environmental services', 'cultural services', 'central services' – not to mention 'other'. Parks could be hiding in any of them.

The Council also publishes a 'budget book' (available for 2018-19[49]) with more detail than you really want. 'Parks' are mentioned 26 times, though some of these are 'car parks' (a late use: 1916); did you want to know about 'total Parks & Open Spaces' (£2.8M) or 'total Parks Development' (£0.2M), or did you want to know how these figures re-appear through the filter of 'Oxford Direct Services'?

> The majority of operational frontline service delivery functions previously carried out within the Council by Direct Services are now undertaken by the wholly owned Local Authority Trading Companies, Oxford Direct Services Limited and Oxford Direct Services Trading Limitied [sic].
>
> The Council pays a management fee to Oxford Direct Services (ODS) to provide various statuory [sic] services to residents, whilst retaining income for car parking and domestic waste. The sservices [sic] provided by ODS to the Council include management of car parks, domestic waste, street cleansing, parks and open spaces and pest control. ODS in turn buys-in support services and leases assets from the Council.
>
> The client contractor relationship is managed through a series of service level agreements, with client side managers within the Council overseeing the performance of services provided by ODS. There is a profit share arrangement in place for any surpluses generated by the wholly owned companies, with targets forming part of the Council's medium term financial plan.
>
> The ODS client side budgets held by the Council do not include any staffing costs, with all operational staff having transferred to the companies.

All clear enough, I suppose, despite the typos (the Council's prose as bumpy as their roads) until you hit those last two lines about staffing costs – wait, just who is paying what for staff?!

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48 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/239/guide_to_council_tax_booklet
49 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4782/budget_book_2018-19

Then you find Parks Development in the Community Service Budget too – another (?) £0.2M; and the 'Tree Team' get £26k 'additional resources' in the capital budget... There are also some interesting figures for how much the Council charges for the use of a park per day for commercial events – generally starting at £1,000, unless you're a circus or funfair, or qualify for a 'community rate'...

We'd need to spend a lot longer studying this 118 page document to really get to grips with it. For example, the big figure of £2.8M is part of the *Sustainable City Directorate's* net total budget of £22M, but that is after income of £18M for that Directorate, and then the SCD is only one thread in the overall budget, which includes Housing Services, Business Improvement and a dozen other categories, with total gross expenditure of £62M, net £24M.

Super-simplistically maybe one could say that of my £3.1k Council Tax, about £500 goes to the city council (this figure is given on the tax-assessment); and the Parks net expenditure of c£3M is 3/24 of the total net general fund budget, so £62 of my money goes to Parks. Which seems surprisingly high after all that – shome misunderstanding shomewhere?

Is it right for us to enjoy walking through these fine examples of civilised social organisation without having *some* idea of how they work? It seems a bit like turning on the gas (or electricity, or water) without the faintest idea of the process by which such vital supplies are made available. Is 'I pay money' to *x* and 'look, I benefit thus' from *y* sufficient? Is it perhaps *exactly* this disconnect that leads to political disenfranchisement, Brexit, climate change and the end of the world as we know it?



And just how much does it cost to foster the mentality that puts this warning on a sign (from Court Place Farm Nature Park)?[50] Priceless.



Incidentally, Court Place Farm NP is a useful corridor for walkers heading from Old Marston up to Old Headington, avoiding lots of the awful Northway suburb, though the Peasmoor Piece route is a good alternative and not just for the name. Suggested routes in blue on this map,[51] top left coming from the Vicky Arms on the Cherwell.

It might also be a wildlife corridor, but it seems unlikely; even for walkers it is somewhat blighted by juxtaposition to the ring road. This north-eastern section was the first of the ring-road to be completed, in the mid 1930s; the last bit, between Heyford Hill and Hinksey, wasn't finished until 1966.[52] This included the 'Isis Bridge' over the Thames, up the south-east edge of which you can

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50 The absurdity can be picked out with a couple of questions. Is deep water not dangerous if it isn't a flood event? What *is* a 'flood event'? Assuming we would recognise one if we saw it (I'm thinking the breaking through of the Dover Straits by the glacial lake ponded up in the North Sea, 450,000 years ago – now *that* was a flood event), would we not be doing something other than reading signs anyway?

51 2.5in to the mile OS extract thanks to http://www.streetmap.co.uk as usual.

52 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Ring_Road

scramble in an illicit sort of way if determined not to enter and exit Rivermead Nature Park from the same place on the slopes of the Rose Hill estate. (Entrance and suggested exit in yellow on this satellite view.[53]) Rivermead NP is a jungly place on a slope, with ponds, quite unlike most Oxford NPs, and worth a visit for that reason. It is close to Old Iffley and its beautiful church, even if you have to walk through a different world to get to it.



The Isis Bridge offers not only a very broad pedestrian and cycle path over the river but a legitimate descent on the other side to the Thames Path, where you find yourself by Iffley Meadows. These are an SSSI, being remnants of wet meadows,[54] and if you have arrived in about April, 'you can enjoy Oxfordshire's iconic flower, the snake's-head fritillary' as BBOWT says.[55] BBOWT manages this site for the City; they claim credit for increasing the fritillaries from 500 in 1983 to 'over 89,000'. They know because they count them every year.

The Iffley Meadows reserve 'sits just a stone's-throw from the centre of Oxford, but is a peaceful haven for wildlife'. Well, first up, the ring-road is all-too audible to describe this as a 'peaceful haven' unless you're wearing noise-cancelling headphones. Second, you'd need to have a jolly good throwing arm, it's about two miles to Carfax. And third, when did 'wildlife' became so botanically oriented? Not a mammal is mentioned, other than humans, using this large area.[56] And while we're cribbing, since when was the snakehead fritillary promoted to 'Oxfordshire's icon'? BBOWT, the 'Berks Bucks Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust' used to be BBONT, a 'Nature Trust' when I did their accounts; along with their rebranding – just *what* was the point?[57] – seems to have come some outbreak of wishy-washy English. I blame marketing...

The BBONT office was full of young science graduate volunteers. They seemed to spend all their time – literally, I was shocked, me with my time to account for – looking at job-ads in the New Scientist. Real paid jobs, that is, but still, weren't they there to, well, *work*?

While walking up the Thames path towards Folly Bridge – just a stone's throw, remember – you pass along the edge of Longbridges Nature Reserve after going under Donnington Bridge (1962, as a sign on it commemorates). Longbridges seems to be typical of Oxford's NPs – a patch of waste ground that no-one could use for anything else. The Council's own description is terse; 'things to do' is down to one option, 'a walk through the nature reserve can be incorporated into a longer walk along the Thames Path, taking in the sights and sounds of the river and its surroundings'[58]

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53 Mr G again, but outline of NPs by OCC 'Site Boundaries Map' via the links in the 'boundaries' section on individual Countryside and Nature Reserves pages. (Being a tailored Google-map, the specific link is longer and less meaningful than even these footnotes can accommodate.)

54 You Have Been Warned.

55 https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/iffley-meadows. Latest count 2018.

56 I think info-boards at the entrances might have mentioned dogs, to be kept on short leads.

57 Their publicity makes no acknowledgement of this change; very 1984. 'For more than 55 years we have worked with local people to make Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire rich in wildlife and protect special places for generations to come.' https://www.bbowt.org.uk/about Which I approve of, really!

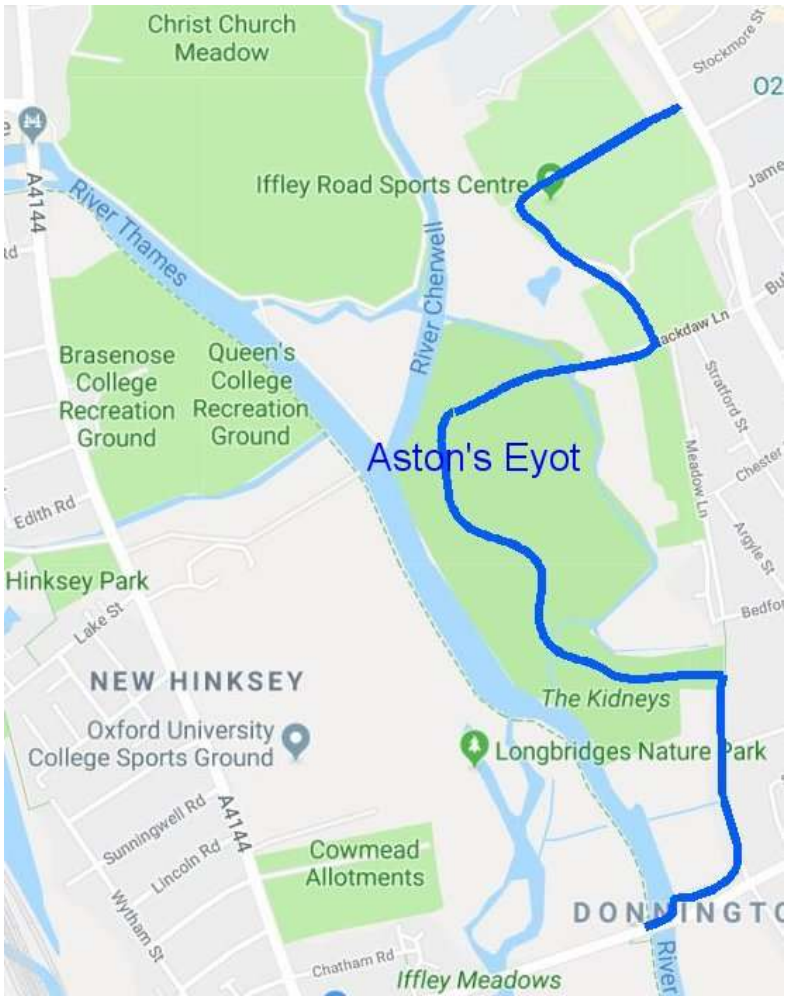
58 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/895/longbridges_nature_park

(so do that...), and the biodiversity section cursorily lists 'grass', 'willow', 'waterfowl and mammals'. Not even an info-board on site...

Across the river from here is 'the Kidneys' – you would have had to make a choice back at Donnington Bridge to get here – another bit of unusable ground one feels, though in fact rather more walked-through by the locals. The Council provides a webpage for this, but it isn't on their index. Perhaps the resulting lack of web-traffic explains this brevity under 'things to do':

> Wildlife spotting:
> New or experienced wildlife enthusiasts will find something to see in the wildflower[sic]. [59]

The Kidneys is contiguous with Aston's Eyot, a rather more interesting area that, like Burgess Field off the edge of Port Meadow, used to be a City Dump. One part is full of fruit trees that have grown from market-place refuse, or so the story goes.[60] The Kidneys and Aston's Eyot provide a road-free, albeit wiggly, way towards the city centre; continue, also in a rather wiggly-way, through (around) the University (Iffley Road) Sports Centre. Blue line on this map:[61]



Anything to avoid the Iffley Road itself, eh? Though Meadow Lane offers an acceptable and rather more direct alternative.

Where the blue line kinks right back at the top towards the Iffley Road is where one *really* would like access across the next bit of green, Christ Church sports ground, and over that college's bridge to its Meadow, so invitingly close across the Cherwell on the way to the city centre. But no, you have to head up the Iffley Road to Petty Pont, if you have come this way.

Aston's Eyot used to be on the 'Berkshire' side of the Thames as the Shire Lake Stream, after crossing Christ Church Meadow, used to continue roughly along the east edge of the Eyot. The straight bit where it says 'River Cherwell' on the map above is the 'New Cut', dug in 1884 to relieve flooding in the area.[62]

So, I haven't explored all the city's parks yet, neither in real life nor here; more to find out. It seems you can't lose really; if they have more than one entrance and exit, authorised or

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59 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/894/the_kidneys. I hope they are looking after it carefully.

60 They had a useful and informative website at http://friendsofastonseyot.org.uk/ but the 'server has been undergoing maintenance' for several months now (at as Feb 2019. Ah, fixed again – April 2019.)

61 Thanks again, Mr G.

62 https://thames.me.uk/s01669.htm even includes a photo by Henry Taunt of the works – amazingly treeless.

otherwise, then they are probably a good road-free connection from one place to the next; but if there is no way through, you might find unfrequented gems, such as Tumbling Bay Bathing Place, tucked into the far corner of Botley Park, an otherwise dull playing field. This cul-de-sac of history (& walking) might not appeal to everyone but it is immediately evocative of different times. Steps descend into the water at several places on both sides; a grainy wooden bridge crosses the middle.



Here you are a little way down the fourth arm of 'where four rivers meet', usually seen from the Thames Path on the bridge across the Sheepwash Stream. And it isn't actually a cul-de-sac; if you are prepared for a bit of barbed wire and trespass – there is a way north across the fields from here to Binsey Lane.

And Botley Park itself does have useful additional exits at Henry and Helen Roads, even if, together with its main one by the West Oxford Community Centre, they all lead back to the Botley Road. (Unless you catch the snicket from Helen Road to Binsey Lane – per ch.4.)

Amusingly the City claims on each of its 'Parks' webpages that:

> It is currently not possible to fly model aircraft or drones (both with and without camera for filming purposes) within Oxford City Council's public open spaces, including parks and nature reserves.[63]

I think they mean it is not currently 'permitted', but maybe they have deployed some useful technology, like those mysterious brakes to wandering supermarket trolleys at the edge of car-parks. Perhaps they should let Gatwick know?

As a post-script to the City's open spaces dichotomy between 'parks' and 'countryside and nature reserves', and my despair at compiling a complete list of such things, I later found another

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63 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory_record/360/botley_park

category of open spaces, 'play areas and recreation grounds'.[64] Many of these overlap with Parks, which is fair enough, we're talking about the swings and roundabouts often found in the corner. However, several additional spaces, not otherwise indexed, are revealed – such as the Angel and Greyhound Meadow, off St Clements. And there are *still* OCC areas not included in any of their lists or maps...

No, wait, then there is an entirely *different* list – pdf this time – that maybe includes all 'parks and open spaces' – as per the document heading (and web-page title). Nope, although there are 63 rows on this list (I use 'rows' advisedly – a quick review shows several duplications and at least one other specific error, two separate parks included with one name and another's address) and all eight spaces indexed as 'Parks' at the head of this chapter are included, and Headington Hill Park is added, which hasn't yet been mentioned on any map or index; despite this apparent inclusivity, it omits all the 'countryside and nature reserves'. Possibly because the 'typologies' of those listed are 'Park – City', 'Park – Local' or 'Park – Neighbourhood' – whatever those distinctions signify, but they don't include 'wild' things; and possibly because the web-page address[65] suggests these are possible locations for events, and we wouldn't have such things in 'countryside', would we?

Clearly all is unclear.

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64 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20229/leisure_and_sports_locations/635/play_areas_and_recreation_grounds
65 https://www.oxford.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2205/events_locations_-_parks_and_open_spaces.pdf

Chapter 6 – Mutabilitie

Anthony a Wood's description of the area ravaged by fire in 1644 is almost unrecognisable:

> Octob. 6, Sunday, hapned a dreadful fire in Oxford, such an one (for the shortness of time wherein it burned) that all ages before could hardly parallel.[1] It began about two of the clock in the afternoon, in a little poor house on the South side of Thames-street*2, (leading from the North gate to the High bridge*1 occasioned by a Foot Soldier's roasting a Pig, which he had then stolen. The wind being very high, and in the North, blew the flames Southward very quick and strangely, and burnt all stables and houses (except St. Mary's College*3 standing between the back part of those that reach from the North gate to St. Martin's Church*4 on the East, and those in the North Bayly commonly called New Inn Lane, on the West. Then all the old houses in the Bochers Rew*5 which stood between St. Martin's Church*4 and the Church of St. Peter's the Baylie*6, among which was a Printing House, and the Will Office (newly translated from London by his Majesty's command) totally consumed. From thence it flew over the gardens and back yards to Pennyferthying street*7, all which, except the East end, it burnt. From thence to Beef hall lane*8, leading from St. Aldate's to St.Ebb's Church, which also, except the East end, it consumed. From thence to Slaying lane*9, and some other houses between St. Ebb's Church and Water gate*10, and between that gate to Prechers bridge*11 which were all levelled to the ground, and then the Fire ceased.

*1 High Bridge is Hythe Bridge...
*2 Thames-St must thus be George Street. This area was earlier 'Broken Hayes'.
*3 Frewin Hall in New Inn Hall Street is all that remains of St Mary's College.[2]
*4 St Martin's is at Carfax.
*5 Butchers Row is Queen Street.
*6 St Peter's is on Bonn Square.
*7 Pennyfarthing Street is Pembroke Street.
*8 Beef Lane is still extant, at least as a sign in the public way, and otherwise runs as a vestigial passage through Pembroke College – the location matches the descriptive trend for this to be the same as 'Beef Hall Lane'.
*9 Slaying Lane is now Brewer Street (from 1932[3]; Davis 1790 – Brewer's Street).
*10 'The Little Gate (or Little South Gate) was at the exact point where St Ebbe's Street meets Littlegate Street, and explains why what is now a continuous road suddenly has a change of name here. It was earlier known as Water Gate, and had a small arched gateway for pedestrians and a larger one for carts. The pedestrian arch survived until 1798'[4]
*11 Preachers Lane is current in St Ebbes, south of Thames St, at the end of where Littlegate St is heading; however, Preacher's Bridge was further north and crossed the Trill Mill Stream just before the Albion Place kink[5] to the line south down St Ebbes. The VCH says of the stream, 'By 1279 Trill mill stream seems to have been canalized, and was 5 feet wide and 4 feet deep at Preachers Bridge. (fn. 265).'[6]

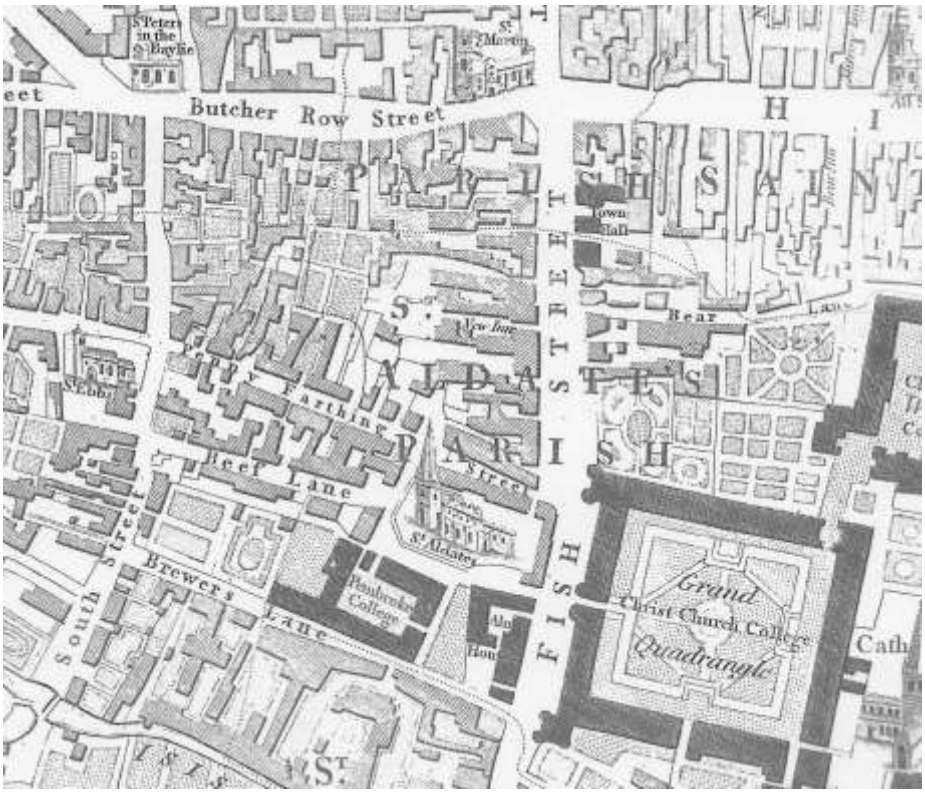
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1 Mind you, VCH Oxford 4 has it 'there were setbacks through a fire in 1138, which was said to have burnt the whole town, the sack by Stephen's army in 1142, a fire in 1190, which destroyed, among other buildings, St. Frideswide's priory, and a fire in 1236.' https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73#h3-0005
2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mary%27s_College,_Oxford
3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brewer_Street,_Oxford
4 Stephanie Jenkins: http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/city_wall/12_little_gate.html
5 https://trillmillstream.wordpress.com/ maps the stream – at least before New Westgate moved it...
6 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73

Not remembering this fire (and the others per footnote 1!) is rather like not remembering the massacre on St Brice's Day (13 November 1002), alluded to in ch.1, when ethnic hatred turned to cleansing and Christians burned their own temple, St Frideswide's church, to kill the refugees who had taken sanctuary therein. Well, maybe that's stretching reasonable expectation of historical recall.[7]

What about the road-name changes since the seventeenth century? Perhaps that too is not unreasonable? Though I'm not talking about actual changes in road – such as laying out Beaumont Street in the 1830s,[8] or obliteration due to redevelopment such as at the new Westgate in our time – I refer to the surely odd decision to rename an existing road as something else. It seems unsurprising that a renaming should take tentative decades – Osler Road in Headington, was renamed by 1956,[9] yet had a sign 'formerly Manor Road' for the next fifty years or so;[10] and yet a little digging and scratching reveals that a positive rolling-boil of name-changes, and not just, as in this case (and with a lot of other streets in Headington), as it all-but merged with Oxford, to avoid confusion with other roads.

Rackham Lane became St Margaret's Road when the church was built in the latter part of the nineteenth century;[11] Queen Street was named after Charlotte, George III's wife, who visited in 1785[12] - what she would have seen was Butchers Row; Merton Street was King Street in the mid-eighteenth century[13] – presumably after Charles I's use of Christ Church the previous century. When one looks at, say, Davis' 1790s detailed plan of Oxford, one rather seizes upon those roads that *are* unchanged – in this extract with Carfax at the top centre, High Street, and Brewers and Bear Lanes:



The Place-names of Oxfordshire has a section about roads in Oxford;[14] it contains as a sort of bass-line the apologetic '(lost)' after many names through its monolithic presentation (the street names are alphabetical but the text simply runs continuously from one to the next). Thus, Bedford's Lane

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7 The Danes did not forget. They sacked the city in 1009 – it is thought in reprisal.

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaumont_Street: 'The street was laid out from 1828 to 1837 with elegant terraced houses.'

9 Personal memory J Z Willmott, resident, then aged 8.

10 Personal observation. Actually, this road used to be 'Sandy Lane' until 1801 – Stephanie Jenkins, http://www.headington.org.uk/history/streets/general/streetnames_changes.html

11 'to the north, Rackham Lane (later St. Margaret's Road) was laid out in 1879' – VCH Oxford 4, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp181-259

12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Street,_Oxford#History

13 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merton_Street#History

14 English Place-Name Society. Volume XXIII for 1945-46, part I, pp 37 - 44

(lost), Benseual Street (lost), Drapery Lane (lost), Little Jewry Lane (lost), The Racke (lost), Rats and Mice Hill (lost)... To adapt Oscar Wilde, to lose one street might be regarded as a misfortune, to lose so many looks like carelessness.

Yet (as with parents), such loss is but natural. The city is a churn, constantly renewing itself; any attempt to encapsulate it risks similar loose threads, or being instantly out of date. 'The city portion of Wood's treatise remained in manuscript till his death, receiving constantly additional notes as Wood came upon new facts and references...'[15] My steadily accumulating notes and reminders indicate I might have the same problem, especially as I begin to forget what I have written, started a year ago already.

Much of the earlier chapters might already seem to be about change – history *is* change, change is our only constant, and I seem to have found a lot of it as I walked about – but it remains astonishing. I used to drive to a builders' merchant just over the canal bridge in Aristotle Lane called 'UBM' in the 1980s, as the nearest available. Their yard behind stretched in unused desolation far behind to the north. Subsequently I used to attend the premises a bit further along the Lane of Alden Heating, to do their audit; I was glad not to spend much time on this, as it was an unhappy office, with everyone seemingly at grim monosyllabic loggerheads, the whole permeated with cigarette smoke. Now this road is laid out in smart (if too-tightly packed) housing, and it is hard to remember how it used to be.

Stepping into the Museum of Modern Art recently – which isn't even called that any more – I enquired of the library at the top of their brewery building. Gone, the books sold off, converted to offices, especially for the Director. Well, the space would be more used... I rather think some of his views out across to fields and hills that I found so striking are now blocked by the new Westgate, though.

My largest audit was Blackwell's Scientific Publications down on Osney Mead, from the boardroom of which I used to watch the Bulstake Stream rise and rise in winter flood – the audit being in October. Walking through Osney Mead recently I saw that it is now 'Osney One Building', part of the Bodleian.



'Osney One Building' – still full of books...

One of their main suppliers, Aldens Press, a little further on, was deserted, its car-park colonised by weeds in a desultory way. Many of the other buildings were similarly run down, though a few nearer the entrance seemed to have been repurposed for modern use, though in terms that I couldn't recognise – what does 'Oxford Flow' do? 'Workspace Oxford'? 'Jericho Coffee Traders' are obviously coffee, but are they wholesale or would they do me an espresso if I

[15] https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Dictionary_of_National_Biography_volume_62.djvu/356

needed it? Granted it was a weekend, but there seemed very little chance of passing trade. I did see a chap with a pushchair, but judging from how out-of-place he looked I must have as well, flip-flopping past.

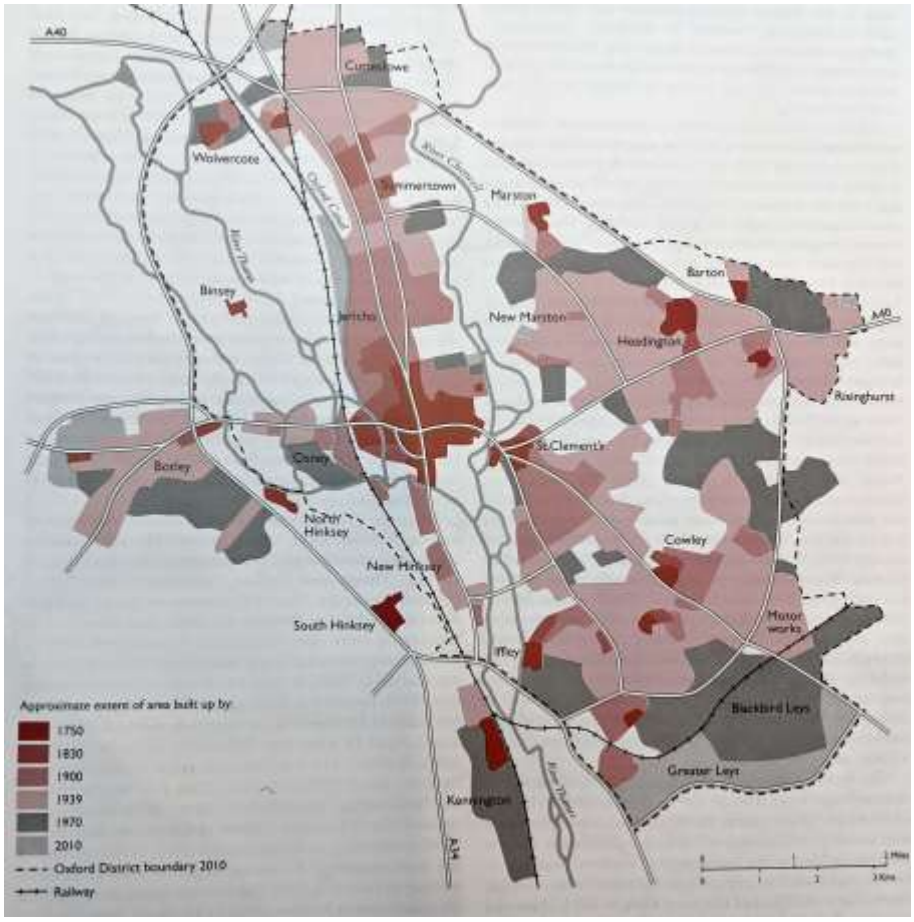
The whole of this area is slated for redevelopment:

> The masterplan looks at regenerating the whole site to become a vibrant innovation quarter... It envisages a transformation ...into a pleasant waterside place, with new publicly accessible outdoor spaces, improved landscapes, and reduced risk of flooding.'[16]

(Of *course* it has a 'masterplan'. The spiel ticks all the eco-fluffy-boxes, too.)

When I started to learn about accounting, perhaps the most counter-intuitive aspect was the insistence that buildings have a measurable life-span, and thus should be depreciated (ie 'a charge representing the effluxion of value' should be made, as I learned to say). This rule was to apply even to freehold property; and, eventually, 50 years became a prescribed maximum. By way of compensating for the nonsense, a distinction was made between the land itself and the building on it; perhaps more reasonable, but had I not been brought up in a house that had been built in about 1600, if not earlier? Even the Oxford house I then lived in was over a 100 years old.

Yet I now understand that buildings are only as good as their occupants. A house left empty for even a few months shows signs of this vacancy; longer, and decay is obvious. Daily one fettles up the property, even if only in minor ways – like a decorator crab which sticks plants on its shell and then tends this living borrowed coat. And the same goes for business buildings. The page that introduces the Osney Mead masterplan explains that the 'estate is a largely under-utilised, 44-acre site... comprising a large number of low intensity industrial buildings, in poor condition and nearing the end of their useful economic life.' But surely only those already empty could be so described – 'Osney One Building' looked OK, for example. I think this blurb translates to, 'we plan to redevelop this site, so many leases have not been renewed; what's left soon looks awful'.



Cities are no different; and – like houses (and house-prices) always expanding:[17]

Particularly striking here is both how small the dark red old cores are, and at how (relatively) recent these areas were so – 1750. Old Oxford itself covered little more area then than in earlier centuries: if you take the bounds of the city wall, and take into account that 'the whole of

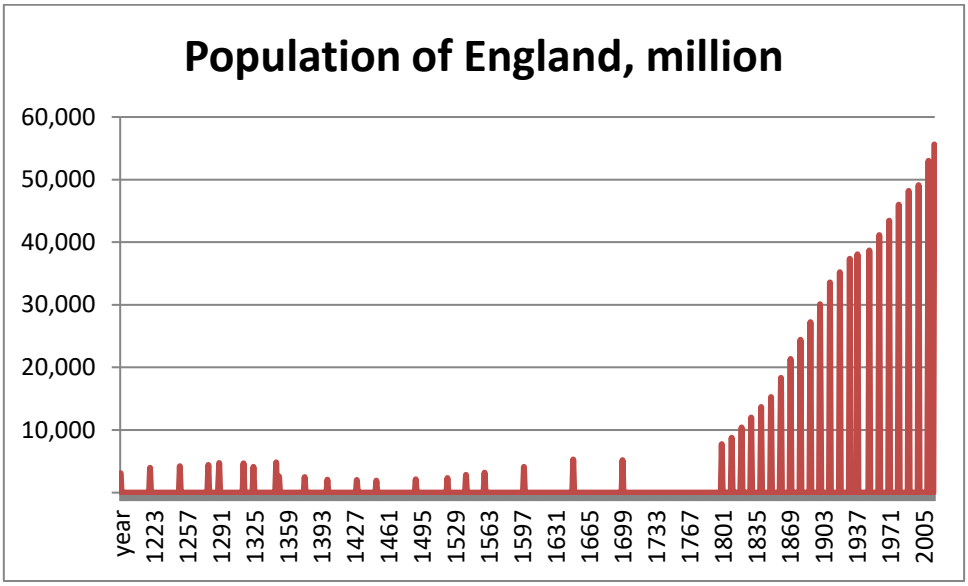
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16 https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/building-our-future/vision/master-plan-areas/osney

17 Chronomap from *An Historical Atlas of Oxford* ed Tiller & Darkes, Oxfordshire Record Society vol 67.

St. Giles's Street, and of Worcester Street to the west, seems to have been built up by 1279',[18] you pretty much have the same dark-red area in the thirteenth century as on the map.

This congruence is perhaps not entirely surprising, as the overall population of England had remained essentially unchanged from 1200 to 1600, and was only just beginning to show the beginning of serious growth by 1700:



Figures since 1801 are from census returns, those before are by various learned calculations and different estimates 'vary considerably'.[19] Nevertheless, what is striking is that until say the mid-eighteenth century, decreases in numbers were as likely as increases: a pattern completely alien to our modern mindset, that has learned that every year is faster, better, bigger, just plain simply *more*.

In Oxford areas of decay were obvious:

> The decline of Oxford's population in the later Middle Ages led to contraction of the built-up area and some physical decay. There are a few references to empty plots and derelict houses in the late 13th and early 14th century, but such references become commonplace later. In 1370 it was reported that even in the main streets some houses were being pulled down and others were falling down because tenants, particularly those of houses in multiple occupation, were failing to carry out repairs. The most obvious contraction was in the southern and northern suburbs. At least three houses on Grandpont became gardens, and tenements in Speedwell Street were not apparently occupied in the later Middle Ages. Outside North Gate George Street, which had been built up in the late 12th and 13th centuries, became waste ground called Broken Hayes (hedges); at least seven properties in Broad Street became gardens or waste ground between 1329 and 1373, and there seems to have been little or no 15th- or 16th-century occupation at the east end of the street on the site of the New Bodleian Library.[20]

The switch to apparently irresistible growth since the industrial revolution is surely the biggest change of all that we have had to adjust to – more so than the introduction of specific tools to help fuel this increase, even though the litany of these and their impacts is always amazing. Osney Mead may be decaying, or the shops in Cornmarket hollowing out, but only because there are plans (sorry, *masterplans*) for regeneration, or because the shops have shifted to Westgate. The horror felt as the 2007-8 financial crisis seemed about to trigger an actual implosion in our civilisation is a measure of the power of the steady-growth metaphor; similarly, the innumerable

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18 VCH Oxford 4, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73

19 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_England

20 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73#p73

presentations of post-apocalyptic futures in film and fiction indicates how sore is this point, as we niggle at it like a wobbly tooth.

I have a book called 'Oxford Past and Present' which carefully contrasts photographs from about 1900 with 'modern' ones taken from as near the same vantage points as possible. The newer ones are from the 1970s, and looking at them is to look into something antique, a world that has not discovered pizza, let alone the computer or mobile phone. Some of the older ones – for example around the canal basin and warehouses now occupied by Nuffield, or looking down St Ebbes or St Aldates – are simply unrecognisable, or can only be just wrenched into recognisable perspective by a chance surviving line or two.

The most striking feature of the photographs is how empty everything is – of people, and especially cars; even from the 1970s. Attempts to update the pictures with 21st century versions are largely thwarted by cars and buses. Ah, change; how it creeps up on one. Speaking of cars and buses, I remember when buses went to Oxpens, where the vehicles could get in and out relatively easily (though admittedly not so easy for access on foot); and now I notice that Gloucester Green – where of course they go now, with some manoeuvring difficulties – is shown as 'Omnibus Centre' on the 1945 (revised 1939) 25-inch Ordnance Survey map.

I thought this textual perambulation might be justified as a snapshot of my own thinking, when I started it. Now I see it is also a snapshot of the city too; even over the course of writing it significant aspects have changed. And as for my thinking, well, that too seems to be shifting. Heading out across the open space of the north part of Port Meadow, I was always stimulated to imagine the Royalist and Parliamentarian forces drawn up in uneasy opposition at either end; after a bit I used to just notice that this part of the walk always made me think of that, a sort of meta-memory, like remembering a photograph of an event. Now I don't even think of that, having seemingly moved on to other (and rather better informed?) thoughts.



Better informed

I should tackle at last the long-disputed issue of the origin of Oxford's name, seemingly so obvious in etymological terms but then giving rise to the question of where the ford was. Here too we find circumlocutory patterns, with my own pet theory having support, apparently, back in the seventeenth century (and since dismissed). Now it is all but an accepted fact that the ford was at Grandpont; the immensely scholarly *Oxford Before the University*[21] has as a subtitle 'The late Saxon and Norman archaeology of the Thames Crossing, the defences and the town' – *the* crossing, note, and '*the* study area' in the book is St Aldates and Folly Bridge.

Now, there is enough archaeology down St Aldates to indeed prove that there was a crossing there, and one indeed dating back a long way. *OBTH* (pp12-13) describes an 'early Saxon' stone surface at the bottom of a deep tunnel at the south end of St Aldate's, with evidence to show that it was periodically wet and dry – suggesting 'a causeway' 'probably laid to reinforce the island's surface for traffic'. A plank, radially split from an oak tree, was on top; this artefact was felled 577 - 619. The association of this plank and its date with the presumed causeway is but tentative, and the conclusion is only that there is 'evidence for human activity in the vicinity around the turn of the 7th century' including 'slight evidence for human habitation... or at least the dumping of settlement refuse.'

But then people have concentrated their research on this area too, rather to the exclusion of others such as Petty Pont and Osney; accordingly I suspect some sampling bias in the claim that Folly Bridge was the site of the 'original' ox-ford.

In the absence of written sources much discussion about the name-giving ford is probabilistic: where would people have wanted to go, where would the easiest crossing have been? Thus, R H C Davis[22] writing in 1973:

- oxen pulled heavy carts, so on a big and important road
- the river would have to be shallow with a hard gravelly bottom
- town named after the ford so presumably ford came first
- 'thus... it is hard to believe that the ford could have been on an east-west route, because such routes could, and did, avoid any crossing of the Thames by keeping either to the north or the south of it.'
- Port Meadow to Binsey route (e-w) particularly ruled out as then required to pass up top of Wytham Hill and then cross river again at Eynsham. 'It is hard to see how anyone would have wanted to use such a route, any more than they would have wanted to cross the Cherwell at Magdalen Bridge, unless the town was already in existence.'
- 'the obvious facts of geography' are that the Thames runs west to east so that traffic crossing it would be going north to south or vice versa – Northampton to Southampton the presumed route.
- the Osney Mead to Hinksey route[23] considered: dismissed because a) based on special pleading in 1352 and 1376 designed to 'prove' jurisdiction over the Isle of Oseney and b) this route only used by pedestrians and individual horsemen.[24]
- the Abingdon Road route over many bridges and islands 'suggest a shallower river with a firmer bottom.'
- C10th charters refer to Mayweed ford and Stanford (stone ford) at the southern end of the Abingdon Road.
- archaeological evidence for a crossing on this route [true enough – substantiated by later work eg as in *OBtU*.]

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21 Ed Anne Dodd, Oxford Archaeology Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph No.17, 2003

22 R. H. C. Davis *The Ford, the River and the City*, Oxoniensia XXXVII (1973), pp. 258-67 - https://oxoniensia.org/volumes/1973/davis.pdf

23 Promulgated by H. E. Salter *The Ford of Oxford,* Antiquity, II (1928), 458-9

24 Based on GabrielIe Lambrick *Some Old Roads of North Berkshire*, Oxoniensia, XXXIV (1969), 78-92

It is submitted therefore, concludes Davis,

> that the original oxen's ford was indeed on the line of St. Aldate's and the Abingdon Road, but that it did not consist of one particular ford, but of a whole series of fords which could be negotiated by heavy ox-carts. Though presumably the easiest possible ford of the Thames, it would have been by far the most serious obstacle for traffic on the route from Northampton to Southampton, and it is not in the least surprising to find that it was eventually converted into an elaborate causeway.

A L Rowse[25] could write in 1975 with *even greater* certainty about our forefathers (if rather less reference to sources) that the ford was instead at Hinksey:

> prehistoric travellers by the Ickneild way, from south west to north east, kept to the high ground along the ridges from (modern) Swindon and Faringdon to Appleton, where there was no river to cross except the Thames at Hinksey, where the ford has a firm bed of gravel. This was the only serviceable route into Berkshire until after the Norman Conquest, when Robert d'Oilly made Grandpont...

As an interesting adjunct, he points out that the Norman castle is sited to guard just this route (rather than the way south). Though this construction is so much later as to be pretty much irrelevant; especially as the castle did not honour the location of any previous Saxon fortification, as far as is known – houses were demolished to make room for it. A similar pencilled query might hover over the assertion about the river's firm bed of gravel... how does he know?

Even so, I offer some further topological counter-points Davis:

- The historical core of Oxford lies between the Thames and the Cherwell. You have to cross one of them to get to it, unless coming from the north.
- Looking at a larger scale map of the area around Oxford, the Thames runs south for the next ten miles or so, with wide sweeping curves down to Abingdon. Wide sweeping curves mean slow-flowing, flooding areas. If you want to go south, you need to get across the river and off westwards at least a-ways – south-west is in fact the way to go.
- London is on the north bank of the Thames. If you wish to get to that city with a minimum of river crossings, you need to cross the Cherwell and keep going. In modern terms, you want to go by the A40 (M40).

And some historical observations, the essence of which is adduced by Rowse as well:

Oxford has always been on the edge of things. Nowadays this is manifested whenever you have to fill in a 'which part of the country do you live in? – London, north-west, north-east, midlands, south-west, south-east...': Oxford doesn't 'belong' to the midlands; nor to the south-west; nor, despite usual inclusion, in the 'south-east' (with Canterbury...?!).

Historically – by which I mean between the 7th and 9th centuries – it was part of what Stenton calls 'the debatable land' north and south of the Thames, a frontier area between Wessex and Mercia that sometimes belonged to one and sometimes the other. For example, the See of Dorchester, just downstream from Oxford, was granted to Birinus, first Bishop of Wessex, by Cynegils (Wessex) and Oswald his then overlord, King of Northumbria[26] in 635; when war between Wessex and Mercia threatened, both the seat and the relics of Birinus were 'moved south to the relative safety of Winchester'[27] in 690.[28] King Ine (688-726) certainly held the 'country immediately to the south of the river' though 'it is uncertain whether he ever recovered any of

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25 A L Rowse *Oxford in the History of the Nation*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1975, pp 9 -11
26 F Stenton *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford 3rd edn 1971 (2nd vol of the Oxford History of England) pp82, 118.
27 https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/abbey-history/
28 https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/st-birinus-story/

the ancient West Saxon possessions to the north of the Thames.'[29] By the early eighth century Mercia had conquered the West Saxon lands beneath the Chiltern range, and a Mercian appointment Ætla became bishop of Dorchester.[30] The eighth century continued as it began: Cynewulf, king of Wessex, 'was recognised as king in Berkshire and north Wiltshire as well as in Hampshire and Wessex beyond Selwood. For a time he was master of a stretch of country north of the Thames, but in 779 Offa defeated him at Bensington[31] and reoccupied the debatable land on either side of the river.'[32]

The next century saw a similar division of the country, though now between Wessex and the Danish armies. 'In 879, of the four independent kingdoms which had existed at the middle of the century, Wessex alone survived in its entirety. Within the limits of what had been the Mercian, Northumbrian and East Anglian kingdoms three large armies had now found a permanent settlement.'[33] As before, there was no precise boundary, but Oxford was borderline, demonstrable (in later times, 1002) by the murder of Danes by the English in St Frideswide, and their sacking of Oxford a few years later (1009). Oxford's 'foundation' and its central grid of streets is often traced to Alfred's burghal fortifications of a number of cities against Danish depredation.

The evidence for Alfred's connection with Oxford is circumstantial, other than that provided by a few pennies bearing his name and the place of origin 'Ohsnaforda' or 'Orsnaforda'. These coins have long been contentious; often described as Viking imitations; and maybe not from Oxford at all. Much has been written on both sides of the debate, though it might be said that the pages of the *British Numismatic Journal* since 1905 are largely in support.

The significance both for the history of the city, and for my argument about the original ford, is such that the specific evidence needs to be set out rather more fully than might be otherwise appropriate.[34]

Anglo-Saxon coins were of standard weights. Many Viking coins are identifiably imitations (ie fakes) by virtue of being light; their inscriptions are often 'blundered', ie poorly formed. The Ohsnaforda pennies offer quite a range of presentation, and weights, so have been dismissed en masse as a result. Also, 'Ohsnaforda' is not 'Oxford', nor yet 'OX VRBIS' as in Athelstan's time, so must be somewhere else.



However, the President's Address to the British Numismatic Society in 1970,[35] on the subject of the Cuerdale Hoard, is the latest and best argument in favour of a genuine Alfred/ Oxford mint. The Hoard, C.S.S.Lyon explains in the address, contains many crude and blundered specimens – including Ohsnaforda pennies – but one at least (one is shown specifically, but 'one or two' are mentioned) of this group is worthy of special note. The obverse, showing the moneyer's name, is virtually identical in presentation to a later (and

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29 Stenton p73

30 Stenton p135

31 Just south of Dorchester according to the map in Stenton following p730. Wikipedia advises that nothing is known about this battle beyond the succinct mention in the Chronicle, 'Her Cynewulf & Offa gefuhton ymb Benesingtun & Offa nam þone tuun' (This year Cynewulf and Offa fought near Bensington and Offa took the town.)

32 Stenton p209.

33 Stenton p257.

34 Plus, all this is fun!

35 C.S.S. Lyon, *President's Address*, British Numismatic Journal 1970 https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1970_BNJ_39_21.pdf

undisputedly Anglo-Saxon) coin of Edward the Elder's – see picture on previous page: the left is Alfred ('Elfred') and the right is Edward. The moneyer is Bernwald, also known from other coins.

This, together with the correct weight of the earlier coin, is taken to demonstrate the genuine nature of at least some of the Ohsnaforda items. I would have thought it was also valid to suggest that with so many imitations, there must have been some original, but this line is not mentioned in any discussions I have found.

Where is Ohsnaforda? Or Orsnaforda, maybe? Although sometimes suggested to be Horsforth, now part of Leeds, (Mssrs Dolley and Blunt[36]), Lyon suggests this is unlikely as Alfred's name would not be used 'so close to the viking mint of York'. A former president of the BNS, P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton, in an essay strongly asserting the existence of Alfred's Oxford mint,[37] followed what initially struck me as a wild idea, but it turned out to be a veritable old chestnut: 'the name is intended for OVSNAFORDA = the ford over the Ouse, the old Anglo-Saxon name for the Isis, and a form that is still preserved in the name Ouseney or Osney, the island in the Ouse, where the celebrated Abbey of that name was erected; and that the name OXNAFORDA or OXENAFORDA is another and later form of the same name.'

Leland is quoted, via Camden: 'Camden tells us that "Leland with some show of probability derives the name (of Oxford) from the River. Ouse, in Latin Isis ; and he believes it to have been heretofore called Ousford, since the little islands which the river here makes are called Ousney."'[38]

It seems that Ranulphus Higden, fourteenth century monk of Chester, wrote in his *Polychronicon* that '*Tamisia videtur componi a nominibus duorum fluminium, quae sunt Thama et Ysa aut Usa*'.[39] Thus was born the 'Isis' as the name of the upper Thames, or nowadays that bit that passes through Oxford; Leland repeated the assertion in his *Itinerary* of 1546, and Camden followed up in his *Britannia* of 1586 with 'Isis vulgo Ouse'. Carlyon-Britton was not making it up. However, the whole thing is a hum; no Anglo-Saxon reference to 'Isis' is to be found – though 'Thames' appears.

And which version of the place name is 'right', anyway? They are usually referred to as 'Ohsnaforda' pennies, but the reading on some is Orsnaforda, and the variations on offer are legion – Alfred Anscombe enumerates: 'Of the fifteen letters ... which make up the four words of the inscription, A and S are found recumbent ; A, F, L, M are found inverted; Æ, E, and H are found fractured ; B, D, E, L, N, R, S, are found dorsed [by which the writer means reflected about a vertical axis, ie back to front]; Æ, F, L, are found dorsed and inverted ; and S is found dorsed and recumbent. In addition to these opportunities for going wrong which the cuneators have afforded us, there are numerous misrepresentations of individual letters...'[40] Of course many of these variations constitute imitative blunders. Lyon relies on having identifying the type of a real coin to confirm 'Ohsnaforda' as the proper form. He may also be tacitly relying upon Anscombe's extensive philological discussion that turns on *hs* = *x* in some Anglo-Saxon,[41] whereby 'Ohsnaforda' may be seen as 'Oxnaforda'.

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36 Authoritative numismatists.

37 Largely in rebuttal of a previous writer who dismissed all such coins as fakes, C. L. Stainer in *The Oxford Silver Pennies*, Oxford Historical Society 1904. Mr Stainer comes in for a lot of stick in the years following his article.

38 P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton,*The Oxford Mint In The Reign Of Alfred*, British Numismatic Journal 1905 https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1906_BNJ_3_6.pdf

39 'Thamesis seems to be composed from the names of two rivers, that are the Thama and the Ysa or Usa.' The translation is provided, and the connection recounted, by P Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River*, Random House 2008: pp26-27.

40 A. Anscombe, '*The inscription on the Oxford pennies of the Ohsnaforda type*', *Brit. Numismatic J.*, III (1906) 67- 100 (p72).

41 Anscombe as above at pp. 86-8. That C.S.S.Lyon relies upon this is derived from Metcalf, D M 1976 '*A Round halfpenny or farthing of King Eadred, found at the castle, and of the Oxford Mint*', a section of Hassall, T 1976 *Excavations at Oxford Castle*, 1965 – 1973 Oxoniensa 41, 232 – 308 (specifically pp267-270) – 'I am indebted for this last reference to Mr. Lyon, who kindly drew my attention to it', writes Metcalf.

Anscombe's philology (we are talking about the 'representation of the guttural tenuis and the sibilant'...) rests upon far wider reading in Anglo-Saxon than I would dare challenge.[42] Having established that 'the words for "ox" in the A.-S., O.N. and O. F. dialects are *oxa*, *uxi*, *oxa*, respectively, and in Gothic, O.H.G. and O.S. they are *auhsan*, *ohso*, and *ohs*, respectively' – i.e., the coins, whether English or Viking, ought to use 'x' – he then shows that there are in fact a few instances where *hs* **is** used for *x* in Anglo-Saxon, and in particular by Alfred himself in *Pastoral Care*, influenced perhaps by an Old-Saxon (ie continental) mass-priest, John.

On the other hand, he admits that the use of *x* as such is more common, and that all known written references to Oxford use that letter.

I get a faint sense of the possibility that the witness is being led; Anscombe wants the 'hs' to be 'x' to show that the mint is Oxford (and so 'hs' the correct reading of the many options).

Irrespective of the language, I think we can at least follow a lay-man's argument about known centres for possible mints, ie Alfred's burhs[43], and the near-match between Ohsnaforda and Oxford – there is no other contender in the list...

***Burhs* from the Burghal Hidage:**

Axbridge	400	
Bath	1000	
Bridport	760	
Buckingham	1600	
Burpham	720	
Chichester	1500	
Chisbury	700	
Cricklade	1500	
Eashing	600	
Eorpeburnan	324	location lost
Exeter	734	
Halwell	300	
Hastings	500	
Langport	600	
Lewes	1300	
Lydford	140	
Lyng	100	
Malmesbury	1200	
Oxford	1400	
Pilton	360	
Portchester	500	
Sashes	1000	
Shaftesbury	700	
Southampton	150	
Southwark	1800	
Twynam	470	now Christchurch, Dorset
Wallingford	2400	
Wareham	1600	
Watchet	513	
Wilton	1400	
Winchester	2400	

The links in the chain of reasoning seem good enough to me to establish the coins as from what became 'Oxford'. The main issue (for me) is whether the coins, as the earliest written evidence of the place-name, signify some proto-form, or whether they merely represent some unlikely orthography. Anscombe needed to prove the latter, to connect the coins to Oxford; but other evidence has accumulated to link Alfred with the place, and the former might be permissible without losing the connection.

Dodd writes[44]:

> Although not all Anglo-Saxon mints were in fortified towns, Blair has pointed out that those that first appear in Alfred's last years were essentially part of the expanding burghal system (1994, 101). Thus a date of foundation in the late 880s or 890s is a distinct possibility; Alfred took London in 886 and this seems to have enabled him to establish formal overlordship over the Mercian ruler Ealdorman Aethelred, who subsequently married Alfred's daughter, Aethelflaed. Alfred will therefore have had clear authority over the Oxford region, through Aethelred and Aethelflaed, from 886 onwards. Aethelred and Aethelflaed were active participants in the king's policy of *burh* creation (see Brooks 1996, 143, for their association with London and Worcester in the last decade of Alfred's reign), and Blair has suggested that they may well have been the instigators of the

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42 Even if his calculations of average weight of the coins are demonstrably erroneous. Maths, eh.

43 List from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burghal_Hidage

44 Dodd, *OBtU*, as above, p31-32.

building of the *burh* at Oxford, within the control of the king of Wessex, but on the north bank of the Thames and thus in Mercian territory (1994, 101).

This extensive historical discursion may now be reined in. I suggest the possibility that Ohnasforda or Orsnaforda in fact represents an early form or forms of the place name; indeed, the apparent variability of its representation on the coins may indicate an as-yet unsettled name. Furthermore, I also suggest that it sounds like a ford at Osney to me (which I have heard voiced with a short o, '*Oh*sney') – and indeed here I follow Carlyon-Britton, even if not as far as the Ouse – rather than something to do with oxen. I throw this out as a suggestion only, even if one I like!

Finally closing the loop, my Osney-ford thus fits in with the west-south-west route across to Hinksey as the 'original' crossing. This theory gained some support with the 'discovery' of 14th century legal pleadings that cite it as such, but these have subsequently been undermined by consideration that they (as much of the law) were merely trying to make a point for gain, and were not supported by any earlier references. However, the prehistoric trackways from the south-west, associated with the route, do have credibility[45] – though one at least heads for the fords at the end of the modern Abingdon Road, perhaps aiming for Headington and its R-B potteries, so one can't entirely rely upon such to define a south-west entrance rather than a southern one.

However, I'm afraid that a definitive location for the original ford may have to remain silted over. As Auden has it in *The Labyrinth*, after considering the problem from all angles and avenues, 'My knowledge ends where it began;/ A hedge is taller than a man.' Or, a river is deeper...?

What I *can* say is that the south-west route now affords a good way of getting out of modern Oxford without trailing along the main north-south-east-west roads. The sense that one might be treading the prehistoric approach enhances the pleasure. But more of that in ch.7.



Whichever way you go...

[45] See eg VCH Oxon 4, 'In prehistoric times the route from the south probably approached the site of Oxford along the watershed between the rivers Thames and Ock, crossing the Thames perhaps at North Hinksey, where several prehistoric finds have been made in the river, (fn. 5) before joining a ridgeway running northwards between the rivers Thames and Cherwell. (fn. 6) In Roman times the route seems to have continued in use, and was partially metalled: in Berkshire the Roman road running north-eastwards from Wantage seems to have turned eastwards at Besselsleigh, passing between Hurst Hill and Hen Wood to North Hinksey; there was probably another branch to the south, over Foxcombe Hill to South Hinksey, crossing the river near the site of the modern Donnington Bridge to join the Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester as it ran through an important pottery works at Cowley and Headington. (fn.7)'.
https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73#h3-0002

Chapter 7 – LDPs

- Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, a political party in the Philippines
- Label Distribution Protocol, a routing protocol used in Multiprotocol Label Switching networks
- Large deviation principle, the rate function in mathematics
- Laserdisc player
- Leadership development Program, a type of professional development program for businesses and organizations
- League for Democracy Party, a political party in Cambodia
- Lebanese Democratic Party
- Lebuhraya Damansara–Puchong (LDP), an expressway in Malaysia
- Liberal Democratic Party
- Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, a political party in East Germany
- Lingwa de planeta, a conlang mentioned in Worldlang
- Linked Data Platform, a Semantic Web specification
- Linux Documentation Project
- Loan deficiency payments, a U.S. agriculture policy farm income support program
- Local Development Plan, a form of town and country planning document in Wales
- Long day plant, a plant that flowers when the night length falls below its critical photoperiod
- Long Distance (Skateboard) Pumping
- **Long-distance footpaths in the UK**[1]

I wasn't going to be specifically prescriptive or descriptive of specific paths but this section on Long Distance Paths has emerged like some necessary vapour from the toil and trouble of the previous chapters. I will try to avoid the 'take the left turn at the pink and green pavilion' type of instruction anyway: you will still need a map, some common sense, and, ideally, a willingness for exploration – not always easy on a long walk, when you might be weary and your feet tired.

The first section is about walking *to* Oxford, from the surrounding countryside. This follows from the 'ancient routeways' mentioned at the end of *Mutabilitie*. Tracing their possible routes gives you a chance to really sense the landscape, and see how traversing it might have been influenced by the topography and geology – hills, rivers, types of soil and their typical flora.

The second section[2] is about routes *through* Oxford, for, having entered within its ring-road from some outlying location, you will probably need to get to another part of the city. (Probably via the centre. It's a hub and spoke thing.) A number of good paths link park to park, or utilise a bicycle lane here or a snicket there, to join one area to another without simply following, say, the Botley Road, a dreary length usually choked with traffic. Of course, if you really have over-matched your stamina getting *into* town, these dreary lengths usually offer buses; but really, unless you are lucky, you might as well keep walking as wait, no?

One of the strangest experiences for a map-user is coming across a section of open land that is shown as forested on the map – or vice versa. It is like trying to recognise someone who has suddenly lost their distinctive hair; unexpected features have to be re-scanned, connections pieced together; the first reaction is very much *what has happened here?* and shock, as when meeting an old friend who is now bald as an egg. (Do you ask?) The historical-walker is faced with an even

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1 LDP possibilities from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LDP

2 This has had to be budged into another chapter in the end. Or not – see ch.8, anyway.

more difficult problem of reconstruction: just what did the woods and fields look like? And how might they have influenced the road?

Trees in particular are hard to imagine. The romantic vision of England covered in forest (through which errant, or erring, knights wander, questing) is alas too simplistic, even if richly represented in Arthurian legends. Even the types of tree have changed over the years: imports from Australia (eg Eucalyptus) and the New World (various firs including eg Western Hemlock) greatly increased the variety, once they were discovered; the Victorians were energetic collectors; and a smattering of earlier imports, such as Cedar of Lebanon in the 1740s, the Horse Chestnut in the late sixteenth century, the Sweet Chestnut and Walnut by the Romans – all these are now rather thought of as 'British'.[3] Even the sturdy Sycamore is thought to have been introduced in the Middle Ages, from central and southern Europe.[4]

The native species are those 'that recolonised the land when the glaciers melted after the last ice age and before the UK was disconnected from mainland Europe.'[5] There were fewer conifers – only Juniper, Scots Pine and Yew. Although there were several types of large tree – Beech, Elm, Lime, Oak, Poplar, Willow – the picture that emerges from palynology seems to be more typically one of scrubby coverage, Alder, Birch, Hazel, Rowan. But this is to simplify wildly, both by period and location – for now, beware the inward eye of historical recreation!

LDP1 - start at the top, traditionally the north

Although the Thames enters Oxford from the north, it has just curved in from the west. The northern approach is from higher ground, coming in from the Cotswolds. It may be imagined that this would be the preferred route towards the v-shaped bank between the two rivers that was prehistoric Oxford. Yarnton, on the way, is endowed with prehistory: the oldest remains of bread in Britain was found here,[6] amongst much else – '[later Neolithic] prehistoric activity was widespread across [this] area'[7]. Now the main road, rather obviously dividing the angle between the Thames and Cherwell – although provided with a decent cycle path, the hollow green dots, see map on next page – is anathema for walkers, and there is no obvious alternative other than by taking a cast some way west to Bladon or east to the Cherwell and canal.

You can get buses to Woodstock easily enough. Bladon then looks promising, especially if you have a chance to cut through Blenheim Park (ie it is open, you have one of their expensive tickets, etc – '1' on the map[8]) to the gate in that village. Thence and preferably picking up the bridleway through the wood via the back of Begbroke and various wiggles over Spring Hill to so-called 'Shakespeare's Way', Yarnton Church and Manor, thread the intersection of railway, canal, A40 and A34 at the Duke's Cut (to '2' on the map) and so on down the canal. Despite the wiggles, which might cause some difficulties on the first outing, this is a relatively direct route and one that offers wide-reaching views in the right light from the low crest near Spring Hill. Oxford's spires are even visible, just, hazily, unexpectedly:



3 Well, maybe not the Eucaplyptus, very specifically associated with koalas.

4 Information from Woodland Trust, https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/common-non-native-trees/

5 ie from about 10,000 years ago. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/what-does-native-and-non-native-mean/

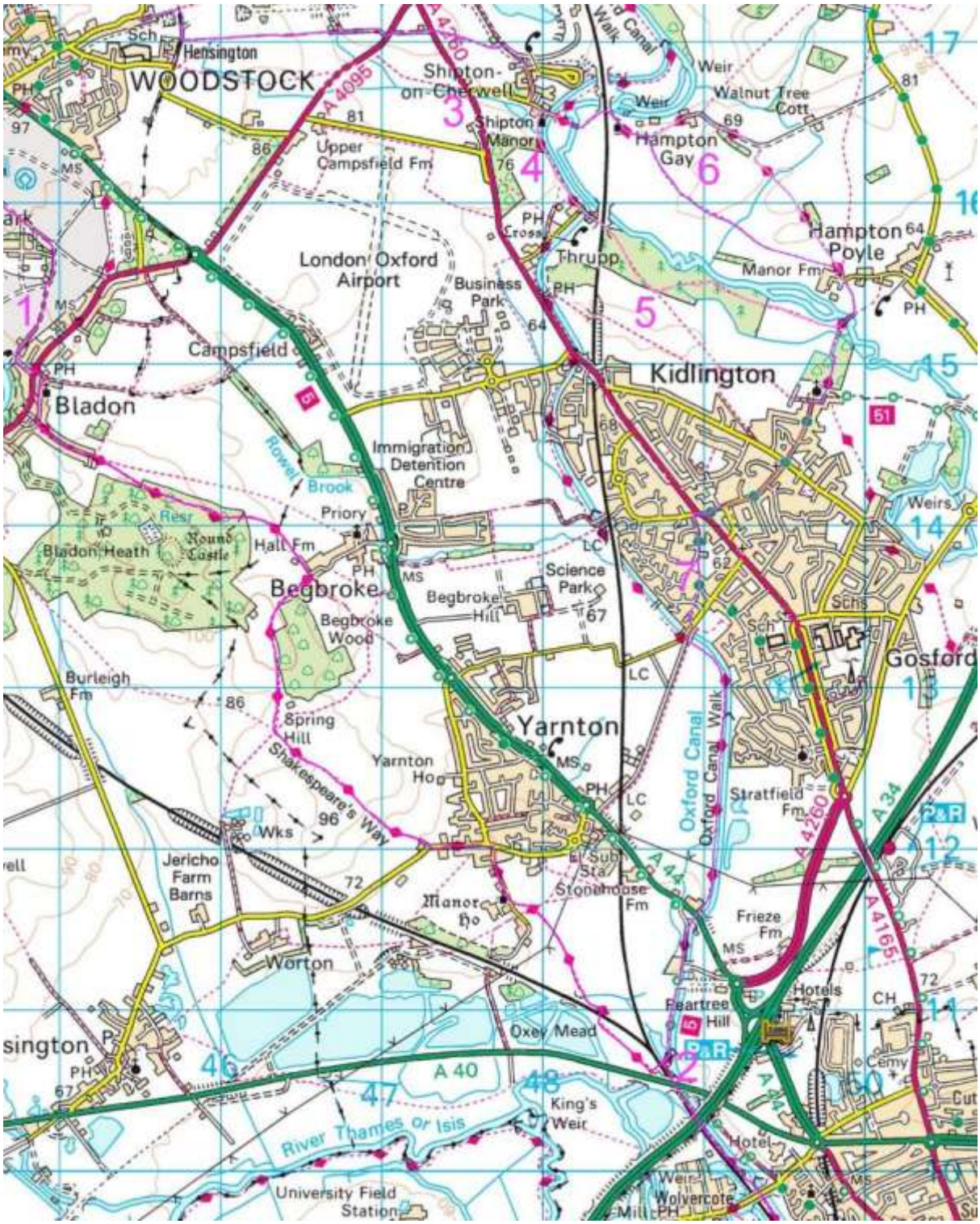
6 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/472505.stm

7 *Yarnton Cassington Evaluation 1993*, Gill Hey, Oxford Archaeological Unit 1994 https://library.thehumanjourney.net/1172/

8 All maps in this chapter from http://www.streetmap.co.uk. All except the summary map at the end are, of course, Ornance Survey. I haven't got a licence for this because it is absurdly complex; the cost would be square-cm of maps in final print x9p +VAT x print run – maybe 3 or 4?! do the maths... What if it stays as an e-doc?! https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/licences/publishing-licence-how-to-calculate-the-royalty-fee.pdf.

Without the Blenheim Park section to start with you might try heading east from Woodstock instead. You want to head for Shipton Manor (you have a choice of field-paths but all rather cut-up by main roads; I would try the one due east from Hensington). Though if you're planning this route, I'd suggest skipping this first part by taking the bus to 'Shipton on Cherwell turn' ('3' on the map) which is one of those apparently pointless stops on the main road that is in fact useful: a short stroll along the little road opposite where you've been set down gets you to the church.

The canal path south by the church ('4') is easy and can be picked up anywhere; to avoid it being too linear (and too much of it) I suggest forking off at Thrupp through the woods there ('5'), and continuing on through these parallel to the Cherwell though obviously there is another more direct option towards Kidlington.



My recommended route is straight on to Hampton Gay, wondering at the decay of the house there, and the hummocks in the field by the now-orphaned church, which is all that remains of the village, and thence across the fields towards Hampton Poyle. There is a choice at '6' – I'd head on through the first village and take the east-ward cast. The views of Kidlington church spire across the way are fine in any case.

Old Kidlington is lovely, but you will have a section along the High Street that is less so. However, at the cross-roads with the main Oxford Road, go straight across and then left past the back of the garage – 'Crown Road' leads to a series of little back-paths and snickets through new estates ('7' on the map; a compass is handy – or at least the knowledge that you can't go far wrong) to emerge at Yarnton Road by the bridge over the canal – the towpath being on the other side.

The length of towpath here is baffling; why aren't you in Oxford already? what are all these main roads you can see across the fields, or go under? You can try counting bridge numbers (as ch.3) for entertainment. Eventually (whatever) you arrive at Duke's Cut ('2') and rejoin the other route from Woodstock, heading into Oxford along the canal path.

Shortly after the Duke's Cut, the landscape beneath the A34/ A40 and railway bridges is particularly worthy of note, as a bizarre modern environment, high as a cathedral (complete with columns), dry and barren, a left-over place of no purpose with the constant hymn of traffic overhead. The A34 span is also worthy of note as an engineering project, as the worn-out bridge



from the 1960s was replaced with a minimum of disruption by building the new overpass in parallel, and then sliding the '254m long, 8 span, 4,920 tonne new east carriageway ...16.6m from its construction position into final position,' a process that took 18 hours in March 2010. The

system is available (presumably at a price...) with 'support point level tolerance of +/- 2mm during skidding and ... a movement speed of 7.5 m/hour.'[9]

The variety of scenes following this is pleasant, with some wilderness, Wolvercote green, then allotments, the railway to your right (and the new branch to Bicester and Marylebone slanting over to your left after a bit), St Edward's School, and a variety of Victorian, Edwardian and modern housing and other buildings. Though at Wolvercote bridge you could take a right jink and continue into town across Port Meadow (ch.1).

Both canal and Port Meadow slide past the 'old' boundary to Oxford at Green Ditch – now approximately St Margaret's Road. Traditionally this was the location for ceremonial greetings of visiting dignitaries such as Elizabeth I in 1566 and Charles I in 1636.[10] The same was also the location of a gibbet,[11] and was called Rackham's Lane up to Victorian times,[12] when it was reincarnated in its modern name (to match the church built at the same time) and incorporated as part of the Garden Suburb. Other than noting this now-invisible boundary, you won't miss much unless mentally in 'Victorian Mode'[13] as you pass canal bridge 240 under Aristotle Lane. Sometime amidst this medley of names it was also 'Gallows Baulk Road' – seemingly even later than 'Rackham's Lane' as reportedly so called by Henry Taunt (1842–1922).[14]



9 https://dormanlongtechnology.com/en/projects/A34.htm - 'for further details please contact us.'

10 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp74-180#p12

11 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol4/pp3-73#p50

12 As wikipedia would say, '*citation needed*'! Hah, found it – OS 6in map Oxfordshire XXXIII (includes: Gosford and Water Eaton; Marston; Oxford) surveyed 1876, published: 1887 https://maps.nls.uk/view/102346822

13 ie ready to be sympathetic of Red Brick NeoGothic; interested in the retrofitting of modern life to this incongruous architecture (to judge by on-going building works major-rebuilding is a necessity); amused by the even greater ugliness of later intrusions into the Victorian matrix; intrigued by the not-quite-us activities of people with servants, with horses, with coal fires for heating, and their solutions for day-to-day problems...

14 This is one of those instances where the same phrase, 'according to Henry Taunt...' recurs in every web-resource (eg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Margaret%27s_Road) but without anyone actually saying what their source is.

LDP2 – a bit to the right

This is really a variation of the first walk. *Another* variation, anyway. *Variations,* you might say.



At Kidlington church you might decide to avoid that *very large* "village" – Kidlington is *not* a town! –

Chairman of the village's parish council Maurice Billington said the proposals did not mean Kidlington would have to start calling itself a town - suggesting instead that they could put the village on the road to becoming the largest in Europe. "We can keep calling ourselves a village and don't have to turn ourselves into a town - just a large village. Kidlington may become the largest village in Europe in the end. If I suggested the village should become a town I would be hung, drawn and quartered. I don't really think there's anything to gain from becoming one."[15]

– and 'a bit to the right' – east – will do the trick.

Actually, to really avoid it you have to head firmly east on the cycle track (1a on the map), which then means a tedious stretch along the road to 1b – I tried the footpath vectoring south to the big-road bridge over the Cherwell, and then ENE across fields, and can't recommend it unless you like the sensation of reclaiming unused paths for public use. And *then* you have to get back over the Cherwell, and the footpath between Mill and Northfield Fms (1c) looks promising but the river crossing is a ford, if anything (I couldn't sense any particularly shallow place, or firm bottom), so you have to take a cast even further to Islip (where there is a footbridge, and interesting back areas) to finally head the way you first wanted at 1d. This is all 'doable' but probably not worth it.

Instead you have to cope with a bit of the non-town (2 on the map) and thence trackways over the A34 at Gosford and so to Water Eaton. *Not* the Park & Ride of the same name, visible (if a sunny day) as a glittering of massed cars over the fields, but farms and the old Manor House, not ruined this time and complete with chapel and dove cote. Make sure you take the path that skirts just to the east of the house to see the latter, and to get a good view of the house from the east.



Shortly afterwards, at '3' on the map, you face another choice: which bank of the Cherwell would you favour? The west offers a relatively direct route into Oxford; the east definitely requires a higher energy level but gives an interesting view of unusual areas.

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15 https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/14879103.oxfordshires-biggest-village-set-to-expand-and-chairman-says-it-wont-become-a-town/

Keeping to the west, you have to take care to pick up the unsigned path along a now non-existent hedgerow (one solitary tree) and then keep pretty much straight, ignoring other tempting tracks. After 'Recn Gd' – which is Cutteslowe Park (ch.5), the white area before the green ring-road on the map is in fact Cutteslowe Park Community Woodland and a very pleasant use of the area too, planted only in November 2011.[16] Rather less pleasant is crossing the ring-road; the public footpath continues directly opposite, but the Council (I suppose) would rather you diverted to the overpass visible but inconveniently up the road to the west and, at least last time I passed,[17] try to block up the steps down from the woodland.

After Sunnymead park you join the 'north Oxford cycleway' (green dots on the map, at 5), aka route 51 (see ch.2) and had better follow blue signs for this because some of the suburban building hereabouts provide cul de sacs *without snickets*. But really I've brought you a long way into town already...

The rather more interesting route along the east bank of the Cherwell requires you to cross that river just south of Watereaton Manor using Sparsey Bridge – 'considered ancient in 1807, (fn. 72) but there is no evidence for its date.'[18] The bridge itself is unprepossessing, but the linguistic balance between Wood- and Water-eaton suggests a properly old route between these; indeed, walking on to the other village is a most attractive path, the curling trackway by Home Fm being edged with fine oaks. However, our route turns south, and at '6' you can in fact head rather illicitly along the bank of the river rather than fetching two sides of a long triangle on the public footpath to get to the same point on the 'Oxford Greenbelt Way' (honestly, who comes up with these names? or uses them?[19]). Here you will need both your stamina and your best orienteering skills, first as you head around the gruelling loop at '7' – we're talking big fields with a claggy and scraggy edge, even if (on the plus side) very little chance of seeing anyone else – and then, at '8', to get around Sescut Farm. *Some* of the signs are still standing...

If you manage that you have the rather nettle-y pleasure (unless you come hence in winter) of the back approach to 'JC Manor' as the bizarre neo-classical edifice, complete with pillars and much white statuary, calls itself (at '9'). The footpath passes along the edge of the tennis court, and then not down the inviting drive but along the hedge to the left.

Once again the footpath crosses the ring-road without assistance, other than a gap in the central barrier. Jink left along the refuge in the middle before crossing the second carriageway. You find yourself on a path that begins to look as if it might be used by others from time to time, until, passing the Vicky Arms ('PH') you are back amongst what passes for civilisation. Note the unusual footpath shown by the map on the other side of the river here, which leads up to the bank but then stops: this is visible as a slight causeway across the fields if you explore it on foot, though not much to be seen from the pub side. It is all that remains of the 'Marston Ferry' itself. The 'Marston Ferry Road' (B4495 on the map) that you cross next has in fact curved away south of the original line of travel, presumably so that the traffic could be routed away from the village.

The path I've shown continuing on along the bank of the Cherwell takes you as far as Wolfson bridge, as explored in ch.2. If you remember from that, the Marston Ferry road and bridge only dates from 1971, and Wolfson bridge about 1974 – though the earlier-crossed ring-road was the 1930s – so this is a most twentieth-century route, despite its behind-the-scenes country nature.

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16 https://lcon.org.uk/cutteslowe-park-community-woodland/

17 In February 2019. I moved their barrier out of the way.

18 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol12/pp179-183#p14

19 Of course Mr G knows. And indeed it turns out to be more interesting than you might have guessed, with 52 miles designed, at its devising in 2007, to represent the 52 years since greenbelts were so designated in 1956 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Green_Belt_Way, etc.

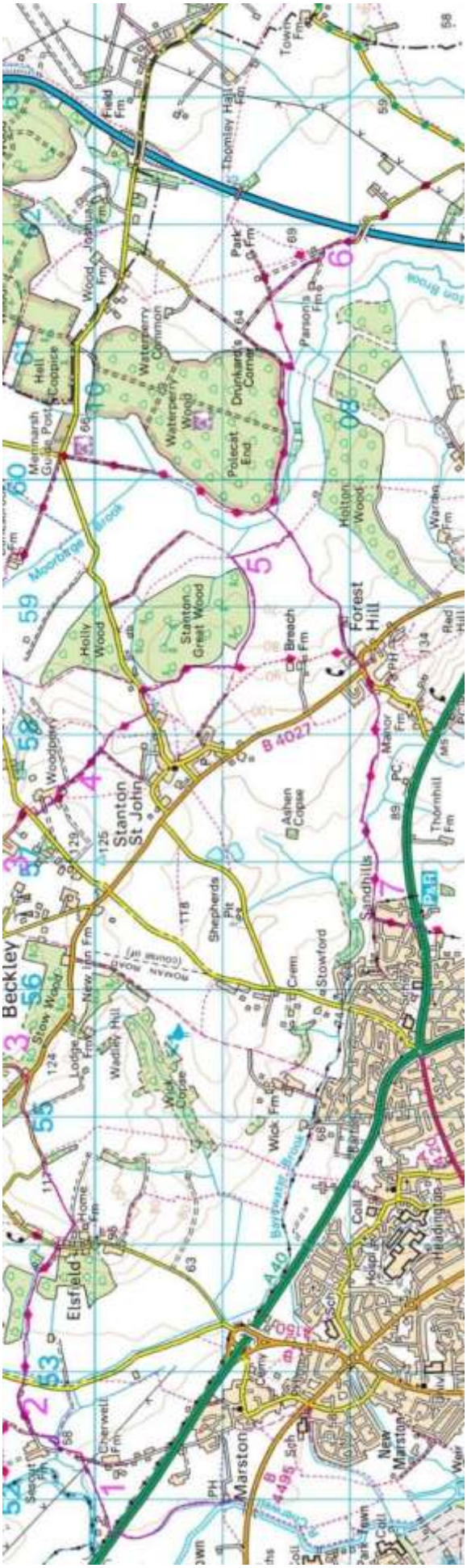
LDP3 – something else

Working around north-east from Oxford one comes to Islip and Otmoor, and perhaps this is an area I should explore more one day. Otmoor, The Bursar used to tell, was discovered to be the most consistently cloudy (and foggy) area in Britain and so chosen in World War II for some covert development or other, swathed from spies in the sky. My suggested walk is more easterly... and, what is more, comes more as a loop, going out of Oxford as well as coming back in.[20]

It all starts out from our previous exit/ entrance to the city, out along the Cherwell to Sescut Farm ('1' on the map; see also LDP2). One of my early discoveries about Oxford, from my second term as an undergraduate, was how difficult it is to get *out* of the city without going along main roads. I was cycling more than walking back then, but even so... [21] Although this route *crosses* two big roads to get beyond the ring-road, it avoids walking *along* them. And as far as that goes, the 'country' starts pretty much as soon as you've reached the east bank of the Cherwell here.

After crossing the little Bayswater Brook at Sescut (for so the ditch is called), strike boldly down the drive at '2', this being a public footpath for all their 'private' signs. Cross the yellow-road rat-run carefully – car drivers from Bicester and such like try to avoid the north-Oxford Woodstock/ Banbury Road queues along here, and they're not there to admire the scenery – to start up the hill to Elsfield. This is one of Oxford's surprising hills; so accustomed to walking on the flat does one become that any mild incline like this is something of a shock.

My Christ Church tutor told me that Lewis Carroll was often up here – something about an outlying Christ Church property, perhaps? but for all I can find out Carroll is now only associated with Beckley. He mentioned this as counter to my suggestion that Alice's chessboard fields and brooks might have originated from Marston Meadows along the east of the Cherwell, rather than Otmoor. Though it is true that she viewed the fields from 'a little hill',[22] of which none of course near the Cherwell, the brief time required in the story to either ascend this geophysical



sorry, but this has *to be sideways*

[20] Map as ever thanks to OS via http://www.streetmap.co.uk. When and why was 'up' standardised as north?

[21] I *think* that was Hilary 1979. I worked out that the overpass just by Marston, just south of '2' on the map, was the best way out.

[22] Alice through the Looking Glass, ch 2.

feature or run down the other side seems less than might be involved with the limestone outcrop you have just toiled up.

Elsfield:

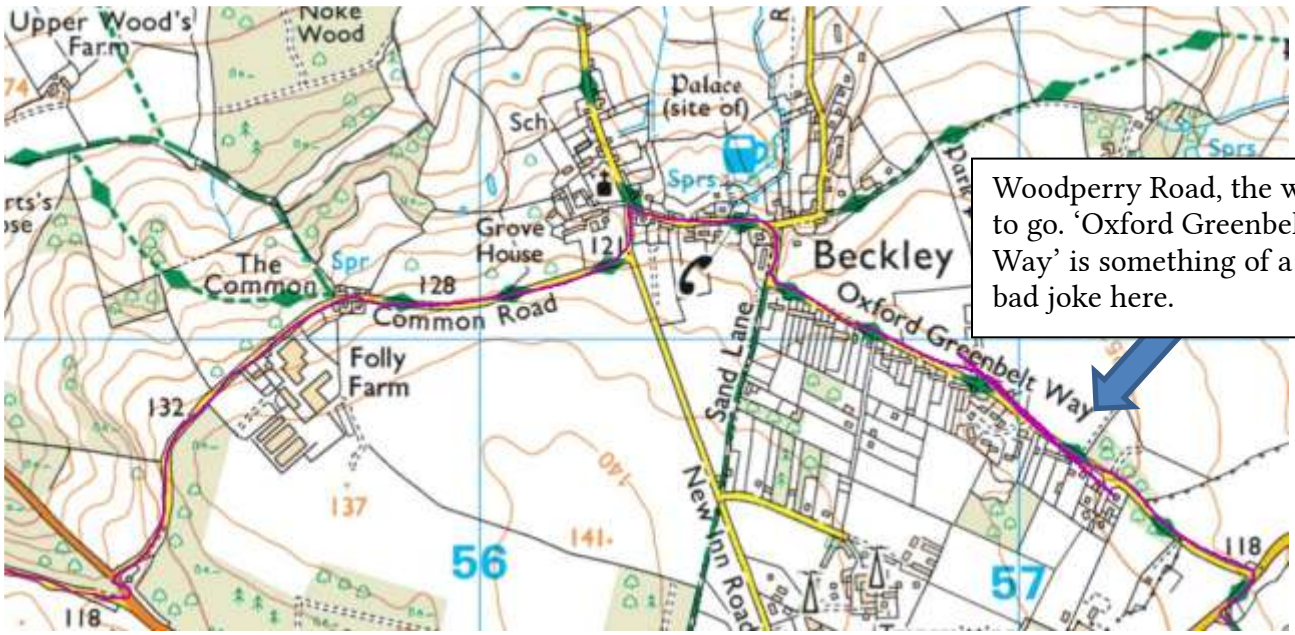
> ...is a springline village. Rain falls on the areas of Corallian sands and emerges as a series of springs called 'welle' in Old English, at the junction with the Oxford clay, thus giving a reliable source of water. The term 'welle' still survives in the field name 'Lockwell', now 'Lockels' and Pennywell Wood. The lower fields in the clay drained by the Bayswater Brook, parts of which are also known as the Washbrook, are often waterlogged in winter[23], but the higher parts drain well.
>
> There was also a source of stone for building – an outcrop of Wheatley limestone, which was exploited in the 13th century and sold to Merton College for building its library. There is an entry in the Bursar's Rolls of Merton College dated 1373-6 referring to Elsfield stone: *Item pro lapidibus emptis apud Elsefelde, 10s.* (Item for stones bought in Elsfield, 10 shillings[24]) and the stone was used on the south side of Merton library, which was built 1371-9.[25]

This is a lot about a village you're just passing through, perhaps to compensate for there seeming to be not much to it. When I passed, this chap mincing down the street seemed to be the sole inhabitant:



there's only me...

It is also because after finding the path out across the fields, you are back on a road and can't get off all the way through Beckley from '3' to '3' off the first map (oops – see add-on bit below[26]), even if through Beckley it is another part of the Oxford Greenbelt Way (see LDP2).



Make sure you take the right road out of Beckley, jolly tedious though Woodperry Road is both in

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23 You have been warned often! And the path up does follow a little blue line on the map, even if the Bayswater Brook itself is the one running parallel a little to the south.

24 Accounts were a lot more verbose in those days.

25 http://www.elsfield.net/history/from-domesday-to-the-17th-century-1

26 NB this is different scale, being from the 2.5 inch OS map, not that that matters – but the key is different of course.

length and architecturally, for the turns down into and then back out of the village may leave you thinking Sand Lane is the way to go. Or the footpath continuing east...[27]

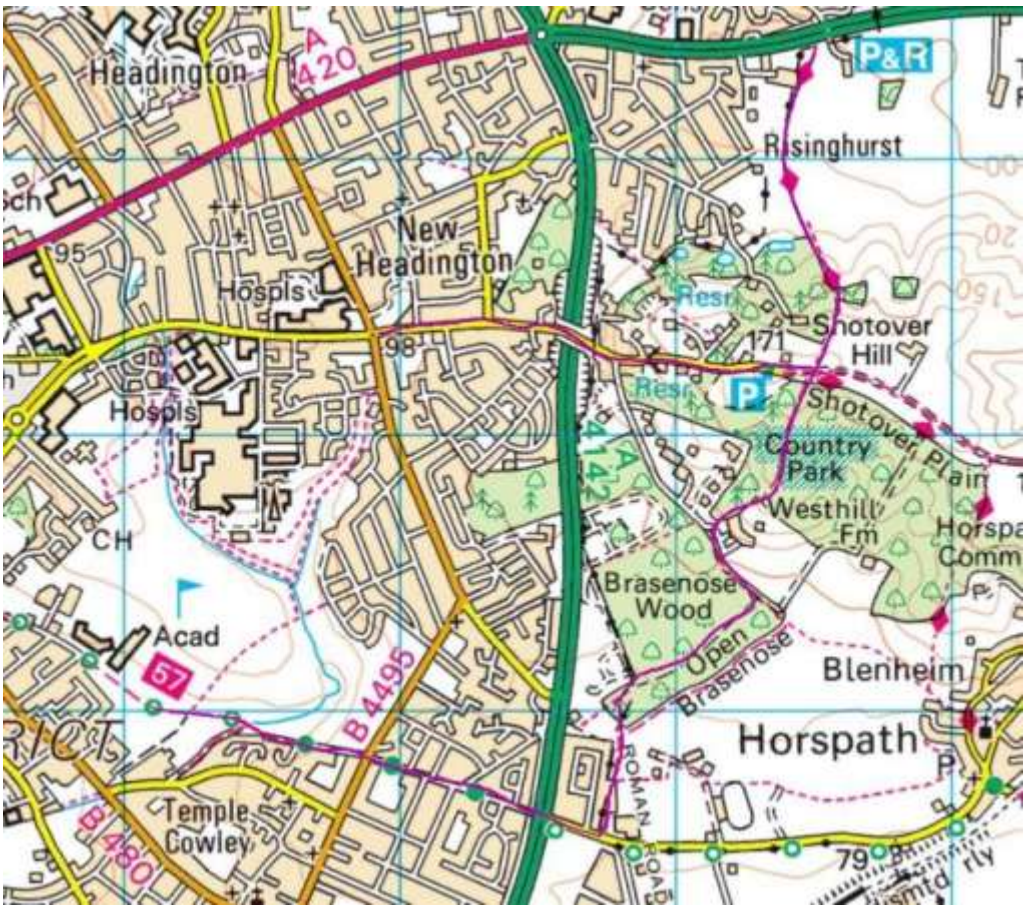
You are heading for Woodperry, like Water- and Wood-eaton, 'twinned' with Waterperry a bit further on, up and down their respective hills. Woodperry is a Grade I Palladian house, one of those mid-sized[28] houses that one sometimes finds unexpectedly gracing the countryside. The path out of it at '4' on the map involves an unsigned jink to the public path towards a private-seeming area, and when I walked it the bridleway straight on to the road leading out of Stanton St John was easily missed, I ended up taking the right-angled turn to the south-west into that village, which was in fact a pretty diversion even if three sides of a square.

From Stanton Great Wood on – '5' on the map – although the public footpath zig-zag is a bit odd, you are in a lovely area, meadows and woods, Polecat End and Drunkard's Corner. On my walk I was going on to Waterperry, Waterstock, Tiddington, Rycote and Tetsworth, which involved getting over the motorway at '6', but, as you can see from the map, there are plenty of opportunities for exploration and alternatives.



Indeed, I have indicated a possible loop back to Oxford here via Forest Hill and along to Sandhills at '7', conveniently at the P&R and (if weary of foot by now) a bus-ride back into town. There is an underpass to the P&R where you will see this charming mural:

If *not* weary, the footpath continues south just along the edge of the P&R, signed 'Shotover Plain 1m', from whence you can return down Old Road to town or even continue south, through Brasenose Wood and so onto cycleway 57. Both routes have their merits!

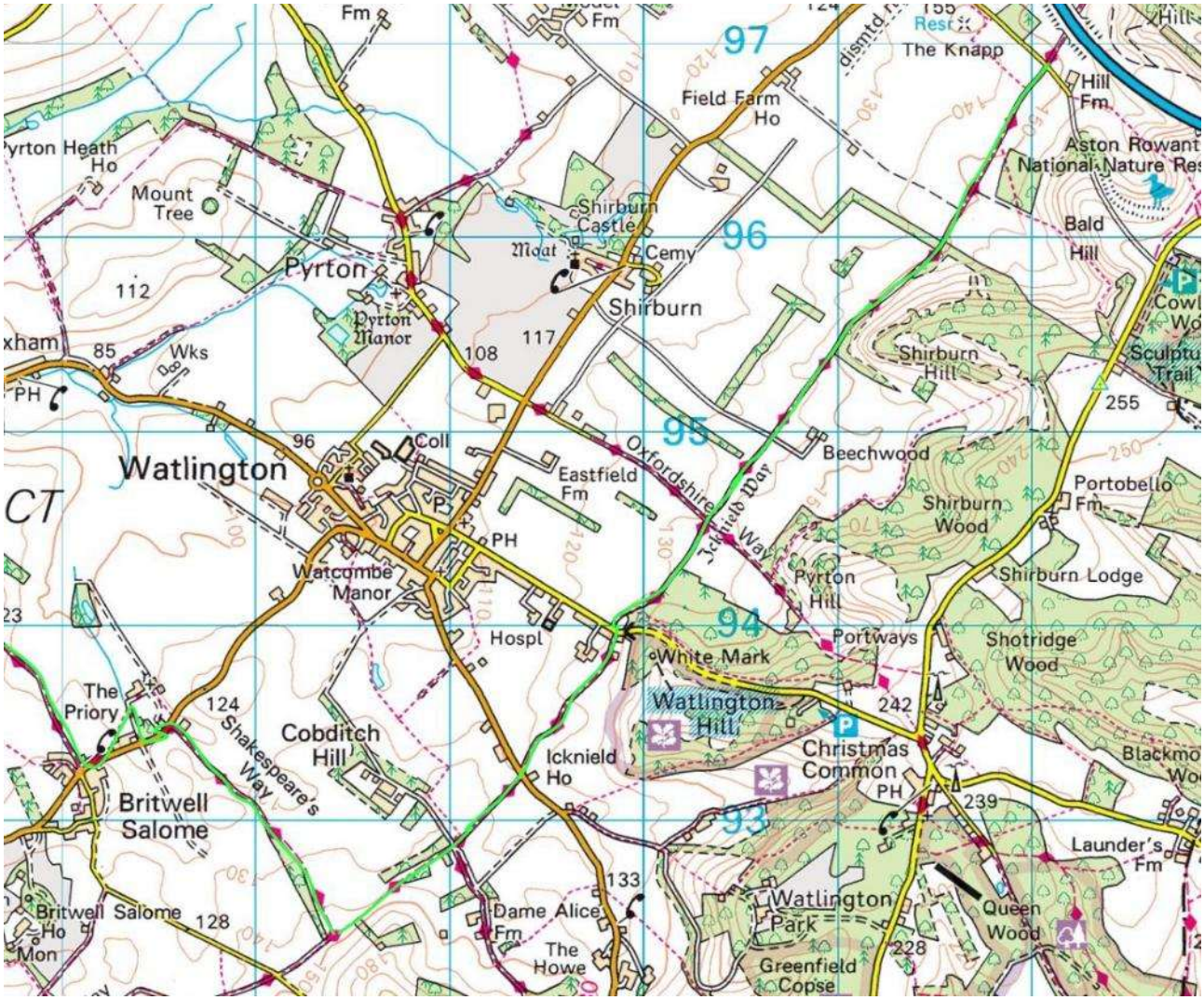


[27] Another time.

[28] Nine-bedroomed. Nine bedrooms is mid-sized, no? Reportedly £14M-worth, anyway - https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1270299/Sold-400m-divorce-tycoon-The-extraordinary-property-portfolio-Scot-Young-owned-banks-took-keys.html

LDP4 – from the south-east

What do you do if you're travelling along the Icknield Way (or Ridgeway) and suddenly decide to divert to Oxford? Or, in other circumstances, what should you do if your bus breaks down at Lewknor, susceptible as charabancs are to such inconveniences? This walk will assuage your anxieties!



Lewknor is just off the top-right of this map. Following the Icknield Way south west is not the most direct way to Oxford, but it is a lovely walk.[29] The M40 or even A40 is the straight route back. But you're not going to walk along those.

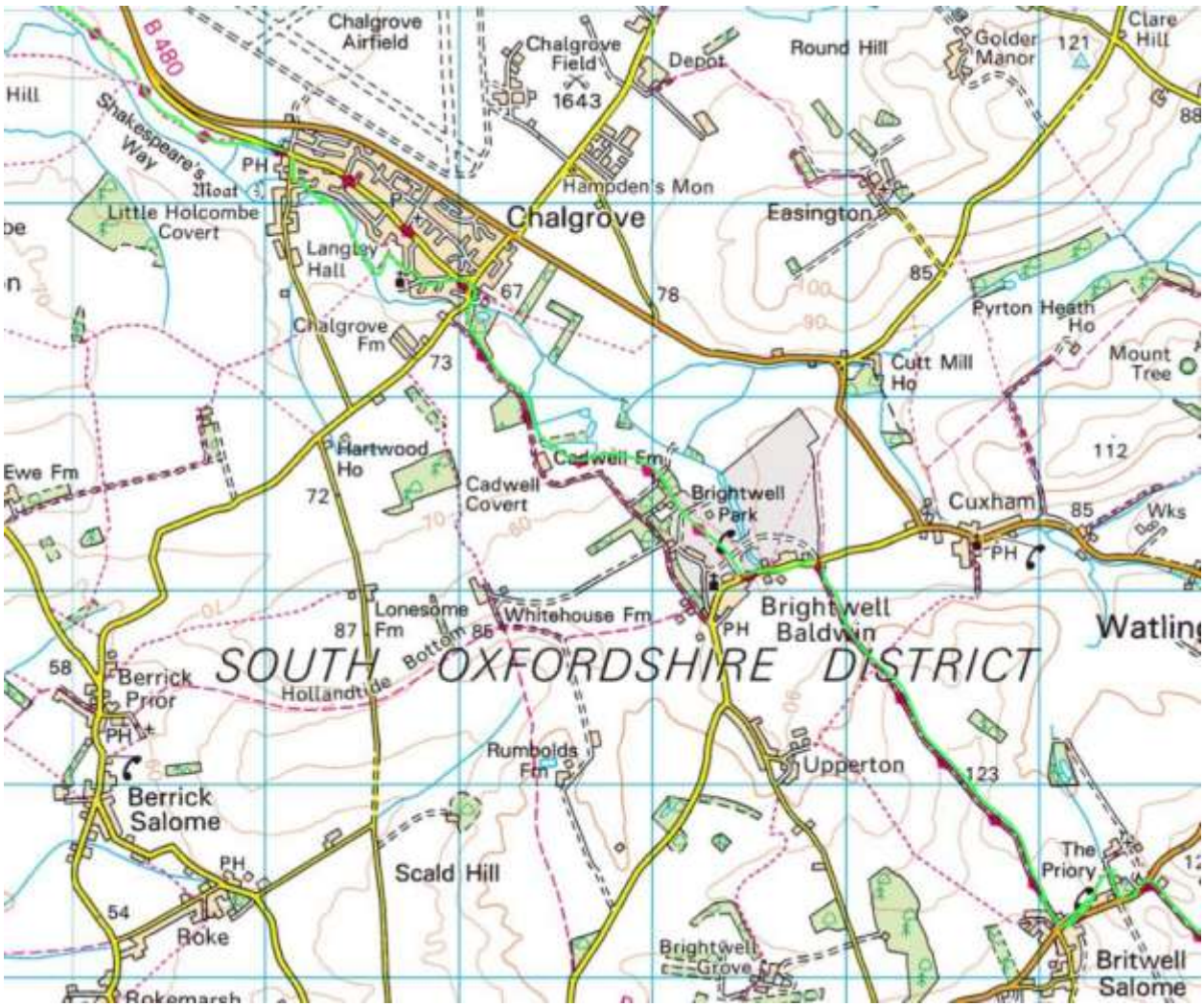
Of course you could head off NW sooner than later along the Oxfordshire Way to Pyrton; this then zigzags up to Tetsworth and could join on to the extension of LDP2, or otherwise you could head for Great Haseley, Great Milton, Cuddeston, which has some interest. But my suggestion is to continue on until you can turn for Britwell Salome, along Shakespeare's Way again (met in LDP1). It is a pleasant narrow wooded walk close-crowded with bushes here.

After wondering at the strange name of Britwell Salome,[30] and making sure to take the little back-path both for the interest in the buildings (church, old rectory, a charming square clapboard shed on piles of bricks, under old red tiles...), the track continues north-west for Brightwell Baldwin.



[29] If muddy in places, at times... :)

[30] Bright spring is obvious enough. Salome is nothing to do with the Herod story; it 'is a family name derived from Sulham. Aumaricus de Suleham held Britwell in 1236' – Ekwall, *Concise Dictionary of English Place Names.*



Brightwell Park here has wonderful trees, and a pleasant eighteenth century stone bridge, and a strange cubic building that at first glance looks as if it might be a large dove-cot, but seems to be missing entrances.[31] The park also seems to be missing a house, or anyway the plain-looking buildings to your left seem rather run down. Perhaps used for some council or other corporate purpose, or converted to flats?



Alas, even skirting the back of Chalgrove doesn't really improve the next place much, especially if someone is doing noisy aerial acrobatics over the nearby airfield. At the top end of the village you emerge from a snicket between houses by a charming mill and opposite a fine oak-framed manor.

Make sure to find the turn off the road into the path running parallel to it as you leave Chalgrove. When I walked this in 2016, a very new hedge had just been planted by the path – makes a change; and a bit further on the grass was extraordinarily thick and lush, coming almost up to my knee, as I approached Ascott Farm (see map on next page). The farm, when you get there, is a pleasant grouping of red tiled roofs on house and barns.

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[31] It really is a dovecot. The way in and out is through the rather industrial-looking chimney-like things in the middle of the top. Picture and confirmation at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brightwell_Baldwin

The local features continue to charm as not long after the path goes through the grounds of Ascott House, of which only some beautiful brickwork outbuildings survive. These are worth a



visit just for themselves and the associated story, which might be suggested by the gates to nowhere on the passing road.[32] It is unclear whether the house had ever been rebuilt after a disastrous fire of 1662, just as it had been finished: '"There was a verie noble house built there", says the antiquary Anthony a Wood in October 1662 (3), "and the outside being finished ..the joyner's shavings took fire by accident and so 'twas burnt down."'[33]

The Dormer family fortunes (including the Ascott estate) declined to John, who

> ... was a thoroughly bad lot. Hearne describes him in 1710 as a "young gentleman of a most wicked, profligate, debauch'd Life, a Person of no Conscience nor Religion, and who is not known to have ever done one virtuous or good thing..." Hearne gave a colourful account of John Dormer murdering a man in Woodstock Park because he would not hand over his wife for Dormer's gratification. He fled to Yarnton "without his hat" and escaped a conviction for murder only because another Dormer was one of the judges and a bunch of "rascals and villains" was collected for the jury.[34]

Between Stadhampton and Chiselhampton the path passes through lovely meadows and willow trees by the river – note, here, you are off the public right of way, which goes along the meadow, and in a nature reserve.



The path beyond Chiselhampton proceeds along wide headlands and well-defined ways through rolling countryside to the Baldons, with a view of Garsington Church off to your right seemingly on its own in fields.

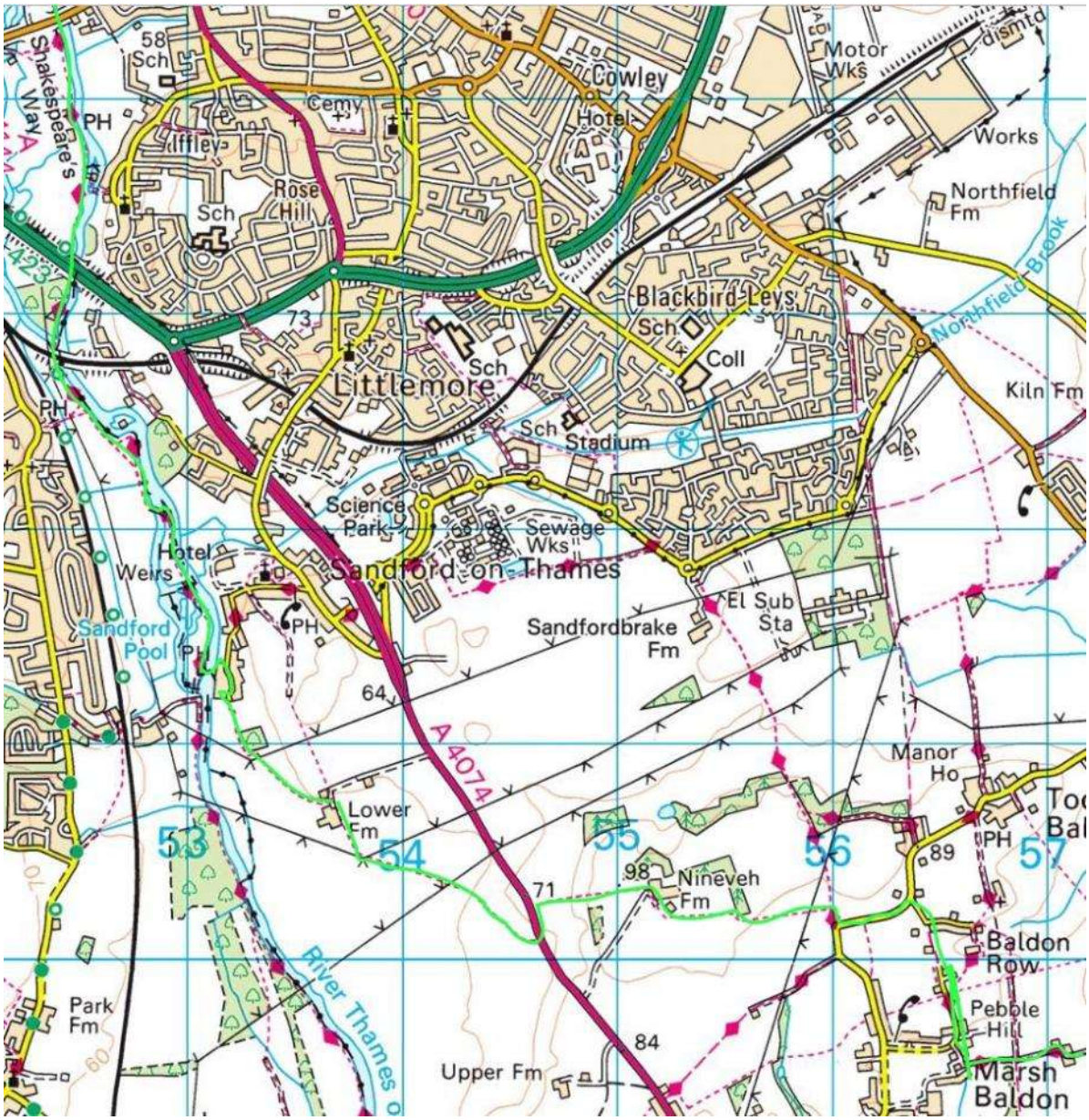
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32 Information about this park is not so easy to find, as searches are readily confused with other more famous Ascotts (and Ascots). However, an introduction and info-trail-map may be found at https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/countryside/walks-and-rides/suggested-walks-and-rides-oxfordshire/ascott-park-historical-trail

33 http://www.oxfordshirebuildingstrust.co.uk/files/9414/5286/3136/THE_MYSTERIOUS_LATER_HISTORY_OF_ASCOTT_PARK.pdf

34 ibid

From the Baldons you obviously have a wide range of choice:



However, I wasn't much tempted by 'Sewage Works', as Shakespeare's Way seems to take you past, nor an easterly slant through Blackbird Leys and the remains of the motor-works (though all these things no doubt have their own peculiar interest), and headed for Nineveh instead.



For years I have seen the sign for this romantically-named farm, travelling from my grandmother's house in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell to school in Oxford, and the chance to find out a bit more was too good to miss. I was rewarded – after defeating the offensive insistence upon Privacy by carefully following the public way, not always clear – by a large herd of large deer! – as well as the satisfaction of navigation.

The jink across the red A4074 was admittedly unpleasant, both onto and off the main (hedge, nettles – an unencouraged way, though then the path across to Lower Farm was broad through the crops), but the back approach to Sandford was interesting (as a wholly unknown area to me). You have to wiggle around the pub to cross onto the Thames Path but from there of course it is just straight up into the centre of town – even if still three weary miles to Folly Bridge.

LDP5 – from the south – and north-west!

I can keep this simple: this is the Thames path. It is the sort of section that gets included with the apology 'for completists only' – which is sort-of both apologetic and at the same time rude to those who like collections to be whole, as if a little obsession-compulsion is really a disorder.

Anyway, from the south: walking along the Thames up from, say, Abingdon is perfectly do-able.

Perhaps because I tried it in December, and some time ago, I have no warm recollections other than the view of Carfax Conduit up on the hill at Nuneham House, which is now a Global Retreat Centre, rather ironically undergoing two years of refurbishment,[35] though this may represent an opportunity: "As there is no Reception to report to, the grounds are open to people to come in and enjoy, throughout the week. We would request that, should you visit, that you don't bring picnics or alcohol on site. Please be aware that we do close the gates at 6 pm and so don't find yourself locked in the car park!" – I had heard that visiting depended upon a rare open day,[36] but maybe the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University UK has evolved a more welcoming style.

The Conduit used to be – not surprisingly – at Carfax, the centre of Oxford, where it dispensed water brought in from Hinksey (LDP6 takes you past 'Conduit House', the source). The actual conduit is the pipework between the two; this bit is more of an elaborate drinking fountain, here seen in situ (it is the square-plan thing against which the gent is leaning on the left):[37]



Here is stood from 1617 until, by 1787 it had 'become an obstacle to traffic' and was given to Earl Harcourt who removed it to his house at Nuneham.[38]

Walking to or from Abingdon reminds me of 'An Instance at the Fingerpost', an odd book with a lot of vivid description about the seventeenth century and the early Enlightenment. At one point in it the narrator trails a mysterious woman who walks on a warm summer's night from Oxford to Abingdon, holds a mysteriously silent but possibly deeply significant meeting there, and then walks back again. Before reading this Abingdon for me had always been impossibly separated from and linked to Oxford only by the umbilical A34 – good for cars, inconceivable for the pedestrian. Indeed, I hadn't ever really considered the functional possibility or necessity of 'long-distance' walking before (despite having read plenty of Hardy and such like). Even so, I can see no practical footway to Abingdon that could avoid a lot of traffic nowadays, other than the Thames path;[39] and can't recommend doing this both ways. 'I remember, and once is enough.'[40]

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35 Starting March 2019: https://www.globalretreatcentre.org/refurbishment/. Ironically because the headquarters of an organisation focussed on wellness is un-well. Geddit?

36 eg https://sites.google.com/site/derelictionintheshires/other-sites/carfax-conduit

37 http://www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk/features/400-years-water-supply-oxford, Carfax Conduit and St Aldate's, 1755.

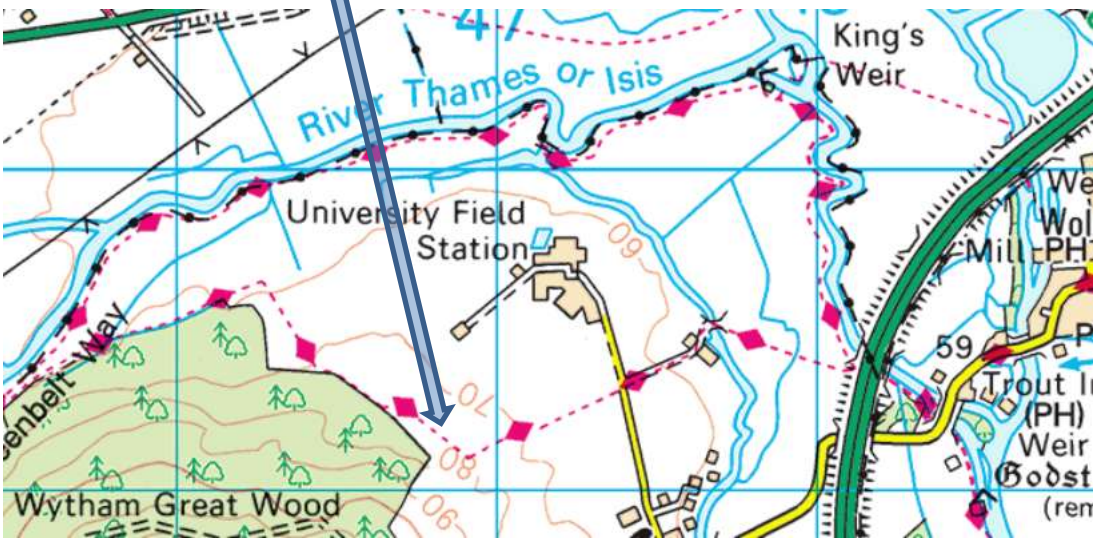
38 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carfax_Conduit

39 Harcourt, Boars, Foxcombe Hills; Sunningwell *might* be worth a try. AEFTR.

40 T S Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*. What *I* remember is heavy going through rather flat landscape.

More interesting is the approach from upstream, say from Bablock Hythe. Admittedly, the walking is no less flat – the Thames can hardly claim to be a particularly *exciting* river. But you have the interest of the wooded Wytham Hill to circle around, and the puzzle of this steady circling – you start as far south as Donnington Bridge, and the river curls as far north as Cutteslowe. As an 'approach' to *Oxford* you are simply not being very efficient here: walking a couple of miles south-east *away* from the river at Bablock will join you onto LDP6 and a direct route into town.

But walking isn't about efficiency! and you might even get a view of the dreaming spires if you fork over the lower flank of Wytham Hill rather than following all the twists and turns past Kings's Weir. Plenty of grass to see otherwise, and probably sheep and cattle too.



Reward! –



One thing both ends of the Thames paths have going for them – they both get you into Oxford without having to even cross a main road, let alone walk along one.

LDP6 – from the south-west

This picks up on the 'ancient trackways' mentioned in ch.6, and so comes with the added imaginary pleasure of exploring such history in person, so to speak.

I start at Appleton, though the bus is another of those 'there you go!' types that leave you in the middle of nowhere except a main-road ('1' on the map). Further south-west the apparent line of this track has been taken by the main road, either on towards Swindon or to Wantage, so Appleton it is, and I couldn't find a better bus easily.



Getting along the main road to the turn off at '2' is unpleasant, or I missed something (can the Appleton bus-users *really* have to suffer this?[41]). A much more pleasant walk would be afforded by heading immediately northish past 'Bessels Leigh (Sch)' but then you would miss out on Appleton, wouldn't you? And rather more seriously, call into question why you aren't just starting at '4' anyway, if so determined to stick on the 'ancient track'.

I'm not sure I identified the public way at '2' either (unsigned?) but after a track through the woods you emerge in the pleasant fields of Tubney Manor Farm and things are a *bit* clearer. Suffice to say, working your way across to Appleton ('3') is the most confusing part of this route.

Although you're turning right at Appleton church, to the left the path continues through the churchyard, surely adding some antiquity to its passage,[42] and the eye is drawn to the yellow-road continuing the same line south-west beyond the village... Well, 'ancient trackways' are hard to work out. At least the path heading east to Bessels Leigh ('4') certainly feels properly pre-industrial, a purposeful link between neighbouring villages, and is (at last) easy to find and follow. The variety of fields and woodland is engaging too. Bessels Leigh presents as one of those pleasant backwaters bypassed by the traffic and so known (normally) only as a road sign ('village only'[43]) and a pub.

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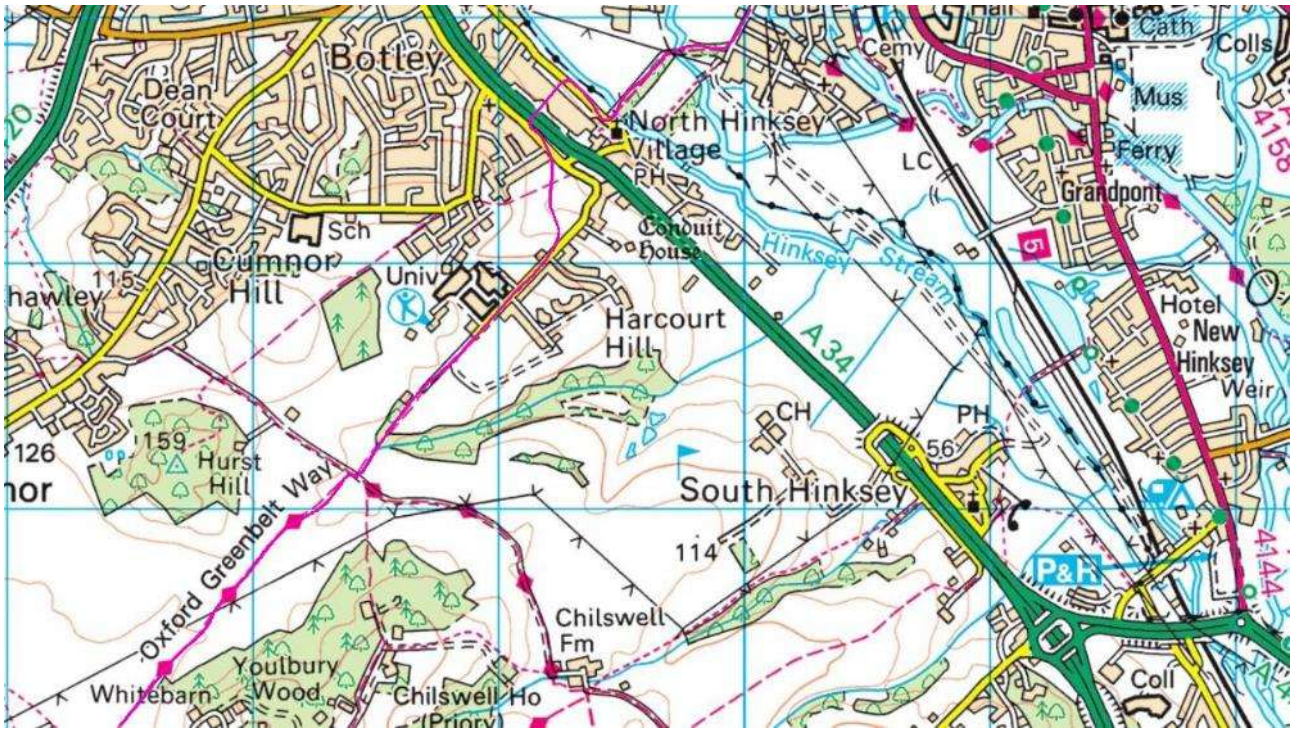
41 No, dimmy. They use bus route 63 on one of the five-times-a-weekday when it passes through the village itself.

42 The earliest parts of the church are C12th - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appleton,_Oxfordshire#Parish_church

43 Actually the sign offers 'Eaton' too, so it isn't thus this time; but it does warn 'single track road'.

At the pub, The Greyhound,[44] jink across the main road and along the smaller but still rather dangerous (no footpath, and the traffic coming round the bend is in a hurry) brown road to Wootton Business Park and Wootton and several other places. The object is to get off this as soon as possible, and indeed at the next junction a wide gate at last offers a primrose path north-east.

Actually, this is a 'byway' – in which I think 'by' ought to be a contraction of 'borough', ie this is a lane that leads to another village or town. But is it a 'BOAT'?![45] Presumably, since it doesn't say it is a 'restricted' byway – something of a contradiction. You are certainly now on my 'ancient trackway', anyway, and other than being somewhat linear, it is a pleasant walk into town. Note how it passes between Cumnor and Boars hills – this is a 'natural' way to approach the town, likely to be ancient(!). Even if Harcourt Hill thereafter is unexpectedly steep. Can't help that.



Hello 'Greenbelt Way' again (see LDP 2 & 3), by-the-way.

Half way down Harcourt Hill I'd turn left through Raleigh Park ('1'), both because it is nicely managed (both as a park and nature reserve – see ch.5, Parks) but also to get off the road. However, if you've not been this way before, straight on down and a little diversion for Conduit House ('2') is recommended (qv LDP 5).

In either case, however, the old way is horribly disrupted by the ring-road and a rather tedious



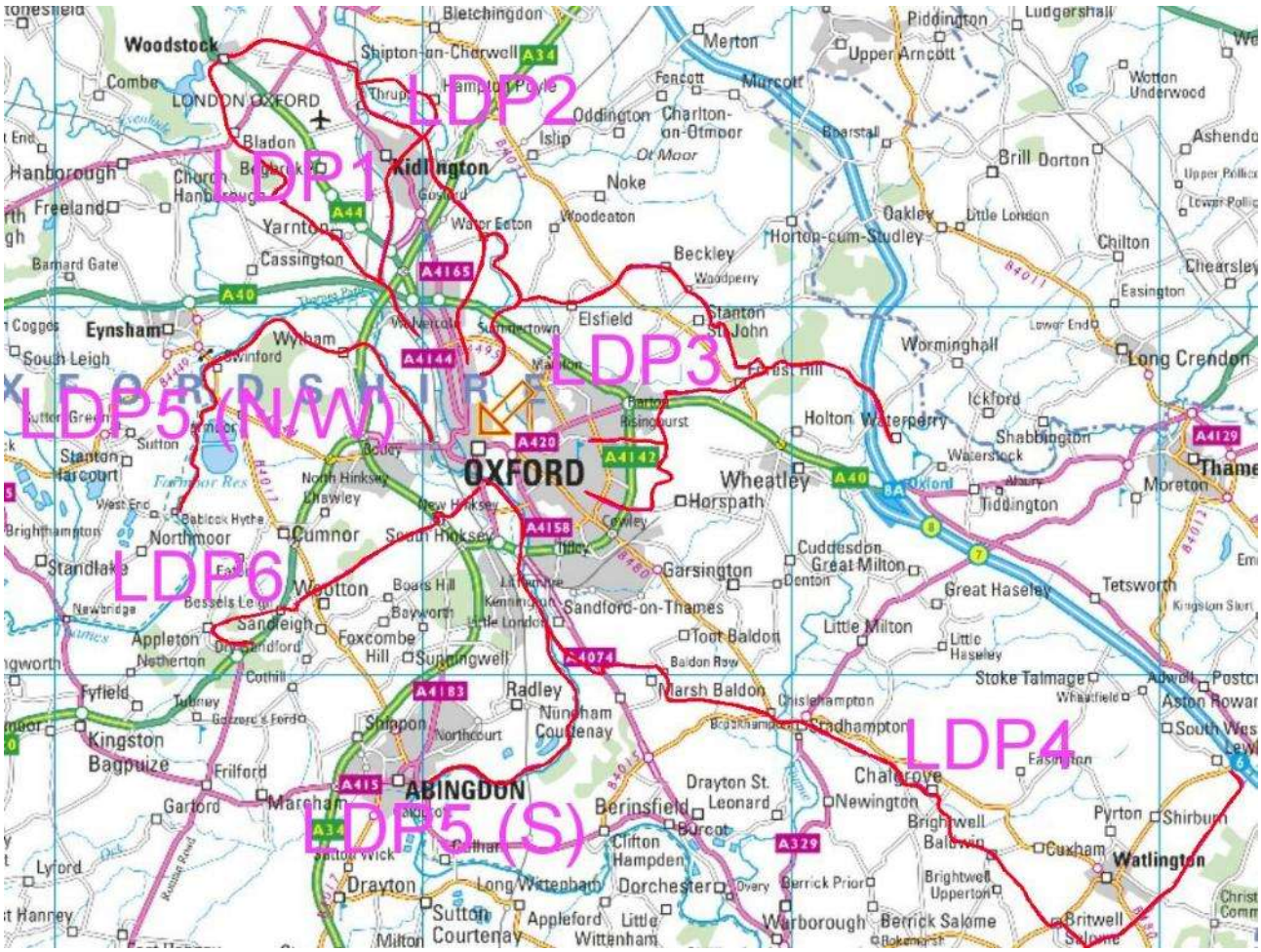
[44] A Brunning & Price pub. "We are a group of pub restaurants founded in the North West of England and North Wales" - https://www.brunningandprice.co.uk/. The Greyhound 'near Wootton' – Bessels Leigh doesn't get a mention – is classified as 'south-east', qv ch.6.

[45] BOAT – 'byway open to all traffic'.

diversion up and back (‘3’) is required. Though this does bring you to an underpass – one of the few ways of getting into Oxford without crossing a main road. In a rare modern touch, mounting blocks are provided either end for the convenience of horse-riders, who are asked to walk their mount through – not, I think, because ’ealth and safety have spotted an opportunity for a Pointless Rule, but because the head-clearance really isn’t sufficient to ride.

The Oxford Flood Relief Project (see ch.s 2 and 4) may also mean that ‘Willow Walk’ (at ‘4’) is diverted[46] – if it isn’t, you are heading across to Ohsnaforde (ch.6).

I was going to include cross-town routes here, but this chapter has turned out far too long already. Another chapter required! But a quick overview[47] of the routes described above first:


LDP1
LDP2
LDP3
LDP4
LDP5 (S)
LDP5 (N/W)
LDP6
OXFORD
ABINGDON
Woodstock
Kidlington
Eynsham
Wheatley
Horspath
Garsington
Sandford-on-Thames
Radley
Drayton
Berinsfield
Dorchester
Watlington
Long Crendon
Thame
Chalgrove
Cumnor
Wootton
Kingston Bagpuize
Frilford
Marcham
Abingdon
Shippon
Northcourt
Nuneham Courtenay
Marsh Baldon
Toot Baldon
Little Milton
Great Haseley
Tetsworth
Cuddesdon
Great Milton
Holton
Waterperry
Wheatley
Oakley
Horton-cum-Studley
Beckley
Noke
Oddington
Charlton-on-Otmoor
Islip
Elsfield
Stanton St John
Wheatley
Horspath
Cassington
Yarnton
Freeland
Hanborough
Bladon
Combe
Shipton-on-Cherwell
Bletchingdon
Merton
Piddington
Upper Arncott
Brill
Dorton
Chilton
Worminghall
Ickford
Shabbington
Tiddington
Moreton
Stanton Harcourt
Sutton
Standlake
Northmoor
Appleton
Fyfield
Tubney
Cothill
Foxcombe Hill
Sunningwell
Boars Hill
Sandfield
Bayworth
Kennington
Newbridge
Bessels Leigh
Wytham
Seacourt
Elsfield
Stanton St John
Forest Hill
Holton
Waterperry
Shabbington
Tiddington
Great Haseley
Little Milton
Stadhampton
Chalgrove
Newington
Brightwell Baldwin
Brightwell Upperton
Warborough
Berrick Salome
Berrick Prior
Cuxham
Pyrton
Shirburn
Britwell Salome
Drayton St Leonard
Clifton Hampden
Long Wittenham
Appleford
Little Wittenham
Sutton Courtenay
Milton
Hanney
Lyford
Gartord
Marcham
Abingdon
Ashendon
Chearsley
Easington
Lower End
Upper Arncott
Piddington
Ludgershall
Wotton Underwood
Brill
Dorton
Oakley
Little London
Horton-cum-Studley
Chilton
Worminghall
Long Crendon
Ickford
Shabbington
Tiddington
Moreton
Thame
Tetsworth
Stoke Talmage
Aston Rowant
Chalgrove
Pyrton
Shirburn
Watlington
Cuxham
Britwell Salome
Berrick Salome
Warborough
Berrick Prior
Brightwell Upperton
Brightwell Baldwin
Newington
Drayton St Leonard
Clifton Hampden
Long Wittenham
Appleford
Little Wittenham
Sutton Courtenay
Milton
Hanney
Lyford
Gartord
Marcham
Abingdon
Frilford
Kingston Bagpuize
Appleton
Fyfield
Tubney
Cothill
Foxcombe Hill
Sunningwell
Boars Hill
Sandfield
Bayworth
Kennington
Newbridge
Bessels Leigh
Wytham
Seacourt
Elsfield
Stanton St John
Forest Hill
Holton
Waterperry
Shabbington
Tiddington
Great Haseley
Little Milton
Stadhampton
Chalgrove
Newington
Brightwell Baldwin
Brightwell Upperton
Warborough
Berrick Salome
Berrick Prior
Cuxham
Pyrton
Shirburn
Britwell Salome

On reflection, 2 is perhaps just too gruelling if on the east bank of the Cherwell, and a bit dull if straight through Cutteslowe.

And, dear reader, you will have realised already that I'm not keen on 5, even though the central part, from Iffley up to Port Meadow, is an excellent in-city walk – but that is to anticipate...



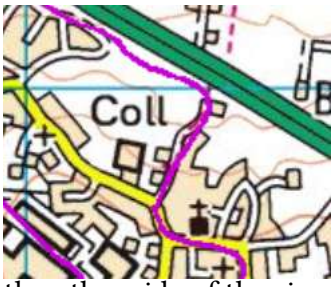
Though if you do visit Iffley, the church is very fine in itself. What you *won't* see, though, is this chestnut by the church gate, as it was cut down in 2018, no doubt because it was a threat to God's faithful. Not enough of them to risk, nowadays.[48]

[48] But if there aren't very many of them, the risk reduces proportionately, no? Quite apart from questions of whether Big G looks after his own or not.

Chapter 8 – washed up

This was meant to be chapter 7b, suggestions for getting from place to place in Oxford without using main roads; ideally, on footpaths and through snickets, parks and nature reserves. The last chapter ended with the recommendation to walk from Iffley to Port Meadow (or vice versa), the central part of 'LDP5', and that was to be the start of it, from the beautiful Iffley Church...

So I was drawing lines on yet another map of Oxford by way of starting as I meant to go on, but then the scale was wrong – the paths wouldn't be visible on the page, whatever colour I chose – and then I'm pretty sure that I got this bit[1] up in Headington wrong, I don't think the way from the top left can continue until Stoke Place, the white road heading downhill past 'Coll' to the ring-road, and I couldn't remember if one could get to the continuation of this track as bridlepath on the other side of the ring-road without crossing the road or not – pretty cruel joke if not, I don't actually *advocate* crossing this road on foot,





even if mentioning its possibility at one or two places... Zooming in doesn't help:



Mind you, back in 1876 it doesn't look as if it went much further than where the ring-road is now anyway, just leading to 'Well':

Even if by 1898 the modern arrangement of footpaths is shown pretty much as now (below). Does that indicate their creation in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with the great increase in population and conurbation, or does it simply reflect incrementally better surveying? Like the underpass, this is a matter for conjecture, or AEFTR.[2]



Speaking of conjecture, yesterday's Google Doodle about mothering Sunday included the mealy-mouthed phrase 'most historians believe...' with respect to its origins, which got me onto an early-morning rant about mis-use of 'belief' in the context of rational argument and scientific studies. It started to be used as a sort of apology for superiority, degenerated via 'IMHO' and is now used with the sub-text of 'but your opinion is as good as theirs' and 'they are "experts" and we don't have to accept anything they say nowadays.' Forgetting that serious people have spent serious time studying the data and drawing rational conclusions.

Indeed, I see in the phrase the undermining of the Enlightenment, the tide of mob rule and hysterical opinion

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1 Modern maps from OS via http://www.streetmap.co.uk as usual. Historical from https://maps.nls.uk/os/.

2 Later: I did my own exercise. There is no underpass. Despite the vast new building works for Barton Park that overlay the area on the other side of the ring-road, the footpath continues through these. It has a little sign advertising that it is still in use, though clearly few do use it – as it includes one of those take-your-life-in-your-hands road crossings, I'm not surprised.

and rumour washing away our fragile sandcastles of observation, hypothesis, testing, synthesis, connected rational thought itself flung aside for the momentary pleasure of infantile gratification.

Back to 'walking Oxford' though: how many places can you cross the ring-road without, so to speak, actually crossing it, even if maybe not up here in Stoke Place?



Some are easy – the Thames paths, the canal, and I mentioned the pedestrian underpass along the 'ancient trackway' from the south-west in North Hinksey. These are the best, in red:

Others, also in red, involve small roads crossing under or over: Old Road up to Shotover; Littlemore, Wolvercote to Wytham...

Some involve roundabouts and other car-dominated intersections, though they are better than nothing – Marston-Elsfield; Cowley; the old Abingdon-road link, South Hinksey, Botley. Purple:

The Cherwell-walk crossing is shown in black,[3] as is the place by Cutteslowe where I suggest skipping across to follow the footpath rather than using the footbridge a bit to the west.

No doubt there are others. I think I glimpsed one in the fields to the west of Binsey Church once. Walking around the ring-road to try to determine the full list strikes me as neither an attractive proposition, nor even a method sure to lead to an answer. Modern roads are so monomaniacal that they cross things without a blink, and when what they're crossing is just a little culvert-like footway, you are most unlikely to notice it from above, even if on foot up there.

But wrapping up (and further apologia for not following-up on the intra-Oxford connections – though truly, it would have been truly tedious): as some of these paths start to fade in my memory, and I still find new ones – and maybe re-find ones I had forgotten – I have come to realise that any attempt to 'fix' a map of these is impossible.[4] Rather, it is the steady action of passing and repassing that creates a sort of neural network, reinforcing earlier connections and observing changes. (For example, yesterday, Cuckoo Lane up in Headington seems to be undergoing some major facelift behind Headington School; a bizarre allocation of the budget, given the state of some of the roads, but there you go, it does get muddy along there.)

I'm sorry not to have found a place to advocate a favourite loop of mine, across Port Meadow to Godstow, thence to Wytham Woods, in one gate, along 'the Singing Way' and out the other and so back in at Botley; nor to plot the strange and unexpected Lye Valley and how that can join on to Boundary Brook or across past Southfield Golf Club to Cowley Road.

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[3] You can of course take-your-life-in-your-hands pretty much anywhere, except along the south-west stretch of the ring-road where serious fencing removes your choice.

[4] Signally failing to learn earlier from ch.6, Mutabilitie!

Sorry too to have neither got an answer from the City Council about what they think the difference between Park and Nature Reserve is, and why they don't just list *all* the open spaces they look after in one place – perhaps my own failure to collate such a thing is a good indication of the latter, though. Alas, Appendix X, in pieces...

Also disappointing was not finding out from the University Parks Keepers as to whether they still have a list of their trees as tagged under the old system.

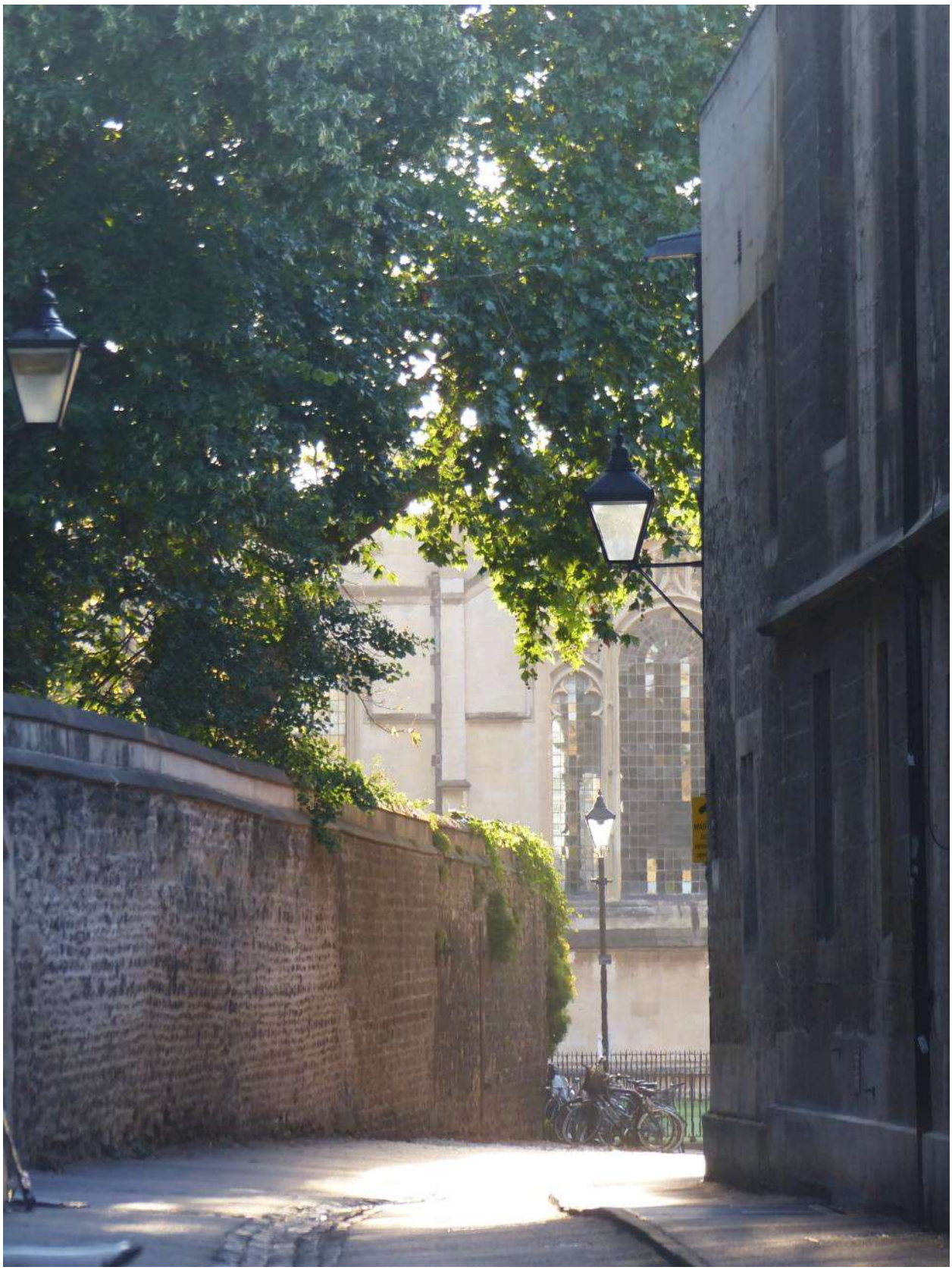
There's an obvious pattern developing here, even if it is a pattern of pattern-making-failure: obviously I am a 'completist', by training not trusting part-lists because, why, without they are totalled and locked into place preferably by some sort of double-entry mechanism, you can't trust them, you may always be surprised by someone saying, ah-ha, but?!

And this is because (obviously) I like *knowing* (or, less charitably, I like being *right*; sure, that's it).

The last lesson then is that one *can't* know, not for sure; one can only *find out*. And walking at least gets you *out*. And maybe it is not even so much 'finding' as in 'keeping', but experience, a brief flash of a kingfisher along the green river between one blink and the next. There's always hope.

> Alone, the startling lattice of the nights
> reminds of old indictments,
> avoided, not excused;
> and of how far from home.
>
> And then the northern cold
> sweeps us loose, too.
> Salutations, Li Ho!
> A millennium in a footnote,[5]
> sifted layers in reams and seams,
> more permanence I could not bear.

[5] Li Ho (*Poems of the Late T'ang*, trans A.C.Graham, Penguin Classics 1965) is now not even called that – step forward, Li He. Ah, *mutabilitie*. He lived in the 8th century.



Ah, change...

– Appendices

1 List of waterways in Oxford

2 Plants to look out for on Port Meadow

3 Trees in the University Parks

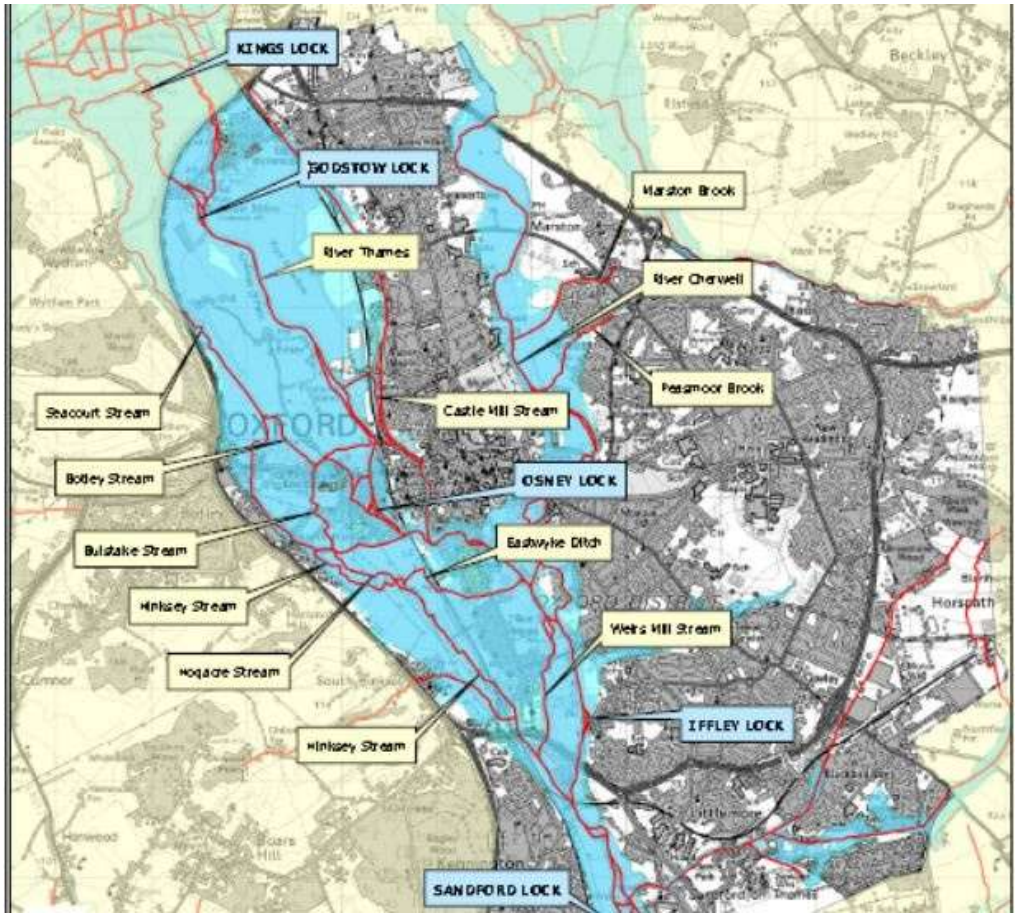
Appendix 1: list of waterways in Oxford

To an extent this is a futile exercise, as endless as learning 'the name of every cape, point, bay, sound, inlet, channel, harbour, shallows, reef and rock of the shores of Lossow, a little islet of the Pelnesh sea' under the tuition of the Master Namer in the Isolate Tower.[1]

Or, again, "the Thames, at and about Oxford, forms a complete network of streams - so much so as to be puzzling even to the surveyor. Our Oxford readers will recollect the various names of "Seekworth", "the Reach", "the Dunge", "Pot stream", "the Wyke Stream", "the Four Streams", and many others" - 1893: Ravenstein, The Oarsman's and Angler's map, quoted in 'Four Rivers'.[2] But we can try to list the larger bits in Oxford, and work down; and maybe the smaller ones can be jumped over.

A Named as 'main river' on the old Oxford Area Plan[3] by the Environment Agency:

Botley Stream
Bulstake Stream
Castle Mill Stream
Eastwyke Ditch
Hinksey Stream
Hogacre Stream
Marston Brook
Peasmoor Brook
River Cherwell
River Thames
Seacourt Stream
Weirs Mill Stream



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1 Ursula le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* Penguin 1968, p59

2 Four Rivers, Oxford - http://thames.me.uk/s01780.htm

3 "The Flood Map for Planning has been moved to a new site, to provide better information" says http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/37837.aspx now (December 2018). The 'better information' excludes, however, the handy (if rather blocky) labels for the waterways as shown on this earlier-retrieved version.

B Additionally from 2½ inch OS maps:

Bayswater Brook	runs along the edge of ne bypass and so perhaps not to be counted as 'Oxford', especially as then flowing north to join Cherwell at Sescut Farm
Boundary Brook	
Oxford Canal	
River Isis	another name for part of the Thames – but see p.90
Shire Lake Ditch	shown as course of Cherwell to east of Aston's Eyot but historically much more important, crossing Christ Church Meadow
Wytham Stream	another name for Seacourt Stream

C Others from various sources –

Duke's Cut	connection between Thames and canal to north of Oxford
Fiddler's Island Streams[4]	
Moors Brook or Ditch	alternative name for Boundary Brook or part thereof[5]
Pot Stream[6]	
Sheepwash Channel	one of the Four Streams at Rewley – two of the others being the Thames, and the one opposite the Sheepwash being Bulstake
Trill Mill Stream or Trill Stream	the parallel mill stream to Blackfriar's mill on the opposite, west, side of St Aldates, seems to lack a name
Wareham Stream	Castle Mill Stream by-pass and water supply for Morrell's Brewery

4 Four Rivers, Oxford - http://thames.me.uk/s01780.htm
5 Stephanie Jenkins, http://www.headington.org.uk/history/misc/boundary_brook.html
6 Four Rivers, Oxford – http://thames.me.uk/s01780.htm, Fred Thacker's Map, 1920

Appendix 2: plants to look out for on Port Meadow

Try to recognise (in addition to *a.repens*)*: [7]

creeping bent	}	
silverweed	}	flood tolerant
marsh foxtail	}	
floating grass		
water mint		
water forget-me-not		
articulated rush		
marsh arrowgrass		
water dropwort		
marsh helleborine		
marsh bedstraw		
ox-eye daisy	}	
meadowsweet	}	
greater burnet	}	
pepper saxifrage	}	where grazed
devil's-bit scabious	}	
adder's-tongue fern	}	
>18 species of wild grasses	}	**
green-winged orchid	}	
autumn crocus	}	
saw-wort	}	where managed for hay
pepper saxifrage	}	
meadow rue	}	

* I'm afraid that to attempt such distinction here would be too much. Another time.

** Too difficult to even list...! maybe start somewhere such as https://www.summerfieldbooks.com/a-guide-to-common-grasses--fsc-fold-out-chart~3082 ?

[7] this is in the extended IPA (and 'ZoO' – really! = 'Zone of Opportunity') but presumably also the eastern bank of the Cherwell. See map at http://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/uploads/documents/Oxford_Meadows_copy.pdf and source of my plant list at http://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/wild_plants/important_plant_areas/oxford_meadows

For sheer botanic poetry, this SSI listing with respect to Marston Meadows is hard to beat:

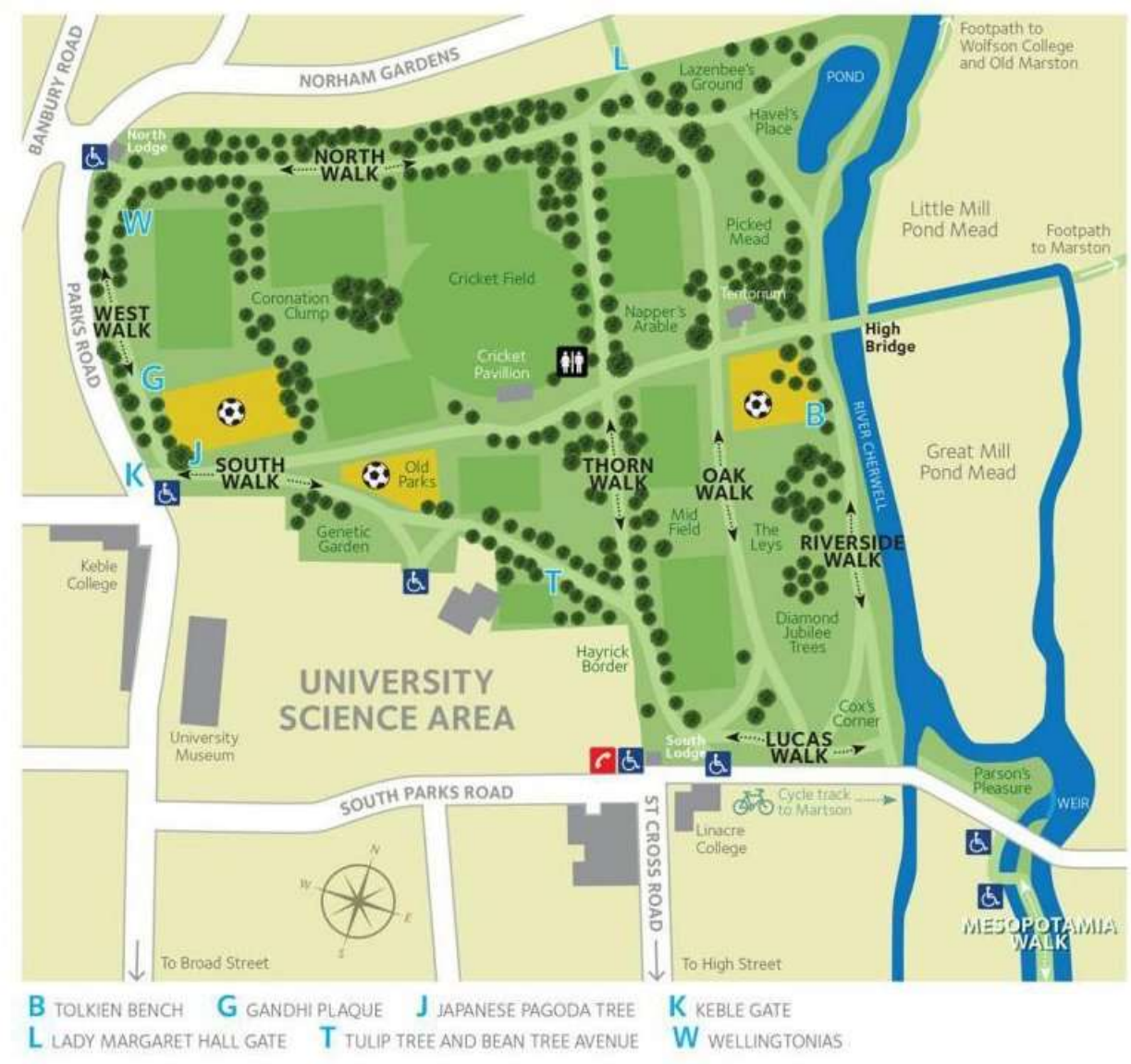
> The predominant grassland occurring on the hay meadows is the *Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis* type. This is largely restricted to unimproved lowland hay meadows and it has become rare in Britain and Europe. Plants indicative of ancient grassland that are found within these meadows include common meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum*, pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, early marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* together with the grasses smooth brome *Bromus racemosus*, meadow brome *B. commutatus* and meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*. The nationally scarce[8] fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris* also occurs at the site.
>
> In the summer-grazed fields an *Agrostis stolonifera-Alopecurus geniculatus* inundation grassland community predominates. Here, other plants associated with unimproved grassland include tubular water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, creeping-jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, slender spike-rush *Eleocharis uniglumis*, bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea* and the round-fruited rush *Juncus compressus*.
>
> Intermixed with the grassland are wetter swamp communities dominated by the tall grasses reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* or the sedges, lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and greater pond-sedge *C. riparia*. The swampy areas also support the locally uncommon brown sedge *C. disticha* and marsh stitchwort *Stellaria palustris*.

From https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1006612.pdf. See ch 2.

[8] Not scarce in Iffley Meadows, of course – see p.77.

Appendix 3: Trees in the University Parks

The Parks provides this map by way of an index to locations. It predates the Ghinko Gate, though the 'G' for Gandhi Plaque isn't far from it.



Note in particular the different areas and their codes for the tree list:

CC	Coronation Clump		**OW**	Oak Walk
CX	Cox's Corner		**PA**	Pavilion Border *
LG	Lazenbee's Ground		**PM**	Picked Mead
LW	Lucas Walk		**PP**	Parsons Pleasure
LY	The Leys		**SW**	South Walk
MF	Mid Field		**TW**	Thorn Walk
NA	Napper's Arable		**WW**	West Walk
NW	North Walk			

I can't find * 'Pavilion Border' (presumably around the cricket pavilion) and but can see 'Havel's Place' and 'Diamond Jubilee Trees' as uncoded areas. And 'Genetic Garden' and 'Hayrick Border' don't have trees that count, presumably.

By tag:

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
CC2	*Quercus* sp	Oak
CC3	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
CC4	*Pinus pinea*	Stone pine
CC5	*Pinus x holfordiana*	Holford pine
CC6	*Pinus ponderosa*	Western yellow pine
CC7	*Pinus monticola*	Western white pine
CC8	*Pinus halepensis*	Aleppo pine
CC9	*Acer cappadocicum*	Caucasian maple
CC10	*Aesculus x carnea*	Red horse chestnut
CC11	*Tilia tomentosa*	Silver lime
CC12	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
CC13	*Malus* sp	Apple
CC14	*Acer opalus*	Italian maple
CC16	*Sorbus esserteauana*	Esserteau's rowan
CC17	*Cladrastis lutea*	Yellow wood
CC18	*Acer rubrum*	Scarlet maple
CC19	*X Cupressocyparis leylandii* 'Haggerston Grey'	
CC20	*Quercus macrolepis*	Valonia oak
CC21	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
CC22	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
CC23	*Quercus ilex*	Holm oak
CC24	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
CC25	*Cornus mas*	Cornelian cherry
CC26	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
CC	*Acer hyrcanum*	Balkan maple
CC	*Cotinus obovatus*	American smoke tree
CC	*Pinus pyramidalis*	
CC	*Quercus palustris*	Pin oak
CC	*Quercus x lucombeana*	Lucombe oak
CC	*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*	Leyland cypress
CC	*X Cupressocyparis ovensii*	Ovens cypress
CX1	*Populus x canescens*	Grey poplar
CX2	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
CX3	*Salix babylonica*	Chinese weeping willow
CX4	*Ilex* sp	Holly
CX5	*Alnus incana*	Grey alder
CX6	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
CX7	*Betula pubescens*	Downy birch
CX8	*Populus nigra*	Black poplar
CX10	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
CX11	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
CX	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
CX	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
CX	*Alnus glutinosa*	Common alder
CX	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
LG1	*Tilia platyphyllos*	Large leaved lime
LG2	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
LG3	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
LG4	*Corylus colurna*	Turkish hazel
LG5	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Rosea Flore Pleno'	
LG6	*Ostrya carpinifolia*	Hop hornbeam

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
LG7	*Quercus robur*	English oak
LG8	*Larix decidua*	European larch
LG9	*Betula x aurata*	Hybrid birch
LG10	*Pterocarya x rehderiana*	Rehder wingnut
LG11	*Cedrus deodara*	Deodar cedar
LG12	*Populus trichocarpa*	Black cottonwood
LG13	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
LG14	*Pinus nigra* subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine
LG15	*Liquidambar styraciflua*	Sweet gum
LG16	*Quercus cerris*	Turkey oak
LG17	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
LG18	*Sequoia sempervirens*	Coastal redwood
LG19	*Carya tomentosa*	Mockernut, Big-bud hickory
LG20	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
LG21	*Ilex x altaclerensis*	Highclere holly
LG22	*Picea omorika*	Serbian spruce
LG23	*Tilia mongolica*	Mongolian lime
LG24	*Acer saccharinum*	Silver maple
LG25	*Picea pungens* 'Glauca'	Blue spruce
LG26	*Betula populifolia* 'Purpurea'	
LG27	*Ailanthus altissima*	Tree of heaven
LG28	*Platanus orientalis*	Oriental plane
LG29	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
LG31	*Alnus glutinosa*	Common alder
LG32	*Fagus sylvatica* var *heterophylla*'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved beech
LG33	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
LG35	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
LG36	*Morus nigra*	Black mulberry
LG37	*Juglans regia*	Common walnut
LG38	*Salix alba*	White willow
LG39	*Alnus glutinosa* 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved alder
LG	*Betula populifolia*	Grey birch
LG	*Betula utilis*	Himalayan birch
LG	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Rotundifolia'	Round leaf European beech
LG	*Fraxinus ornus*	Manna ash
LG	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
LG	*Populus alba*	White poplar
LG	*Populus x canadensis* 'Serotina'	Italian black poplar
LW1	*Acer saccharinum*	Silver maple
LW2	*Cedrus atlantica*	Atlas cedar
LW3	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
LW4	*Picea pungens* 'Glauca'	Blue spruce
LW5	*Betula pubescens*	Downy birch
LW6	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
LW7	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
LW8	*Pinus nigra* subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine
LW9	*Populus* sp	Poplar
LW10	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
LW12	*Picea brachytyla*	Sargent spruce
LW13	*Prunus avium*	Gean, Wild cherry
LW14	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
LW	*Betula albo-sinensis* var *septentrionalis*	Chinese red birch

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
LW	*Betula maximowicziana*	Monarch birch
LW	*Betula papyrifera*	Paper birch
LY1	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula'	Pendulous beech
LY2	*Taxodium distichum*	Swamp cypress
LY3	*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*	Dawn redwood
LY4	*Salix fragilis*	Crack willow
LY5	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
LY6	*Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiate hornbeam
LY7	*Tilia tomentosa*	Silver lime
LY8	*Carpinus betulus*	Common Hornbeam
LY9	*Abies numidica*	Algerian fir
LY10	*Ulmus carpinifolia* var *sarniensis*	European field elm
LY11	*Acer rubrum*	Scarlet maple
LY12	*Quercus robur*	English oak
LY13	*Alnus cordata*	Italian alder
LY14	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
LY16	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
LY17	*Ostrya carpinifolia*	Hop hornbeam
LY18	*Corylus colurna*	Turkish hazel
LY19	*Fraxinus ornus*	Manna ash
LY20	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
LY21	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
LY22	*Quercus rubra*	Red oak
LY23	*Acer negundo*	Box elder
LY24	*Acer monspessulanum*	Montpellier maple
LY25	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
LY26	*Cedrus atlantica*	Atlas cedar
LY27	*Alnus glutinosa*	Common alder
LY28	*Populus alba*	White poplar
LY30	*Populus x canadensis* 'Regenerata'	Canadian poplar - female
LY31	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
LY32	*Populus x canescens*	Grey poplar
LY33	*Populus x canadensis* 'Serotina'	Italian black poplar
LY34	*Rhamnus cathartica*	Common buckthorn
LY	*Abies grandis*	Giant fir
LY	*Abies numidica*	Algerian fir
LY	*Acer saccharinum*	Silver maple
LY	*Acer saccharum*	Sugar maple
LY	*Alnus glutinosa* 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved alder
LY	*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia'	False acacia
LY	*Salix alba*	White willow
LY	*Salix alba* subsp *caerulea*	Cricket bat willow
LY	*Salix daphnoides*	Violet willow
MF1	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
MF2	*Crataegus ellwangeriana*	
MF3	*Quercus robur*	English oak
MF4	*Populus alba*	White poplar
MF5	*Populus nigra* var *italica*	Lombardy poplar
MF6	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
MF7	*Salix x pendulina* 'Blanda'	Wisconsin weeping willow
MF8	*Populus* sp	Poplar
MF	*Crataegus succulenta* var *macrantha*	

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
NA1	*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*	Caucasian wing nut
NA2	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
NA3	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
NA4	*Prunus padus* 'Watereri'	Bird cherry
NA5	*Betula pubescens*	Downy birch
NA6	*Quercus robur*	English oak
NA7	*Pinus* sp	Pine
NA	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
NA	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
NA	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
NA	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
NA	*Pinus nigra* subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine
NA	*Platanus x hispanica*	London plane
NA	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
NW1	*Alnus rubra*	Red alder
NW2	*Liquidambar styraciflua*	Sweet gum
NW3	*Zelkova carpinifolia*	Caucasian elm
NW4	*Tilia mongolica*	Mongolian lime
NW6	*Robinia pseudoacacia*	False acacia
NW7	*Fraxinus americana*	White ash
NW8	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
NW9	*Gleditsia triacanthos* (*inermis*)	Honey locust
NW10	*Ulmus glabra* 'Nana'	Dwarf wych elm
NW11	*Crataegus submollis*	Quebec hawthorn
NW12	*Prunus avium*	Gean, Wild cherry
NW13	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
NW14	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
NW15	*Alnus rubra*	Red alder
NW16	*Sorbus* sp	Rowan, Mountain ash
NW17	*Platanus x hispanica*	London plane
NW18	*Sophora japonica*	Scholar tree, Japanese Pagoda
NW19	*Nothofagus obliqua*	Roble beech
NW20	*Corylus colurna*	Turkish hazel
NW21	*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*	Dawn redwood
NW22	*Sorbus x thuringiaca*	
NW23	*Carpinus betulus*	Common hornbeam
NW24	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
NW25	*Quercus robur*	English oak
NW29	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
NW32	*Malus* sp	Apple
NW33	*Quercus suber*	Cork oak
NW34	*Corylus colurna*	Turkish hazel
NW35	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula'	Weeping beech
NW36	*Prunus serrulata*	Japanese cherry
NW37	*Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiate oak, Cypress oak
NW38	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
NW40	*Quercus ilex*	Holm oak
NW41	*Betula* sp.	Birch
NW43	*Thuja orientalis*	
NW44	*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Patula'	
NW46	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Crispa'	
NW47	*Quercus canariensis*	Algerian oak

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
NW48	*Acer campestre*	Field maple
NW49	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
NW50	*Acer negundo*	Box elder
NW51	*Juniperus* sp	Juniper
NW52	*Cupressus glabra*	Smooth Arizona cypress
NW53	*Abies* sp	True fir
NW54	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
NW55	*Morus alba*	White mulberry
NW56	*Prunus cerasifera* 'Pissardii'	Purple leaved plum
NW57	*Chamaecyparis* sp	Cypress, False cypress
NW58	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
NW59	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
NW60	*Cedrus libani*	Cedar of Lebanon
NW61	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
NW	*Acer hyrcanum*	Balkan maple
NW	*Amelanchier canadensis*	Snowy mespilus
NW	*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*	Katsura tree
NW	*Crataegus arnoldiana*	
NW	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Paul's Scarlet'	
NW	*Crataegus schraderiana*	
NW	*Eucalyptus gunnii*	Cider gum
NW	*Magnolia x soulangeana*	Chinese magnolia, Saucer magnolia
NW	*Malus domestica*	Apple
NW	*Malus floribunda*	Japanese crab apple
NW	*Olea europaea*	Olive
NW	*Ostrya carpinifolia*	Hop hornbeam
NW	*Prunus avium* 'Plena'	Double wild cherry
NW	*Prunus serrulata*	
NW	*Ptelea trifoliata*	Hop tree
NW	*Quercus cerris*	Turkey oak
NW	*Quercus petraea*	Sessile oak
NW	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
OP1	*Prunus sargentii*	Sargent cherry
OP2	*Prunus* 'Shimidsu Sakura'	Flowering cherry
OP3	*Populus nigra* var *italica*	Lombardy poplar
OP4	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
OP5	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
OP6	*Fraxinus* sp	Ash
OP7	*Quercus x lucombeana*	Lucombe oak
OP8	*Pinus pinea*	Stone pine
OP9	*Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood'	Claret ash
OP10	*Quercus robur*	English oak
OP11	*Catalpa ovata*	Yellow catalpa
OP12	*Quercus* sp	Oak
OP14	*Liriodendron tulipifera*	Tulip tree
OW1	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
OW2	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
OW3	*Cedrus libani*	Cedar of Lebanon
OW4	*Quercus robur*	English oak
OW5	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
OW6	*Acer negundo*	Box elder
OW7	*Sorbus aucuparia* 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiate rowan

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
OW8	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
OW9	*Malus floribunda*	Japanese crab apple
OW10	*Prunus padus* 'Watereri'	Bird cherry
OW11	*Populus x candicans* 'Aurora'	Ontario poplar
OW12	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
OW13	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
OW14	*Cedrus deodara*	Deodar cedar
OW	*Acer platanoides*	Norway maple
OW	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
OW	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
OW	*Malus x eleyi*	
OW	*Malus* 'Profusion'	
OW	*Malus* 'Red Sentinel'	
OW	*Pinus nigra* subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine
OW	*Populus balsamifera*	Balsam poplar
OW	*Populus nigra* var *italica*	Lombardy poplar
OW	*Prunus avium*	Gean, Wild cherry
OW	*Prunus avium* 'Plena'	Double wild cherry
OW	*Prunus sargentii*	Sargent cherry
OW	*Prunus* 'Spire'	
OW	*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*	Caucasian wing nut
OW	*Sorbus hupehensis*	Hubei rowan
OW	*Sorbus pohuashanensis*	
OW	*Sorbus thibetica* 'John Mitchell'	Tibetan whitebeam
OW	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
PA	*Corylus avellana*	Hazel
PA	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
PA	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea'	
PA	*Ilex aquifolium*	Holly
PA	*Laburnum anagyroides*	Laburnum
PA	*Pinus nigra*	Black pine
PA	*Quercus* sp	Oak
PA	*Sorbus aria* 'Lutescens'	
PA	*Sorbus intermedia*	Swedish whitebeam
PA	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
PM1	*Populus x canadensis* 'Eugenei'	Canadian poplar - male
PM2	*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*	Caucasian wing nut
PM3	*Fraxinus angustifolia*	Narrow-leaved ash
PM4	*Sorbus latifolia*	Service tree of Fontaienbleau
PM5	*Fraxinus latifolia*	Oregon ash
PM6	*Larix decidua*	European larch
PM7	*Quercus cerris*	Turkey oak
PM8	*Betula pubescens*	Downy birch
PM9	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
PM10	*Aesculus x carnea*	Red horse chestnut
PM11	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
PM12	*Corylus colurna*	Turkish hazel
PM13	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
PM14	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
PM15	*Platanus x hispanica*	London plane
PM16	*Salix alba* subsp *caerulea*	Cricket bat willow
PM17	*Ostrya carpinifolia*	Hop hornbeam

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
PM18	*Alnus glutinosa* 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved alder
PM19	*Salix alba*	White willow
PM21	*Alnus glutinosa*	Common alder
PM22	*Robinia pseudoacacia*	False acacia
PM23	*Tilia platyphyllos*	Large leaved lime
PM24	*Tilia cordata*	Small leaved lime
PM26	*Carpinus betulus*	Common Hornbeam
PM27	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
PM28	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
PM29	*Fagus sylvatica* var *heterophylla* 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved beech
PM30	*Sorbus aucuparia*	Mountain ash, Rowan
PM31	*Quercus rubra*	Red oak
PM32	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch
PM33	*Quercus ilex*	Holm oak
PM34	*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*	Lawson cypress
PM35	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Common ash
PM36	*Betula lenta*	Cherry birch
PM38	*Quercus robur*	English oak
PM39	*Betula ermanii*	Erman's birch, Gold birch
PM40	*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*	Dawn redwood
PM41	*Pinus nigra* subsp *Laricio*	Corsican pine
PM42	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
PM	*Abies nordmanniana*	Caucasian fir
PM	*Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King'	Norway maple ‘Crimson King’
PM	*Corylus avellana*	Hazel
PM	*Ginkgo biloba*	Maidenhair tree
PM	*Populus tremula*	Aspen
PM	*Sorbus latifolia*	Service tree of Fontaienbleau
PP1	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
PP2	*Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Variegatum'	Variegated sycamore
PP3	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
PP4	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
PP5	*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*	Dawn redwood
PP6	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
PP9	*Salix alba*	White willow
PP10	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
PP11	*Juglans regia*	Common walnut
PP12	*Acer pseudoplataus*	Sycamore
PP	*Aesculus hippocastanum* 'Baumannii'	Double horse chestnut
PP	*Aesculus x carnea*	Red horse chestnut
PP	*Populus alba*	White poplar
PP	*Populus* sp	Poplar
SW3	*Populus nigra* var *italica*	Lombardy poplar
SW4	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
SW5	*Larix decidua*	European larch
SW6	*Liriodendron tulipifera*	Tulip tree
SW7	*Catalpa speciosa*	Western catalpa
SW8	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore
SW9	*Pinus nigra* subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine
SW10	*Sorbus aria* 'Lutescens'	
SW11	*Catalpa ovata*	Yellow catalpa
SW12	*Aesculus hippocastanum* 'Baumannii'	Double horse chestnut

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
SW13	*Ailanthus altissima*	Tree of heaven
SW14	*Fraxinus ornus*	Manna ash
SW15	*Magnolia denudata*	Lily tree, Slender magnolia
SW16	*Quercus rubra*	Red oak
SW17	*Pseudotsuga menziesii*	Douglas fir
SW18	*Laburnum anagyroides*	Laburnum
SW19	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
SW20	*Fagus sylvatica* var *heterophylla*	Fern-leaved beech
SW21	*Cedrus deodara*	Deodar cedar
SW22	*Malus* 'John Downie'	Ornamental crab apple
SW23	*Quercus x lucombeana*	Lucombe oak
SW24	*Thuja plicata*	Western red cedar
SW25	*Quercus x lucombeana*	Lucombe oak
SW26	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
SW27	*Prunus* 'Pandora'	
SW28	*Prunus speciosa*	Oshima cherry
SW29	*Prunus* 'Spire'	
SW32	*Acer platanoides*	Norway maple
SW33	*Acer platanoides* 'Erectum'	Norway maple ‘Erectum’
SW	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
SW	*Aesculus x carnea*	Red horse chestnut
SW	*Catalpa bignonioides*	Indian bean tree
SW	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
SW	*Prunus dulcis*	Almond
SW	*Prunus x yedoensis*	Yoshino cherry
SW	*Tilia platyphyllos*	Large leaved lime
TW1	*Malus floribunda*	Japanese crab apple
TW2	*Crataegus submollis*	Quebec hawthorn
TW3	*Ginkgo biloba*	Maidenhair tree
TW4	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Rosea'	
TW5	*Prunus padus* 'Watereri'	Bird cherry
TW6	*Crataegus wattiana*	
TW7	*Crataegus champlainensis*	
TW8	*Crataegus arnoldiana*	
TW9	*Quercus robur*	English oak
TW10	*Catalpa x erubescens* 'Purpurea'	Purple leaved catalpa
TW11	*Crataegus laevigata*	Midland hawthorn, May
TW12	*Liriodendron tulipifera*	Tulip tree
TW13	*Crataegus laciniata*	Oriental hawthorn
TW14	*Crataegus punctata*	Dotted hawthorn
TW15	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Paul's Scarlet'	
TW16	*Acer davidii*	Pere David's maple
TW17	*Crataegus x dippeliana*	
TW18	*Crataegus x lavallei*	Lavellee’s hawthorn
TW19	*Crataegus macrantha*	
TW20	*Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora'	Glastonbury thorn
TW21	*Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia'	Broad-leaved hawthorn
TW22	*Crataegus monogyna* 'Pteridifolia'	
TW23	*Crataegus arkansana*	Downy hawthorn
TW24	*Crataegus mollis*	Red haw
TW25	*Crataegus crus-galli* var *arbutifolia*	
TW26	*Crataegus crus-galli* var *pyracanthifolia*	

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
TW27	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
TW28	*Pinus sylvestris*	Scots pine
TW29	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Heterophylla'	
TW30	*Crataegus sorbifolia*	
TW31	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Punicea'	
TW32	*Crataegus monogyna* 'Stricta'	Upright hawthorn
TW33	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	Horse chestnut
TW34	*Fagus sylvatica*	Common beech
TW	*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Alumii'	Scarab cypress
TW	*Crataegus azarolus*	Azarole, Mediterranean medlar
TW	*Crataegus canbyi*	Dwarf hawthorn
TW	*Crataegus coccinioides*	Kansas hawthorn
TW	*Crataegus crus-galli*	Cockspur thorn
TW	*Crataegus crus-galli* var *oblongata*	
TW	*Crataegus douglasii*	Black hawthorn
TW	*Crataegus ellwangeriana*	
TW	*Crataegus laevigata* 'Plena'	
TW	*Crataegus pedicellata*	Scarlet hawthorn
TW	*Crataegus phaenopyrum*	Washington hawthorn
TW	*Crataegus schraderiana*	
TW	*Crataegus x mordenensis* 'Toba'	
TW	*Crataegus* sp	Hawthorn
TW	*Malus hupehensis*	
TW	Malus tschonoskii	
TW	*Prunus cerasifera* 'Pissardii'	Purple leaved plum
TW	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
WW1	*Ilex x altaclerensis*	Highclere holly
WW2	*Sophora japonica*	Scholar tree, Japanese Pagoda
WW3	*Tilia x europaea*	Common lime
WW4	*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Alumii'	Scarab cypress
WW5	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Crispa'	
WW6	*Prunus cerasifera* 'Pissardii'	Purple leaved plum
WW8	*Crataegus laciniata*	Oriental hawthorn
WW9	*Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Camelliifolia Variegata'	
WW11	*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
WW12	*Tilia tomentosa*	Silver lime
WW13	*Crataegus schraderiana*	
WW14	*Ostrya carpinifolia*	Hop hornbeam
WW15	*Quercus cerris*	Turkey oak
WW16	*Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Balearica'	
WW17	*Calocedrus decurrens*	Incense cedar
WW18	*Crataegus crus-galli* var *arbutifolia*	
WW19	*Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King'	Norway maple ‘Crimson King’
WW23	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Handsworthensis'	
WW24	*Crataegus monogyna eriocarpa*	
WW25	*Larix decidua*	European larch
WW26	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Golden Queen'	
WW27	*Castanea sativa*	Sweet chestnut
WW28	*Quercus rubra*	Red oak
WW29	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Argenteomarginata P.M.' Pectinata	Silver margined holly
WW30	*Acer saccharinum*	Silver maple
WW31	*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech

LOCATION	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME
WW33	*Taxus baccata*	Common yew
WW34	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Heterophylla'	
WW35	*Crataegus oxycantha*	
WW36	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea'	Silver hedgehog holly
WW37	*Sequoiadendron giganteum*	Wellingtonia, Giant redwood
WW38	*Crataegus monogyna* 'Rosea'	
WW39	*Crataegus sinaica*	
WW40	*Crataegus monogyna*	Common hawthorn, May
WW	*Acer negundo*	Box elder
WW	*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Lutea'	Lawson cypress 'Lutea'
WW	*Ilex aquifolium* 'Bacciflava'	Yellow-berried holly
WW	*Koelreuteria paniculata*	Golden rain tree
WW	*Pyrus calleryana*	Callery pear

And then, for the true student, by type:

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Abies grandis	Giant fir	LY
Abies nordmanniana	Caucasian fir	PM
Abies numidica	Algerian fir	LY9, LY
Abies sp	True fir	NW53
Acer campestre	Field maple	NW48
Acer cappadocicum	Caucasian maple	CC9
Acer davidii	Pere David's maple	TW16
Acer hyrcanum	Balkan maple	CC, NW
Acer monspessulanum	Montpellier maple	LY24
Acer negundo	Box elder	LY23, NW50, OW6, WW,
Acer opalus	Italian maple	CC14
Acer platanoides	Norway maple	OW, SW32
Acer platanoides 'Crimson King'	Norway maple 'Crimson King'	PM, WW19
Acer platanoides 'Erectum'	Norway maple 'Erectum'	SW33
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	CC22, CX, LG3, LY16, NW54, PM14, SW8
Acer pseudoplatanus 'Variegatum'	Variegated sycamore	PP2
Acer pseudoplataus	Sycamore	PP12
Acer rubrum	Scarlet maple	CC18, LY11
Acer saccharinum	Silver maple	LG24, LW1, LY, WW30
Acer saccharum	Sugar maple	LY
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse chestnut	CC26, CX, LY21, NA3, OW, PM28, PP4, SW, TW33
Aesculus hippocastanum 'Baumannii'	Double horse chestnut	PP, SW12
Aesculus x carnea	Red horse chestnut	CC10, PM10, PP, SW
Ailanthus altissima	Tree of heaven	LG27, SW13
Alnus cordata	Italian alder	LY13
Alnus glutinosa	Common alder	CX, LG31, LY27, PM21
Alnus glutinosa 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved alder	LG39, LY, PM18
Alnus incana	Grey alder	CX5
Alnus rubra	Red alder	NW1, NW15
Amelanchier canadensis	Snowy mespilus	NW
Betula albo-sinensis var *septentrionalis*	Chinese red birch	LW
Betula ermanii	Erman's birch, Gold birch	PM39
Betula lenta	Cherry birch	PM36
Betula maximowicziana	Monarch birch	LW
Betula papyrifera	Paper birch	LW

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Betula pendula	Silver birch	CX6, LW7, LY25
Betula populifolia	Grey birch	LG
Betula populifolia 'Purpurea'		LG26
Betula pubescens	Downy birch	CX7, LW5, NA5, PM8
Betula utilis	Himalayan birch	LG
Betula x aurata	Hybrid birch	LG9
Betula sp.	Birch	NW41
Calocedrus decurrens	Incense cedar	WW17
Carpinus betulus	Common Hornbeam	LY8, NW23, PM26
Carpinus betulus 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiate hornbeam	LY6
Carya tomentosa	Mockernut, Big-bud hickory	LG19
Castanea sativa	Sweet chestnut	LG20, MF6, NA, NW59, OW2, PM13, WW27
Catalpa bignonioides	Indian bean tree	SW
Catalpa ovata	Yellow catalpa	OP11, SW11
Catalpa speciosa	Western catalpa	SW7
Catalpa x erubescens 'Purpurea'	Purple leaved catalpa	TW10
Cedrus atlantica	Atlas cedar	LW2, LY26
Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar	CC12, LW3, NA, NW61, OW1, SW19, WW11
Cedrus deodara	Deodar cedar	LG11, OW14, SW21
Cedrus libani	Cedar of Lebanon	NW60, OW3
Cercidiphyllum japonicum	Katsura tree	NW
Chamaecyparis lawsoniana	Lawson cypress	PM34
Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Alumii'	Scarab cypress	TW, WW4
Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Lutea'	Lawson cypress 'Lutea'	WW
Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Patula'		NW44
Chamaecyparis sp	Cypress, False cypress	NW57
Cladrastis lutea	Yellow wood	CC17
Cornus mas	Cornelian cherry	CC25
Corylus avellana	Hazel	PA, PM
Corylus colurna	Turkish hazel	LG4, LY18, NW20, NW34, PM12
Cotinus obovatus	American smoke tree	CC
Crataegus arkansana	Downy hawthorn	TW23
Crataegus arnoldiana		NW, TW8
Crataegus azarolus	Azarole, Mediterranean medlar	TW
Crataegus canbyi	Dwarf hawthorn	TW
Crataegus champlainensis		TW7
Crataegus coccinioides	Kansas hawthorn	TW
Crataegus crus-galli	Cockspur thorn	TW
Crataegus crus-galli var *arbutifolia*		TW25, WW18
Crataegus crus-galli var *oblongata*		TW
Crataegus crus-galli var *pyracanthifolia*		TW26
Crataegus douglasii	Black hawthorn	TW
Crataegus ellwangeriana		MF2, TW
Crataegus laciniata	Oriental hawthorn	TW13, WW8
Crataegus laevigata	Midland hawthorn, May	TW11
Crataegus laevigata 'Paul's Scarlet'		NW
Crataegus laevigata 'Paul's Scarlet'		TW15
Crataegus laevigata 'Plena'		TW
Crataegus laevigata 'Punicea'		TW31
Crataegus laevigata 'Rosea'		TW4
Crataegus laevigata 'Rosea Flore Pleno'		LG5
Crataegus macrantha		TW19

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Crataegus mollis	Red haw	TW24
Crataegus monogyna	Common hawthorn, May	CC24, CX10, LG35, LY14, MF1, NA, NW58, OP4, PM42, PP10, SW, TW27, WW40
Crataegus monogyna eriocarpa		WW24
Crataegus monogyna 'Biflora'	Glastonbury thorn	TW20
Crataegus monogyna 'Pteridifolia'		TW22
Crataegus monogyna 'Rosea'		WW38
Crataegus monogyna 'Stricta'	Upright hawthorn	TW32
Crataegus oxycantha		WW35
Crataegus pedicellata	Scarlet hawthorn	TW
Crataegus persimilis 'Prunifolia'	Broad-leaved hawthorn	TW21
Crataegus phaenopyrum	Washington hawthorn	TW
Crataegus punctata	Dotted hawthorn	TW14
Crataegus schraderiana		NW, TW, WW13
Crataegus sinaica		WW39
Crataegus sorbifolia		TW30
Crataegus submollis	Quebec hawthorn	NW11, TW2
Crataegus succulenta var *macrantha*		MF
Crataegus wattiana		TW6
Crataegus x dippeliana		TW17
Crataegus x lavallei	Lavellee's hawthorn	TW18
Crataegus x mordenensis 'Toba'		TW
Crataegus sp	Hawthorn	TW
Cupressus glabra	Smooth Arizona cypress	NW52
Eucalyptus gunnii	Cider gum	NW
Fagus sylvatica	Common beech	NA, NW24, OW13, PA, PM9, TW34
Fagus sylvatica 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech	LG2, NA2, NW14, OW5, PM11, WW31
Fagus sylvatica 'Pendula'	Pendulous beech	LY1, NW35
Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'		PA
Fagus sylvatica 'Rotundifolia'	Round leaf European beech	LG
Fagus sylvatica var *heterophylla*	Fern-leaved beech	SW20
Fagus sylvatica var *heterophylla* 'Laciniata'	Cut-leaved beech	PM29, LG32
Fraxinus americana	White ash	NW7
Fraxinus angustifolia	Narrow-leaved ash	PM3
Fraxinus angustifolia 'Raywood'	Claret ash	OP9
Fraxinus excelsior	Common ash	CC21, CX11, LG17, LY5, NW38, OW12, PM35
Fraxinus latifolia	Oregon ash	PM5
Fraxinus ornus	Manna ash	LG, LY19, SW14
Fraxinus sp	Ash	OP6
Ginkgo biloba	Maidenhair tree	PM, TW3
Gleditsia triacanthos (*inermis*)	Honey locust	NW9
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	CX, LG, LW14, NW13, OW, PA
Ilex aquifolium 'Argenteomarginata P.M.' Pectinata	Silver margined holly	WW29
Ilex aquifolium 'Bacciflava'	Yellow-berried holly	WW
Ilex aquifolium 'Crispa'		NW46, WW5
Ilex aquifolium 'Ferox Argentea'	Silver hedgehog holly	WW36
Ilex aquifolium 'Golden Queen'		WW26
Ilex aquifolium 'Handsworthensis'		WW23
Ilex aquifolium 'Heterophylla'		TW29, WW34
Ilex x altaclerensis	Highclere holly	LG21, WW1
Ilex x altaclerensis 'Balearica'		WW16
Ilex x altaclerensis 'Camelliifolia Variegata'		WW9
Ilex sp	Holly	CX4

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Juglans regia	Common walnut	LG37, PP11
Juniperus sp	Juniper	NW51
Koelreuteria paniculata	Golden rain tree	WW
Laburnum anagyroides	Laburnum	PA, SW18
Larix decidua	European larch	LG8, PM6, SW5
Liquidambar styraciflua	Sweet gum	LG15, NW2
Liriodendron tulipifera	Tulip tree	OP14, SW6, TW12
Magnolia denudata	Lily tree, Slender magnolia	SW15
Magnolia x soulangeana	Chinese magnolia, Saucer magnolia	NW
Malus domestica	Apple	NW
Malus floribunda	Japanese crab apple	NW, OW9, TW1
Malus hupehensis		TW
Malus tschonoskii		TW
Malus x eleyi		OW
Malus 'John Downie'	Ornamental crab apple	SW22
Malus 'Profusion'		OW
Malus 'Red Sentinel'		OW
Malus sp	Apple	CC13, NW32
Metasequoia glyptostroboides	Dawn redwood	LY3, NW21, PM40, PP5
Morus alba	White mulberry	NW55
Morus nigra	Black mulberry	LG36
Nothofagus obliqua	Roble beech	NW19
Olea europaea	Olive	NW
Ostrya carpinifolia	Hop hornbeam	LG6, LY17, NW, PM17, WW14
Picea brachytyla	Sargent spruce	LW12
Picea omorika	Serbian spruce	LG22
Picea pungens 'Glauca'	Blue spruce	LG25, LW4
Pinus halepensis	Aleppo pine	CC8
Pinus monticola	Western white pine	CC7
Pinus nigra	Black pine	PA
Pinus nigra subsp *laricio*	Corsican pine	LG14, LW8, NA, OW, PM41, SW9
Pinus pinea	Stone pine	CC4, OP8
Pinus ponderosa	Western yellow pine	CC6
Pinus pyramidalis		CC
Pinus sylvestris	Scots pine	CC3, LG29, LW6, NW8, OP5, PP6, SW4, TW28
Pinus x holfordiana	Holford pine	CC5
Pinus sp	Pine	NA7
Platanus orientalis	Oriental plane	LG28
Platanus x hispanica	London plane	NA, NW17, PM15
Populus alba	White poplar	LG, LY28, MF4, PP
Populus balsamifera	Balsam poplar	OW
Populus nigra	Black poplar	CX8
Populus nigra var *italica*	Lombardy poplar	MF5, OP3, OW, SW3
Populus tremula	Aspen	PM
Populus trichocarpa	Black cottonwood	LG12
Populus x canadensis 'Eugenei'	Canadian poplar - male	PM1
Populus x canadensis 'Regenerata'	Canadian poplar - female	LY30
Populus x canadensis 'Serotina'	Italian black poplar	LG, LY33
Populus x candicans 'Aurora'	Ontario poplar	OW11
Populus x canescens	Grey poplar	CX1, LY32
Populus sp	Poplar	LW9, MF8, PP

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Prunus avium	Gean, Wild cherry	LW13, NW12, OW
Prunus avium 'Plena'	Double wild cherry	NW, OW
Prunus cerasifera 'Pissardii'	Purple leaved plum	NW56, TW, WW6
Prunus dulcis	Almond	SW
Prunus padus 'Watereri'	Bird cherry	NA4, OW10, TW5
Prunus sargentii	Sargent cherry	OP1, OW
Prunus serrulata	Japanese cherry	NW36, NW
Prunus speciosa	Oshima cherry	SW28
Prunus x yedoensis	Yoshino cherry	SW
Prunus 'Pandora'		SW27
Prunus 'Shimidsu Sakura'	Flowering cherry	OP2
Prunus 'Spire'		OW, SW29
Pseudotsuga menziesii	Douglas fir	SW17
Ptelea trifoliata	Hop tree	NW
Pterocarya fraxinifolia	Caucasian wing nut	NA1, OW, PM2
Pterocarya x rehderiana	Rehder wingnut	LG10
Pyrus calleryana	Callery pear	WW
Quercus canariensis	Algerian oak	NW47
Quercus cerris	Turkey oak	LG16, NW, PM7, WW15
Quercus ilex	Holm oak	CC23, NW40, PM33
Quercus macrolepis	Valonia oak	CC20
Quercus palustris	Pin oak	CC
Quercus petraea	Sessile oak	NW
Quercus robur	English oak	LG7, LY12, MF3, NA6, NW25, OP10, OW4, PM38, TW9
Quercus robur 'F*astigiata'*	Fastigiate oak, Cypress oak	NW37
Quercus rubra	Red oak	LY22, PM31, SW16, WW28
Quercus suber	Cork oak	NW33
Quercus x lucombeana	Lucombe oak	CC, OP7, SW23, SW25
Quercus sp	Oak	CC2, OP12, PA
Rhamnus cathartica	Common buckthorn	LY34
Robinia pseudoacacia	False acacia	NW6, PM22
Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia'	False acacia	LY
Salix alba	White willow	LG38, LY, PM19, PP9
Salix alba subsp *caerulea*	Cricket bat willow	PM16, LY
Salix babylonica	Chinese weeping willow	CX3
Salix daphnoides	Violet willow	LY
Salix fragilis	Crack willow	LY4
Salix x pendulina 'Blanda'	Wisconsin weeping willow	MF7
Sequoia sempervirens	Coastal redwood	LG18
Sequoiadendron giganteum	Wellingtonia, Giant redwood	WW37
Sophora japonica	Scholar tree, Japanese Pagoda	NW18, WW2
Sorbus aria 'Lutescens'		PA, SW10
Sorbus aucuparia	Mountain ash, Rowan	PM30
Sorbus aucuparia 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiate rowan	OW7
Sorbus esserteauana	Esserteau's rowan	CC16
Sorbus hupehensis	Hubei rowan	OW
Sorbus intermedia	Swedish whitebeam	PA
Sorbus latifolia	Service tree of Fontaienbleau	PM4, PM
Sorbus pohuashanensis		OW
Sorbus thibetica 'John Mitchell'	Tibetan whitebeam	OW
Sorbus x thuringiaca		NW22
Sorbus sp	Rowan, Mountain ash	NW16

LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	LOCATIONS
Taxodium distichum	Swamp cypress	LY2
Taxus baccata	Common yew	CX2, LG33, LW10, LY31, NA, NW29, OW, PA, PM27, PP3, TW, WW33
Thuja orientalis		NW43
Thuja plicata	Western red cedar	SW24
Tilia cordata	Small leaved lime	PM24
Tilia mongolica	Mongolian lime	LG23, NW4
Tilia platyphyllos	Large leaved lime	LG1, PM23, SW
Tilia tomentosa	Silver lime	CC11, LY7, WW12
Tilia x europaea	Common lime	LG13, LY20, NW, SW26, WW3, PP1
Ulmus carpinifolia var *sarniensis*	European field elm	LY10
Ulmus glabra 'Nana'	Dwarf wych elm	NW10
X Cupressocyparis leylandii	Leyland cypress	CC
X Cupressocyparis leylandii 'Haggerston Grey'		CC19
X Cupressocyparis ovensii	Ovens cypress	CC
Zelkova carpinifolia	Caucasian elm	NW3