

Hidden Strengths

Unexpected collections in Oxford College Libraries

Wadham *
Broadsides & Accompanying Films

A walking tour
28th September 2026
2-5pm



William Morris at Exeter

Exeter *

Cohen Quad

Unexpected
Languages

Jesus



St Edmund Hall

Brief introduction
to the whole tour
at Lincoln at 2pm



Unexpected
Items

MAGDALEN

Clothing
& Textiles



Magdalen *



Lincoln *

Plays and Drama



Merton *

Modern Book Art

* Step-free access



Refreshments

Exeter

William Morris at Exeter



Given that William Morris (d.1896) studied at Exeter College, it probably comes as no surprise that the library and archives have a strong collection of material associated with the famous polymath. But did you know that this includes items that were on Morris's desk when he died – even his spectacles, paintbrushes, and pipe? This unexpected collection of personal belongings will be displayed alongside other highlights from the library and archives, including Morris's personal copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer.

Jesus

Unexpected Languages



Jesus is traditionally Oxford's Welsh college — and as well as the Celtic languages, its historic 17th-century Fellows' Library has given a home to books in more unexpected languages and scripts from around the world.

Lincoln

Plays and Drama



Among the weighty tomes of theology, philosophy and history on the shelves of Lincoln's Senior Library nestles a collection of over 500 17th and 18th century libretti and play texts, largely from the library of an 18th century Fellow who clearly had a passion for the stage. Could John Wesley's interest in the theatre have started when - a Fellow at Lincoln himself - he came across this collection?

Merton

Modern Book Art



What happens when three spectacular and very different book artists seek inspiration from an archival collection, explore ancient concepts of time, or respond to the buildings of an historic college? Rarely-displayed original works by Paul Johnson, Joumana Medlej and Gareth Brookes will be exhibited.

Magdalen

Clothing & Textiles



"Wearable" might not be the first word that comes to mind when you think of a library or archive, but Magdalen has a variety of historic fabrics in its collections. Some of these fabrics were used to make clothing, others for home décor, others as protective armour for our precious medieval seals, and still others to "dress" our books in lovely bindings.

St Edmund Hall

Unexpected Items



Visit our 17th century Old Library and see a collection of some of the most unusual and surprising items from the Library and Archive of St Edmund Hall including a relic of our namesake saint, a David Hockney doodle and a bitter 18th-century academic feud literally carried out on the pages of two books.

Wadham

Broadsides & Accompanying Films



Step into the world of revolutionary England and examine a selection of political broadsides issued between the years 1640 and 1680 by the King or by Parliament and the Lords. Discover how those governing the country during this tumultuous time communicated with the common man and woman. Watch two accompanying films which delve deeper into the purpose and effect of the broadsides and describe how they were produced and disseminated.



Step-free access



Free refreshments



Accessible toilet



College café open



Photography allowed



No photography



Includes visit to historic library

(without flash & private use only)