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## Nature in the heart of the city

### Discover a greener and more exotic side to Oxford

#### 1. Welcome to Oxford

##### Oxford Town Hall

Welcome to Walk the World, a project which celebrates the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics by finding evidence of links between the UK and the 206 countries taking part in the Games. Walk the World is being developed as part of the Discovering Places Cultural Olympiad programme by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in partnership with the Heritage Alliance.

This walk in Oxford is one of a series of walks in different parts of the UK that highlights international connections. Oxford is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the UK, famous for the 'dreaming spires'

of its university which dates back 800 years. But this walk is designed to give you a different perspective on Oxford and introduce you to some lesser known corners of the city.

This walk focuses on international connections through flora and fauna. You will discover a range of trees and plants from around the world. Find out how different animals have been used symbolically in architecture and sculpture. See how many real live species you can spot in the parks and gardens. Explore natural history collections in the museums. Learn about the characters that travelled the world to collect specimens of trees, plants, seeds and animals.

The walk is about 2 ½ miles long. The route is mostly on the fringes of the city centre. Oxford can get very busy with visitors and tourists as well as residents and students. Please take care on busy pavements and when crossing busy roads. I hope you enjoy the walk.



Catte Street, Oxford  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

**Directions 1** - Make your way to Oxford Town Hall on St Aldate's. When you have a good view of the building (the best is probably across the road), listen to Track 2.

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## 2. Strong as an Ox

### Outside Oxford Town Hall

Welcome to Oxford. Here we are at the Town Hall. There has been a municipal hall on this site since the thirteenth century, though the current building dates from 1893. This very elaborate building is in a style called Gothic Revival. Just look at the detailing. But in particular have a look up. First look above the doorway at the coat of arms and see if you can spot an ox. Now look further up, at the weathervane on the roof. Did you find the ox up there as well? There are other oxen on the building too.



Oxford Town Hall (c.1905)  
© www.headington.org.uk

These oxen are on the Town Hall because of the city's name. There are places called Oxford in New Zealand and Canada, plus 21 Oxfords in the United States. 'Oxford' comes from the old English word *oxanforda*. It means a shallow crossing in the river (ford) where cattle (oxen) could cross safely - hence Ox-ford. Long before the spires of academic Oxford had even been dreamt about, this was a small trading settlement located between the fertile agricultural areas to the east and west.

Oxen were an important part of agriculture, not just in Anglo-Saxon Britain but long before. Humans domesticated cattle in order to harness their power to plough and transport, grind grain, pull logs and lead wagons. There is evidence of oxen being used on field terraces by the River Nile in ancient Egypt and in the paddy fields of ancient China. In fact, in Chinese culture, the ox is the second sign of the zodiac cycle. Those born in the Year of the Ox are characterised by strength and hard work.

Because of Oxford's name origins, the ox has long been the symbol of the city. As well as on the Town Hall, you will see many other images of an ox on signs and buildings. There is even a bronze statue of one outside the railway station. See how many you can spot today as you walk around. Throughout our walk, we will be looking for images of animals on and inside buildings. Before we leave the Town Hall, why not have a closer look for more oxen and other animals - including elephants and dragons!

**Country links** - Canada, China, Egypt, Greece, New Zealand, United States of America

**Directions 2** - From the Town Hall walk uphill and all the way along Cornmarket. At the junction with George Street, go straight across with shops on the left and a church on the right. At the junction with Beaumont Street, cross over at the traffic lights and turn left. Go inside the Ashmolean Museum and listen to Track 3.

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### 3. A wealth of world connections

#### Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology



See if you can spot these horse exhibits from Italy, China, Iraq and Tibet.  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The Ashmolean first opened in 1683. It was the UK's first ever public museum! It moved to this spectacular building in 1845. The museum has had a recent interior makeover and there are now 39 different galleries and temporary exhibition spaces inside. It is open every day except Monday from 10am to 6pm and it's free to go in.

You could spend all day inside exploring all the different collections from around the world. But given the theme of our walk, why not look for some specific international exhibits relating to animals.

See if you can find four different horses. In Room 9 is the ghostly outline of a horse's head decorated with bronze bits from Lucera in the Apulia region of southern Italy. Next to it is a sculptured relief of an Assyrian horse being led by an archer dating back to around 700 BC. In Room 32 see if you can find a Tibetan statue of Kuvera, the Hindu god of the north direction – seated on a horse. And in Room 38, look for a Chinese ceramic roof tile in the shape of a horse dated somewhere between 1600 and 1700.

Although not every town or city has a museum quite like the Ashmolean, many do have local history collections or exhibitions. So why not explore one near you and see what international connections you can find?

**Country links** - China, Iraq, Italy, Tibet

**Directions 3** - When you are ready, leave the museum by the main entrance. Go down the steps and turn left onto Beaumont Street. At the traffic lights you need to go straight across to the opposite side of St Giles. Use the pedestrian crossings and take care. Once on the opposite side, turn left up St Giles. Outside the main entrance to St John's College is a raised area under some trees. Stop there and listen to Track 4.

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## 4. A tree from east and west

### St Giles

Lining this wide road – which is known as St Giles – are a type of tree known as London Plane. They are characterised by being tall – usually 20 to 35 metres with a trunk of up to 3 metres or more in circumference. Often you will see the bark exfoliating and the patchy grey and green colours look a bit like khaki army camouflage. The London Plane was created by crossing two types of plane tree from two continents – the Oriental Plane tree and the American Sycamore.

The Oriental Plane was first recorded in the literature of ancient Greece, from whose name, Platane, our modern tree's name originates. The tree is also recognisable from Turkey to India, although named as the Chenar, following a root of Iranian language.

The American Sycamore is native to North America and can grow to massive proportions and great age. One of the oldest is in the city of Buffalo, New York and is claimed to date from the year 1700.

The first written account of the cross-pollination of these two trees was in Spain in the seventeenth century. As a hybrid, the London Plane has better tolerance to cold weather and is more disease resistant than its two parents. It is also very tolerant of urban pollution which is why it is found throughout central London – hence the name London Plane – as well as other cities in temperate regions such as Buenos Aires, Shanghai, Chicago and Sydney.



An exfoliating London Plane tree, St Giles  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

**Country links** - Argentina, Australia, China, Greece, India, Spain, Turkey, United States of America

**Directions 4** - Continue along the right hand side of St Giles until you reach the Lamb & Flag pub. Stop outside the pub and listen to Track 5.

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## 5. Sacrificial lamb

### St Giles

This pub gives us an example of animals being used symbolically. In this case, the lamb represents the Lamb of God – or agnus dei in Latin. In ancient Israel, lambs were highly-valued possessions. But under the traditions of Abrahamic religion they were sometimes sacrificed to God in order to request forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ was represented as being the perfect sacrificial lamb whose death brought forgiveness for all humankind. In the Bible John the Baptist says of Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). The lamb and flag has therefore become symbolic of St John the Baptist.



The Lamb and Flag pub sign, St Giles  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The college that we just passed – St Johns – is named after him. In fact, the college manages the pub and the profits from behind the bar fund scholarships for doctoral students!

The Lamb and Flag was also the heraldic symbol of the Knights Hospitallers, also known as the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This order of knights was formed after the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 to take care of knights who had been injured or were suffering from diseases. The order provided hospitals and shelter for pilgrims on their way to the Holy Lands and also had powerful military units who fought in almost every battle of the Crusades.

#### Country links - Israel

**Directions 5** - Go down the Lamb and Flag Passageway at the side of the pub. Before the passageway bends is a large tree. Stop by the tree and listen to Track 6.

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## 6. Beyond conkers

### Lamb and Flag Passage

Right here in Lamb and Flag Passage is a splendid horse chestnut tree. Horse chestnuts are easy to recognise because of their leaf shape - a fan of between 5 and 7 leaflets which spread from the base of the leaf.

The name of the tree is rather misleading. It is thought to originate from the erroneous belief that the tree was a kind of chestnut together with the equally false observation that eating them cured horses of chest complaints! Horse chestnuts actually originated in mountainous areas in south-eastern Europe, including northern Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria - although they are now found across countries where summers are not too hot, or else in the cooler mountain areas of warmer countries.



Horse chestnut tree in Lamb and Flag Passage  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

You probably know horse chestnuts best for their fruit – conkers. A glossy brown nut grows inside a green spiky capsule then falls from the tree in autumn. The children’s’ game of conkers developed in Britain and Ireland. There are other uses for the nut though. The nuts are available in food supplements and were even eaten during the two world wars as a source of starch. They can also be used to treat some health issues such as varicose veins, edema and sprains. Meanwhile in the Ukraine you might see the nuts in animal models and chunky children’s jewellery.

**Country links** - Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine

**Directions 6** - Continue along Lamb and Flag Passage and straight along Museum Road. Cross Parks Road at the pedestrian crossing and turn left. Stop on the grass outside the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and listen to Track 7.

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## 7. Long distance travellers

### Oxford University Museum of Natural History

This is the University's Museum of Natural History, built in the 1850s. It's not only home to a large natural history collection but also to a live species. Look up at the tower. Inside the ventilation flues are the nests of swifts which come here in the spring and summer to breed.

Swifts are quite remarkable because they spend almost all of their lives in the air – day and night, winter and summer. A swift can spend the first two or three years of its life in the air before making its first landing to breed.



Common Swift in flight  
Wikimedia Commons

Swifts are migratory birds which breed across Europe, Asia and Northern Africa during the summer then fly to Southern Africa for the winter. They can be seen here in the UK from the end of April until early September. Our UK swifts migrate through France and Spain to spend their winter in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Congo and Tanzania, with some going as far south as Zambia and Mozambique. Their annual round trip is about 22,000 kilometres, or 14,000 miles.

This swift colony is part of the Oxford Swift Research Project. It started in 1947 and is one of the longest running studies of any bird species. It has contributed greatly to our knowledge about the bird. There is even a webcam inside the nesting boxes. Between May and August you can view live pictures either inside the Museum or on the website.

**Country links** - DR Congo, France, Mozambique, Spain, Tanzania, Zambia

**Directions 7** - Go towards the building and look for some large footprints in the grass. Stop when you have found them and listen to Track 8.

## 8. Watch out for the Megalosaurus!

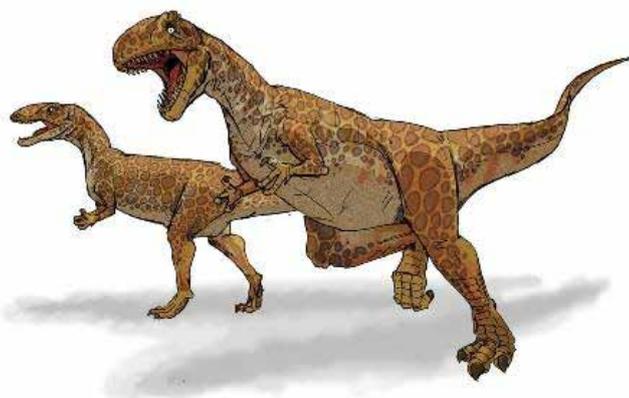
### Outside Oxford University Museum of Natural History

These giant footprints belong to a Megalosaurus – a dinosaur that was right here in Oxford millions of years ago! In 1997 a set of footprints was found in an old limestone quarry 20 kilometres north of Oxford. They had been created 166 million years ago when the area was covered by shallow sea, lagoons and mudflats. The footprints outside the Museum are a cast of those found in the quarry.

The Megalosaurus was nine metres long and walked on its hind legs much like the Tyrannosaurus Rex. Its name is from the Greek for 'great lizard'. As you can see it had three toes and big claws. The Megalosaurus was the first dinosaur species ever recorded in Britain when a femur was found in Chipping Norton near Oxford in 1676.



Megalosaurus footprint  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



A modern reconstruction of Megalosaurus  
Wikimedia Commons

Inside the Museum are spectacular displays of four species of dinosaur that lived in Oxfordshire, as well as other dinosaurs from around the world. These include a Triceratops skull from South Dakota in the USA, a skeleton of an Edmontosaurus which lived between Alaska and Mexico, and the cast of an Iguanodon skeleton from Belgium.

**Country links** - Belgium, Canada, Greece, Mexico United States of America

**Directions 8** - Go over to the stone pillar outside the main entrance. Stop there and listen to Track 9.

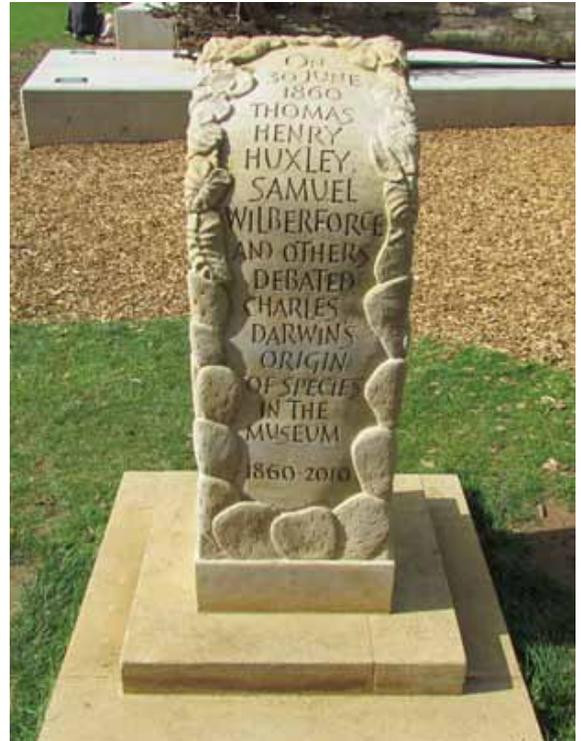
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## 9. The Great Debate

### Outside Oxford University Museum of Natural History

This monument commemorates a 'Great Debate' between science and religion. The naturalist Charles Darwin set off in his ship, the Beagle, in 1832. On his five-year voyage around the world, he visited the Azores, Tenerife, the Cape Verde islands, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, the Falkland Islands, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, Mauritius and South Africa. Along the way he collected many different plants, animals, rocks and fossils. He also made observations about the behaviour or different species.

As a result of this voyage he formulated his theory of natural selection. This was published in 1859 entitled *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin's idea of evolution went against the commonly-held view that God was in control of creation. A year after his book was published there was a 'Great Debate' here in Oxford between the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, and the biologist, Thomas Huxley. They debated natural selection in front of a vocal crowd of 500 people.



The 'Great Debate' monument  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This memorial stone commemorates that debate. Over 150 years later the debate between evolution and creation continues. You can also find a statue of Darwin inside the museum.

**Country links** - Argentina, Australia, Cape Verde, Chile, Ecuador, Mauritius, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, Spain, Uruguay

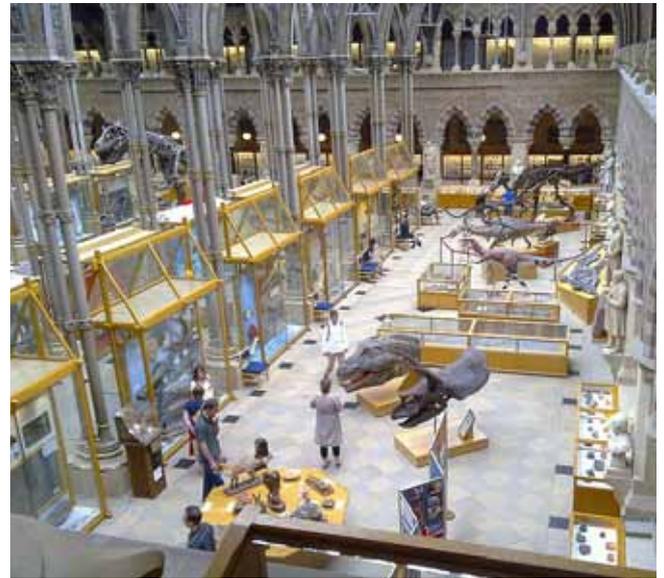
**Directions 9** - The Museum is free and is open every day from 10am to 5pm. Go inside and listen to Track 10.

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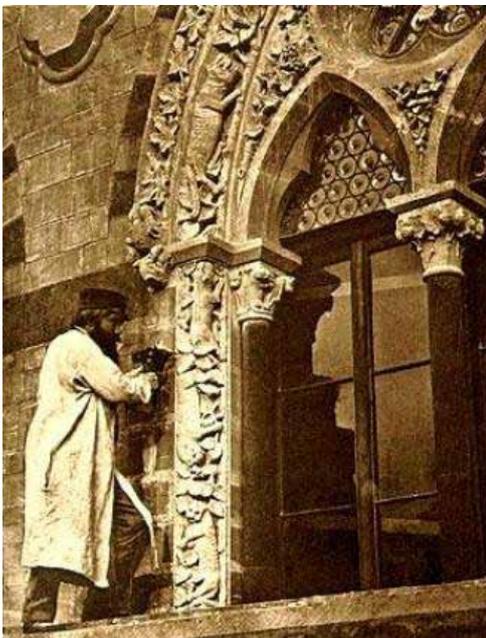
## 10. Cathedral of science

### Oxford University Museum of Natural History

As we found in the Ashmolean Museum earlier, museums are a treasure-trove of international connections. The collections here are broadly divided into four main areas of natural history. The first theme is entomology, or insects. There are over five million specimens here making it the second biggest collection in Britain. The second theme is geology, which includes fossils of flora and fauna. The third theme is mineralogy and petrology, which includes over 30,000 mineral specimens from all over the world as well as collections of gemstones, meteorites and mineralogical instruments. The fourth theme is zoology, which includes more than 250,000 specimens of mammals, birds and crustaceans. It's not surprising that this museum has been described as a 'Cathedral of Science'.



The OU Museum of Natural History Dinosaur Gallery  
Wikimedia Commons



Sculptor James O'Shea working on some of the Museum's animal carvings  
Wikimedia Commons

Natural history is also inscribed into the building itself. In the lobby look out for a stork, pelican and snake carved in stone. Many of the carvings were made by the Irish company O'Shea and Whelan. In the main court look on the 30 pillars, each of which has different species of plant weaving around. Here are two suggestions to look for. Once you have identified them see how many other examples from around the world you can find on the other pillars.

On column 3 is the date palm which originated in the Persian Gulf and has been cultivated since as early as 4000 BCE across the area between Mesopotamia and Egypt. In later times traders spread dates around South and Southwest Asia, northern Africa and Mediterranean Europe. They were introduced into Mexico and California by the Spaniards in 1765. Today the leading date producers in the world are Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

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On column 30 is a pineapple plant which is said to originate from the area between Southern Brazil and Paraguay. Natives spread it throughout South America and it eventually reached the Caribbean where Christopher Columbus discovered it in 1493 and took the first examples to Europe. The Spanish then introduced the plant into the Philippines, Hawaii, Zimbabwe and Guam. Today the world's leading producers are Thailand, the Philippines and Brazil.

One of the museum's well-known exhibits is the world's most complete dodo which is to the left of the Main Court. The flightless bird was endemic to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. When humans settled on the island they destroyed much of the forest where the birds made their homes, while dogs and cats brought by the settlers plundered their nests. It became extinct in the late seventeenth century just over 100 years after its discovery and is now often used to symbolise the extinction of a species as a direct result of human activity.



The Museum's Dodo reconstruction  
Wikimedia Commons

**Country links** - Brazil, Egypt, Guam, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Mexico, Morocco, Paraguay, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Zimbabwe

**Directions 10** - When you are ready leave the museum by the main entrance and turn right along Parks Road. Turn right through the ornamental Keble Gate into the University Parks. Pick up a leaflet from the information board which contains a map of the park. Turn left along West Walk. Shortly before the corner with North Lodge are a group of six tall trees. Stop at the six trees and listen to Track 11.

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## 11. Six giants

### The University Parks

From the early 1600s this area was used as a 'pleasure ground'. The 70 acre park that you see today was created in the 1850s as a free recreational space for members of the university, Oxford residents and visitors to the city. Although the park has a variety of uses, particularly for leisure and sport, it is an arboretum – a collection of trees. Species have been brought here from all around the world.

This group of six tall trees are Wellingtonia trees, or giant sequoias. Their Latin name is *sequoiadendron giganteum*. In the Victorian era, it became fashionable to have these giant trees in gardens.



A lithograph showing 32 people dancing on the stump of a giant sequoia found in California in 1853  
Wikimedia Commons

They originated in the Sierra Nevada, California. Cornish plant hunter, William Lobb, first heard about them at a meeting of the California Academy of Science in San Francisco and immediately recognised the commercial potential. In 1854 he shipped the first specimens back to the UK and marketed them as the 'Monarch of the Californian Forest'.

But the name of this tree went on to cause an international diplomatic incident between Britain and America. In Britain the tree was named *Wellingtonia gigantea* after the Duke of Wellington who had defeated Napoleon. But the Americans wanted to call it *Washingtonia*, to honour the first American President, George Washington. After years of botanical wrangling, it was finally given the name *sequoiadendron giganteum* because of its similarity to the Californian redwood, which is *sequoia sempervirens*.

**Country links** - United States of America

**Directions 11** - Make your way along the North Walk and listen to Track 12 as you continue.

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## 12. International roots

### The University Parks

As you have already heard this arboretum has species from all around the world. As you walk look out for the Coronation Clump which was planted to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It includes an Italian Maple (native to countries such as Spain, Italy, Morocco and Algeria), the Aleppo Pine (native across the Mediterranean including Croatia, Greece, Tunisia and Libya), the Valonia Oak (also native to the Southern Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Greek Islands), and the American Smoke Tree (native to the southeastern United States).



Various tree species at the University Parks  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In the section of the park called Lazenbee's Ground are some more examples of trees brought from overseas. There is a Turkish Hazel, which is native across a belt from southeastern Europe and the Balkans through Turkey to Iran. The Serbian Spruce is a rare species local to a valley in western Serbia and eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Oriental Plane is noted in ancient Greek history but also eastwards as far as India where it was used in Islamic gardens as well as being symbolic of a Hindu goddess. Meanwhile, the Himalayan Birch is found in the Himalayas in India and Nepal where the bark has a variety of uses including butter packaging, umbrella covers and bandages!

So, as you can see, many of the trees around us did not originate in the UK. Why not look around your local park or garden and see what plants you can identify from around the world.

**Country links** - Algeria, Croatia, Greece, India, Iran, Italy, Libya, Morocco, Nepal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, United States of America

**Directions 12** - When you reach the river, turn right, following the footpath parallel to the river. Stop at the bridge and listen to Track 13.

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## 13. Parklife

### The University Parks

This is the River Cherwell. Most of the University Park is on the west bank of the river but across the bridge is a small four acre extension. Because this area lies between two branches of the river it is known as Mesopotamia after the area in modern-day Iraq, northeastern Syria, southeastern Turkey and southwestern Iran between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, where human civilization is thought to have first begun.

On the river see if you can spot ducks and swans. The type of swan seen in Britain is the mute swan which originated in Eurasia. According to the United Nations Environment Programme the mute swan is found in 70 different countries, breeds in 49 of these places and is vagrant in 16 countries. In total there are about 500,000 mute swans worldwide, of which 70 per cent are in the former Soviet Union. The largest single breeding area is the Volga Delta on the Caspian Sea where there are about 11,000 pairs. The United Kingdom has about 22,000 of the birds. Other significant populations in Europe are in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland and Ukraine.



A Mute swan in Lake Killaloe, Ireland  
© Alfredo Encallado via Flickr.com

The most commonly-seen duck in Britain is the mallard. The males are distinctive for their bright green head and yellow bill, while females have a light brown head and orange bill. Mallards are found throughout the temperate and subtropical areas of the Americas, Europe, Asia and North Africa. There are thought to be at least 10 million breeding mallards worldwide. In Britain the native population is joined by migrants in winter escaping the harsh weather in Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

As you continue you're bound to see some squirrels too. Red squirrels were the native type in the UK and across Europe but you will be lucky to see one today. In Britain most of the native population of red squirrels have been wiped out by the grey squirrel which was brought from North America in the nineteenth century.

**Country links** - Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America

**Directions 13** - Continue a short way along the footpath, keeping the river on your left. Listen to Track 14 as you continue.

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## 14. Heavenly trees

### The University Parks

One type of tree to look out for in the Park is the willow. Willows can be spotted easily by their drooping shape with branches bending downwards. They are often found on the banks of rivers and canals. Although willow trees are a common sight across the UK they are found across temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

Many centuries ago people discovered that the leaves and bark of the willow tree had medicinal properties. There is mention of it in ancient texts from Assyria, Sumeria, Egypt and Greece. It was used in concoctions to relieve fever and rheumatism as well as serving as an antiseptic and disinfectant. These days the chemical salicin found in the bark is used to make aspirin. So next time you take an aspirin tablet for a headache, think of the graceful willow tree.



Willow branches over the Cherwell  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Willow trees have long been very important in Eastern mythology and beliefs. Willow trees symbolise a kind of Buddhist heaven. Across China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Vietnam, people carry willow branches during the Qingming Festival when they visit the graves of their ancestors. They also put willow branches on gates and front doors to help ward off the evil spirits that are thought to wander on Qingming. You will also have seen willows on pen and ink paintings from China and Japan.

Many other trees and plants in Britain that we take for granted –or may not even notice - originate in other countries. Why not find out more about the trees or plants in your local park and find out where they came from. You may be surprised by the results!

**Country links** - China, Egypt, Greece, Hong Kong, Iraq, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, Vietnam

**Directions 14** - Keep the river on your left then follow Lucas Walk to the right along to the South Lodge Gate. Leave the park at South Lodge and turn right along South Parks Road. Keep on the right hand side. Just before the pedestrian crossing is the University's Department of Plant Sciences. Stop outside and listen to Track 15.

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## 15. Saving the forests

### South Parks Road

This is the University's Department of Plant Sciences. It was originally known as the Imperial Forest Institute, later the Commonwealth Forest Institute, and then the Oxford Forestry Institute. You can see the word Forestry inscribed above the door. It became part of the Department of Plant Sciences in 2002.

One of the research programmes within the department is 'Plants for the 21st Century' which addresses questions in three major areas of global concern – crop production, species conservation and forest management.



Aerial view of the Amazon rainforest, Brazil  
Wikimedia Commons

Researchers look at species of plants, crops and trees from all over the world. Some important research is carried out in tropical forests such as the Amazon rainforests of Brazil. These forests make a vital contribution to stabilising the world's climate. But they are under threat from commercial logging and converting land for agriculture to sustain a growing population.

**Country links** - Brazil

**Directions 15** - Continue along South Parks Road. Stop outside the University's Department for Inorganic Chemistry. Look on the opposite side of the road at the building with columns and a green dome and listen to Track 16.

## 16. Bird on a tightrope?

### South Parks Road

The building with the columns and green dome is Rhodes House. It is home to the famous Rhodes Scholars programme which was created from the will of Cecil John Rhodes. He was a graduate of the university who went on to establish the De Beers diamond company in South Africa. Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia – now Zambia and Zimbabwe – were named after him. The scholarship programme, dating back to 1903, selects 83 scholars each year from America and some of the Commonwealth countries who are identified as being potential future leaders.



Rhodes House  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Of interest to our walk though is the distinctive bronze bird on top of the dome. It is a Bateleur eagle commonly found in the open savannah country of sub-Saharan Africa. The word 'bateleur' is French for 'tight-rope walker' because during flight the bird tips its wings as if balancing on a wire. The Bateleur eagle is the national emblem of Zimbabwe and therefore also known as the Zimbabwe Bird. It appears on the Zimbabwean flag, coat of arms, banknotes and coins.



The Bateleur eagle  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG  
Discovering Britain

Stone carvings of this emblematic bird once stood on the walls of the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe, founded by the ancient Shona people of Africa. When the site was discovered by European archaeologists in the late nineteenth century five of these stone-carved birds were taken to South Africa by Cecil Rhodes. Four of the statues were returned to Zimbabwe by the South African government on Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. The fifth remains at Groote Schuur, Rhodes' former home in Cape Town.

**Country links** - South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

**Directions 16** - Continue along South Parks Road. Turn left at the traffic lights along Parks Road. Stop at the junction with Holywell Street, Catte Street and Broad Street and listen to Track 17.

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## 17. Elephant ride

### Holywell Street / Catte Street

This building on the corner of Holywell Street and Catte Street is the Indian Institute. The Institute was established in 1875 when India was the crown jewel in the British Empire. The purpose of the Institute was to promote Indian studies at the university: "...making Englishmen, and even Indians themselves, appreciate better than they have done before the languages, literature and industries of India."

In particular it was a training place for those entering the Indian Civil Service and managing Britain's greatest colony. This building was constructed in 1883 and certainly reflects the Indian influence.



The Indian Institute weathervane  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Look out for the heads of animals carved in stone – tigers, lions, elephants and bulls. Some animals are particularly important in the Hindu religion because they represent deities – such as Ganesh the elephant god and Hanuman the monkey god.

And look on top of the dome at the weathervane – it is in the shape of a howdah, a seating carriage fixed on top of an elephant. Howdahs were widely used in India as a means of transport for the aristocracy and in hunting and warfare.

#### Country links - India

**Directions 17** - Go past the Indian Institute and along Catte Street. Pass the Bridge of Sighs and stop outside the entrance to Hertford College to listen to Track 18.

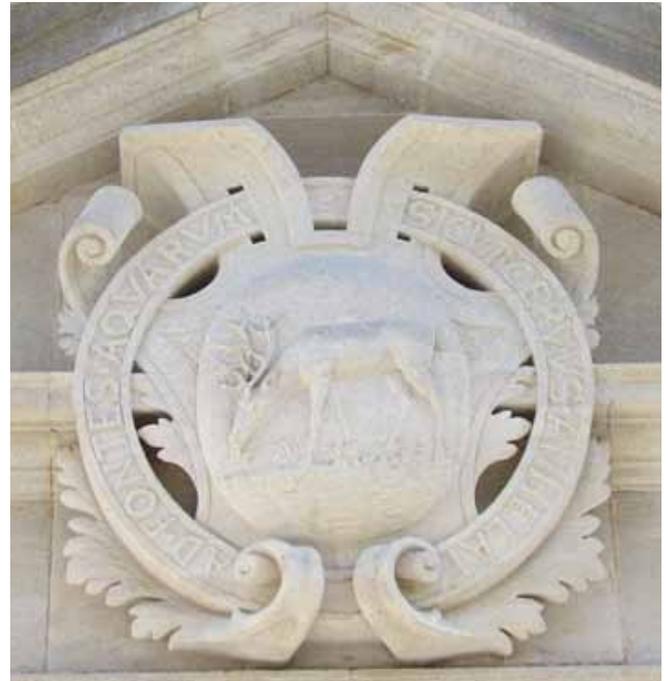
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## 18. The hart of Hart Hall

### Catte Street

Hart Hall was founded here on Catte Street by Elias de Hertford in about 1282. It provided lodgings for students of the university in medieval times although it did not become a full College of the university until 1874. Look at the animal carved above the door. This is a hart, the emblem of the college. There are six more carved in the stone just below the balustrade.

A hart is a male red deer more than five years old. The red deer is one of the largest deer species. They are found across the United Kingdom and Ireland, much of mainland Europe, the Caucasus Mountains region and Asia Minor. They are also found in the Atlas Mountains in northwest Africa. In the nineteenth century red deer were introduced along with other game species for hunting to countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Chile.



Hertford College coat of arms  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The inscription around the College coat of arms reads *ad fontes aquarum sicut cervus anhelat* or 'as a hart doth pant for streams of water', another reminder of the city of Oxford's name deriving from a place where animals could be taken across water .

As well as these sculpted deer there are actual specimens elsewhere in Oxford. Magdalen Grove has been home to deer herds since the eighteenth century. We will hear more about them later. But before we leave Hertford College note the ornate detailing on the main doors. These flowers and plants were carved in the mid seventeenth century. In this period Oxford became the home to Britain's first botanical gardens. We will hear more about these later on the walk as well.

**Country links** - Algeria, Armenia, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Tunisia, Ukraine

**Directions 18** - From the entrance to Hertford College, go straight across the road to the Old Bodleian Library. Stop in the courtyard and listen to Track 19.

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## 19. Funny faces

### Bodleian Library

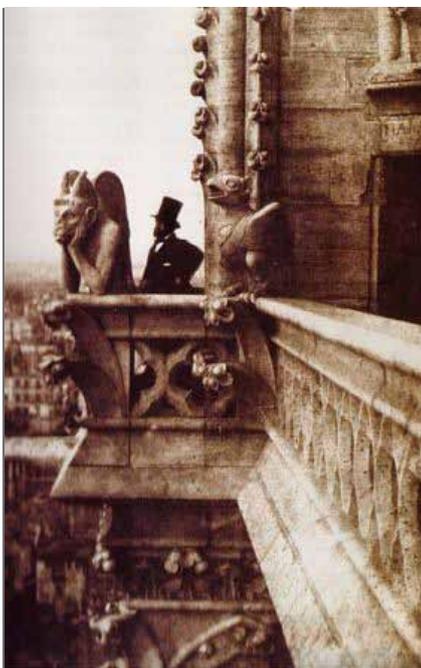
Look up to the walls of this spectacular courtyard at the stone faces staring down at you. These are gargoyles. The word gargoyle comes from the French 'gargouille' which means 'throat' or 'gullet' and similar European language words relating to gargle and swallow. They are waterspouts designed to channel rainwater away from the walls. Although functional they are also decorative.

Gargoyles can be found throughout Europe, particularly on churches and public buildings. They first started to appear on European buildings in the twelfth century.



Bodleian Library carvings  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

They were often animals such as lions, dogs, wolves, eagles, snakes, goats and monkeys which were attributed with mystical powers. Some of the best examples are on the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris.



Gargoyles on Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, photographed in 1853 by Henri Le Secq  
Wikimedia Commons

Gargoyles have been here at the Bodleian Library since the Library was built in 1435 but the history of gargoyles goes back much further. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Etruscans and Romans all used animal-shaped waterspouts. A French legend from around 630 AD runs that St Romanus saved the town of Rouen from a dragon called Gargouille. There are many versions of the story but they all end with the head of the monster being mounted on the walls of the newly-built church to ward off evil spirits. Gargoyles were often given grotesque or humorous faces to scare away evil spirits.

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Over time some of the Bodleian Library gargoyles wore away. So in 2009 a competition was set up for children from Oxford schools to design some new ones. The designs had to be based on myths, monsters or people with a historic connection with Oxfordshire. Of the 500 entries nine were chosen. Try to spot them on the northwest wall – look for stone that is lighter in colour than the surrounding features. The designs include a dodo based on the one at the Natural History Museum that you saw earlier, a wild boar inspired by a local tale of a wild boar choking on a book, Aslan the lion from The Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis, and the 'Green man', a mythological creature symbolising nature.

Why not look for gargoyles on churches, monuments and public buildings near where you live?



Some of the Bodleian Library gargoyles  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

**Country links** - Egypt, France, Greece, Italy

**Directions 19** - Leave the courtyard of the Bodleian Library and turn right along Cattle Street. Go through Radcliffe Square and through the passageway to the High Street. Keep on the left hand side and pass Queens College. Then look across the road and find number 83 on the right hand side immediately before the University Examination Schools. Stop and listen to Track 20.

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## 20. A taste that travelled the world

### 83 High Street

So far we have looked at some of the trees we can find in Oxford and the rest of Britain. The by-products of trees can also have international stories. A good example is marmalade. Marmalade is made from the juice and peel of citrus fruits. Most marmalade is made from Seville oranges which originated in Spain. The name 'marmalade' derives from 'marmeleda', a type of Portuguese jam made from quinces. Although the origins of marmalade go as far back as the ancient Greek and Roman empires, the first marmalade - made from quinces - probably arrived in Britain from Portugal in the early 16th century.

Oxford was home to one of the world's most famous marmalades - Frank Cooper's. The story started from a family grocer's shop here on the High Street. In 1874 Frank Cooper's wife, Sarah-Jane, made a batch of marmalade to her own recipe.



Frank Cooper marmalade jars  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

It proved so popular that by 1903 production moved to a purpose-built factory. The factory survives; if you arrived in Oxford by train you may have seen it opposite the station. Frank Cooper's Oxford Marmalade travelled the world and was enjoyed at literally the ends of the earth. In 1912 Robert Falcon Scott took some with him on his journey to the South Pole. Many years after his ill-fated expedition the jar was found buried in the ice. In 1953 the Nepalese mountaineer Tenzing Norgay packed some when he accompanied New Zealander Edmund Hillary to the top of Mount Everest. The brand has become a staple of British embassies and fans include the Queen and James Bond!

Frank Cooper's Oxford Marmalade is still available today though production stopped in the city in 1967. The former shop here in High Street was briefly a museum and now a blue plaque outside celebrates Sarah Cooper's inception of Oxford Marmalade.

**Country links** - Nepal, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Tibet

**Directions 20** - Continue along the left side of the High Street. At Longwall Street, turn left. A short way along the right hand side is the side gate into Magdalen College. Go in if it is open. Stop by the railings overlooking the garden and listen to Track 21.

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## 21. Oh deer!

### Magdalen Grove

Magdalen College was founded in 1458. Some people consider it the most beautiful of the Oxford colleges and it is certainly the most-visited but there's more to it than the spectacular buildings. To the northwest of the college's grounds is a large meadow known as Magdalen Grove. In the sixteenth century the grove consisted of gardens, orchards, and bowling greens. During the Civil War it was used to house a regiment of soldiers. At one point in the nineteenth century it was home to three traction engines belonging to the works department of the college. By the twentieth century it had become well-wooded with many large trees.



Fallow deer in Magdalen Grove  
© collision.theory via Flickr.com

Despite changing uses there have been herds of deer here ever since 1710. The deer in Magdalen Grove today are fallow deer. This species originated in Turkey and were introduced to central Europe by the Romans. There is evidence that the deer arrived in southern England in the first century AD although it is unknown whether they died out and were reintroduced by the Normans. There are historic herds in Ireland and Sweden and more recently fallow deer have been introduced to the United States.

Fallow deer can be found across Britain though the oldest and biggest herds are in the south such as in the New Forest, Epping Forest and the Forest of Dean. Their colouring varies from white to black though the most common species have a reddish coat with white patches. The herd in Magdalen Grove were introduced in the early eighteenth century. You should be able to spot them here during the winter and spring.

**Country links** - France, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Turkey, United States of America

**Directions 21** - Retrace your steps back down Longwall Street. Turn left along the High Street and cross over at a safe place. Stop outside the Danby Gate entrance to the University Botanic Gardens on the right hand side, just before the bridge over the River Cherwell, and listen to Track 22.

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## 22. A seedy place

### The University Botanic Gardens

The Oxford University Botanic Gardens are the oldest botanic gardens in Britain. They were founded in 1621 by the first Earl of Danby, originally as a source of herbs for use in science and medicine. The first two 'keepers' of the gardens, Jacob Bobart and his son (also called Jacob), managed and increased the collection to over 1,000 specimens over a seventy-eight year period and established a cataloguing system. Bobart Junior also began a seed list which made it possible to exchange seeds between international collections. Even today the Botanic Garden exchanges seeds with over 400 gardens around the world.

Famous visitors have included the eighteenth century Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus who developed a system for the naming of plants which is still the international standard today. Literary visitors included Lewis Carroll who loved the gardens and drew inspiration from them for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Later JRR Tolkien was a regular visitor. His favourite tree, the Austrian Pine, was probably the inspiration for the walking talking tree people in The Lord of the Rings. More recently Philip Pullman set a critical scene right at the end of the His Dark Materials trilogy on a bench in the Gardens.

You need to pay to go into the gardens. The price varies according to the time of year but it is well worth a visit. Inside are over 7,000 specimens from around the world grown for scientific and conservation research. In the Tropical Lily House you can see examples of cash crops such as bananas, sugar-cane and rice, while the Palm House features ginger, cocoa, coconut and oil palm.



A woodcut of the 'Great Gate of the Physic Garden, Oxford', now known as the Danby Gate  
Wikimedia Commons

**Country links** - Sweden

**Directions 22** - Remain by the University Botanic Gardens and listen to Track 23.

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## 23. The green heart of the city

### The University Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens is an appropriate place to end this walk about the flora and fauna of Oxford. Along the way we have seen evidence of all sorts of trees, plants and animals right here in the centre of the city.

We saw footprints of dinosaurs and gargoyles of mythical creatures; some trees that caused a diplomatic incident and other trees that soak up air pollution; graceful swans and miniature deer, animal gods and migrating birds, exotic fruits and glossy nuts. We discovered that many of these trees, plants and animals have international links.



A Red Admiral butterfly visits American asters, Botanic Gardens  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Along the walk route we found links to more than 80 different countries that are competing in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. You should now have some ideas of how to search your local parks, gardens and riversides for flora and fauna with international connections. I hope you have enjoyed the walk and found this rather unusual perspective on Oxford interesting. If so, why not visit the Walk the World website to try another walk or even create one of your own.

**Directions 23** - You can now explore the Botanic Gardens or retrace your steps along the High Street to revisit some of the parks, gardens, museums and colleges.

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## Credits

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Visit [www.walktheworld.org.uk](http://www.walktheworld.org.uk)

Submit your own links  
Search for other walks  
Find out how to create your own walk

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