

# Oxfordshire

## **Phial of Thames river water (collected 25/8/19 near Abingdon weir)**

The River Thames crosses the county, forming the ancient boundary separating Mercia from Wessex and Oxfordshire from Berkshire. Notable also as a crucial inland transport corridor from the Thames estuary - a driver of mills and a source of fish - a sacred repository for ritually deposited Bronze-Age to Anglo-Saxon weapons - and latterly as a venue for pleasure boats.

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## **Fragment of Cotswold limestone rubble, collected near Leafield**

West Oxfordshire's primary base rock, and its primary vernacular building material, still dominating its 'Cotswold' towns and villages - Burford, Chipping Norton, Kelmscott et al.

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## **Piece of Stonesfield slate (with peg hole).**

Frost-split Stonesfield slate fostered a significant local industry around Stonesfield village from the 17th century, and stone slate generally is still the dominant roofing material in Oxfordshire's Cotswold villages, giving them much of their visual character.

*Donated by Cotswold Woollen Weavers, Filkins.*

## **Chiltern flints, collected near Nuffield**

Commonplace in the south Oxfordshire Chilterns, capping the underlying Chiltern chalk. Worked in Mesolithic times (e.g. near Nettlebed), and common in local buildings along with chalk clunch, brick, and timber.

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### **An ox (Or rather a bull standing in for an ox.)**

Oxford's emblem (still featured in its coat of arms), from the eponymous 'ox ford' across the Thames - cf. Swinford (the swine ford) and Shifford (the sheep ford) higher upstream. As a plough-beast, also representing Oxfordshire's long history of intensive arable farming (especially wheat and barley), which still continues.

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### **Tourist souvenir keyring, showing St George's Tower, Oxford Castle.**

Oxford castle has dominated Oxford's Westgate area since 1071, while St George's Tower itself is now recognised to be pre-Conquest. The site is now a major tourist attraction, incorporating the surviving motte and the former HM Prison (closed 1996). The castle was the site of Empress Matilda's famous escape from Oxford during the Anarchy in 1142, and also has Civil War connections.

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### **A (modern) quill and an Oxford University tourist badge.**

Representing Oxford University - a dominant feature of the town since the 12th century, and still dominating outside perceptions of Oxford, frequently in fanciful ways.

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### **Wooden shuttle (replica)**

Sheep, wool, and cloth (alongside arable farming) have been central to Oxfordshire's economy throughout its history - including cloth manufacture at e.g. Chipping Norton, Burford, and Witney, which from the 17th century to the 20th was famous for its blankets.

*Provided by Cotswold Woollen Weavers, Filkins.*

### ***Oak leaves from Wychwood Forest (collected 21/8/19)***

Woodland has long been an important feature of the Oxfordshire landscape - from the Chiltern beechwoods through to its ancient royal forests. Wychwood Forest was substantially cleared in the 1850s, but its remains still form the largest stretch of ancient broadleaved woodland in the county.

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### **Morris dancing bell pad (c.1977-83)**

In the 18th to early 19th century Oxfordshire was 'the most prolific area for morris dance activity in the south midlands' (Keith Chandler), especially in the west and centre of the county, forming an important strand of rural working-class culture. Morris dancing still continues, following a marked revival from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

*Suggested and provided by Michael Heaney.*

### **Victorian clay pipe bulb**

Though clay pipes are ubiquitous, some Oxfordshire pipe-makers prospered as rural craftsmen in the 18th and early 19th centuries, often over several generations - for example in the Ramsden/Leafield area near Wychwood Forest, exploiting the local clay which also spawned a local pottery industry.

*Provided by Cotswold Woollen Weavers, Filkins.*

### **Scale model of a Morris Eight E Series Tourer**

Development of William Morris's Cowley car plant (just outside Oxford) from 1913 provided the city's first large-scale employment entirely independent of the university. Morris cars manufactured there achieved iconic status first with the famous Morris Oxford 'Bullnose', and from 1959 with production of the original Mini Minor. The Morris Eight Series was made from 1935-48.

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### **Martin-Baker Aircraft Co. 'Ejection Tie' and ejection handle keyring**

Since the 1940s the Martin-Baker Aircraft Co. has developed and tested aircraft ejector seats at the former Second World War airfield at Chalgrove. As such it typifies the diverse and often innovative new industries (engineering, scientific, and hi-tech) attracted to Oxfordshire in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The 'Ejection Tie' is awarded to pilots who have ejected using a Martin-Baker ejector seat, who collectively form 'The Ejection Tie Club'. Chalgrove airfield typifies numerous small airfields built across the county on the eve of the Second World War or during its early stages.

*Suggested by Kevin Poile (Oxfordshire Family History Society). Donated by Martin-Baker Aircraft Co.*

### **Oxfordshire tourist leaflets, August 2019**

Oxfordshire as perceived by many modern tourists: Blenheim Palace, Dreaming Spires, Inspector Morse, and Harry Potter - often as a prelude to an onward trip to 'Shakespeare's County' and Stratford-on-Avon. According to one survey, 16,000 tourists a day visited Oxford in July 2018.

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