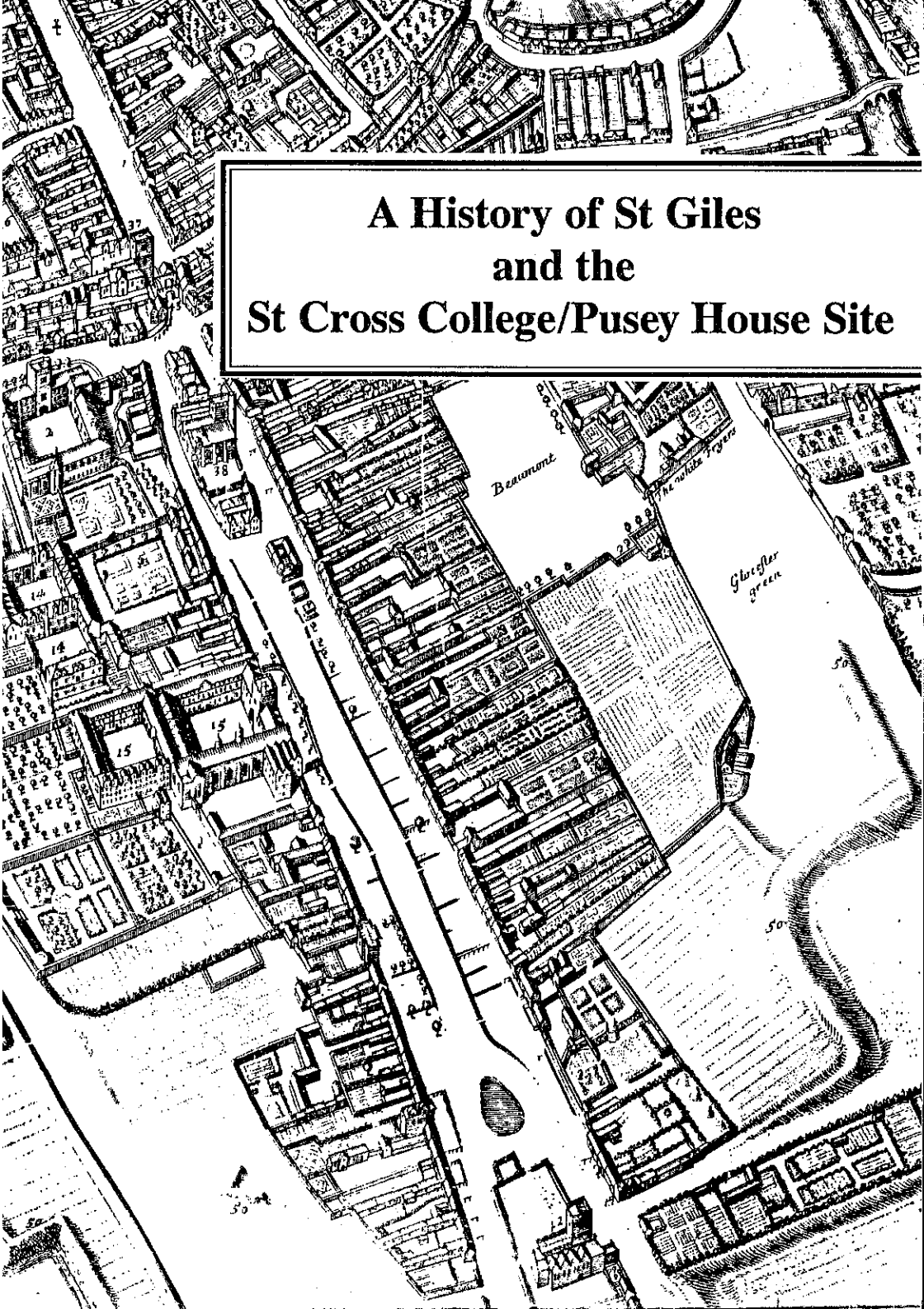
A History of St Giles and the St Cross College/Pusey House Site



This booklet is published as a contribution towards the celebrations occasioned by the completion of the new south wing of St Cross College in 1993.

Based on detailed research by David Sturdy, with contributions from Susan Allen, Brian Atkins, Stephen Bowden, Alan Coates, Kenneth Hylson-Smith and John Owen.

Compiled and written by Kenneth Hylson-Smith, David Sturdy and Brian Atkins.

Acknowledgements:
The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, for permission to reproduce Figs. 1, 3 and 6.
The Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Oxford, for Fig. 4 and frontcover illustration.

© Published by St Cross College, Oxford
April 1993

Printed by Parchment (Oxford) Ltd.
Printworks, Crescent Road, Cowley, Oxford,
from customer's artwork supplied.

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A HISTORY OF ST GILES AND THE ST CROSS COLLEGE/PUSEY HOUSE SITE

Introduction

Although the High, with its great curve of townscape is widely regarded as Oxford's most magnificent street, and indeed one of the finest in Europe, St Giles (as everyone calls it - never St Giles's Street) has comparable beauty and historic interest. This short study, timed to celebrate the new south wing of St Cross College, draws attention to some of the street's historical and architectural aspects over the last thousand years and more, but focuses particularly on the evolution and development of the area now occupied by St Cross College and Pusey House (formerly Nos 57-61 St Giles).[1] Throughout this account this area will be referred to as **'the site'.**

Pre-twelfth century

In pre-Roman times, the area was sparsely occupied by scattered communities of native Britons. During the Roman period there was no town on what was to become the site of the Saxon and medieval city of Oxford. The whole area contained isolated hamlets and farms, the main areas of settlement being the gravel terraces which stretch from St Giles to Summertown, Wolvercote and beyond.[2]

An important early Anglo-Saxon site just to the north of St Giles's Church is firmly attested by finds made over the last three and half centuries. In the twelfth century, the site of the present Radcliffe Infirmary was known as the "Croft of the Three Barrows". The barrows and the burials were almost certainly Anglo-Saxon. The most striking of the finds of this

period was a decorated gold disc, or bracteate, of the fifth or sixth centuries AD, now in the Ashmolean Museum.

By the late ninth century, if not before, Oxford was very probably an administrative centre, established as a local fortress at some date in the late 890s by Alfred the Great of Wessex and his principal governor Ethelred, formerly of Mercia.[3] As Oxford developed in the early medieval period St Giles assumed significance as the road leading out of the town through the North gate.

It is probable that the narrow burgage plots on either side of St Giles arose from subdivision of Saxon fields.[4]

The first documented century and the origin of settlement

Most of St Giles was built up by the late thirteenth century, although the north end remained rural.[5] Many of the buildings were farmhouses. There was a largely empty space extending westward in which Walton village was located, probably around the present Walton Road and Southmoor Road. Cattle and sheep were driven along St Giles to market. St Giles's Church was built as a private church by Edwin, son of Godegose, between 1123 and 1133, during which time he obtained a writ from King Henry I confirming his possession of it. In 1139, he gave the church to the newly founded Abbey of Godstow. At the other end of the street, somewhere to the west, Henry celebrated Easter 1133 "in the new hall", the first reference to the minor royal residence that was later known as 'Beaumont Palace'. The other church in St Giles, St Mary Magdalen, was also well developed, with a massive chancel arch of the period 1100 - 1120.

The earliest certain fact about the site is a reference in a Christ Church charter which informs us that "Abbot Hugh of Oseney and the convent of that place" granted "the land

formerly Robert the Weaver's" to "Guy son of Edwin the carpenter" at an annual rent of eight shillings and eight pence.

In ca 1266, John With (grandson of Guy) was paying Oseney rent on two houses on the southern part of **the site** and the northern part of Blackfriars, roughly equivalent to the later Nos 61 and 62, although it is not possible to say with certainty that the property boundaries remained unchanged over the centuries. By 1279 on the north (roughly Nos 60 - 61) was Walter of Leicester, in a house bought from Nicholas Erneburg, and beyond that (about Nos 59 - 60), Nicholas of Garsington had a house bought from Roger Hering.[6]

The Middle Ages

The property-files on Oxford houses that Christ Church inherited from Oseney Abbey in 1546 allow us to trace the owners or tenants of a row of houses from what seems to be the later No 61 St Giles to No 65, the house next south of Blackfriars, from the 1260s to the 1490s.

The Abbey, which stood on the western edge of the town a little south of the present railway station, was concerned with banking and property as well as with spiritual affairs. Since usury was a sin, the monks could not pay interest on the deposits that many citizens made with them, but they could invest the deposits in property and draw the rents and premiums. During the course of the thirteenth century the Abbey, and other property-owning corporations, learnt to make short leases that would fall in so that they could take advantage of inflation and charge more next time. But early in the thirteenth and in the twelfth century many grants became, in effect, freeholds paying a small fixed rent to the original owner.

Oseney's rent of 3s 8d from the southern house on **the site** (later No 61) was of this kind. But the rents from the adjoining

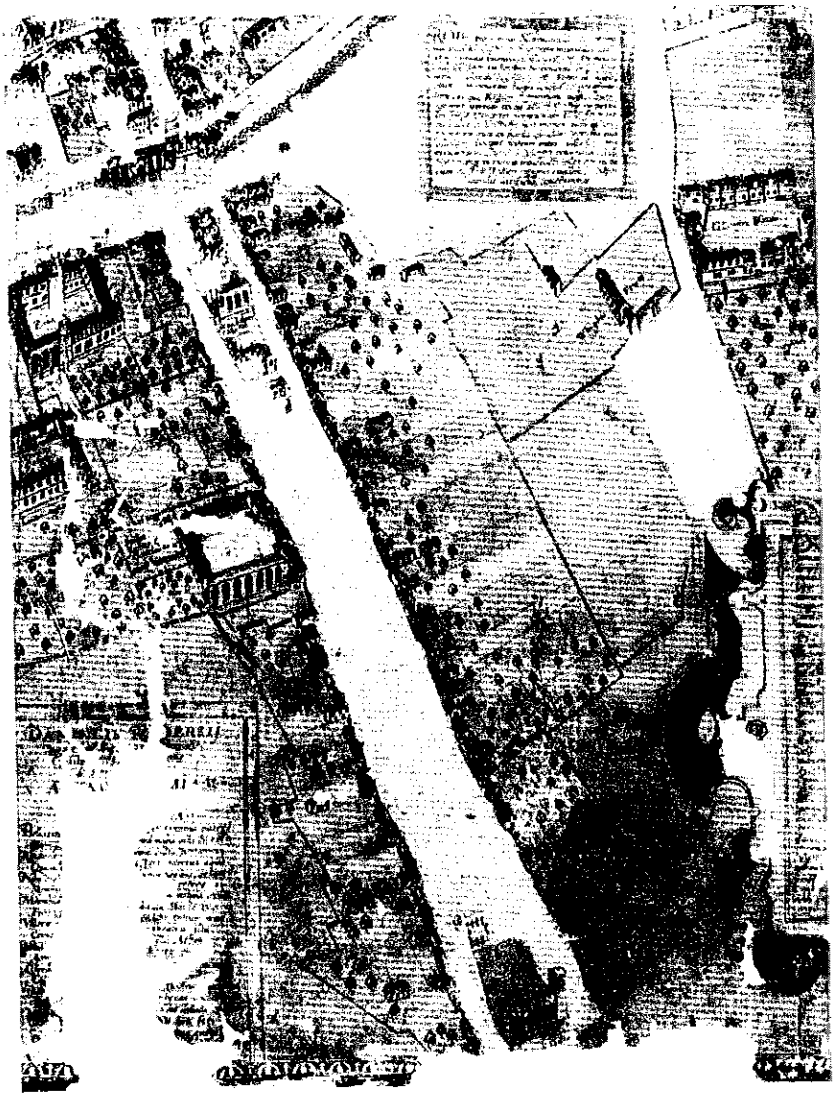


Fig. 1 St Giles in 1578.
Top (south): Northgate and St Mary Magdalen's Church; *Centre left*: St John's College; *Bottom (north)*: St Giles's Church.
(cf. St Giles in 1675: frontcover)
(Part of a plan of Oxford by Ralph Agas: Bodleian Library, from negative in Box 477)

houses further to the south were fixed rents bought up by the immensely wealthy Henry Simeon (an implacable enemy of the University) as a benefaction to the Abbey in the 1220s.[7]

From 1485 to 1720

By the sixteenth century St Giles still had the character of a quiet market town which had lost its market (see Fig.1), and there was, for a considerable time, at least in the period 1578 -1733, a pond in the middle of the road where the War Memorial now stands. Thomas Cogan (d.1588), who was an Oxford mercer, proprietor of the Kings Head Inn in Cornmarket (now Barclays Bank), and was also the leading theatrical promoter of Elizabethan Oxford, owned the whole of the site, four houses, as had his family from at least the 1540s, and possibly from the 1480s. He and his family before him drew rents from their tenants in the properties. Thomas often sponsored performances by travelling companies in the galleried courtyard of the Kings Head. An established member of the urban elite, he was grandson of two wealthy merchants, William Cogan, Mayor of Bristol in the 1480s, and Edward Woodward, Mayor of Oxford six times in the 1480s and 90s.

The Cogans owned much more property in Oxford than the four houses in St Giles. They had more than twelve acres of rich meadow land off the Botley Road, eleven acres of arable in North Oxford, three properties in Queen Street, one in the western part of High Street, one in the lower part of St Aldates, and two in Cornmarket, the Kings Head, to which reference has already been made, and a tavern opposite. We may presume that most of these properties, including the houses on the present site, had been purchased by Cogan's grandfather Alderman Edward Woodward, whose prominence is indicated by the fact that he had a magnificent monument with a brass

inscription beside the high altar in Carfax Church. The Cogan family continued to own **the site** for a further 70 and more years after Thomas's death in 1588.

Edmund Cogan, goldsmith of St Clement Danes, London, in the 1660s sold off the Oxford property inherited from his great-grandfather Thomas Cogan.

Twenty-four different families lived in some part or other of the four main house-plots of **the site** between 1680 and 1720.[8] Among them we discover two widowers and one widow embarking on second marriages, two unmarried girls landed with unwanted babies and even a family break-up with the drama of a runaway wife making off with the valuables. Several of the family-heads made a living as maltsters, two were described as yeomen and one as a labourer, while one or two were gardeners. There was a family of stone masons, a glazier, a lathrender and a blacksmith, all engaged to some extent in the building world. From the cloth and clothing trades we can find a fuller, a tailor, a cordwainer or shoemaker and there was a gunsmith.

None had much pretence to professional standing or gentility, though this very broad mix of occupations, with a fairly strong rural flavour, was beginning to give way to a more specialised group of doctors and lawyers, with a retired soldier and a few widows or gentlemen living on investments whom we will encounter in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. Already, from the 1670s, the very next house south of **the site** was the home of a prominent medical man, John Bateman of Merton College, who succeeded in his profession to become King Charles I's doctor and President of the Royal College of Physicians.

But, as yet such changes had not taken place on **the site**, and many of the families in the seventeenth century must have lived

crammed into multi-occupied houses, with a generally rapid turnover in the occupancy. Three families, the Coateses, the Masons and the Tomlinsons display some stability, the first and the last of them, interestingly enough, engaged in the building trade. Only a minority of families in any large town stayed in the same house or the same part of a street, as these did, for several decades.

From 1720 to 1800

In the eighteenth century there was considerable building of elegant town houses and offices for professional men and University academics from a, by then, steadily growing Oxford. Drains and sewers were laid in St Giles in 1786, and by the time that the Taylor Institute had been built in 1844 much of that side of the street had been re-built. It was also in the eighteenth century that the St Giles's Fair became a more prominent feature in the life of the town.

It evolved in the second half of that century from the previous St Giles's Parish wake, which became known as St Giles's Feast. In the 1780s it was a toy fair and by the beginning of the nineteenth century had become a general fair for children.

The houses on the present **site** underwent an upgrading typical of much of St Giles during the 18th century. The later No 61 was bought in 1761 by John Phillips, a wealthy City Councillor and grocer, and it was almost certainly Phillips who then built a handsome classical stone house on **the site** for his own occupation, which survived until 1924, when it was replaced by the south wing of the present Richard Blackwell Quadrangle. In 1781, the property was purchased from Phillips by Thomas Walker, a wealthy and highly influential local lawyer, who was Town Clerk of Oxford from 1756 to 1795 and

also the Duke of Marlborough's man of business from 1766. In 1796 the house was bought as an investment and retirement home by Thomas Hornsby of Corpus Christi College, who had amassed in his own person most of the University's established science posts as Professor of Experimental Philosophy and Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy as well as Radcliffe Observer.

Next door, another fine classical house survived (as No 60) until 1914. This belonged to three generations of the Pears family of Woodperry House, whose standing as rather 'nouveau riche' gentry had been established by the first James Pears (c. 1740 - 1804), an Oxford builder and protege first of Henry Keene and later of the fashionable London architect James Wyatt. Both seem to have allowed Pears a good deal of freedom in carrying out their projects in Oxford and both Keene and Wyatt himself, most elegant of Georgian designers, were sprung from provincial building families. All three were involved at the Radcliffe Observatory (now Green College) and Pears, while living on **the site** from the 1770s, both designed and carried out the splendid interior behind Wyatt's breathtaking facade for the Library at Oriel College. (See Fig.2 for a view of St Giles in 1779).

Pears had bought his property in 1776 from George Poulton, Timber Merchant. Poulton had bought the site in 1764, and lived there himself. When it was put up for sale in 1773, it was described as a "freehold modern new well built House, with a brick and sashed front and stone coin, nearly facing St John's College in Oxford, the property and occupation of Mr. George Poulton, Timber Merchant, who is moving into Surrey: containing three upper lodging rooms with two closets; five good bedchambers, two neat parlours, and a study, fitted out with Wainscot, paperhangings, marble and other chimney pieces,

and fixtures; also a kitchen, pantry, three good cellars, Brewhouse, a tiled shed and other conveniences; with a large Yard and Garden fit for a genteel private family or may easily be rendered convenient for carrying on branches of business".

1800 to the 1880s

In the early part of the century the southernmost house (No 61) and the adjacent house (No 60) belonged to absentee clergymen: No 61 to William Tournay, who had come up to Wadham College in 1780, had a spell as fellow and Tutor in the 1790s, and was a pluralist with a clutch of church livings and three canonries at Lincoln, Peterborough and St Pauls, London; and No 60 to the scond James Pears of New College, who came up in 1795, took a B.C.L. in 1810, taught classics at Marlow and Bath and held a rich Somerset living for thirty years.

Alfred Street (now Pusey Street) which defines the northern limit of **the site**, was created in 1828 approximately along the boundary between St Giles's and St Mary Magdalen's Parishes.[9] In 1854 a revived Quaker meeting, which had acquired the rear third of the garden of No 60, commissioned the architect C.S Davis to design a meeting house. It is not clear why the older, seventeenth century meeting-house fifty yards to the south (on the site of the Oriental Institute) was no longer available. In 1876 the new meeting house had a seating capacity of 140, and between then and 1891, to judge from various maps, it was expanded to take in the rear half of the back garden behind Nos 58-9. This implies that there was a flourishing congregation. The building was eventually purchased by Pusey House and finally demolished sometime in the middle of the twentieth century. Part of the external walls of this second meeting-house were unearthed during an archaeological dig prior to the beginning of work on the new south

wing of St Cross College in 1991.[10]

By the 1830s the booths and side-shows of the St Giles's Fair were catering more for adults than children, and by the end of the nineteenth century, as well as entertainments, they provided opportunities to buy clothing and crockery, baskets and tools and various other commodities. Toll was exacted by St John's College as Lord of Walton Manor. Towards the end of the century it was more than once proposed that the Fair should be suppressed on the grounds that it had become too rowdy and licentious, but such opposition was largely overcome by more efficient policing. The Corporation took over sole control of the Fair in 1930. Apart from the war years, the Fair has been, and still is, a regular annual event. (For a picture of the Fair in the late nineteenth century, see Fig. 3.)

Meanwhile, in the 1840s and 50s, the family of Doctor James Ady Ogle (1793 - 1857), Regius Professor of Medicine, acquired Nos 60, 61, 63, 64, and 65, comprising two-thirds of the present **site**, two-thirds of Blackfriars and the large house (No 65) that still stands just to the south of Blackfriars. While all this empire-building was taking place, the humbler homes on the north side of **the site** seem to have escaped the Ogle family's grasp. No 59 was a wine-merchant's (Morton & Co). No 58 (Mrs Hill) and No 57 (George Reed) were private houses, both of which stood on the site of the present Pusey House Chapel.

Since the 1880s

The modern development of the whole **site** began in 1883. In 1882 Dr E.B. Pusey, one of the influential leaders of the Oxford movement both during its initial phase from 1833 to 1845 and subsequently, died, leaving a substantial library. A number of his friends purchased this from his daughter for £2,200. An



Fig. 3 St Giles's fair in 1868, looking north.
(Bodleian Library: MS. Minn 6, item 27)

appeal was made for a 'Dr Pusey Memorial Fund'.[11]

Early in 1883 a freehold house, 61 St Giles, was obtained at a cost of £6000, and alterations were made to it to accommodate the library and a small staff. Within two years of the inauguration of the Memorial Fund, Pusey House was opened on Thursday 9 October 1884. Three Librarians were appointed: Charles Gore, later Bishop of Oxford, and a very prominent Churchman in his day, the Reverend Vincent Stuckey-Coles and the Reverend Frederick Brightman. The new institution flourished, both as a library, as a focus for teaching and as a centre for pastoral work, largely amongst students. In 1887 No 60 was extended by adding a second floor with six extra bedrooms, which had half-timbered mock-Tudor gables, to the long eighteenth century back wing and by extending a large ground-floor room in the wing out into the yard to form a large dining room. The alterations were designed by H.Wilkinson Moore (architect of much of north Oxford) and built by Isaac Castle (Fig.4). In 1889 the adjoining house was bought. The first entirely new Pusey House building was a simple, brick and timber chapel, 50 feet long, which a local builder, W. Brucker, erected in 1891 along the middle of the garden of No 60 (Fig. 5. and note 12).

Fig. 6 shows the houses from No 57, on the corner of Alfred Street, to No 61, at the end of the nineteenth century.

From 1887 until its demolition in 1912, No 57 was a photographic studio and picture framing shop. Nos 58 and 59 were run by a Miss Sara Anne Patchett as university and family lodgings.

At the time of its purchase by Pusey House, No 60 was run by Misses Howe and Beaufoy as a seminary or private school and No 61 had been occupied by the Misses Hyde.



Fig. 4 The mock-Tudor alterations made by Pusey House to the north elevation of No 60 St Giles, ca. 1887.
(Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Westgate Library, Oxford)

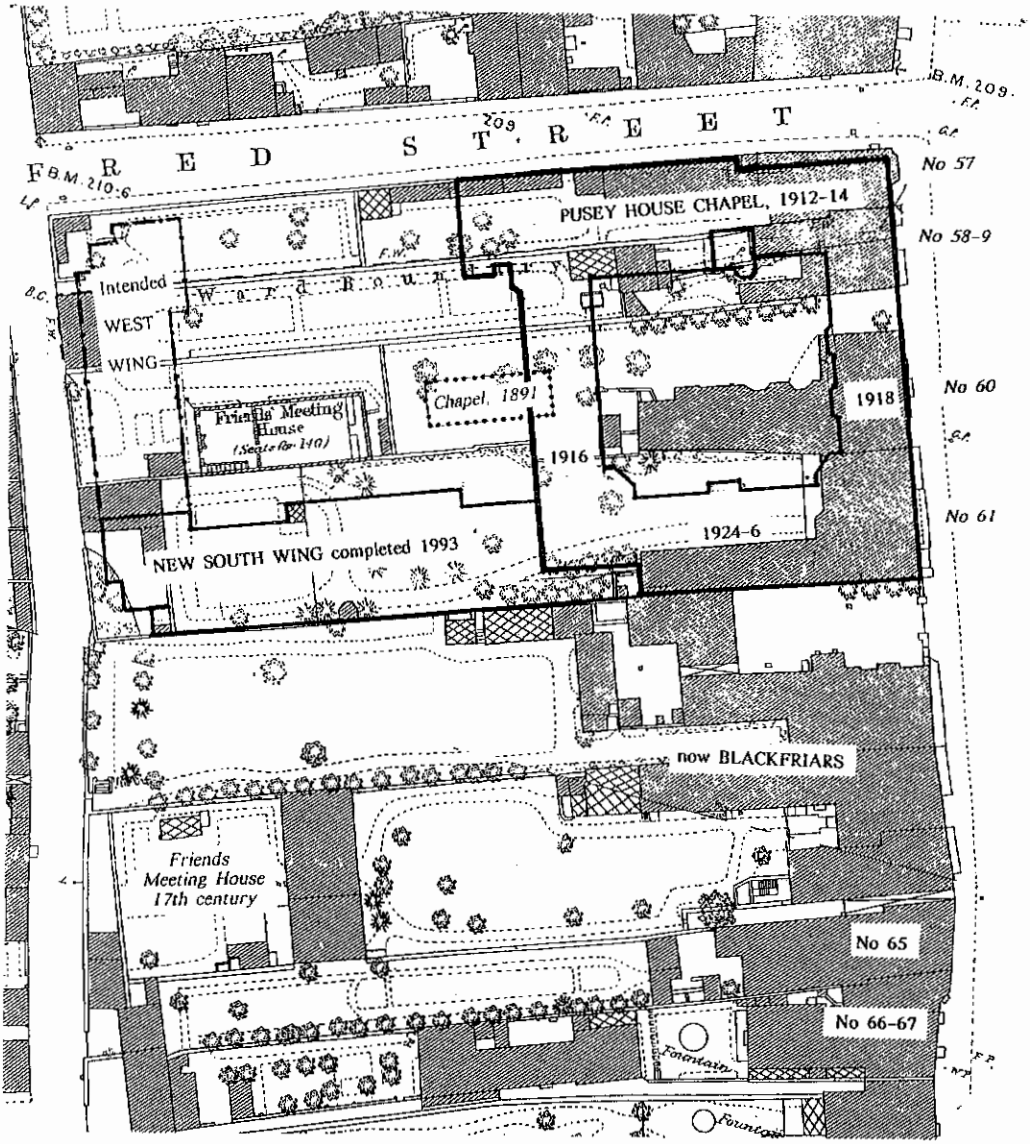


Fig. 5 Site plan

showing the Quaker meeting house of ca.1854 (and its predecessor to the south), the first Pusey House chapel of 1891, the late 19th/early 20th century houses, and the outlines of later buildings on the site, and their dates.

(Based on the Ordnance Survey map of 1876.)



Fig. 6 The frontage of **the site** in May 1911.

From left to right: gateway, now part of Blackfriar's site; Nos 61 and 60 (the large houses), fenced gap, Nos 59/58 and 57; entrance to Pusey St. (*extreme right*). Demolition of these buildings to make way for the Pusey House development began in the following year. (Bodleian Library: MS. Top.Oxon. d.500, fol.61)

In 1903 a Leeds solicitor, Mr J.W Cudworth, bequeathed a large part of his estate (about £70,000) to the Memorial Fund. In his will he wrote that 'it was in great measure through attending sermons at St Saviour's church in Leeds, built and founded by Dr Pusey, that I became a Churchman, and I know of no more likely agency than the Institution founded to perpetuate his memory and work for promoting a knowledge of true and distinctive Church principles, concerning which so much ignorance prevails amongst English Churchmen.'

It was in 1907, with the appointment of Dr Darwell Stone as Principal, that it was decided to use the Cudworth bequest for the erection of a more commodious House. In the summer of 1912 work began on the construction of a chapel of the Resurrection and half of the library, under the direction of the architect Temple Moore.

The Chapel of the Resurrection was completed by Michaelmas Term 1914 and dedicated on 10 October, and, despite the war, work continued on the building of half the library and parts of the House adjoining the chapel. There followed the rest of the library and the St Giles front in 1918 in which two of the original eighteenth century rooms were retained (now the Pamphlets Room and the van Heyningen Room). In 1924-6 the south wing was completed in the same late Gothic style, with John Coleridge as architect.

The chapel follows a monastic arrangement - a large chapel used mainly for Sunday worship being divided from a smaller chapel at the east end by a solid stone screen surmounted by painted rood with a rood-screen altar at its foot. The eastern chapel was adorned in 1935-6 by an east window and altar with canopy designed by Sir Ninian Comper.

It was in August 1925, when the new building was almost completed, that the City Council agreed to change the name of

the street running down the north side of the site from its previous name of Alfred Street, to Pusey Street. At the same time the City Council agreed to the designation of Pusey Lane.

On the other, south, side of the site, Blackfriars, is the House of Studies for the English Province of the Order of Preachers, otherwise known as the Dominicans. It dates from 1929 and its foundation was largely a result of the inspiration of Father Bede Jarrett O.P. As an undergraduate at Hunter-Blair's Hall in 1904, he had looked forward to the day when the Dominicans, who had been suppressed in England since 1538, could once again open a house in Oxford. The Priory was not completed until 1954, twenty years after Father Bede's death.

The garden wing and the Bede Jarrett Memorial Tower were built under the direction of the architect Thomas Rayson.

St Cross College

St Cross College joined Pusey House on the site in 1981. The major alterations at the time were the conversion of a number of rooms and a cloister into kitchens and Hall (now the main Common Room) and adaptations to create the Lange Room.

The construction of the new south wing in the rear part of the site began on 5th August 1991 and was completed in time for use by the College for Hilary Term 1993. The exterior of the new building is in natural stone, most of it being Stoke Ground tooled ashlar, but with detailed work in Portland stone.

Notes and References

1. This brief account is based to a large extent on detailed research by David Sturdy. This detail is recorded in the *Survey of Oxford Townscape and Landscape, Study No.4*, a copy of which is available in the College's archives. We very much hope that members of the College will continue the study. Much remains to be discovered, especially in regard to the 18th and 19th century residents on the site.

2. For sites indicated by finds, see *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire* **1** (1939), 265 and 301-3; for sites revealed by aerial photographs, see *Oxoniensia* **8-9** (1943-4), 74-84 and D.Benson *et al. The Upper Thames Valley, an archaeological survey of the river gravels*, 52.

3. For this site, see *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire* 1 (1939), 355-6, 371; and for discussions of the foundation of the town, J.Parker, *The Early History of Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. **3**, 1884-5), 115-129, and *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire* 4 (1979).

4. Compare J.M.Steane, *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (1985), 119-128.

5. For a detailed late 13th century survey, including farmland, see *Collectanea* **4** (Oxf. Hist. Soc. **47**, 1905), 78-95.

6. H.E.Salter, *Medieval Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. **100**, 1936), 114-6; H.E.Salter, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* **2** (Oxf. Hist. Soc. **90**, 1929) 298; and *Collectanea* **4**, 81-2.

7. H.E.Salter, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* **2** (*op.cit.*) 299.

8. This section is summarised from a detailed account prepared by David Sturdy (see Note 1 above) from the parish records in Oxfordshire Archives, in particular the manuscript Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor; the Parish Registers available in typescript at the same place and also in the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies in the Westgate Library; and from Archdeaconry Court wills in Oxfordshire Archives.

9. A.Osmond, "Building on the Beaumonts", *Oxoniensia* **49** (1984), 307.

10. The contract drawings are in Oxfordshire Archives (Mor XXXV/i/1), and the excavation was reported in: Anon. (Oxford Archaeological Unit) *St Cross College Oxford. Archaeological investigations in advance of redevelopment*, 1991.

11. J.Owen, "Pusey House" *St Cross College Record*, No.10 (1991), 23-6.

12. Brucker also built (1875/6) the cabmen's wooden shelter near the Martyrs' Memorial, a minor Oxford landmark which still survives.