

# Classical Oxford as it is

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THE CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL THIS LONG PERIOD IS THE CON-  
viction of all those who lived in it that by no apparent means  
could their world, their lives, or their culture be improved.  
They never doubted that their age was the best of all possible  
ages; nor, in a smaller sphere, that the University of Oxford had  
attained the ultimate perfection possible in a place of learning. It  
was large, rich, and famous; one asked no more. And that  
is the reason why, in two centuries, but one new college was  
established.

Though a complacent, it was an unheroic age. There was no  
lack of glory in the wars of Marlborough, nor of courage in the  
exploits of Clive. Architecture was lavish, proud, monumental.  
The university might stand in need of no improvement; but it  
was handsomely adorned by grateful generations. To the em-  
bellishment of Oxford were devoted the talents of several amateur  
architects of high merit. Oxford produced and fostered the  
greatest English architect of all.

Wren had his first big chance in Oxford. At the age of thirty  
he enjoyed a European reputation as a mathematician. As  
Savilian Professor of Astronomy, he was contriving lenses, globes,  
and pendula—the more mature successors of his sundials and way-  
wisers. In the course of his work he had delivered a series of  
lectures on the Geometrical Flat Floor. He was now commissioned  
to erect a “flat floor” of uncommon size.

Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, was distressed and  
shocked by the irreverence of the annual Encænia at Oxford.  
The licence accorded to Terræ Filius and the other buffoons was  
broad, and based on old tradition. It was all very well, but this  
coarse mummery took place at yearly intervals within the con-  
secrated walls of St. Mary's, as the university church. Hopeless  
of purifying the proceedings, Sheldon decided to transfer them to  
a secular setting, and for this purpose to erect a theatre. It was  
here that Christopher Wren's researches proved useful. The

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amphitheatres of the ancients had no ceilings, set as they were beneath blue Mediterranean skies. How was it possible, given the standard size of timber, to cover in a theatre of the classic shape and size? It had never been done. The broadest span in Oxford was in Christ Church Hall, where great Irish oak-beams bridged a space of forty feet. The hall was essentially a quadrilateral: what Sheldon aimed at was a semicircle. He decided to risk his scheme on the professor's Geometrical Flat Floor.

The Sheldonian Theatre is not really a beautiful building. A grotesque and pedantic row of mouldering heads of Roman worthies strikes an unfortunate note in the view of the curved front to the north, from which side, also, the composition by its very nature can nowhere be satisfactorily taken in. The south front is more successful. Here is the ceremonial entrance, aligned to the position of the Divinity School. It was to provide access across to this entrance that Wren boldly provided the Divinity School with a north door.

The interior of the Sheldonian is delightful. With its curious boxes, pulpits, and galleries, all of the most Wrennish carpentry, it is as odd a theatre as any in the world. It is of course adapted particularly for the curious ceremonies of the university—annual occasions when degrees are given, when Latin compliments are bandied, when prize poems are read, and when the distant lodging-houses of North Oxford send forth their camphor-scented array of strange anchorites and learned nobodies.

The ceiling of the theatre is seventy feet by eighty: by an extremely happy pretence this is adorned with foreshortened painting which purports to be strung upon ropes, as though it were an awning slung across the open amphitheatre. Wren's portrait is to be seen above one of the boxes. The organ and its case are the work of Sir T. G. Jackson.

A staircase in the corner of the building gives access to the cupola on the roof; but it is not so good a view-point, except in wet weather, as the roof of the Radcliffe Camera. The great loft below the cupola is certainly worth seeing; for here are the beams and trusses which enabled Wren to effect his architectural innovation. To throw off the shackles of a narrow roof-span, limited by the size of available timber, was a departure comparable to the introduction of ferro-concrete. A model of the building was exhibited in London, for the admiration of the Royal Society.

Among these huge timbers the University Press established its workshop when the Theatre was first built. For many years the "Theatre" was the imprint sign of Oxford books. Here the fellows of All Souls pored furtively over their secret proofs of Aretin's *Postures*.

John Evelyn came to Oxford in October 1664, and was hand-

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somely entertained for two days. He found Wren in the former observatory at the top of the Old Schools Tower "with an inverted tube, or telescope, observing the discus of the sun for the passing of Mercury that day before it." They strolled across to the Bodleian, where the librarian showed Evelyn his name among the benefactors. From there Wren took him to see the foundations of "the new Theatre, now building at an exceeding and royal expense by the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury . . . the whole designed by that incomparable genius, my worthy friend Dr. Christopher Wren, who showed me the model, not disdaining my advice in some particulars." That day he also looked in to see the new painting in All Souls chapel, where the old reredos had been, and found it "too full of naked for a chapel." Five years later, Evelyn was present when the Theatre was opened with an Encænna, which "drew a world of strangers." The poor man was terribly shocked when "Terræ Filius entertained the auditory with a tedious, abusive, sarcastical rhapsody, most unbecoming the gravity of the University. . . . It was rather licentious lying and railing than genuine and noble wit. In my life, I was never witness of so shameful entertainment." Sheldon's £25,000 was in his view well spent in freeing St. Mary's sacred walls from such ribaldry as this. Though the office of buffoon has died away, the Encænna was till quite lately an uproarious event, attended by multitudes of undergraduates. Nowadays it is decorous and dull. Between whiles, the Theatre is used for some of the many excellent musical performances with which Oxford is surpassingly provided and enriched. Schnabel and Kreisler play on the same boards as Handel and his lousy crew of foreign fiddlers.

Wren's next employment was just across the street, at Trinity. This college, Carolan in its present aspect, still occupied the ancient buildings of Durham College, the former Benedictine settlement, taken over as they were by Sir Thomas Pope when he founded the new college in 1555. There had been added since then a dingy hall, and a curious gabled row of buildings called Kettell Hall, which still flanks the college front, with its own separate porch on Broad Street. The name of this block derives from Dr. Kettell, the President of Trinity whose end was hastened by the outrageous licence of the Court ladies during the Civil Wars. Kettell has been so well described by John Aubrey, his own pupil, that a digression is not to be avoided.

"The Doctor's fashion was to go up and down the college, and peep in at the keyholes to see whether the boys did follow their books or no.

"He observed that the houses that had the smallest beer had the most drunkards, for it forced them to go into the town to comfort their stomachs, wherefore Dr. Kettel always had in his college excellent beer, not better to be had in Oxon, so that we could not go to any other place

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but for the worse, and we had the fewest drunkards of any house in Oxford.

"He preached every Sunday at his parsonage at Garsington, about five miles off. He rode on his bay gelding, with his boy Ralph before him, with a leg of mutton (commonly) and some college bread.

"A neighbour of mine, Mr. St. Low, told me he heard him preach once in St. Mary's Church at Oxon. I know not whether this was the only time or no that he used this following way of conclusion: But now I see it is time for me to shut up my book, for I see the doctors' men coming wiping of their beards from the alehouse. (He could from the pulpit plainly see them, and 'twas their custom in sermon to go there, and about the end of sermon to return to wait on their masters.)

"Our Grove was the Daphne for the ladies and their gallants to walk in, and many times my lady Isabella Thynne would make her entry with a theorbo or lute played before her. . . . She was the most beautiful, most humble, charitable, etc., but she could not subdue one thing. I remember one time this lady and fine Mrs. Fenshawe (her great and intimate friend, who lay at our college) would have a frolic to make a visit to the President. The old Dr. quickly perceived that they came to abuse him: he addresses his discourse to Mrs. Fenshawe, saying, Madam, your husband and father I bred up here, and I knew your grandfather. I know you to be a gentlewoman, I will not say you are a whore; but get you gone for a very woman. The dissoluteness of the times, as I have said, grieving the good old Doctor, his days were shortened, and died and was buried at Garsington."

Kettell was succeeded after the Restoration by a kinsman, Dr. Ralph Bathurst, one of whose first acts as President was to summon his friend and fellow-scientist Wren to advise him on the enlargement of the college. Before his death, forty years later, Bathurst had practically rebuilt the whole of it.

The front quadrangle of Trinity is a kind of orchard. The focal point is a pair of entrance gates, perpetually closed, which were presented by the father of the famous Lord North. To the left are the repulsive buildings of Balliol; in front, a fine classic chapel; while the remainder is predominantly, and by this time I hope obviously, the work of Sir T. G. Jackson, except for the tumble-down cottages along Broad Street.

If you cross the quad and pass under the clock tower of the chapel, you come into the oldest part of Trinity. This is a bare quadrangle containing a very old library and a Jacobean hall. Through and beyond this to the north are the extensions in which Wren assisted. His advice had been to build a "lame quadrangle," that is to say, a quadrangle with one side open to let in the light and air. In this respect Wren set a fashion which was immediately copied by William Bird in his additions to New College, and by Hawksmoor at Queen's and All Souls. But the only portion which Wren actually built was the north wing; and that has been altered



66 The Sheldonian : Busts of the Roman Emperors



67 The Interior of the Sheldonian



out of all recognition. What he built, in about 1665, was an independent block, with mullioned windows, a pediment, dormers, and a Mansard roof—the last being a new-fangled French importation of his own. Some fifteen years later the west side was added, and sixty years later the south side; so that Wren's work has been assimilated into the scheme, while losing all its individual features.

The garden upon which this quadrangle opens is very fine. At the far end is a gate corresponding to that on Broad Street: there is a legend that it is never to be opened except to admit a Stuart sovereign. Both pairs of gates were made by Thomas Robinson, the craftsman of the New College grille. The iron spikes which surmount them, and the array of broken bottles set in cement along the adjoining walls, convey a vivid idea of the fortifications required by every college. In spite of these obstacles, Trinity is reputed the easiest college to enter after twelve. There is an attractive lime-walk on the south side of the garden. The old pictures showed a maze or labyrinth on this side. No doubt this part of the garden was the "Grove" where Lady Isabella Thynne would make her entry with a theorbo or lute played before her. A more serious note is now struck by the bust of Cardinal Newman.

To return, through both quadrangles, to the chapel, this was the last of Dr. Bathurst's embellishments. The old chapel was destroyed in 1691, by which time Wren's architectural practice had passed all bounds. The work was entrusted to none other than the Dean of Christ Church, Dr. Henry Aldrich. It is one of the most successful things in Oxford.

It is pleasing to imagine what would transpire to-day if the head of one college were asked to design the chapel of another. Aldrich was an amiable divine, renowned as a smoker of tobacco, and as a composer of anthems and musical catches, of which "The Bonnie Christ Church Bells" is the best known. He bequeathed a large musical library to the House. He was his own architect for the Peckwater Quadrangle; later still, he built All Saints' Church. But Trinity chapel appears to have been his first, as it is his best work.

The front of the chapel is most exquisitely proportioned. The requirements of size called for no more than four bays—always a number to be avoided by any architect of skill. Aldrich avoided it with perfect dexterity. There should be a kind of *porte-cochère* to prolong the mass of the building. Its character as an entrance should be accentuated by an extra storey; and lest it should seem to masquerade uncomfortably as an ante-chapel, belfry, or anything of that sort, its secular character is further emphasised by rectangular sash windows. For symmetry, an arch is introduced; for distinction, the head of this arch is filled in. Finally, and with

what art, the line of the principal roof is renewed and prolonged beyond the little tower, for exactly the right distance. How surely is the whole structure buttressed, anchored, and balanced, by the extrusion of those five feet or so of stonework.

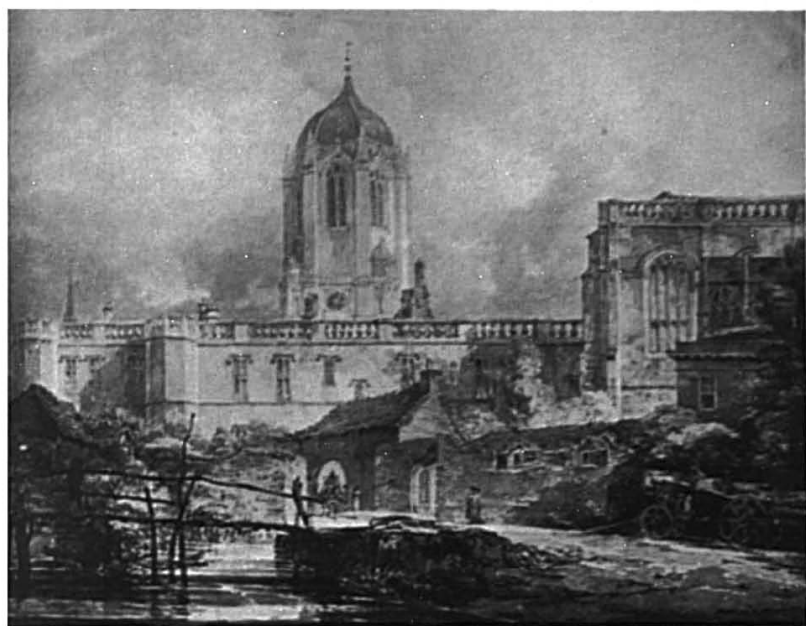
Wren, as a very old friend of Dr. Bathurst, was asked to look over Aldrich's design. It seems that he slightly altered the balustrade, and suggested the gay vases in place of some more formal type of pinnacle. For the rest, it was a plan which he might have been proud to own himself.

If the exterior of this building charms, its interior dazzles; for it contains a fantastic profusion of the finest work of Grinling Gibbons. At the east end, his limewood carvings surround fine panels of veneer beneath a broken curved pediment. The wainscots of the side walls are of oak. They terminate in a pair of glazed cupboards, ingeniously contrived so that the tomb of the founder, a revered but incongruous object, might remain at hand and open to inspection without obtruding its primitive appearance in such a setting. The screen at the west end is also ornamented by Grinling Gibbons; and its two seats of honour, with their little canopies, are singularly neat and pleasing. The candles, the plaster roof, and the marble floor complete an effect which by some miracle has survived the attentions of the nineteenth century, unspoiled except by some detestable stained glass.

Having transformed and embellished his college, Ralph Bathurst died in the fortieth year of his Presidency. When he had finished with building, there was one other pleasure left to him, and this was to observe the desolate state of Balliol College next door. "Dr. Bathurst was perhaps secretly pleased to see a neighbouring and once a rival society reduced to this condition, while his own flourished beyond all others. Accordingly, one afternoon he was found in his garden, which then ran almost contiguous to the east side of Balliol-college, throwing stones at the windows with much satisfaction, as if happy to contribute his share in completing the appearance of its ruin."

Tom Tower, Wren's Oxford masterpiece, was designed at the height of his fame, fifteen years after the Great Fire of London. It used to be confidently stated that he was the architect of the Old Ashmolean, that charming little museum which stands alongside his Sheldonian, to which it is rather more than ten years junior. Nowadays this attribution is challenged. The Old Ashmolean is intended as an unpretentious building, and the Broad Street front is modest enough; but on the eastern entrance the architect, whoever he may be, lets himself go with a pyramidal flight of steps and a massive pediment, curved in more directions than one, all centring round a doorway of quite ordinary size. It is a very successful piece of architectural exaggeration, and the detail is admirably carried out. It is interesting to compare this





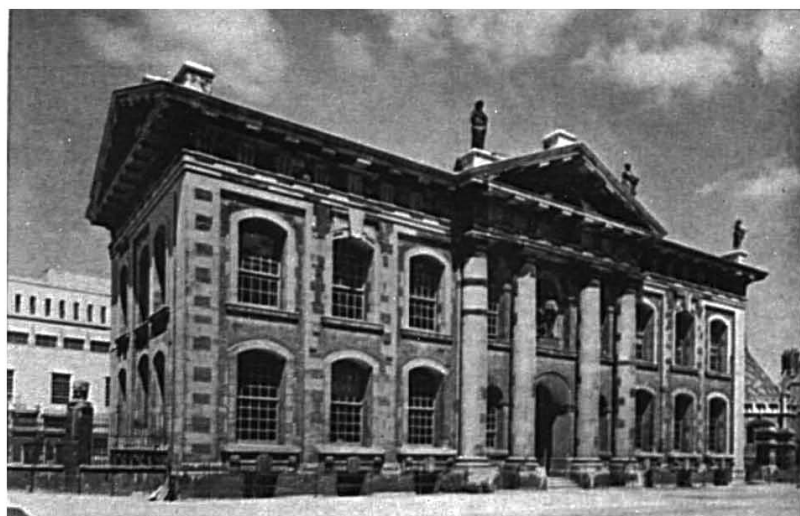
60 Christ Church and Tom Tower, from a drawing by J. M. W. Turner  
(ca. 1794)



70 The Doorway of the Old Ashmolean



**71 The Clarendon and Sheldonian Buildings**



**72 The Clarendon Building, with a glimpse of the new Bodleian**

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work with the Sheldonian : it bears no intrinsic unlikeness to Wren's work, and would suggest that his skill and confidence had grown in the intervening period.

The Old Ashmolean was built to house a collection of curiosities formed in the seventeenth century by two famous gardeners and botanists, both employed by Charles I, namely, the two John Tradescants, father and son. They formed a "physic garden" at Lambeth; but their natural history collection descended to Elias Ashmole, an eccentric and astrologer, who presented his own and the Tradescant collections to the university. They have formed the nucleus of a much larger collection, which has long since moved its quarters. The main floor of the Old Ashmolean now houses the offices of the Oxford English Dictionary. The upper storey, to which access is obtained by a side entrance, contains an interesting collection of scientific instruments; but from an architectural standpoint the interior is of no interest.

The Sheldonian's other neighbour carries the story on for yet another thirty years. The Clarendon Building was finished just fifty years after the Sheldonian was begun. It was built to house the university printing press, for which the Theatre had become an insufficient home. Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and Chancellor of Oxford, had written a best-seller in his *History of the Rebellion*, as all haunters of old bookshops may observe. His son, Lord Cornbury, the friend of John Evelyn and High Steward of Oxford, gave the copyright of this valuable work to the university. This sudden bounty was promptly used to build the "Clarendon." The design appears to have originated in a sketch by Sir John Vanburgh carried out by Nicholas Hawksmoor. The former was engaged on Blenheim Palace at the time, and doubtless had frequent occasion to visit Oxford. The latter was a distinguished pupil in the office of Sir Christopher Wren, who was then almost retired, having seen the completion of St. Paul's.

The University Press, whose continuous history dates from 1583, only remained in the Clarendon building for just a century before it had to transfer, like the Ashmolean, to larger premises. It is worth recording that the beautiful types which this press still uses were collected by Dr. Fell, who was fond of having books printed for his private circulation. The Clarendon building now contains the principal university offices, and most notably those of the proctors. On any morning in term, undergraduates are to be seen in cap and gown attending to learn the penalty of their transgression. They are summoned by tickets sent to their colleges. Some ten years ago, Mr. Duncan Sandys contrived to have such tickets distributed to almost the whole university; and the following morning the Clarendon was besieged by an indignant mob of several hundreds. But such enterprise is rare.

We have seen Hawksmoor's pseudo-Gothic quadrangle at All

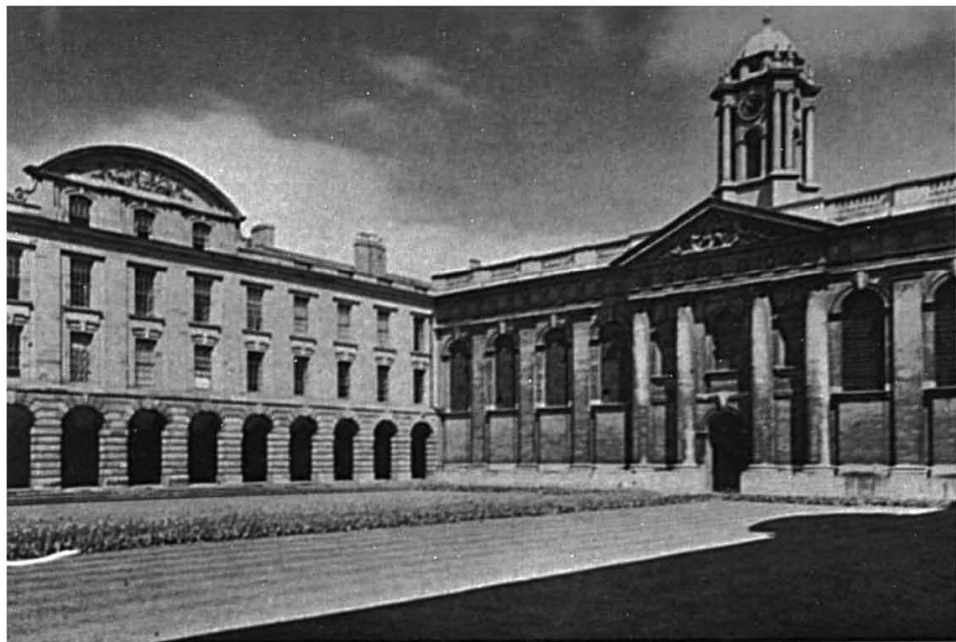
Souls, and regretted the miscarriage of his scheme to rebuild Brasenose. But he had his great chance instead at Queen's, where he rebuilt the entire college to his own design.

Queen's was the sixth of Oxford colleges, being founded in the year 1840. It had become very rich, and its original quarters were three and a half centuries old; so the fellows decided that the requirements of a spacious age, in which the humblest student expected two large rooms, justified an entirely fresh start. Their first step was to build a library, and this was done in the 1690's. It is a little difficult to attribute this design exactly, since Hawksmoor was then actually in Wren's office. Like so much else that people have put down to Wren, it is most likely that the plans were sometimes glanced at by the great Surveyor-General, and that he made hints and criticisms upon them. Certain it is that all the remainder of the present college was designed by Hawksmoor himself after 1700, and finished about 1733.

The great front quadrangle of Queen's is three-sided, like those added to New College and Trinity; while the fourth side is linked up by a piazza, as in Hawksmoor's other effort at All Souls. The graceful dome over the entrance, in which columns are frankly employed as buttresses, shelters a statue of George II's brilliant Queen, Caroline of Anspach, who gave her blessing to the rebuilding. In this she carried forward a traditional association between the college and the queens of England which began with Queen Philippa and has not ceased with Queen Mary. The terminal pediments on either side are adorned with symbolical statues, as were those of the Clarendon building.

Within the quadrangle a massive arcade is carried round three sides, of which two are plain and solid blocks of "staircases." Facing the entrance are chapel and hall, aligned in one block, but in reversal of the usual order. The hall is to the left, a noble room of great height, marred by the alterations of Mr. Kempe. The chapel opens from the central passage opposite the gate, and protrudes an apsidal eastern end into Queen's Lane. In this severely classical composition, an incongruity is created by some old glass of the van Ling brothers, saved from the former chapel and but ill adapted to its present place. The ceiling of the apse is painted by Thornhill; the screen, with its particular ornate seat for the Provost, is carved by Grinling Gibbons; while the silver upon the altar is the handiwork of the greatest of all silversmiths, Paul Lamerie.

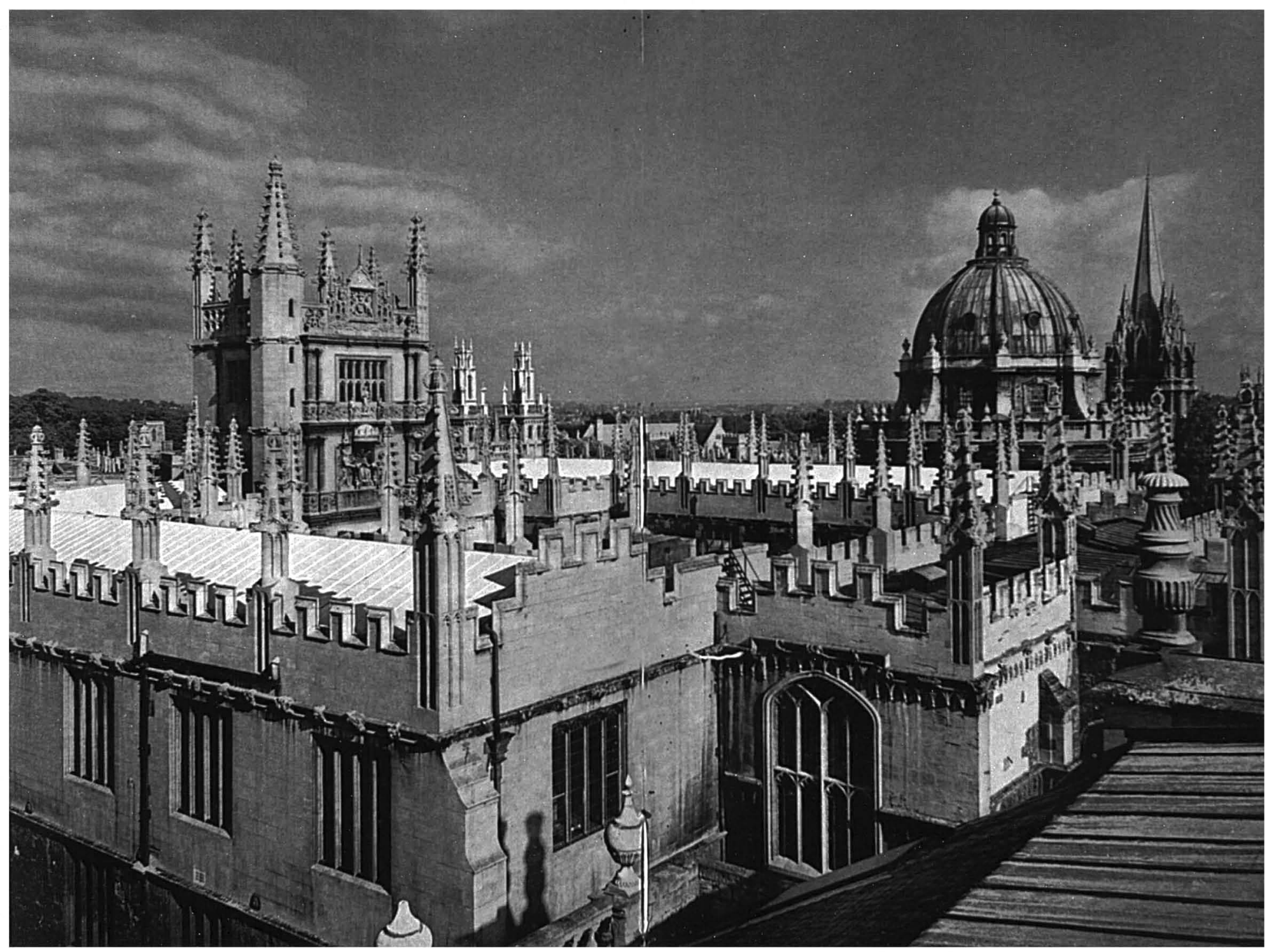
The second quadrangle at Queen's is a considerably plainer affair than the first, apart from its noble library. Those who know Wren's great library at Trinity College, Cambridge, will quickly understand why this work is so confidently attributed to the same hand; but it might equally well have been the triumph of a brilliant pupil. The Trinity library maintains its original



73 Queen's : the Front Quad

74 Queen's : the High Street Front







76 Queen's : the Library



77 Queen's : a Carved Panel from one of the Racks

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feature of an open colonnade below, to protect the room from mildew and to provide a promenade for gossiping dons below. This golden intention, so often formed but as often departed from, has here again given way to the ceaseless expansion of the library. The ground floor is merely an untidy book-store. The room above it is one of the noblest libraries in England. In its layout the architect has reverted to the mediæval system of ranging the cases at right angles to the walls, so that between each pair is a secluded bay for study. A fine plaster ceiling and a quantity of Grinling Gibbons carvings scattered about the bookcase-ends complete the effect of lavish and cultivated luxury. Though nothing can quite compare with the three old parts of the Bodleian, though the Christ Church library (some twenty years later) is more beautiful, Queen's library is the glory of the college, and since its recent restoration one of the best sights of Oxford.

Queen's maintains the connection with the counties of Westmorland and Cumberland which it derived from Robert Eglesfield, the founder. Many of the undergraduates are North Country; and in earlier days they found it necessary to winter in Oxford. For the Long Vacation, which of course was timed to coincide with the necessity of harvesting, they would revisit their distant homes; but the state of the roads, and the distances, made this impossible at Christmas. To this day, though almost everybody is at St. Moritz or Madeira, there are Christmas celebrations at Queen's, with a boar's head and a special carol; while on New Year's Day the bursar mysteriously presents a needle and thread to each of the other fellows. Queen's is the last of colleges to brew its own beer.

Contemporary with the great new works at Queen's, two other handsome additions to the High Street were made, and both by unprofessional architects. Almost next door, Dr. George Clarke built himself the Warden's house attached to the front of All Souls. At All Saints' Church, a couple of hundred yards along on the same side, Dean Aldrich was presented with a singular opportunity. In 1699 the tower collapsed and fell on to the church. It was rebuilt from his design in 1708. The site was at the foot of the Turl, and the new church was placed so that it almost touches the Mitre Hotel across the road. It may very well have been that Aldrich had some scheme to widen the Turl into a triumphal way between this church and his chapel at Trinity, whose unused gateway is aligned to such a layout. All Saints' could have stood astride of such a street as does St. Mary's in Radcliffe Square. But it was not to be: the Turl remains its dingy self.

All Saints' is not in the same class as Trinity chapel. The tower and spire are a laborious imitation of the inimitable forms that Wren contrived with so many variations for his City churches. The interior is like a hat-box seen from the moth's point of view,



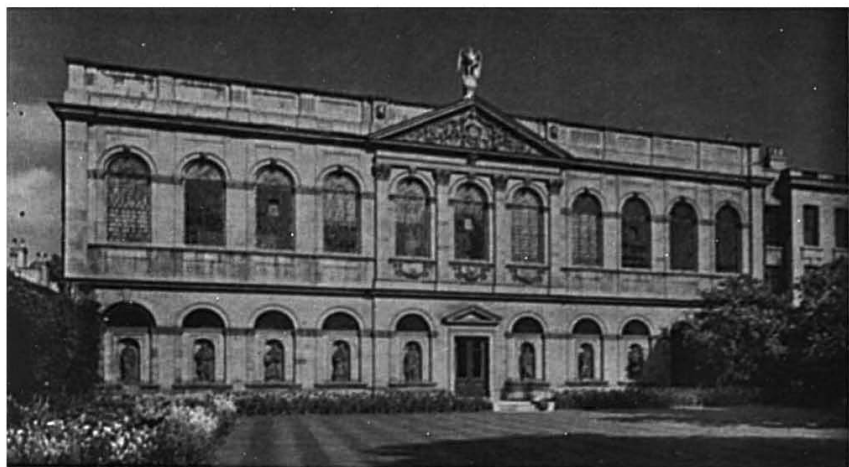
being almost as wide as it is long. It has been twice Victorianised ; and the windows are cluttered up with horrible stained glass. There is a fine pulpit, and a delightful monument to a centenarian alderman. All Saints' is the official church of the city, just as St. Mary's is of the university. On the first Sunday in each month the Mayor and Corporation come here in procession. The parish was amalgamated with St. Martin's when the old church at Carfax had to be pulled down. Amongst other relics, the font came from St. Martin's : this is the font in which Sir William Davenant was baptised with Shakespeare standing godfather ; though whether he attended in person, nobody knows.<sup>1</sup>

Aldrich died in 1710, but the remarkable group of talented amateurs did not die with him. Holdsworth made his bold plan for Magdalen, of which the New Buildings were erected in 1733. Dr. Clarke conceived his masterly scheme at All Souls, whereby the hall was to balance the chapel, and the library was to balance them both ; he built the mighty library at the House ; and at Worcester College he got the chance to build a whole foundation anew.

Worcester is a long way from the heart of Oxford, but as French guides say, *vaut le détour*. The Benedictines, arriving on the scene as early as 1283, thought it wise to establish this colony away from the giddy distractions of the mediæval town, and set it on the fringe of Beaumont Palace. Confiscated by Henry VIII, their property was occupied for a while by Bishop King, and later sold to Sir Thomas White, the founder of St. John's, who established it as St. John Baptist Hall, a satellite foundation to his college. It did not prosper, though it produced one famous son in Richard Lovelace. So unsuccessful was the hall that it was threatened with demolition through inability to pay the chimney-tax. Schemes were promoted—one being to endow it as a house for members of the Orthodox Church ; but the old buildings continued to moulder and decay. At last, in 1714, Sir Thomas Cookes, a baronet of Worcestershire, bequeathed £10,000 to found

<sup>1</sup> Davenant's father kept the Crown Inn at Carfax, where Shakespeare used to stop on his way to Stratford. Upon these premises, now number 8 the Cornmarket, some old wall-paintings were lately discovered in a front room which Shakespeare may have occupied. The room is now open to the public. Shakespeare was "exceedingly respected" on his annual visits, so much so that some thought him to be the father of the younger Davenant.

In the year 1675 the Crown Inn saw a remarkable defeat of the Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, who had so humiliated the British Navy. Tromp spent his time in Oxford "either in the brandy shop or tavern" in company with a butler and a plumber : but the dons defeated him. "Dr. Speed stayed in town on purpose to drink with him, which is the only thing he is good for . . . who mustering about five or six as able men as himself at wine and brandy got the Dutchman to the Crown Tavern, and there so plied him that at 12 at night they were fain to carry him to his lodgings."



78 Queen's : the Library from the Garden



70 All Souls : the Warden's House



80 Worcester : the Garden Front



81 The Mitre Inn

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a college for the men of that county; and with this fund the university took over what remained.

Dr. Clarke not only gave his services as architect, but also helped considerably towards the funds. His plan was original. For once the college entrance is not on the street, but is approached between two balancing wings, consisting of chapel and hall. These are connected by an arcade, above which is the long narrow library. It is an ingenious plan, similar to that of the King's Inns at Dublin. Unfortunately, the chapel has been ruined by an incredibly bad restoration; and its glass is now so murkily stained that it is almost impossible to judge what its appearance can have been. The library contains Clarke's admirable collection of architectural drawings.

Clarke died before his plans were carried out, and the completion of them was entrusted to Henry Keene, a professional architect. To him is due the great classical block of rooms adjoining the central group, and pompously overlooking the sunk quadrangle. With the existing levels, this layout is all the better for its unfinished state. It was undoubtedly intended to erect a south wing to balance the north; but money ran out, and the ramshackle little row of houses on the left was spared. These are the original "mansions" of Gloucester College, and the shields upon their doorways show how each represented an offshoot of some different abbey. Abingdon, Westminster, St. Albans, and so forth—each had its own entrance under its own coat-of-arms. Has it struck you as strange that undergraduates' rooms never open off a corridor, but always off a staircase of their own? Here is the reason. The Benedictines built this way in the thirteenth century; and what they started still appears to be the best arrangement in the interests of peace and quiet. In the women's colleges, they slouch about the long corridors and shuffle in and out of each other's rooms with gossip and cups of cocoa; but a man can retreat behind his impenetrable oak, and ward away all comers. If he wants to visit a friend, he must cross the quad to do it; but he will be able to make his visit in peace, immune from communal hilarity.

• By an obscure hole in the south wall, you can get to the back of the "mansions," from which side their appearance is still more charmingly untidy. But they are not merely quaint; they contain some remarkable varieties of mediæval stonework. Following the garden walk, you arrive at a considerable artificial lake, contrived out of a swamp about a hundred years ago, which is Worcester's principal distinction. It is mournfully landscaped, and the only lake in Oxford; its proximity to two grubby railways and a canal adds a touch of sadness, as to some vista in Regent's Park.

In Walton Street, adjoining Worcester chapel, can be seen the

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old entrance to Gloucester College. A Victorian plan to rebuild the whole street front, by Mr. Blore of all men, was averted by want of money.

Even what there is of Worcester took over sixty years a-building, and ran short for money at that. No other college was founded for well over a century. The age was lacking in Waynfletes or Wolseys. There was little piety and less celibacy about. But the century produced one jolly bachelor, a highly representative figure, who left a considerable mark on Oxford. Dr. John Radcliffe graduated at University College, and practised medicine in Oxford. His knowledge of the subject was not specially great; but his wit was so exquisitely amusing that people feigned illness in order to get him in for a chat. Armed with such valuable powers, he transferred to London, and was soon earning twenty guineas a day. His fees were enormous for the times. He was perpetually being retained by members of the royal family, and as frequently sacked for his familiarities. He infuriated Queen Anne by saying that her malady was nothing but the vapours; and he got into trouble for not attending when summoned to her deathbed. He only survived her by three months.

We meet Dr. Radcliffe in all the diaries of the time. He was always open-handed with his money. Though he had resigned a fellowship at Lincoln rather than take orders himself, he freely helped the poor clergy. When Obadiah Walker was Master of Univ., Radcliffe gave him an east window for his chapel; and when he had to resign, Radcliffe pensioned him off. He made large gifts to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London; but Oxford was his first loyalty, and got the bulk of his bequests.

To University College, Radcliffe left the money for the extensions to the college, and for certain fellowships and a library. His collection of medical works he left to the university with a sum of money to house and endow a library. Out of the surplus of their wealth, the Radcliffe Trustees later built an infirmary and an observatory, both of which are situated in the Woodstock Road. The infirmary is a plain handsome house designed by the same Henry Keene who finished off Clarke's plans at Worcester. It has been frequently extended with the growth of Oxford's population, and in the last few years has received such gigantic sums of money from Lord Nuffield that it is supposed to contain almost as many doctors as patients. This great accretion of wealth has meant still more buildings, with the unfortunate result that the observatory next door has been swallowed up. Its astronomical activities have been shifted to South Africa. A maternity wing obstructs its outlook; a Nuffield Professor of Therapeutics occupies the Astronomers' House. Unknown rites take place in the tall rooms where the telescopes used to be. But it is still worth seeing for its outside alone. Built between 1772 and 1795,

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## CLASSICAL OXFORD AS IT IS

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it is almost the only late eighteenth-century work in Oxford ; and it is the first Greek revival work in Oxford. It is supposed to be reminiscent of a Temple of the Winds in Athens ; and there are some carvings of winds on the octagonal tower. But the charm of the building is in its solid squat base, relieved with niches and without a cornice, and in the *piano nobile* effect of the next storey, and in the immense windows of the room above, rendering the whole tower transparent. Nowadays observatories look like toadstools ; there is something pleasingly naïf about building a tower to be closer to the stars, with a lot of big windows to see them through.

The architect for the Astronomers' House and the Observatory was Henry Keene ; but the tower of the latter was completed by James Wyatt in his best Grecian manner. Anyone who compares it with Wyatt's other works in Oxford, namely, the library at Oriel and Canterbury Gate at the House, will find it difficult to believe that Wyatt did not design the whole building.

Further explorations north of the Observatory will prove disappointing to an architectural observer ; but on the return journey, by St. Giles's, there is a sight worth seeing in number 16, on the east side of the street. This house is the Judges' Lodgings ; that is to say, the tenant makes way for a High Court Judge at every Oxford assize. It is an excellent Queen Anne specimen, bearing the date 1702 on its lead fittings. The architect is unknown ; but it seems that Sarah Duchess of Marlborough rented the house at one period.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Radcliffe's "Physic" Library was nobly accommodated in the most conspicuous building in Oxford, the great domed "Camera" in Radcliffe Square. The Doctor left £40,000 for the purpose, and it is easy to suppose that it was swallowed up in the erection of this vast rotunda. James Gibbs was the architect ; he is better known for his work at Cambridge and some London churches. His work began in 1789, and ended eight years later. It is more ponderous than beautiful in effect.

The mighty rustic base with its iron grilles was intended as an open space, in accordance with precedent ; but as always, it has been filled in. Not only that, but the whole square has been dug up and great underground bookstores have been constructed, from which it takes about an hour to fetch a book. The Physics Library, of which Radcliffe was so proud, has been ousted altogether, and sent away to a science museum. The Camera has become the central reading-room of the Bodleian. Hence these rows of bicycles ; hence the stream of young women trooping like bees in and out of a hive. By following them up fine curved stairs you

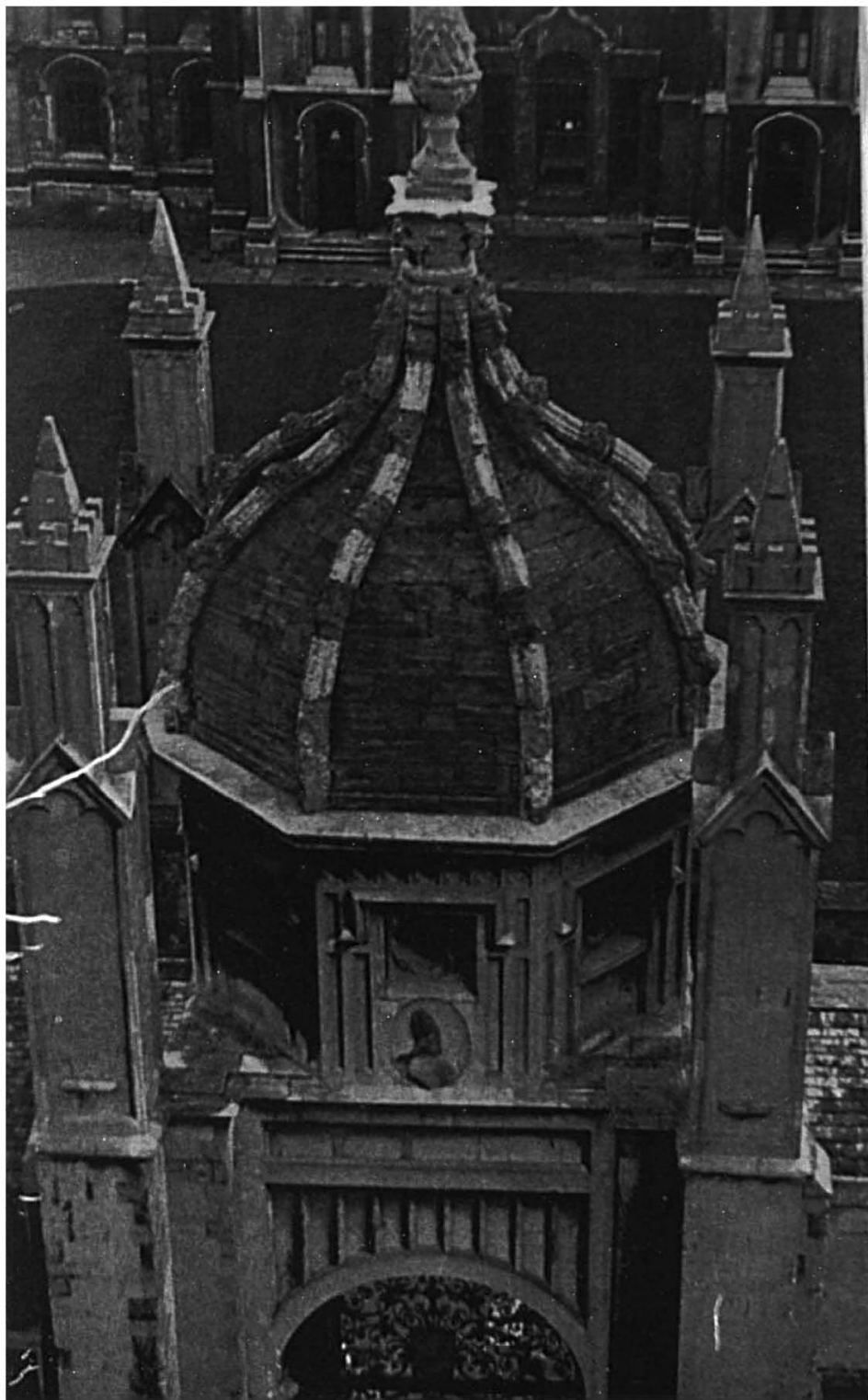
<sup>1</sup> St. Giles's is the scene of one of the greatest of England's country fairs, on September 5th and 6th in each year.

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## OXFORD

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come to the great circular room, with its depressing groups of desks and still more depressing miles of catalogues. From this level a corkscrew stair leads up to the open leads of the roof. The view from this high balustrade is one of the most striking things in Oxford. There is also a whimsical view into the Camera itself through the big windows of the drum.







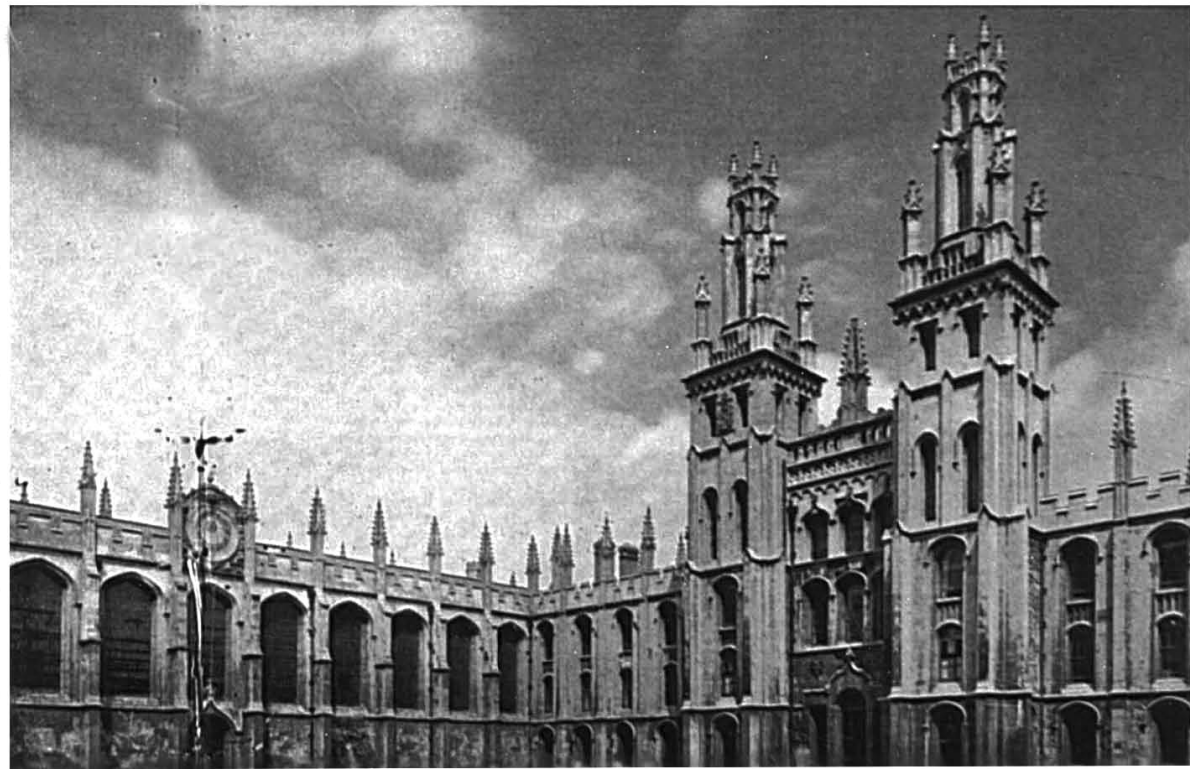
83 All Souls : the Codrington Library



85 Magdalen : the New Building



84 All Souls : Hawksmoor's Towers



86 All Souls : the Inner Quad

