

## What to See at Christ Church : A Short Tour

Christ Church is an essential element in any visit to Oxford. Two of its famous landmarks, Tom Tower, by Christopher Wren, and Oxford's Cathedral spire, define the city's celebrated skyline and mark Christ Church as a unique dual foundation: one of Oxford University's largest colleges and the cathedral church for the diocese of Oxford.

The following tour will provide those visiting Christ Church with more information about its community and history. Beginning in the tranquil landscape of Christ Church Meadow, the tour will move through the college in the footsteps of great minds, royalty, poets, prime ministers, a little girl called Alice and even the odd wizard! Gaze upon the beautiful buildings, elegant quadrangles and vibrant stained glass windows and gain an insight into the rich history of an Oxford college and cathedral.

The tour has been designed to accompany a visit to Christ Church but if you should need more information feel free to approach the bowler-hatted custodians or one of the cathedral stewards with any queries that should arise.

### The Meadow

Christ Church Meadow is a rare open space at the heart of Oxford, open to the public all year round. Though seemingly tranquil, the meadow is highly variable, with seasonal flooding and a variety of wildlife that comes and goes. During the Civil War it proved invaluable as a defence against the Parliamentarian forces, but visitors are nowadays more likely to encounter a rare English Longhorn cow than a soldier besieging the city.

The meadow has long been used as a site for sport, entertainment and recreation. It was the location for some of the earliest balloon flights in England: in 1784 James Sadler, 'the first English aeronaut' rose from Christ Church meadow, landing six miles away after a half-hour flight. In May 1785 Sadler again ascended from the meadow, this time with the statesman William Windham as a passenger.

The meadow is enclosed by the rivers Cherwell and Thames - the Thames is known as the Isis whilst flowing through the city. The Isis is home to the college boathouses where rowing teams gather to train and compete. Every summer the major intercollegiate regatta takes place (better known as Summer Vllls) as it has done since the competition's inauguration in 1815. Crews from across the university descend annually on the Cherwell to compete in a four-day competition. Fittingly, Christ Church has been the most successful men's crew, with 32 victories. Sommerville (the former college of Margaret Thatcher) are the most successful women's crew, with 8 victories since the women's competition began in 1976.

The meadow has also provided a beautiful setting for a number of outdoor performances, including a dramatic a celebration of Christ Church's history in the

form of a *Son et Lumiere* in 1968. It was a star studded performance: scripted by Jan Morris (historian, author, travel writer and honorary fellow at Christ Church), and with a prologue by W.H. Auden (Anglo-American poet, undergraduate and at Christ Church), it was narrated by Sir John Gielgud (actor, Oscar winner and theatre director).

Between the river and the Meadow Gate of the college is the large Broad Walk, installed in the time of John Fell (1625-1686), dean of Christ Church and Bishop of Oxford. Having survived since the seventeenth century, it was in recent years threatened when proposed as the site for a new bypass. Luckily nothing came of the plans and the walk remains a refuge from the busier city streets.

### The Meadow Building

Although Christ Church attracts nearly half a million visitors each year, its purpose remains twofold: the pursuit of learning and the worship of God. In this sense Christ Church preserves the ethos of Thomas Wolsey's original Cardinal College, founded here in 1524, which sought to renew both education and spirituality.

The Meadow Building, through which visitors enter, was built expressly for undergraduates in the nineteenth century – a time when Christ Church, like the rest of the University, was undergoing a series of important reforms to strengthen the emphasis on undergraduate education. The famous tutorial system was developed, in which one or two students discuss their work with a tutor each week, a practice which continues to this day. Meanwhile, the curriculum was expanded to encompass a greater variety of subjects, including such disciplines as natural science, law, and modern history. It was agreed that the undergraduates needed more and better housing, and from 1862-5 the college built a new suite of rooms overlooking the meadows.

Today Christ Church is home to around 420 undergraduates, taught by over 100 academic staff. The rooms throughout the college are still used by students and staff and we ask all visitors to respect the working environment around the college. Like many colleges, rooms are grouped by staircase, each of which is numbered – look out for the numbers on the Meadow building when you have entered. Each staircase has a housekeeper (known as a scout) who looks after the rooms, and once looked after their inhabitants too.

The Meadow Building is in the Venetian Gothic style, popularised in the Victorian period through the writings of one Christ Church alumni, John Ruskin. Ruskin loved the buildings of Venice and sought to encourage a number of their elements within contemporary architecture. Venetian influences can be seen in the pointed shape of the windows and arches (called a lancet arch) and the inclusion of Eastern Mediterranean motifs on the surface of the building (known as polychrome ornament). But the building was designed by an Irish architect, T. N. Deane, well known in Dublin for his work on the National Museum and Library.

If you look up to the wall between the Meadow Building and the Hall, you can see one of the more recent additions to the college: a series of modern grotesques. Whilst work was ongoing elsewhere, it was decided to use some of the spare stone to decorate the wall and a number of long serving Christ Church staff were used as 'models'. Two former Clerks of Works (Robert Branch and Bill Major) can be seen, next to Alec and Tony Clarke who served as a scout and SCR butler respectively. The latter two both held their positions for over fifty years, a not unusual feat for staff at the college.

### The Old Library

Leaving the Meadow Building, you move across the courtyard into a passageway. At the end of this passageway you may see a sign for the Old Library on your lefthand side. This modest notice gives little indication of the great treasury of knowledge that once lay behind this door. Today, only the shell of what was the Old library now remains, but at its opening in 1562 it was one of the largest and grandest libraries in Oxford and the intellectual hub of the college in its earliest days. By the turn of the seventeenth century, however, Christ Church had stiff competition from other colleges with their own ambitions to be Oxford's best: libraries were the currency for this contest and Christ Church needed to keep up. Between 1610-11, therefore, Christ Church library was refitted to rival contemporary examples such as the Duke Humfrey's library (part of the Bodleian). This process was crowned by the installation of a stunning painted ceiling, adorned with an extensive series of royal arms, crests and badges. Parts of this ceiling are still visible today, although only by those lucky enough to stay in one of the rooms in which the ceiling is still intact.

This renovation, though magnificent, was not enough and more space was soon needed. Christ Church was growing, and bequests from men like Robert Burton, the great writer on melancholy and librarian of Christ Church, needed to be housed. Repeated alterations began to take their toll on this medieval frame and the building of a new library became urgent. Begun in 1717, the New Library was finally completed in 1772 - we shall encounter it later in the tour. The Old Library was converted into much needed accommodation in 1775, and members of the college continue to live there to this day.

### Cloisters

As you pass the Old Library into the Cloisters, you are standing where the priory of St Frideswide stood until the 1520s. Although Christ Church combines the roles of a college with that of a cathedral, the site was originally founded as a monastery in the eighth century. Little is known about the early history but it appears that Frideswide was the nunnery's first abbess who courageously chose the religious life over a marriage to the local king, Algar. The king, enraged by Frideswide's decision, pursued her with his henchmen, but was miraculously struck blind. A cult of devotion to her emerged soon after her death, attracting pilgrims from across the region to visit the nunner, and Frideswide became the patron saint of the city and the university. The nunnery was taken over by Augustinian Canons in the twelfth century; they

ministered to the inhabitants of Oxford as well as continuing the daily rounds of communal and private prayers.

Cloisters were a common feature of these monastic establishments, for they provided a sheltered space for monks to move about the priory undisturbed by the outside world. The present cloisters were rebuilt in 1499, although there would have been a similar structure here back in the twelfth century. Make sure you look up, and catch one of the best views of the Cathedral spire. It is the oldest surviving stone spire in England and has been a feature of the skyline since 1230.

By the 1520s the government was clamping down on religious houses and the monks were evicted to make way for Thomas Wolsey's proposed Cardinal College. But the priory's influence did not end there. Wolsey planned his college to be an adaptation of the monastic life with communal devotion combined with the latest, cutting-edge learning. When Henry VIII took over the college, renaming it Christ Church and making it the centre of a new diocese of Oxford, he maintained the spirit of Wolsey's original foundation.

The cloisters suggest the original Gothic architectural style of the priory, which Wolsey wanted to reflect in his new buildings. In late medieval Europe, Gothic was extremely fashionable, emphasising a lighter and brighter feel within stone buildings that had long felt dark and heavy. Typically, the Gothic style involved intricate interlocking ribs running from the base of the pillars to the roof before fanning out across the ceiling. The cloister's ceiling has these distinctively Gothic features and, as the visitor will see during their visit to the college, much effort was subsequently spent in combining the new needs of the college to that of the existing Gothic style.

Before turning into the courtyard, have a look at the three plaques celebrating an often overlooked part of the college: its staff. On the left, William Hall and his wife Elsie, are commemorated for a combined 74 years service to the college: William was a scout and Elsie worked in the college treasury. The central memorial is dedicated to William Pound, said to have earned 'the approbation and esteem of the whole Society' for his role as a porter. Finally, to the right, one of Christ Church's longest serving employees, William Francis, is remembered. All three provide a timely reminder that the college could not function without its staff, many of whom have served the college for decades.

True aficionados of the Harry Potter films may note that the cloisters were used in a scene where Harry is shown the trophy his father won as a 'seeker' many years before.

### Bodley Tower and the Staircase to Hall

The courtyard also provides a view of the Bodley Tower (named after the architect G. F. Bodley, rather than Thomas Bodley of Bodleian Library fame), which houses the staircase to Hall. Although it fits in harmoniously with the Hall and other Gothic buildings, it was (like the Meadow Building) a nineteenth-century addition. In the

course of renovating elements of the cathedral, the bells were moved to a wooden belfry above the stairs to hall. Charles Dodgson, the maths tutor better known as Lewis Carroll, felt that this arrangement was wholly unsatisfactory and wrote a series of satires berating the arrangement, at one point calling the wooden structure a 'tintinnabulatory tea chest'.

In the wake of these attacks upon the belfry, G. F. Bodley was commissioned to build a more suitable tower in a Gothic style appropriate to the Hall. Bodley had wanted to place an even more elaborate structure on top of the present day tower, but the Governing Body felt that it was too ostentatious an addition. Be sure to admire Bodley Tower from Tom Quad, which provides by far the best view.

As you pass into the Tower you will be directed up the staircase towards the Hall. Wolsey envisioned the college becoming a grand, scholarly establishment but, much to the delight of his rivals, he ensured that the kitchens and hall were the first buildings to be completed. The Cardinal, known for his own appetite, was lampooned for allowing college dinners to begin before there was even a library.

Following Wolsey's fall in 1529 most of the college was still under construction and it was only later that the staircase you now see was installed (the present incarnation dates from 1805). The dramatic fanned vaulting of the ceiling was installed just before the civil war, in 1638; the style is medieval but it was made possible by the new techniques of the seventeenth century— another example of Christ Church's fine balance between the old and the new. The vaulted staircase, Wren's Tom Tower, the Meadow Building and Bodley Tower all harken back to the Gothic style, but were built to fulfil the college's changing priorities.

Before heading up the stairs be sure to note the markings on the doorway, especially the 'No Peel' graffiti. This was not a response to anything served up in the Hall - instead it was a protest at the potential re-election of Robert Peel, Christ Church alumnus and later prime minister, as the MP for the University. In 1829 Peel had announced his support for the emancipation of Catholics within Britain, though he had previously opposed such a move (Catholics at the time were barred from holding public positions). Peel knew that his *volte-face* conflicted with University policy and resigned his seat, but was promptly nominated to stand for re-election. The anti-Peel party set about making its feelings known in a divided Christ Church, nailing the door of the then treasury with the message 'No Peel'. Due in part to their efforts, Peel was defeated in Oxford, but he returned to Westminster as MP for a small borough in Wiltshire. To this day, there is no picture of Peel within the Hall, even though he ranks among the most eminent of the college's alumni.

The elegant staircase may be familiar, for it has been utilised in a number of film and television projects including Lewis and Harry Potter.

## Hall

The staircase in Bodley Tower leads up to the Ante-Hall, with the Buttery on the left. The Buttery is home to one of the college's bars where students and guests can enjoy wines, whiskey and beer including those specially produced for Christ Church. It is one of the centres of the lively student life within the college.

From there, the visitor will be directed into the finest surviving section of the college's original foundation: the Hall. It shows the Renaissance magnificence of Cardinal College, and suggests the scale it might have reached had it not been for Wolsey's fall. Until the 1870s this was the largest Hall in Oxford, but then the newly-founded Keble College ensured that their hall was slightly larger (legend has it by only a single metre). It was this Renaissance splendour that attracted the makers of the Harry Potter films to build a replica of the Hall in their London studios.

Completed alongside the kitchens in the 1520s, the Hall has been in almost constant use since the sixteenth century. Over the years, it has hosted some spectacular banquets, perhaps none more so than the Duke of Portland's 1793 banquet, in which guests were treated to turbot in lobster sauce, followed by roast beef, lamb, duck, goose and chicken, a veal pie - and a fruit fool to finish. While the extravagances of Portland's time are gone, the Hall remains very much in use. Members of the college can eat three daily meals here including a formal dinner in the evenings where gowns must be worn. Visitors are reminded to plan their trips around the Hall's closures (everyday at lunchtime between 11.45am and 2.00pm).

Be sure to admire the ceiling of the room, a wonderful example of sixteenth-century hammerbeaming built by Humphrey Coke, Henry VIII's chief carpenter. Its survival was threatened in 1720 when a fire broke out in the Hall. The choristers, up to their usual tricks, had attempted to burn some Christmas decorations in the fireplace, but in the process they managed to set the roof alight! The beams were repaired shortly afterwards and repainted with nearly 600 heraldic devices, many of which celebrate Cardinal Wolsey and ensure his presence remains felt within the college. The Hall still requires regular attention, most recently in 2015 when rot was discovered in one of the beams. The cleaning of the beams allows light to reflect off the paint work as it would have done back when first completed.

The walls are adorned with a number of portraits, each celebrating famous members of the college from Queen Elizabeth to W. H. Auden. At the far end, the founder of Christ Church, Henry VIII, is portrayed above a bust of the current queen, Elizabeth II. The reigning monarch is the Visitor of the joint foundation and has power to inspect both the college and cathedral. The table at the far end of the Hall is known as High Table and it is here that senior members of the college dine. Academic fellows or dons of the college are known as Students, always with a capital S to distinguish them from undergraduate students.

Light enters the Hall through a series of stained glass windows celebrating Christ Church's vibrant heritage. They were finished in 1985 and designed by the leading

contemporary stained glass artist in the country, Patrick Reyntiens. One window celebrates the fantastical work of Charles Dodgson - or Lewis Carroll - and the inspiration for his works, Alice Liddell, who was the daughter of Dean Liddell. Some of the features of the Hall helped to inspire the famous Mad Hatter's tea party. In the far right corner, perhaps the most eminent of Christ Church men are placed together, with the scholars John Locke and Robert Burton sharing space with the great builder deans of the college, Henry Aldrich and John Fell.

### Tom Quad

Passing out of the hall you emerge into the Great Quadrangle, the heart of Christ Church, often referred to informally as 'Tom Quad' after the bell in Wren's tower. But the quad's scale and grandeur are a fitting tribute to the ambitions of another 'Tom', Thomas Wolsey. A leading figure in Henrician England, as Archbishop of York, Lord Chancellor and the founder of Cardinal's College, Wolsey sought to display his power through extravagant building projects. Tom Quad, along with Hampton Court Palace, is the greatest monument to this aspiration. Although the quad remained unfinished during Wolsey's time, his vision was carried through into Christ Church's great building phase of the seventeenth century; subsequent additions, such as the north side of the quad and the clock tower designed by Christopher Wren, were conceived to complement and complete Wolsey's vision of Gothic splendour.

### History

Tom Quad exemplifies the transformation in attitudes and approaches to education in England at the start of the sixteenth century. Pioneers such as Desiderius Erasmus, the Renaissance humanist, and Thomas More, author of *Utopia*, and Lord Chancellor of England, led the way, spearheading efforts to attain a purer, more classical Latin style and a broader knowledge of ancient literature and Christian doctrine. This new learning had already been adopted at Magdalen and Corpus Christi, shortly before the foundation of Wolsey's college.

It was in this climate of intellectual ferment that Cardinal Wolsey's vision for a new Oxford college was formed. Education was one of Wolsey's great passions and he believed that more dynamic educational institutions should replace England's declining monasteries. Although theology and scripture would remain the core of serious learning, he believed that any proper education must be augmented by humanistic teaching in Latin, Greek and philosophy. Indeed, for Wolsey these two traditions of learning were inseparable: his new college was to be the grandest monument to Renaissance learning in England and a bastion of the Catholic faith. This is reflected in the dual nature of Christ Church's foundation, as both a college and a cathedral.

In 1524 Wolsey received permission from the Pope to dissolve the monastery of St Frideswide's and to turn the site (and many of the buildings surrounding it) into a

college. This included taking over the buildings of the former Canterbury College, which lends its name to the present day Canterbury Quad.

Wolsey set about demolishing much of what had previously been there to make room for his sumptuous Great Quadrangle. The quad is the largest in Oxford, measuring 264 feet by 261, and it would have been cloistered were it not for Wolsey's demise in 1530 - the pillars and arches on which the cloister would have rested are still visible on the outside of the buildings. The north side (opposite the Hall) was in the sixteenth century left at its original level and it seems likely that Wolsey had planned a chapel to span this entire wing!

Already impressive, Wolsey's work remained incomplete for another century: the north side was still open and the gatehouse had been left unfinished. It was only when, after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, John Fell was appointed dean, that plans for the completion of Tom Quad were begun in earnest. Fell was the first of the great builder deans and by 1665 the north side of Tom Quad had been completed. No detail was spared: supports for the cloisters were installed on the walls of the seventeenth century north side, even though it was clear that the quad could never be cloistered. But Fell was determined to complete Tom Quad with the unity and grandeur its original builder had desired.

It was in this vein that Fell came to commission Christopher Wren to design a clock tower to crown the St. Aldate's gatehouse. Wren made a case for working in a late Gothic style, he felt that the bell tower 'ought to be Gothick to agree with the Founders worke'. Plans were approved in late spring of 1681, Christopher Kempster was appointed as builder and work was completed by Michaelmas of 1682. Great Tom rang from the new tower for the first time on the 29th May 1684.

Wren included two niches for statues on the tower; one to look into the college, the other outwards. He proposed that the two niches be filled by 'his present Majesty', Charles II, and the founder of the college, Henry VIII. This proposal, however, came to nothing. Instead, the niches remained vacant for a quarter of a century until Robert Harley, earl of Oxford, presented Christ Church with a statue of Queen Anne to fill the inner niche. In 1870, Dean Liddell placed a statue of Cardinal Wolsey in the outer niche, finally completing the St. Aldate's façade. A fitting tribute to Tom Quad's original visionary.

### Great Tom

Tom Tower and its great bell are to Christ Church and to Oxford, what Elizabeth Tower and Big Ben are to London. For over three hundred years, Great Tom, the bell residing in the belfry of Tom Tower, has provided the background noise to life in Oxford, from the everyday marking of the hours, to the celebration of anniversaries and other great events.

Great Tom began life at Osney Abbey, a house of Augustinian Canons to the west of Oxford. With the dissolution of the monasteries, Tom, along with other bells, was

moved to St. Frideswide. Over the next hundred years Great Tom underwent several attempts at recasting, yet it was not until 1684 that it found permanent residence in the newly built Tom Tower, to which Great Tom gave its name.

Great Tom chimes 101 times at 9.05pm and this has a double purpose. The first is to signal the curfew for students to return to college - this still continues even though students are no longer bound by a curfew. The second is to mark the 100 Students attached to the foundation by Henry VIII, plus the additional student added by bequest in 1663. It rings at 9.05pm, which corresponds with 9.00pm Oxford time - though in 1852, Greenwich Mean Time was formally adopted nationwide, Christ Church steadfastly retained 'Oxford' time, five minutes behind GMT. This has had some curious effects: dinner, for example, which the statutes say should begin at 7.15pm, actually starts at 7.20pm.

Great Tom occupies its share of Christ Church mythology. Mr Borrett, long-serving Head Porter, recalled in his memoirs attempts to run around Tom Quad while midnight was being struck - a feat he never saw achieved. Another porter, charged with the rather arduous task of tolling the 101, clearly felt a drink might aid his task: it didn't. He repeatedly lost count of the number of times he had tolled, forcing him to start again. Curfew must have been rather later than usual that evening!

### Mercury

Although apparently ornamental, the pond and fountain at the centre of Tom Quad, now adorned by a statue of Mercury, was not designed as a decorative feature. Its first role was a ready source of water in the event of a fire. And with good reason: in the mid-seventeenth century, a disastrous fire near the cloisters had destroyed the house of a Canon, Richard Gardiner. John Fell, dean at the time, had the pond dug to guard against future blazes.

The statue at the centre of the reservoir has been through several incarnations. Originally it was a lead-gilt globe and a fountain in the form of a serpent, all the gift of the senior Canon, Dr Gardiner, who gave it on condition that it might be kept 'ever hereafter repaired'. In spite of this, the globe and serpent were removed in 1695, and a statue of Mercury, with a body of lead and head of bronze, replaced it.

However, this statue of Mercury was not to last: it was torn down in 1817 in an undergraduate frolic led by the fourteenth earl of Derby. (In 1852, the same man would become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.) The head of this statue of Mercury is now held in the library. Finally, in 1928, a lead copy of Giovanni da Bologna's statue of Mercury was given to the college by a benefactor and placed on a pedestal by the famous architect Sir Edward Lutyens. It remains there to this day.

Although built to prevent fire, Mercury and its pond has also fulfilled more trivial functions. The famous golf 'hole-in-one' from outside staircase 4 of Peckwater building into Mercury, over the top of the Library and Fell Tower, was made in 1951

by P.F. Gardiner Hill, then captain of the University golf team - an achievement encouraged by the Senior Censor, Eric Gray, and 'Hooky' Hill, the steward. No one has managed since, however, perhaps because the Censors are no longer so keen to encourage attempts.

### Cathedral

As we have seen, the college was founded on the site of the former monastery of St Frideswide's. Most of the cathedral was built at the end of the twelfth century as the priory church for the Augustinian Canons who resided there. Nonetheless the church has undergone considerable alteration since then; most significantly, the interior was redesigned in the nineteenth century by the gothic revivalist architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott.

Christ Church was founded amidst the religious changes of Henry VIII's reign and while Henry was re-establishing the college as Christ Church in 1546, he was also carving out a new diocese in Oxford. Previously, he had made the church of Osney Abbey Oxford's cathedral, but in releasing funds for Christ Church, he decided to save expense by turning its chapel to a new purpose - as a cathedral. The relationship between the two sides of Christ Church is thus unique within England.

By the cathedral's main entrance from Tom Quad are a set of war memorials listing those members of Christ Church (both staff and students) who lost their lives in the two World Wars. The cathedral is in the process of creating a database of biographies for those featured on the walls.

On passing the memorial into the cathedral, visitors will see the organ rising above them. Although the present organ was only installed in 1979, the first music master of the college to play in the church was the celebrated sixteenth-century composer, John Taverner. Taverner was perhaps England's finest composer of the period and the bulk of his output - mostly religious works - is thought to stem from the 1520s, part of which he spent as master of the choristers of the choir of Cardinal College. The tradition of musical excellence continues, and the world famous choir sings the cathedral services on most days during term.

To the left of the organ is one of the college's most precious glass windows. Following the appointment of Archbishop Laud as Chancellor of the University in 1630, a series of windows were commissioned from the Flemish brothers, Abraham and Bernard van Linge, to add beauty and colour to the cathedral. However, only the Jonah Window (the window just to the left of the organ) and three others survived the Civil War. Such items were extremely controversial in their day, as many believed that such images were idolatrous distractions from true worship. Indeed, most of the van Linge windows were broken up by a canon's boot heels in 1651, a little after the Parliamentary victory in the civil wars. The shards were recently rediscovered and some were displayed in a 2013 Tate Britain exhibition on iconoclasm.

Passing down the aisle to the far corner of the cathedral (known as the Latin Chapel) brings you to the reconstructed shrine to St Frideswide. The shrine was installed in the church in 1289 but broken up in 1538 during the Reformation when devotion to saints was heavily criticised. Parts of the shrine were found in a well in the nineteenth century and restored to the church, a second reconstruction was then made in 2002. It stands as a memorial to the courage of St Frideswide and all like her, and reminds us that this site has been attracting visitors ever since Saxon times. Above the shrine is a beautiful coloured window by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, depicting the life of the saint and dating from 1858. In one striking panel, the miraculous lightning bolt blinds king Algar who had pursued Frideswide to the sanctuary. And, in the bottom right corner, Burne-Jones included a modern day flushing toilet, supposedly as an acknowledgement of the company which helped finance the window's creation.

On a pillar between the Latin Chapel and the Lady Chapel is a memorial to Robert Burton, the famous writer and college librarian. Burton is remembered chiefly for his work on 'melancholy', pioneering in its day for its discussion of mental health. But Burton's place in the cathedral was not as secure as it may at first seem. There was a rumour that Burton hanged himself in order to conform to his own astrological calculations about his date of death. Perhaps a fitting end given his lifetime preoccupation with melancholy, but ill-supported by evidence: had it been true it is unlikely that he would have been buried in the cathedral, as suicide was viewed as a sin by Christians in seventeenth-century England.

The cathedral also contains memorials to the men and women who have shaped its history in more recent times, especially during the two World Wars of the twentieth century. To the left of the main altar is the Bell Altar, in honour of the Bishop George Bell, who opposed the bombing of German civilians in the Second World War. On the other side of the Chancel lies the Chapel of Remembrance, dedicated to the servicemen and women who gave their lives in the struggles of the period. That Chapel also features another stained glass window by Edward Burne-Jones, a depiction of St Catherine modelled on the then dean's daughter, Edith Liddell. Edith's sister Alice, would prove to be the inspiration for Charles Dodgson's work *Alice in Wonderland*.

### Chapter House

Although currently the site of the Cathedral shop, the Chapter House was originally built as a meeting place for the monks of the priory - the circular shape of these rooms provided the proper acoustics to allow everyone to be heard. It is one of the oldest parts of the college; the current interior was constructed between 1220 and 1240 but masks an even older building, of which the doorway is the most obvious remaining element. Its red colouring was achieved by exposing the stone to fire and is a brief glimpse of the exceptional craftsmanship that has thrived throughout Christ Church's history. The door clearly caught the eye of Lewis Carroll, since he used it as the model for Queen Alice's door in *Alice in Wonderland*.

The room also houses the Diocesan Treasury of church plate, collected over the centuries. Sadly no plate commissioned for the college before the Restoration survives, for Charles I requisitioned all of the college's plate to fund his fight against Parliament in the English Civil War. The only surviving items from that period are a prayer book and Bible from the 1630s, said to have been snatched from the hands of the Parliamentary forces when the city was taken. Another notable element of the Treasury is the gilt wood funeral mitre and staff used only for the death's of bishops. They are exceptionally rare items, crafted for the funeral of Bishop Fell in 1686. The mitre and staff were placed on the Fell's coffin in the Latin chapel of the cathedral where they remained until 1982.

On the east wall of the room lies a reminder of Wolsey's grand ambitions for the transformation of the priory into the college. Although Christ Church seemed ambitious enough on its own, Wolsey intended its members to be drawn from a new school in Ipswich which he founded concurrently. When Henry VIII seized Wolsey's property, he preserved his Oxford college but not the school. The foundation stone of the Ipswich building was thus moved and set into the wall of the Chapter House.

### The New Library

The New Library, the building immediately on your right as you enter Peckwater Quadrangle, provides a striking contrast with the rest of the Peckwater area. The Library's vast Corinthian columns offset the elegance of the Peckwater buildings. Indeed, Peckwater's architectural eclecticism resonates with Christ Church as a whole: a fusion of styles and ages. The contents of the library too reflect something of Christ Church's history and development. The lower floor acts as the base for undergraduate study, housing a large collection of modern books, while the upper library contains one of the most substantial collections of early printed books and manuscripts in Oxford.

### History

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Old Library at Christ Church was no longer fit for purpose. Several major bequests, including a donation of 3,000 books by Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church between 1689-1711, meant that the Old Library was nearly full and a new library was required. Probably designed by Dr George Clarke, Tory politician and architect, building started in 1717. It proceeded in stages, on only in 1772 was the library finally completed.

The building-process was not straightforward: Clarke had intended the ground floor of the library to be an open *piazza*, but another great benefaction forced a change in the design. In 1760-3 Christ Church received a bequest of pictures and drawings, mostly Italian old masters from General John Guise, a prominent army officer and art collector. To accommodate this, the plans for an open loggia had to be revised, and what had been designed as a piazza became a picture gallery.

Nowadays, the ground floor houses the working collections, while the Upper Library contains the bulk of the special collections and objects. Objects on display include the celestial and terrestrial globes made in London in about 1760 and the head of Mercury from the original statue of 1695. The Guise collection is now on display to the public in the purpose-built Picture Gallery, in Canterbury Quad.

### Peckwater Quad

Moving from the Gothic splendour of Tom Quad to the classical sophistication of Peckwater, you witness a new phase in Christ Church's history. Whereas Tom Quad manifests the sixteenth-century ambition of Wolsey, Peckwater embodies the flowering of aristocracy at Christ Church in the eighteenth century. The buildings in Peckwater Quad maintain their function as accommodation for undergraduates. However, they are no longer the preserve of a privileged few: today's room allocation is determined by a ballot system and Christ Church's students come from a wide range of backgrounds.

### History

Peckwater is one of the earliest pure Palladian buildings in England, a style derived and inspired by the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio and strongly based on the symmetry, perspective and values of the formal temple architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was built at the start of the eighteenth century to accommodate undergraduates known as 'Gentlemen Commoners', wealthy students who, unlike scholars, paid their own way through university. These students brought with them the promise of a considerable boost to the College's finances, but also redefined the tenor of undergraduate life at Oxford: young, wealthy and with considerable leisure time, the Gentlemen Commoners are the source of many a myth of undergraduate mischief, including many of those myths associated with the statue of Mercury.

The quad itself stands on the site of a medieval inn, which was run by the Peckwater family and given to St. Frideswide's priory by Robert Peckwater. After the lands of St. Frideswide's were appropriated by Cardinal Wolsey for the building of Cardinal's College, the Inn was used as accommodation for undergraduates. However, with the number and status of undergraduates steadily increasing at the turn of the eighteenth century, it became necessary to renovate the Peckwater buildings into something more fitting.

The design of the building is by Henry Aldrich, Christ Church's most 'Renaissance' dean. Aldrich was a clergyman, architect, composer and classical scholar - a man of many talents indeed. A bequest of £2,000 allowed work on the Quad to begin; it came from Anthony Radcliffe, one of the Canons, and the donor of the first statue of Mercury in Tom Quad. By 1713 three sides of the quadrangle were complete and the library provides the fourth.

## Canterbury Quad

Passing in front of the library, you will enter the last area on your visit to Christ Church, Canterbury Quadrangle. Built on the site of the medieval Canterbury College, after which the quad takes its name, Canterbury originally housed the most privileged undergraduates at Christ Church. Today, rooms in Canterbury are mainly used by university tutors as studies and as the location for tutorials.

### History

Shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the 1530s, the hall, chapel and other buildings of Canterbury College were acquired for the new Oxford foundation. Canterbury College already had a rich history: founded in 1363 as a place of study for the monks of Christ Church priory, the college's alumni include Sir Thomas More, of *Utopia* fame. But during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the focus of the college was upon Tom Quad and its development.

With the eighteenth-century redevelopment of Christ Church came the need to renovate Canterbury, for the splendour of the newly rebuilt Peckwater and the Library was somewhat undermined by the rather shabbier Canterbury lodgings. Courtesy of a generous benefactor, Richard Robinson, alumnus of Christ Church who had become the Archbishop of Armagh, the redevelopment of the Canterbury area was able to commence. The old medieval buildings were demolished and a new quad, designed by the English architect James Wyatt, was completed by 1783. Robinson insisted that the best rooms in it should always be allotted to noblemen and gentlemen commoners. Thankfully, Robinson's demands have since gone unheeded.

Since the 1960s, Canterbury has also provided access to Christ Church Picture Gallery. Designed by the architects Powell and Moya, and opened in 1968, the gallery houses Christ Church's remarkable collection of artistic treasures, which includes drawings by Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael. Visitors are advised to check online for gallery opening times and plan their trip accordingly - they will not wish to miss this splendid collection.

Upon exiting Canterbury gate, you will find yourself in Oriel Square. From here, you have ready access to a number of Oxford's finest sights. Straight ahead of you is Merton Street, on the right-hand side of which is an entrance to Christ Church Meadow. To your left can see the spire of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and behind it, though not visible, the Radcliffe Camera and the Bodleian Library. Please ask any of the custodians for directions to any other sights, they will be happy to assist.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Christ Church, and please visit us again soon!