

# The OXON RECORDER

The Newsletter of the Oxfordshire Buildings  
Record

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*The Oxon Recorder is the newsletter of Oxfordshire Buildings Record and is published four times a year. OBR aims to advance education and promote research on the buildings of Oxfordshire by encouraging the recording of buildings and to create and manage a publicly accessible repository of records relating to such buildings. The Oxon Recorder is also available in the members' section of our website: [www.obr.org.uk](http://www.obr.org.uk)*

## Contents

Secretary's note  
Upcoming Events  
Oxfordshire Buildings Forum – first meeting  
2024 AGM  
Obituaries  
    John Steane  
    Liam Tiller  
OAHS Caseworkers  
OLHA Newsletter  
OBR Bursaries  
Contact details  
Annex: draft minutes of the 2024 AGM

## Secretary's note

Our news this quarter reflects the death in April of our founding chairman, John Steane. Those of you who were able to attend his funeral service on 14 May will have heard much about his life and family. The obituary here reflects also on his contribution to OBR. You can read his autobiographical articles, 'The Making of a Field Archaeologist' in Newsletters 81, 82 and 83. The story of the founding of OBR was printed in OR89 (Spring 2022).

On 22 May we launched the Oxfordshire Buildings Forum, an online discussion meeting for members and others. The next one is scheduled for 17 July, unless there is a demand for an earlier one – see below.

We still need a 'proper' newsletter editor. Please let me know if you are interested.

*David Clark*

## **Upcoming events**

### **15 June 2024, Bicester. Oxfordshire Past.**

This is the annual county-wide review of archaeological discoveries, buildings recorded, and local history developments over the past year. There will be talks by the city and county archaeologists, the VCH team, and a review of OBR recording activity in 2023. Details and the programme available on [OAHS - Oxfordshire Past](#) (Please note that Julian Munby, who will be talking about Bicester Priory, has not become OBR chairman - he has recently taken over the chair of the OAHS Listed Buildings sub-committee, and I think this is what was intended!)

### **TBA Recording day at Nuney Green, Mapledurham**



An opportunity has arisen to record a small cottage on the Mapledurham estate that is about to be demolished. It may date from around 1800 and seems to have begun as two small squatter cottages. As our report will be its only tangible legacy, we shall aim to prepare a plan, elevations and sections, as well as recording details of windows, doors and so on. This simple

building thus offers a good opportunity for members of all levels of experience to have a go at building recording. We have some possible dates next week: Tuesday 4 June, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. If you are interested please contact [secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk) as soon as you can - with your preferred date. As we may return later, please register an interest if you would like to be involved. When we have a date we will contact those who have registered, but note that as it is a small building we may have to restrict numbers.

### **Oxfordshire Buildings Forum**

The next scheduled meeting of the forum will be on Wednesday 17 July at 7.30pm, unless you have anything more urgent to raise, in which case please contact [secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk) The Zoom meeting link will be sent out nearer the time along with the topics about which we have been notified.

### **26 October 2024 Oxfordshire Family History Fair**

This year's family history fair will take place on Saturday 26th October at The Cherwell School, North Site, Marston Road, Oxford, OX2 7EE. Doors open at 10:00 and close at 16:00. Entry is free and refreshments will be available. For details of the event including travel and a link to organisations who have already signed up please see the [OFHS website](#).

### **Oxfordshire Buildings Forum – first meeting 22 May**

We had two topics for this meeting, identification of saw cuts on the timbers of a building in Warwickshire, and a discussion on the preliminary findings from the

recording day at the Iron Buildings at Sarsden. For the latter topic we were joined by Edward Diestelkamp, an expert on iron structures, particularly greenhouses, through his role as Buildings and Landscape Design Manager with the National Trust.

## **2024 AGM**

This year's AGM was held on 11 May at the Key Learning Centre at Oxford Castle, followed by lunch at the Slug and Lettuce, and a walk through Oxford to look at some examples of historic ironwork. The draft minutes of the AGM are attached as an annex.

### **Historic Ironwork in Oxford** – some highlights of the afternoon walk.

*David Clark*

After lunch at the Slug and Lettuce, New Road, I took AGM attendees for a walk in the warm sunshine to look at some examples of historic ironwork in Oxford city centre. Inevitably, the route forced a largely reverse-chronological timeframe. Although broad statements could be made such as wrought-iron pre-dating cast-iron, it was necessary to issue a caveat about the need to use all available sources to be sure of the date of an iron feature. The most important consideration was whether the historic ironwork had survived the WW2 programme of requisition for the manufacture of armaments. For more on some of these issues, have a look at Oxon Recorder no.82 where there is a short article about historic railings and in no. 84 for a summary of my OBR Lecture for 2020, which covers some of the places we visited on this year's walk.

### **County Hall**

Designed by John Plowman and built 1839-41, the screen to New Road is listed.<sup>1</sup> The 'cast iron spears and gates' mentioned in the description have gone. However the list description is dated 1972 though on PictureOxon you can see images from 1968/70 which show no railings or gates. Puzzles such as this abound in the world of railings – they are often ignored or invisible. Lamps on cast iron columns of 'fasces' remain. We also noted the door furniture and boot-scrappers.



Opposite, at the entrance to the New Road Baptist church, we noted the bracket and stone pier for a very fine set of railings (Fig. 1) that were removed some years ago for the Bonn Square redevelopment.

**Figure 1 Bonn Square railings before removal in 2009**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1338533?section=official-list-entry>

### **Girls' Central School railings and gates**

Just round the corner in New Inn Hall Street we stopped to look at the railings in front of Leonard Stokes' Girls' school of 1901. The screen is a 1980s replica replacing those removed during WW2. It consists of robust railings set on a dwarf stone wall; they have a central return with an overthrow above the gates. The gates are original, and opened outwards but are now fixed in the open position, flimsy modern replacements having been introduced in 2017.<sup>2</sup> The earlier gates had inappropriate modifications in the past which had caused considerable damage, and this 'solution' was aimed at preserving the historic fabric while allowing the area to be closed as necessary. The overthrow used to support a lamp – see <https://heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk/images/POX0105386>. It was still there in 1986, but we don't know what happened to it. The weathervane on the cupola seems to show an ox above a ford, and is likely to date from 1901.

### **Mair gate and screen to St Peter's College (1929/2003)**

This is a listed structure, in wrought iron.<sup>3</sup> The gates were originally installed in 1929. A heritage appraisal prepared in 2012 to accompany a proposal to alter the gates suggested that their seventeenth-century design might have been the product of the Revd. P E Warrington, one of the early members of the college.<sup>4</sup> It also states that much of the fabric of the gate (and the commemorative inscription) dates from a restoration in 2002-3, funded by a legacy from the Revd. Canon James Fraser Mair, MA SPH (1947-49). The 2012 proposals envisaged further changes to the gates, including removal of 25mm from the spikes ('for health and safety reasons') and the creation of a new pedestrian gate near the chapel. It seems that the screen has been cut through to form the new gates, but the spikes do not seem to have been shortened. They are very long, and likely to be a deterrent to unwelcome visitors.

### **St Michael's Street**

The Three Goats' Heads is an attractive building, built as offices in 1876 by F J Codd.<sup>5</sup> Decorative ironwork of that date was noted at first floor level: the design of trefoils making heart shapes is interesting, and unlike anything else in the area – perhaps the nearest are around Rewley House, but those are circles. The basement gates and railings, which because of their position, probably survived the WW2 vandalism. Although some of the same design features appear in the ground floor ironwork, the Art Nouveau touches suggest they may be later – worth future study.

We noted the cast iron lamp bracket with a dragon's head opposite at the corner of Cornmarket. It was installed c.1895 in Oxford's first phase of electric lighting.

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<sup>2</sup> Planning reference 17/01193/LBC

<sup>3</sup> List Entry Number: 1245327

<sup>4</sup> OCC planning reference 12/01258/FUL

<sup>5</sup> M Graham, Walk 1 p. 27; Simon Bradley, Nikolaus Pevsner and Jennifer Sherwood *Oxfordshire: Oxford and the South-East* (2023) p. 438.

## **St Michael at the North Gate**

Railings were installed to the south of the tower of St Michael at the North Gate in 1876, replacing a stone wall, but these were removed for munitions use during WW2.<sup>6</sup> The present mild steel railings around the patio where the coffee stall used to be were approved in 1997, on the basis that they ‘shall match those adjoining, erected in 1992, including hammering of the metalwork to imitate the appearance of wrought iron.’<sup>7</sup>

The church has a run of railings along its Cornmarket Street frontage, similar to those at St Mary Magdalen but with taller standards. Despite the fact that there is an adjacent gateway of some distinction, neither this nor the railings are mentioned in the Buildings of England, although they are listed separately from the church at Grade II, and described as ‘mid nineteenth-century’.<sup>8</sup> This cannot be right, as the map evidence shows that buildings against the northern side of the tower were still there at the time of the 1899 survey.<sup>9</sup> There is also a photograph taken around 1900 showing Nurse’s shop abutting the tower. Photographs from 1907 in the Taunt collection show the railings and gateway in place. The adjacent shop is dated 1903 at the console level, so this is likely to be the date of the railings.

## **St Mary Magdalen**

The churchyard of St Mary Magdalen is a relatively recent creation. Houses are shown on both parts in Agas’ map of 1578 and in Loggan’s 1675 map. The southern section of the churchyard was consecrated in 1797 following the demolition of the houses on the site (see J Gwynn's 1771 survey map).<sup>10</sup>

Railings were clearly erected around the new south churchyard, as sixty years after its consecration they needed to be replaced. The earlier railings – also on top of a stone wall – can be seen in a photograph of 1857 though in the same year an advertisement appeared in the local newspaper addressed to ‘Smiths, Ironmongers, and Others’ inviting them to tender ‘for the supply and fixing a new wrought-iron fence, on stone curb, round the south side of St. Mary Magdalen Church-yard... the old fence to become the property of the contractor.’ The architect in charge of this tender was E G Bruton, 11 Beaumont Street.<sup>11</sup>

We walked round the churchyard to study the various features – such as the lamp standards (Figs. 2 and 3 probably for oil lamps as there is no evidence for a gas connection) the evidence for broken-off railings, and the 2023 new railings near the south entrance. We noted that the standards in the south were set diagonally, while those in the north churchyard were orthogonal with notched and waisted spikes.

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<sup>6</sup> Martin, Canon R R (1967) *The Church and Parish of St Michael at the Northgate Oxford* Oxford. p. 82

<sup>7</sup> Oxford City Council planning application 97/01030/L, decision notice dated 22 October 1997.

<sup>8</sup> List Entry Number: 1047326 [SCREEN AND GATES OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL, Oxford - 1047326 | Historic England](#)

<sup>9</sup> Green, Vivian, H H (ca.1992) *The Tower and Church of St Michael at the North Gate Oxford*. p.31 shows the houses in 1857.

<sup>10</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 21.6.1797.

<sup>11</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 19 September 1857.



**Figure 2 Oil lamp standard at South end**



**Figure 3 Oil lamp standard at north**

The houses and shops on the northern part of the churchyard were demolished in 1820. J C Buckler illustrated the earlier arrangement in 1816, which showed the east end of the north aisle as the Diocesan Registry, and a lean-to extension that housed a fire engine.<sup>12</sup> There was a stone wall extending northwards, and so the north churchyard railings cannot be earlier than 1820. Indeed they are probably later than 1850 since illustrations of the 1841 Martyrs' Memorial show a tall stone wall around the churchyard with railings on top – quite different from the present arrangement.

There were once railings around the Martyrs' Memorial but these were erected a couple of years after it was built. The local newspaper wrote, 'It is manifest that so costly a display of exquisite workmanship (in which there is so much of decoration and delicate carving in the detail) ought to be guarded from harm by a suitable fence — such a fence will cost 288l.'<sup>13</sup>

There are railings around the entrances to the toilets (of 1909) at the east of the churchyard. Their designs are different, those in the south are similar to the Lucy railings at the former St Giles' gents toilets (1895) but no name is visible here.



**Figure 4 East toilet entrance (Lucy design)**

At the southern end of the cycle park in Magdalen Street East is the stump of a former sign (Fig. 5). This is identical to the design shown in Fig. 6 from the City Engineer's plan collection for the post at the end of a planned barrier at the north end of the cycle park. There is, however, no evidence on the ground that this was ever built.

<sup>12</sup> Bodleian Library

<sup>13</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 15 April 1843 (p. 3)



Figure 5 Cast iron pillar

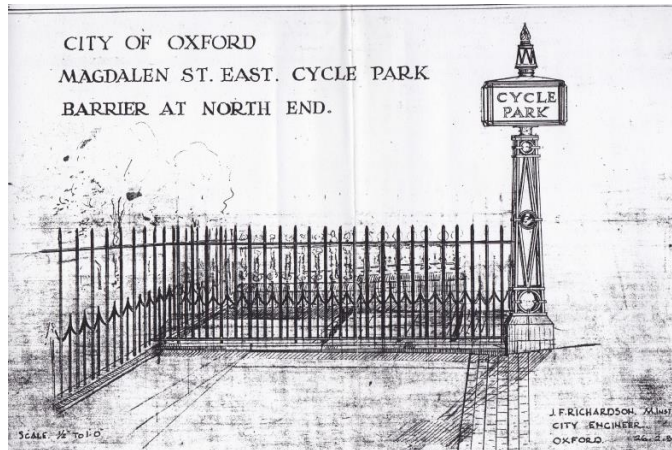


Figure 6 Design for cycle park barrier (1935)

## Broad Street

Most of the shops on the south side have basements, and some have cast iron lightwell covers. One bears the name of the St. Pancras Ironwork Co. (Fig. 7). Their pavement lights are illustrated in an 1897 catalogue.<sup>14</sup> This is the only example I have seen in Oxford. More common are those made by Hayward Bros. This company was notable for inventing a prismatic glass block that provided a waterproof covering for basement lightwells, while directing sunlight down into the cellar. The cover in front of the ‘Cool Britannia’ shop is from between 1857 (when the company moved from Blackfriars Road to Union Street) and 1880 (when the company became Hayward Brothers and Eckstein).<sup>15</sup>



Figure 7 Pavement light in Broad Street

## Clarendon Building, Broad Street (Hawksmoor, 1715).

The gates at the Clarendon building are largely the work of Richard Booth, a London smith who seems to have taken over Jean Tijou’s business in 1712 when the latter left England. But he was not working alone; on 16 March 1715 payments were made to Mabley the smith (£150 9s 9d) and to ‘Booth for ironwork’ (£250).<sup>16</sup> Saunders writes that, ‘There is a difference in quality between the main gates and the screen to Catte Street which is difficult to account for, as they were both put up at the same time as

<sup>14</sup> <https://archive.org/details/basementlighting00stpa/page/n1/mode/2up>

<sup>15</sup> <http://glassian.org/Prism/Hayward/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> Oxford U, Bodleian Library, Vice-Chancellor’s Accounts (Saunders, Edward (2005) ‘Biographical Dictionary of English Wrought Iron Smiths of the Seventeenth And Eighteenth Centuries’ *The Volume of the Walpole Society* Vol. 67 pp. 257-384; p. 268)

contemporary prints show. A possible explanation is contained in a letter written by Hawksmoor to Henry Joynes, dated 19 May 1713, two years before Booth was paid. It reads: 'Ye smith, Mr. Ireland came downe to Oxford last Sunday, to view ye printing house in order to take measur for ye iron fence, pray doe me the favour to goe to Oxford to assist him in the affair'<sup>17</sup> So it seems that Booth was responsible for the Clarendon gates (often attributed to Tijou), Mabley for the gates to Catte Street, and Ireland for the railings (Fig. 8).

The distinctive circular markings stamped into the wrought iron posts and standards of the railings around the Clarendon building and its associated quadrangle are Swedish Ironstamps.<sup>18</sup> In 1604 the Swedish government required each town to have an 'iron controller' and in 1637 each forge was required to mark every iron bar that it made, in order to safeguard the quality and to track it through weigh-houses and bonded stores to export. It was also the basis for a quota system. The mark was applied to the iron bar during hammering. The design of the stamps and the related forges were recorded in a *Stampel-bok*, some of which can be found in the archives of *Jernkontoret*, the Swedish Ironmasters' association.



**Figure 8 Clarendon building railings**



**Figure 9 Hoop/L mark**

A considerable amount of research has been carried out into similar marks, particularly those on the Tijou screen at Hampton Court Palace.<sup>19</sup> Some of the Clarendon marks are similar to those recorded at Hampton Court, but identifying the forges has proved difficult in both locations. At Hampton Court, a total of 54 different marks were recorded, but of these only 8 could be positively identified from the available sources.<sup>20</sup> One of these which can also be seen at the Clarendon building is the 'Hoop/L of Leufsta, a forge in Uppsala founded in 1556 (Fig. 9).

The survival of these railings in the 1940s is due to the university's insistence that they be retained. There was a degree of public criticism at the time that the university was not doing its patriotic duty in handing over railings to aid the war effort, and the

<sup>17</sup> BL, Add. MS 19607, Downes, Kerry (1970) *Hawksmoor* London, p. 239 (Saunders (2005) p. 268)

<sup>18</sup> Percy (1864) p. 737 quoted in Wouters, Ine and Bertels, Inge (2014) 'Production and assembly marks in wrought iron structures' in Campbell, James WP et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the First Conference of the Construction History Society, Cambridge 11-12 April 2014*

<sup>19</sup> Watrobski, Adam (1997) *Ironstamps: a thesis submitted for the Diploma in Building Conservation*. Architectural Association, London. Twomey, Samantha (2017) *Decorative Wrought Iron in England, Wales and Scotland From 1660 to 1720 The Continental Influences* (Thesis submitted for the DPhil in Humanities, University of Sussex)

<sup>20</sup> Watrobski Table 1 and Appendix 2.



City had listed the Clarendon and Bodleian railings – as well as those around the University Parks – for removal.<sup>21</sup> In the event, the only loss was the set of railings around the Parks, despite the university's arguments as to their importance.

## All Souls

The gate to the North Quadrangle of All Souls was part of Hawksmoor's design following the acceptance by the college of Christopher Codrington's legacy of £10,000 for a new library. The gate, however, was one of the last parts of the scheme to be built; the northern part of the cloister was finished by 1728, but in 1733 the Hon. Dodington Grevile gave £750 to complete the gateway and the south cloister.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 10 All Souls Cattle Street gates**

It is clear that the design of the gate was by Nicholas Hawksmoor – his drawings are in Worcester College library.<sup>23</sup> All Souls' records refer to 'Iron gates to be set up by Mr. Hawksmoor under the gateway in the new quadrangle at the expense of the college not exceeding three score pounds', and the college accounts have an entry: 'Goff's bill for the iron gates £59 12s. 6d.'<sup>24</sup> Hawksmoor's design was very French, with a sun disc in the pilaster, but 'Goff replaced this with a crude, embossed mask, suggesting that he was not a master of the repoussé art.'<sup>25</sup> It is clear that Thomas Goff was using Swedish iron, as one of the verticals in the right hand gate pilaster has two stamps on adjacent faces.

These gates and the way in which they were made, signal the ascent of the architect over the skills and knowledge of the traditional craftsman. Here we are, only 20 years after Booth and Mabley at the Clarendon, seeing an equally skilled gatesmith, Thomas Goff, reduced to hammering metal to a design by Hawksmoor. This seems to me to be highly significant in the process by which architects overshadowed traditional craftsmen, and visible here with known people and accurate dates. Perhaps he left the Swedish ironstamp visible as a passive-aggressive signal of his treatment – Booth and Mabley hammered out the stamps on their gates at the Clarendon.

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<sup>21</sup> University Archives UR6/PCU/1 file 1 letter of 19 January 1942

<sup>22</sup> Colvin, H M and Simmons, J S G (1989) *All Souls An Oxford College and its Buildings* Oxford, p.84. List Entry Number: 1046761

<sup>23</sup> Colvin, H. M. (1964) *Catalogue of Drawings the Worcester College Library, Oxford* nos. 410-415

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

### St Mary the Virgin, south porch

These gates are certainly magnificent, and although the rusticated gatepiers with vase finials were thought by Pevsner to be contemporary with Nicholas Stone's Laudian porch of 1637, the list description gives an eighteenth century date for the gates.<sup>26</sup> The gates and the short lengths of railings to either side have dog bars with multiple arrowheads. The railings have far more decorative elements than any other surviving early railings in the city, and there are also some Swedish iron-stamps on the uprights. More work is needed on the gatepiers and ironwork here – they may perhaps be amongst the earliest *in situ* ironwork in the city.

### Lincoln College Library

The boundary wall of the former All Saints church is listed in its own right.<sup>27</sup> The gates are said to be of both wrought and cast iron. They have arrowhead dog bars and a decorative upper section. Although the date given in the listing is nineteenth-century, they have a slight resemblance to the railings of 1730 at Senate House, Cambridge, where cast iron posts with vase or bottle shapes alternate with wrought iron standards with plain spiked heads.<sup>28</sup> And the gates to the Senate House court have similar plinths to those on the walls here.

It seems possible that the railings along Turl Street are much older than the date suggested in the listing. Given its position, the church of All Saints is likely to have had railings around its churchyard from the start (1709), though it is also possible that they were erected using the additional funds provided ten years later by Lord Crewe, then Master of Lincoln College.

### Turl Street



**Figure 11 Griffith Railway Foundry plate**



**Figure 12 Hutchins cover, Ship Street**

Here we noted a number of pieces of pavement furniture:

1. Dean & Son (Oxford). Brander and lamp-post (Oxford Corporation)
2. Griffith Railway Foundry, Reading. Locking Safety Plate / Protected no. 2724 / Feb 23 1888 – outside Lincoln staircase 16 (Mitre). Samuel Griffith started

<sup>26</sup> List Entry Number: 1047276

<sup>27</sup> List Entry Number: 1047272

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, Marian (1997) *Decorative Ironwork* V&A, London, p. 23. The Senate House railings are listed grade I (List Entry Number: 1126280)

his foundry in Caversham Road, Reading, in 1878, moving to Vastern Road in 1899. Date is probably that of the patent. (Fig. 11)

3. The Oxford Electric / Company (formed in 1891). Outside Walter's (no. 10)
4. Cast iron kerbs at corner of Market Street – clear indication of commercial activity.

### **Ship Street**

Finally, Ship Street, noting the rusting and broken balconette near the east end on 16 Turl Street. It may be late C18 – listed.

Pavement furniture includes Dean & Son manhole covers, an Oxford Electric Company cover and one named for S Hutchins & Sons / Contractors / Oxford (Fig. 12). Samuel Hutchins was a builder (and Mayor in 1912/13).<sup>29</sup> His firm survives as Hutchins and Green.

### **John Michael Steane (1931-2024)**



**Figure 13 John in 2002**

The Oxfordshire Buildings Record was John Steane's idea, and as our first chairman he was never short of further ideas (such as our travelling exhibition) for spreading the gospel. In his years as headmaster of Kettering Grammar School and later as Oxfordshire's county archaeologist his inspirational leadership saw many such ideas brought to fruition. John's immense energy saw the OBR through its formative years and latterly as a committee member he continued to keep us on our toes. His ideas were not confined to OBR – as chairman of the OAHS Listed Buildings committee he hired a Norman knight re-enactor to pose for photographs in front of the County Hall to publicise the need for a proper historical appreciation of the former prison buildings to guide their restoration and future use.

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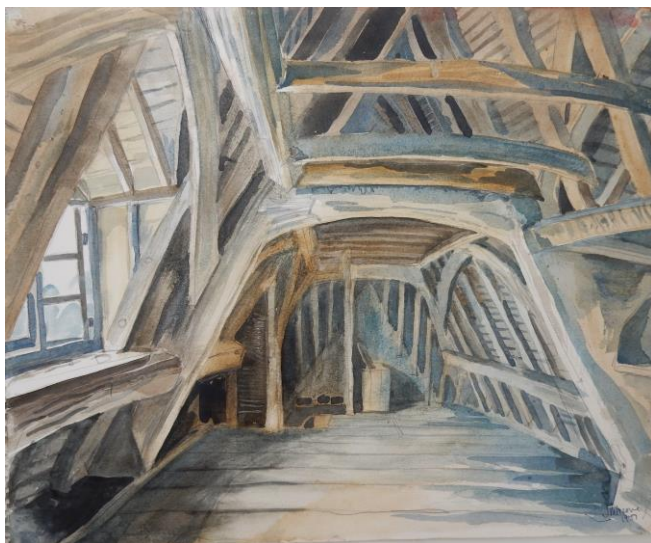
<sup>29</sup> [http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/1836\\_1962/hutchins\\_samuel\\_1912.html](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/mayors/1836_1962/hutchins_samuel_1912.html)

John was born on 3 May 1931 in Balham, South London. During the war, his family moved to Peterborough, where a chance visit to the cathedral and an opportunity to explore its roof spaces whetted his appetite for historic buildings – and recording them: John was encouraged to draw by his aunt, and throughout his life he sketched and painted wherever he went. His formative years were spent at Dulwich College, where he excelled in history, and developed an interest in archaeology. After 18 months National Service in the army – partly in education roles teaching soldiers and others – he arrived at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1950 on a scholarship to read Modern History. Here he met his first wife, Nina Carroll, and through the seminars of W G Hoskins his eyes were opened to the wider historic landscape, and later (in 1974) he was inspired to write his first major book, *Northamptonshire Landscape*. In 1976 as Kettering was to become a comprehensive school, John decided to seek pastures new and applied for – and got – the post of Field Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council.

One of his first projects in Oxfordshire – and an enduring legacy – was Cogges Manor Farm, which he was instrumental in establishing as a popular visitor attraction, underpinned by detailed historical research, sub-surface archaeology, and fabric analysis and interpretation of the important collection of buildings on the site. More books followed – *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (1984), *The Archaeology of the Medieval English Monarchy* (1993), *Oxfordshire* (1996), *The Archaeology of Power* (2001) and (with James Ayres) *Traditional Buildings of the Oxford Region* (2013).

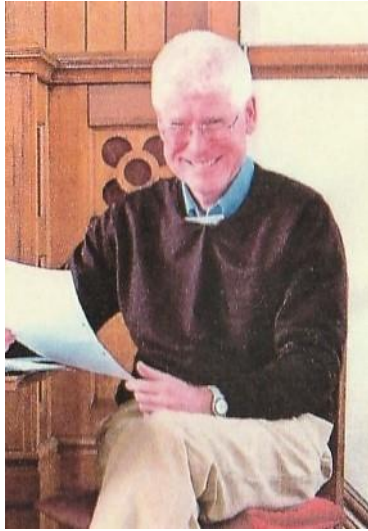
John was larger-than-life, and, until a few years ago, very energetic and dedicated to extending the knowledge of Oxfordshire buildings to as wide an audience as he could reach through books, articles, lectures and of course, through his contribution to, and support for, OBR. We owe him a great debt, and a number of OBR members paid their respects at his funeral on 14 May.

*David Clark, May 2024.*



**Figure 14 One of John's watercolours – the roof structure of a vernacular house**

## **Liam Tiller**



Liam Tiller, who died in April after a long illness, was a long-standing member of the OBR, and will have been known to many through his widespread involvement in local history, which he pursued with vigour after retiring as the County Council's Chief Planning and Development Officer (1986–96). Alongside his meticulous work as treasurer for the VCH Oxfordshire Trust, OLHA, and other organisations, he pursued his own research, publishing a prize-winning article in 2002 (in *Oxfordshire Local History*) about the complex shared field system of Benson, Ewelme, and Berrick Salome. More relevant to the OBR, he also had a long-term interest in timber church towers, on which he undertook a substantial amount of work: in particular he was instrumental in

arranging for the tower at Berrick Salome to be dendro-dated, producing an unexpectedly early date of 1428–9. He also researched another important article on the same building, this time focused on its restoration in 1890, published in *Oxoniensia* 76 in 2011. Beyond all that, all those who knew him valued Liam for his humour, warmth, and kindness, and he will be sadly missed by many.

*Simon Townley*

## **OAHS Caseworkers**

The Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society are active in doing casework on applications for listed building consent throughout the county. Each caseworker has a 'patch' - some cover a whole District, others a part of one. As well as making an important contribution to the conservation of the historic built environment, caseworkers can get access to historic buildings and gain experience in interpreting plans. Although these days major proposals come with a detailed historic building appraisal, written often by a professional architectural historian, there are often cases where there is no such appraisal, or where it is unclear what the effects of the proposal will be on the historic building fabric. In such cases developers are usually amenable for caseworkers to visit the building to learn first-hand what is proposed. This was how many of the founding members of OBR got experience in developing an understanding of the dates and phases of historic buildings. New caseworkers usually team up with a more experienced one to begin with. It is a valuable learning experience – as well as making a contribution to historic building conservation. For further details, contact Julian Munby, the chairman of the OAHS listed buildings sub-committee at [jtmunby@gmail.com](mailto:jtmunby@gmail.com)

## **OLHA Newsletter**

OBR is a member of OLHA and as such all members have access to Liz Woolley's excellent newsletter. The current issue has details of lots of upcoming activities - read it here: [OLHA e-bulletin, June 2024 \(mailchi.mp\)](mailto:mailchi.mp) after 7am on 1 June.

## **OBR Bursaries**

A reminder that the OBR run a bursary scheme which offers a total of up to £500 to individual OBR members towards the cost of training courses which will benefit OBR's aims. The criteria are:

- Applicants must be OBR personal members;
- Applicants must demonstrate that the bursary is being used to pay for course/conference fees and for no other purpose;
- Applications should demonstrate how the course/conference will improve the applicant's ability to record and interpret a vernacular building;
- Applicants will be expected to demonstrate commitment to support and promote the OBR's aims;
- Applicants commit to make a report on the course or conference which may be published in the Oxon Recorder.

Applications can be made at any time. Applications, using the form available on the OBR website, should be made to the Secretary at [secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk)

## **Contact details**

Contributions for the newsletter (including 'letters to the editor' – should be sent to [secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk)

Copy dates are 1 March, 1 June, 1 September and 1 December.

Membership – Paul Clark ([membership@obr.org.uk](mailto:membership@obr.org.uk))

General – David Clark ([secretary@obr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@obr.org.uk))

Website: [www.obr.org.uk](http://www.obr.org.uk)

Annex:

**OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD  
TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Minutes of the twenty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record held on Saturday 11 May 2024 in the Key Learning Centre, Oxford Castle starting at 11.30am.

In the absence of the Chairman, Simon Townley took the chair. The following members attended the meeting: Vic Allison, Janet and Mark Casson, David Clark, Mark Davies, Richard Farrant, Rachel Fletcher, Catherine Hawkins, David Hill, Heather Horner, David Hughes, Mary Lale, John Marriott, Sally Stradling, Barbara Tearle and Nick Wright,

**1. Apologies for absence** had been received from Malcolm Airs, Gillian Argyle, Laurence Balbes, Paul Barnwell, Paul Clark, David Hibberd, John Hine, Sue Hine, Chris Howlett, Janet Hurst, Sue Jacobs, Terry Johnson, Felix Lam, Abigail Lloyd, Peter Mothersole, Helena Neilsen, Keith Randall, Donna Thynne and Enid Worsley. The chairman also reported the recent deaths of founding chairman John Steane and of member Liam Tiller.

**2. Minutes of the twenty-third AGM** on 13 May 2023.

With a correction to the VCH volume number in the secretary's report, these were agreed to be a true record and were accordingly signed by the acting chairman.

**3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts** for the year 2023.

These had been circulated and had been approved by the Examiner. The Treasurer, David Hughes, commented that with the relaxation of Covid restrictions in 2022 OBR had slowly returned to a more normal activity and expenditure profile.

Income from subscriptions, joining fees and members donations increased slightly at £1635 and he was grateful to members for their undiminished support for the OBR. Additional income in 2023 came from bank interest of £211.

In support of the objectives of the OBR, a contribution of £300 had been made to support tree-ring dating of 12-15 High Street, Wallingford.

In summary, he said that the OBR remained in a sound financial position with an excess of income of £109.50. Our reserves now stood at £11615, of which £389 was reserved for the publishing costs of the Chipping Norton recordings.

The chairman thanked David for his report. Barbara Tearle proposed, and Heather Horner seconded a motion formally to adopt the accounts. This was agreed *nem con*.

## **5. Secretary's Report**

The secretary reported that twelve buildings had been recorded in 2023, the small number partly due to the consequences of the pandemic, but also reflecting the winding-down of our projects in the north of the county. The results of the work in Chipping Norton and Hook Norton will appear in Volume XXI of the Oxfordshire Victoria Country History, due to be published in 2024.

One important recording task was to understand the development of the almshouses at Lyford, and a report on this will be published in South Midlands Archaeology. In addition, private houses were recorded in Abingdon, Chipping Norton, Eaton, Hardwick and Wallingford. We were also asked to report on some historic fragments – two walls in Oxford (one possibly part of a former Oseney Abbey building) and some architectural salvage belonging to the National Trust at Coleshill. We also made records of two buildings scheduled for demolition – the Ferry Boat House in Abingdon and 34 Davenant Road, Oxford. In the case of the former we were able to record the building before and during demolition, and create a record of its various uses over a hundred-year period. The latter is one of a number of houses near Oxford designed by Clough Williams-Ellis at an early stage in his career as an architect which have been studied using documentary sources to determine who his clients were and how he obtained his commissions. An article on this was due to appear in Oxoniensia Vol. 89 (2024).

Reports on all these buildings would be available in due course at the Oxfordshire History Centre and on the OBR website (member area). A further set of hard copy reports was deposited in OHC in October.

Our research project to record Inscribed Dates on buildings has continued to add to our collection, and at December 2023 there were almost 1500 dates on the database. This is available for viewing on the OBR website [Date Stones and other Inscribed Dates - OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD \(obr.org.uk\)](#) Members were encouraged to volunteer to fill the remaining gaps.

The annual OBR Lecture was given by member Abigail Lloyd based on work she did on a placement with Historic England in Spring 2023 as part of her doctoral research on the historic landscape with a particular focus on old buildings, churches and medieval place-names. Her title was *New Light on the Early Undercrofts of Westgate Street, Gloucester, and Comparisons with Oxford*. This was a well-attended in-person event at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford, as part of the OAHS autumn lecture series. A report appeared in Oxon Recorder no. 96

Following the report, there was a brief discussion of the possible evidence for timber shuttering of rubblestone-and-mortar walls of the Norman period, as at Oseney, and the towers of St George and St Michael in Oxford.

## **6. Membership Secretary's Report**

Paul Clark had reported that membership stood currently at 190, with 10 new members having joined during the year. For the current year, 157 subscriptions had



been received. Members who had not yet renewed their subscriptions were invited to do so without delay.

### **7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2024/25**

The chairman declared that nominations had been received for Paul Clark as Chairman, David Clark as Secretary and David Hughes as Treasurer. There being no further nominations, Richard Farrant proposed and Heather Horner seconded a motion that they all be elected. There being no objections, he declared them duly elected.

Offering themselves for election to the committee were:

Kathy Davies, Heather Horner, Abigail Lloyd, Sally Stradling, Simon Townley and Nick Wright. There being no further nominations, Janet Casson proposed and Barbara Tearle seconded a motion that they be elected *en bloc*. This was agreed *nem con*.

### **8. Election of Examiner**

The OBR accounts examiner, Ian Workman, had been nominated to the post. Avid Hughes proposed and Richard Farrant seconded a motion that he be elected as the examiner for the 2024 accounts. This was agreed *nem con*.

### **9. Any other business**

The chairman reported that the committee had recently discussed future OBR activities and proposed to float an online *Oxfordshire Buildings Forum*. This new initiative was intended to be an informal and wide-ranging discussion group for OBR members. It would be held on Zoom, lasting about an hour, and held at (probably) about two-monthly intervals – depending on demand. All building-related topics were welcome. If some notice could be given, we would try to invite someone with specialist knowledge to answer members' questions. The aim was for members, with whatever levels of experience, to have the opportunity to share knowledge and increase in our understanding of the vernacular buildings in our area. The first meeting would be on Wednesday 22 May, at 7.30 pm.

In discussion, the point was made that the forum might attract more participants if it were held in the winter months. Concluding, the chairman said that the format and timing would be reviewed in the light of experience, and invited members to write in with any further comments and ideas. He thanked members for their interest and endorsement.

The meeting closed at 12.15 am with a vote of thanks to the acting chairman.

D R Clark, Secretary, 12 May 2024.