

Welcome to Exeter College!



EXETER
COLLEGE
OXFORD

Founded in 1314, Exeter is the fourth oldest college of the University of Oxford.

The College's founder, Walter de Stapeldon, was a Devonshire farmer's son who grew up to be Bishop of Exeter and Treasurer of England under King Edward II. He founded the College to educate men from the West Country for careers in the local church.

When Edward II's popularity waned in 1326, de Stapeldon, despised as a representative of Edward's Court, was attacked by an angry mob in London, dragged from his horse in front of St Paul's Cathedral, and beheaded with a bread knife.

The College was originally called Stapeldon Hall, but from about 1450 it became known as Exeter College. It has occupied its present site since 1315: all but its first year. It was generously re-endowed by Sir William Petre, a prominent Tudor politician, in Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Not only was the College founded on philanthropy, it continues to rely on the generosity of donors to provide world-class teaching and research to this day.

Before 1979 all of the College's students were men. Since 1979 women and men have been admitted on an equal basis. The College has approximately 330 undergraduate students and 190 graduate students who are taught, and who research, across a wide range of academic subjects. Undergraduate students live on-site in their first year of study (and often in their final year, too). Undergraduates study through a combination of College-based small tutorial groups with leading experts in their subject and University-based lectures, seminars, and laboratory work. The College's graduate students base their specialist teaching and research in University departments.

Exeter was the first formerly all-male college to have a female head of house, Professor Marilyn Butler, who was in charge of the College (a role called "Rector" at Exeter) from 1993 until 2004. It has now had two female heads, the most recent being Dame Frances Cairncross who was Rector from 2004 until 2014. The current Rector, Professor Sir Rick Trainor, is Exeter's 130th Rector. He was inaugurated in October 2014.

Exeter has educated many notable people, including prominent business people such as Sir Ronald Cohen and distinguished scholars and scientists such as Nobel Prize winner Sydney Brenner.

Most famous among its alumni is probably JRR Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Other famous authors include Philip Pullman (who wrote the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, closely basing aspects of the fictional Jordan College on Exeter College), playwright Alan Bennett (author of *The History Boys*, *The Madness of King George*, and *Talking Heads*), Qian Zhongshu (one of China's best-known authors), Martin Amis, Will Self, Tariq Ali, Christopher Reid, Craig Raine, and Amy Sackville.

The College also counts among its alumni prominent politicians such as the former president of Ghana, John Kufuor, the current president (and former prime minister) of Peru, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and current UK MPs Matthew Hancock and Nick Hurd.

News reporters Sanchia Berg and Reeta Chakrabarti are often to be heard and seen on the radio and TV, as is actress Imogen Stubbs, all of whom studied at Exeter shortly after the College started educating women. Actor Richard Burton also had a stint at Exeter College, studying English here in 1944 while he was a cadet in the RAF. During this time one of Exeter's Fellows, Nevill Coghill, cast Burton in a production of *Measure for Measure*, which was only the second acting performance of Burton's career.

The College's most noted artists are undoubtedly William Morris and Sir Edward Burne-Jones, who were contemporaries and close companions at Exeter in the 19th century and are associated with the Arts and Crafts and Pre-Raphaelite movements. The most celebrated composer in the College's history is Sir Hubert Parry, who wrote some of the choral music most woven into Britain's cultural identity including scores for Psalm 122, "I Was Glad", and William Blake's poem "And did those feet in ancient time", commonly called "Jerusalem".

Most famous of Exeter's sportspeople is Sir Roger Bannister, who was the first person to run a mile in under four minutes and who also won gold medals in the 1950 European Games and 1954 Commonwealth Games, as well as enjoying a career as a noted neurologist.

Several episodes of popular TV crime series *Inspector Morse*, *Lewis*, and *Endeavour*, as well as documentaries and films, have been filmed at Exeter College. Indeed, in the final episode of *Inspector Morse*, Morse suffers a heart attack while listening to Exeter College Choir perform in the Chapel, staggering into Exeter's Front Quad where he collapses before dying in hospital.

Further reading available from the Development Office (room 5, staircase 11, Margary Quad)

Exeter College: The First 700 Years is a beautifully illustrated 208-page book that brings the history of the College to life. It is written by Fellows, students, alumni and staff of the College.

Tolkien at Exeter College: How an Oxford undergraduate created Middle-earth, written by acclaimed Tolkien expert John Garth. This 64-page book charts the development of the famous author during his time as an undergraduate before he served in the First World War. It is rich with archive material and original sketches by Tolkien – some never before published.

Founders and Fellowship: The Early History of Exeter College, Oxford, 1314-1592 is a comprehensive history of Exeter's early history written by Dr John Maddicott, an Emeritus Fellow in History of Exeter College.



EXETER COLLEGE OXFORD

The University of Oxford's Bodleian Library.

The Library owns 12 million books. For over 400 years the Bodleian has been a Legal Deposit Library, which means it is entitled to receive free of charge one copy of every book published. Can you spot a gargoyle flanked by a kangaroo and an emu overlooking the Fellows' Garden? The man is Kenneth Wheare, a former Rector of Exeter College, and the kangaroo and emu represent his home country of Australia.

The College Library, built in 1856 and designed, like the Chapel, by Sir George Gilbert Scott. It was here, as an undergraduate student, that JRR Tolkien discovered a book on Finnish grammar that was pivotal in developing his interest in the languages and mythology of northern Europe, planting the seed of an idea that grew into Tolkien's Middle-earth sagas *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Be sure to climb the steps at the far end of the **Fellows' Garden** and enjoy one of the finest views in Oxford. The College entrance used to be locked at night and students trapped outside would often scale this high wall to get back in after-hours. A daring feat! The **entrance to the Fellows' Garden** is by staircase 5, in Peryam Mansions.

Dining Hall, built in 1618. At one end the hall is dominated by a painting from 1780 by Matthew William Peters. It is supposedly of the College's founder, Walter de Stapeldon (1261 – 1326) but is in fact heavily based on a portrait that hangs in the Louvre: Hyacinthe Rigaud's 1702 portrait of Bénigne Bossuet. Can you spot the (somewhat) secret door leading to the Senior Common Room (**open to senior members of the College only**)? This door, the hall and the SCR are described in the first of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy of books. Pullman, who studied at Exeter College, partly based the fictional Jordan College (home to Lyra Belacqua) on Exeter College.

Palmer's Tower

built 1432. The oldest surviving part of Exeter College. A memorial to the members of the College who died during the Second World War is at the foot of the tower, on the inward facing wall. After much debate it was considered appropriate to commemorate all 81 Exonians killed, including a German soldier, Rolf Alf Mühlingshaus. Look out for the sundial that no longer receives direct sunlight on the south wall of the Tower.

From **Broad Street** you can see a 7-foot-tall statue by renowned artist Antony Gormley. Installed in 2009, it is part of Gormley's popular "Another Time XI" series of figures.

The Thomas Wood Building, built in the College's 650th anniversary year, 1964. The building completed the College's second quad, Margary Quad.

The Chapel, built 1856-59. Designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the Decorated Gothic Style. Inside hangs a tapestry designed by William Morris and Sir Edward Burne Jones, both of whom studied at Exeter College. There is also a memorial to the Exonians who died in the First World War. Of the 771 Exonians who served in the War, 143 died. You may notice that there are pipes from two organs in the Chapel: the pipes at the front are from an organ that was retired in 1991 and are purely decorative; the organ at the rear is used regularly. Do visit for Choral Evensong during term time, at 6.15pm on Tuesdays and Fridays and 6pm on Sundays.

The Peryam Mansions, built in 1618 and paid for by John Peryam, the brother of a former Fellow of the College, Sir William Peryam.

Beneath the **Front Quad** is buried a huge water tank, the outline of which is still visible in the grass during dry spells. The tank was placed in the Quad during the Second World War in case the College or neighbouring buildings were bombed. The chalk drawings of coats of arms on the Quad's walls commemorate rowing triumphs, known as "achieving blades", in the Torpids and Summer Eights inter-collegiate rowing races.

The main entrance and tower, built in 1605. On the morning of Ascension Day the College Choir sings from the top of the tower. The tower commands a beautiful view of Oxford, standing proudly above the towers of neighbouring colleges. Be sure to look up at the decorated ceiling as you walk under the tower.

It pays to look up while in Oxford. The grotesques to the right of the tower visible from **Turl Street** commemorate the arrival of the College's first female Rector (head of college), Marilyn Butler, by spelling out her name. Can you identify all 13 grotesques? (The grotesques visible from Brasenose Lane spell out the College's motto: FLOREAT EXON – *Let Exeter flourish!*)

