

2 Aaron's House at Carfax

Continue along Queen Street until you come to the Carfax crossroads.

Opposite you is the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop, which was where the house of Aaron son-of-Isaac once stood. In 1141, King Stephen had narrowly missed capturing his rival for the throne, his cousin the Empress Matilda. She had managed to escape from besieged Oxford Castle by crossing the frozen Thames during a blizzard with three knights, all dressed in white cloaks. Storming into Oxford, Stephen demanded ready money from his wards, the Jews, who argued that Matilda, acting in her own royal capacity, has already fleeced them dry. In fury the King burned down Aaron's house at the top of Great Jewry and threatened to burn the entire Jewish quarter if the Jews did not give him three and a half times what they had given Matilda. Having no choice, they did.



2 AARON'S CARFAX



3 OLD TOWN HALL (FORMER JEWISH HOUSE)



4 GEDALYA'S HOUSE

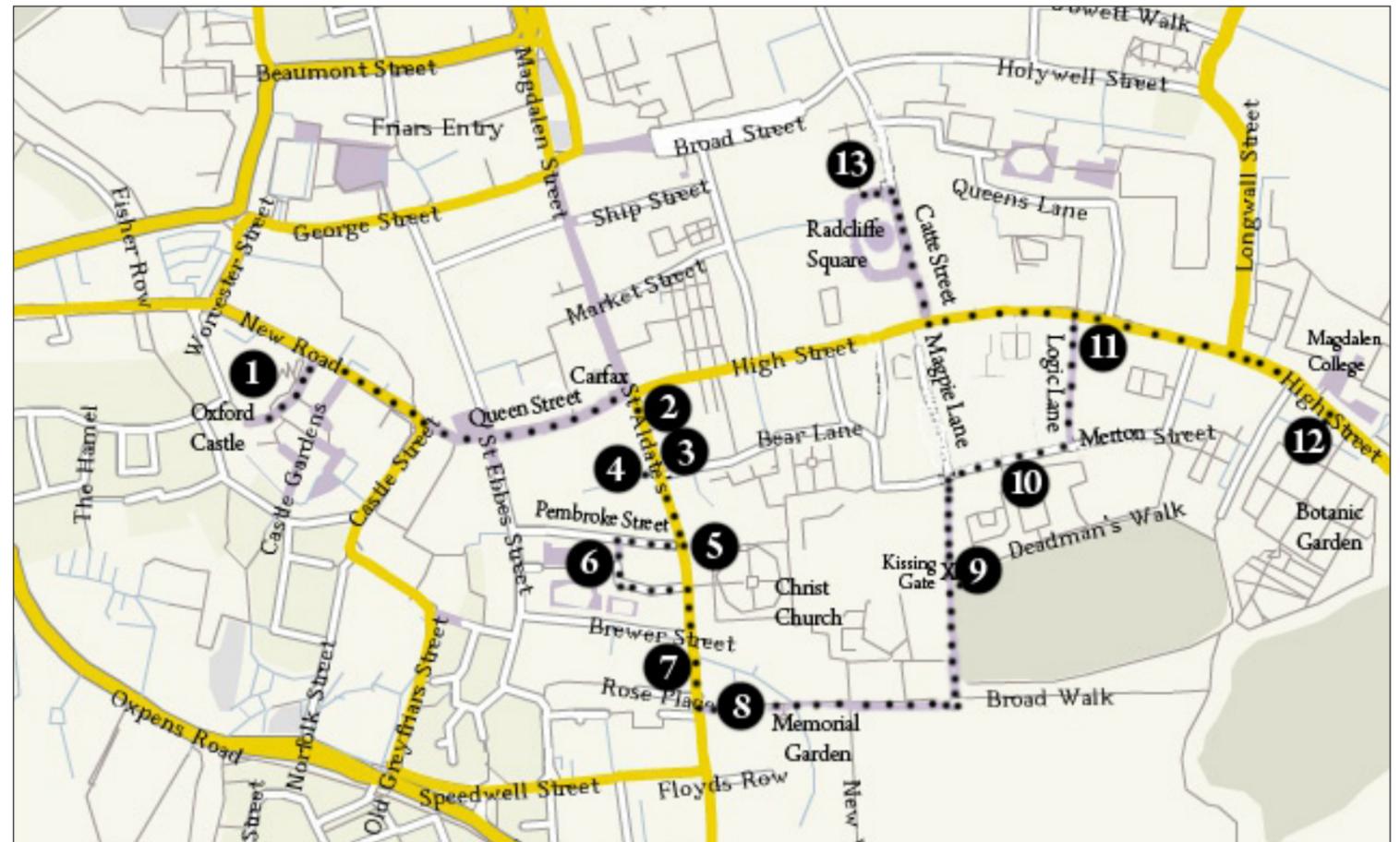
3 The Town Hall & Museum of Oxford on Great Jewry

Turning down St. Aldate's, the ornate building on the left is the Town Hall.

Several medieval Jewish stone houses stood on the Town Hall site. One of these great Jewish dwellings, known as The House With The Stone Chamber, was used by King John to house royal crossbowmen, when crossbows had been outlawed for being too murderously accurate by the Pope. Kings and dukes across Europe used Jewish assets as a way of bypassing this Papal prohibition. Later in the 13th c. David of Oxford, a wealthy financier, owned this house (left) which survived as part of the Town Hall complex until 1751. Even David's interesting home life is recorded in the Pipe Rolls: he tried to divorce his barren wife, Muriel, but both *Beth Dins* (Jewish Courts) of London and Paris upheld Muriel's protests and turned down his request. In desperation he turned to Henry III who, bribed with a set of silver spurs, awarded the divorce. David then married Licoricia of Winchester, a widow and financier in her own right. On the front right of the Town Hall is a plaque informing passersby that St. Aldate's used to be called Great Jewry. 'Explore Oxford' inside the Town Hall has worthwhile exhibitions featuring a map of the 1270 medieval Jewry, some excavated artefacts from the medieval Jewish houses that once stood on this site, and other items. Also on display inside is the base of a stone cross that the Jews of Oxford were forced to erect after an Ascension Day procession in 1268 was disrupted by a disturbed Jewish youth. David and Licoricia feature in the timeline of Historical Oxford Characters on display in the hall, and one of the medieval Jewish cellars which still exists beneath the Town Hall, is featured in an informative video tour. Do explore all the Medieval Jewry exhibits inside the Town Hall.

4 The House of Moses of Wallingford & his son Gedalya

Across St. Aldate's from the Town Hall turn right into New Inn Yard, known as Kepeharm's Lane in the medieval period. Behind St. Aldate's Tavern find the remains of a medieval stone building on your left, now the ground floor of a later building. Deulecresse (or Gedalya in Hebrew) and his father lived here in the late 12th century. During a procession on the feast day of St. Frideswide (Oxford's patron saint), Deulecresse mocked, pretending to limp and then be cured. That night he argued with his father and committed suicide in his father's kitchen. His corpse fell off the cart taking it to London (the only Jewish cemetery in England until 1177) for burial, breaking the corpse's neck. Christians chronicled this as 'Frideswide's revenge' in the *Acts of the Saints*.



5 The Medieval Synagogue

Return to St. Aldate's, proceed to the right. Stop at the corner of Pembroke Street & look across St. Aldate's at Christ Church's frontage. The ground under the northernmost corner tower of Christ Church's Tom Quad was the site of the medieval synagogue. Someone, usually the cantor, lived in the synagogue building which also housed a school. The synagogue itself often was at the back of such a structure on the first floor, discreetly out of conspicuous sight of the local Christian population. Care was taken that the houses on both sides of the property also belonged to Jews. The synagogue was one of only nine Oxford properties still in Jewish ownership at the time of the Expulsion from England of all Jews in 1290. Soon after, it belonged to Balliol College and became part of a large inn complex for 210 years before Wolsey demolished all in 1525 to build his Cardinal College, the predecessor of Christ Church.



SYNAGOGUE SITE

6 Moses' Hall

Turn right and walk down Pembroke Street. Opposite the Story Museum on Pembroke Street see the large pale green house, the remains of Moses' Hall, now 'Staircase 18' of Pembroke College. Parts of the lower floors are medieval. Cross the road and go through the small passageway to the left of the building to see, over Pembroke College's wall, the lower floors which retain some medieval features of this venerable hall.

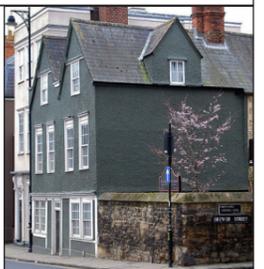


MOSES' HALL

Moses' Hall was built by the scholarly Rabbi Moses of Oxford, head of a family of five illustrious generations active both in Oxford and London. It was later lived in by Lumbarde (Long Beard) of Cricklade. He was a trader in wheat and wool and had warehouses nearby and wharves on the River Thames across from today's college boathouses. Moses' Hall became one of the earliest University Halls.

7 Lumbarde's Lane & The House of Vives

Continue left around Pembroke College & the church, then turn right onto St. Aldate's to the corner of Brewer Street. In the medieval period Brewer Street was known as Lumbarde's Lane, because Lumbarde of Cricklade's wheat and wool warehouses were located there just outside the town walls. (These actual walls remain on the north side of the street in the walls of Pembroke College.) On the opposite corner, now a small play yard for Christ Church Cathedral School, stood the house of Vives le Lung (or Chaim the Tall). He was one of 293 Jews from across England who were hanged for coin-clipping in the Tower of London in 1278. Coin-clipping allegations became widespread after King Edward I's *Statutum de Judaismo* of 1275 prohibited Jews from money-lending. They were directed to engage in 'handicrafts and farming', of which most had no knowledge, so desperate measures were resorted to by some. Eight Jews from Oxford, including one unnamed woman, were hanged in the wake of the 1278 purge.

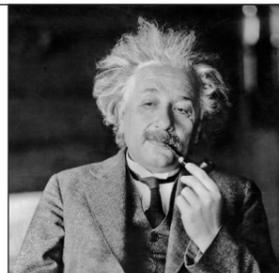


LUMBARDE'S LANE

8 Christ Church and the Einstein Window

Cross St. Aldate's and enter Christ Church Meadow through the Memorial Garden gate.

In the 16th century, a college which would become Christ Church was founded on a site that covered a great deal of the former Jewry. Hebrew had been studied at Oxford since the time of Roger Bacon (13th century) but it was Henry VIII who first established a Regius Professorship of Hebrew in 1546. In the 17th century several crypto-Jews held this chair. After 1871 Jews were openly allowed to study and lecture at the University. Christ Church's Lord Lindemann (later Churchill's Scientific Advisor) invited Albert Einstein to be a Visiting Fellow for three summers between 1931 and 1933. Einstein's face is in a stained glass window in the college refectory hall. Lindemann also played a key role in setting up the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning to fund refugee scholars. By the end of World War II, this society had rescued 2,500 scholars, most of them Jewish, of whom 16 went on to win Nobel Prizes--among them, at Christ Church alone, the physicist Francis Simon, Celtic archaeology expert Paul Jacobsthal, and classicist Eduard Fraenkel, whose books filled two railway wagons on their way out of Germany.



ALBERT EINSTEIN

9 Deadman's Walk

Take the gravel path north along the garden wall of Christ Church which leads to a large iron 'kissing gate' and pause.

The gravel path extending before you runs outside the old City Walls behind Merton College to the Botanic Garden beyond the trees. It is known as Deadman's Walk and possibly has existed as far back as 1090. It was the route by which the Jews transported their dead to Jewish burial grounds, first in London, and then on sites at Magdalen and in front of Oxford's Botanic Garden. You will be visiting the medieval Jewish Cemetery from another direction later.



DEAD MAN'S WALK

10 Merton College

Pass through the kissing gate between Merton & Corpus Christi and out the far gate turning right onto Merton Street.

Over Merton College gatehouse, on your right, there are two statues. To the right is Walter de Merton, Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of England under Henry III; the left hand statue is probably Edward I, who expelled all Jews from England in 1290. But earlier, in 1263, Walter de Merton had bought two houses from Jacob, one of the illustrious sons of Rabbi Moses of London. These houses were never actually demolished, but reputedly have been absorbed into the fabric of the building left of the gatehouse before you. Merton College still has the 13th c. 'starrs' or sales contracts between Walter de Merton and Jacob in its Muniment Tower, written in Latin with a Hebrew addendum. *Continue down cobbled Merton Street and turn left into Logic Lane.*



MERTON GATE

11 The First Coffee House in England

At the end of Logic lane, turn right onto the High.

On the site now occupied by the Grand Café, the first coffee house west of Venice opened in 1650. Its proprietor was 'Jacob the Jew', a Lebanese, who brought his coffee from the Levant (today's Turkey). Competition wasn't long in coming and opposite, the original Queen's Lane Café is thought to have been opened by a Syrian Jew named Cirques Jobson in 1654. Interestingly, both of these enterprising Jews openly traded in Oxford up to five years before Cromwell re-opened England to the Jews. Due to its University, Oxford was often a place to find things slightly ahead of their time.



1ST COFFEE HOUSE

12 The Medieval Jewish Cemetery

Continue up the High Street. Opposite Magdalen College, descend a few steps into the forecourt to the Botanic Garden.

On the right, there are two shallow steps up into a Rose Garden which holds a box-shaped memorial to the Penicillin Scientists. These included Ernst Chain, a refugee scholar who together with Alexander Fleming and Professor Florey won the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1945. On the steps themselves in front of this monument, there is a granite inscription telling the story of the medieval Jewish cemetery that was on this site. An even earlier Jewish burial ground was located across the road on the site now occupied by Magdalen College. These two Jewish cemeteries were in use from 1190 until 1290 and must contain over a hundred burials. To the right of the imposing Danby Gate entrance to the Botanic Garden, a small plaque on the wall (in English and Hebrew) was put up in 1931.

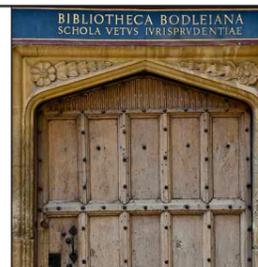


MEMORIAL STONE AT ROSE GARDEN

13 The Bodleian Library

Return back along the High Street toward the center of town and turn right into Catte Street. Walk past the Radcliffe Camera and into the courtyard of the Bodleian Library, the large fortress-like building across the square.

The Bodleian Library is one of the greatest treasure houses of Hebrew manuscripts and books in the world. It also has large collections of Yiddish, Aramaic and Judaeo-Arabic texts. The most important collections are the Huntington Collection of 1692, including an autograph copy of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, the lovely illuminated Kennicott Bible acquired in 1771, the Collection of Chief Rabbi Oppenheimer of Prague, bought in 1829 and over 5,000 Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza.



BODLEIAN LIBRARY



Oxford Jewish Heritage

www.oxfordjewishheritage.co.uk

More extensive professional guided tours are available, contact website.

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Oxford's Jewish Heritage

From the King's Jews of the Norman Conquest to the Refugee Scholars of the 1930s.

A walk through a thousand years of history.

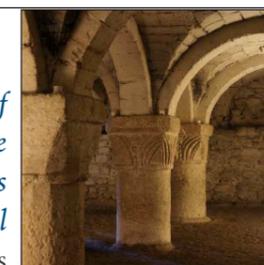
Jews first settled in Oxford c.1075, shortly after the Norman Conquest. William I brought them from Rouen. At its height, Oxford's thriving medieval Jewish community numbered over 200 in a city of several thousand inhabitants. They lived around today's St. Aldates, known then as Great Jewry. Two centuries later all Jews were expelled from England by Edward I in 1290. It was not until 1656 that Jews openly started to return to England after Oliver Cromwell signalled his willingness to re-admit them (there was no formal decree). Throughout the 17th and 18th century only a few Jews found their way back to Oxford. From the mid-19th century, in the wake of much Eastern European Jewish immigration, a synagogue and rabbi are recorded in the city. Since the reign of Elizabeth I, only Anglicans had been allowed at the University. After the University Tests Act of 1871 formally allowed men of any religion to study at Oxford, Jewish scholars and teachers begin to appear in the records. In the 1930s events in Germany, and the positive response of Oxford colleges to the plight of German Jewish scholars, saw an influx of Jewish academics who formed the bedrock of today's Oxford Jewish Community.

A 45-minute walking tour, plus time spent inside Museum of Oxford

1 Oxford Castle

Start at the Visitors' Centre of Oxford Castle. If you have time, take a tour of the Castle and the prison. In the 12th century castle crypt there is an illustrated panel about the Jews of medieval Oxford.

This royal castle was important to the Jews for a number of reasons. As wards of the King (being non-Christians in a wholly Christian society) they were under the direct protection of the king's Constable of the Castle. Oxford Castle was also the location of the Archa Chest. This innovation of Richard the Lionheart had four keys, two held by local Jews and two by local Christians, in which copies of all transactions made by Jews were held. Over 20 of these Archa Chests were located across the kingdom, to ensure that Jewish contracts (whose income ultimately belonged to the Crown) could not be destroyed or stolen.



CASTLE CRYPT