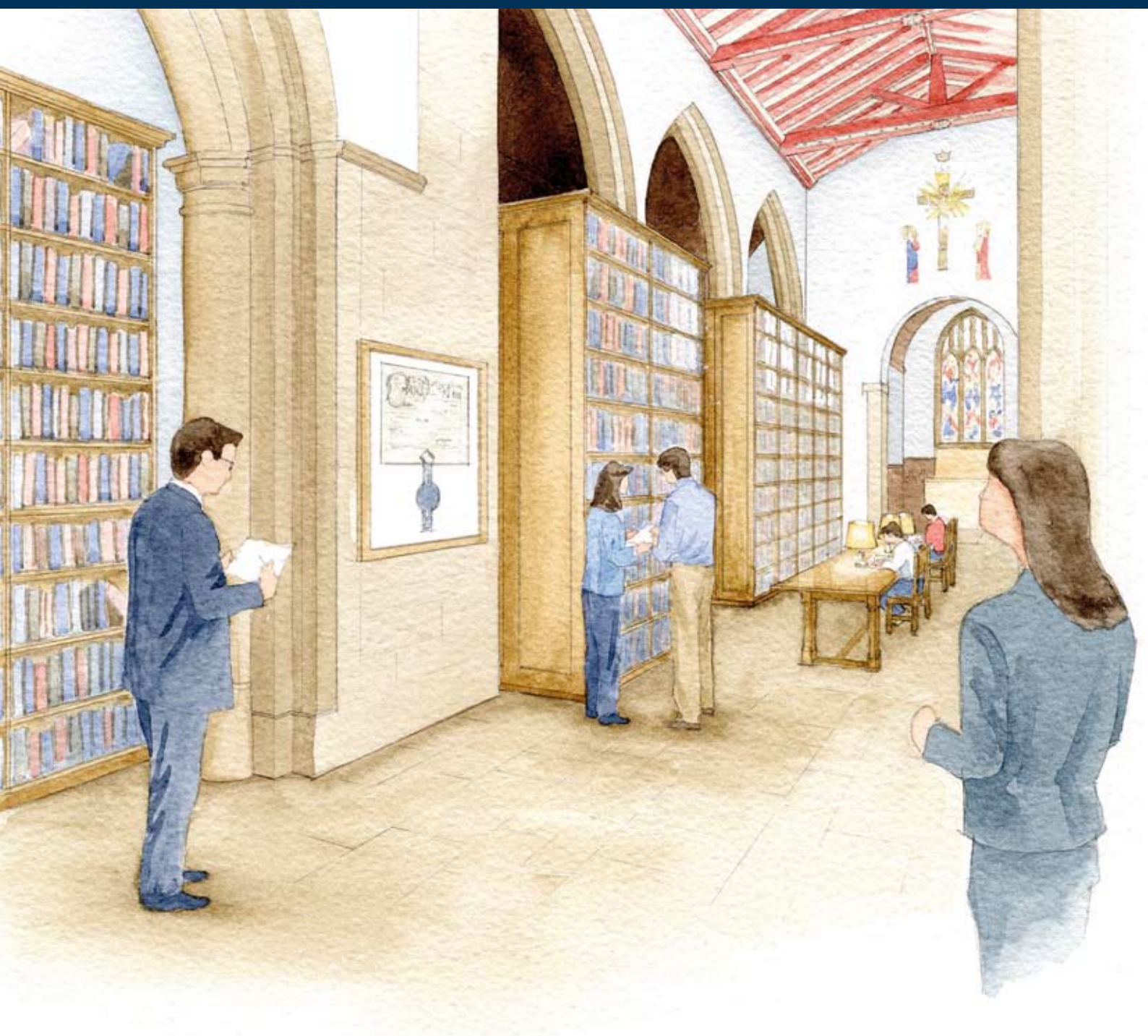




BALLIOL COLLEGE OXFORD

# An Historic Collections Centre in St Cross Church, Holywell



# AN HISTORIC COLLECTIONS CENTRE IN ST CROSS CHURCH, HOLYWELL



**Above:** An artists' impression of how it will look in the corner by the pulpit.

**Below:** How it will look in the central working area looking west.

**Below right:** A page from one of William Gray's books (ca. 1445) showing his arms in an exquisite illuminated initial.

**B**ALLIOL will celebrate its 750th anniversary in 2013. A leading force in the University since about 1825, its fame has been international for well over a century. As a consequence of its antiquity and reputation, it has acquired outstandingly rich and varied Historic Collections comprising medieval manuscripts, many early and rare printed books, and notable holdings of modern literary, scientific and political papers, besides its own extensive archives. These collections span more than eight centuries, and are part of the National Heritage.

We aim to bring these materials together in a Historic Collections Centre, where they will be maintained in climate-controlled conditions, and made fully accessible to students, academics, and interested readers, from across the world.

The collection will be housed in the Church of St Cross in Holywell, one of the oldest buildings in the City of Oxford: the surviving Chancel arch was built about 1180. The Church, which has been little used for many years, is directly contiguous with, and historically closely related to, Holywell Manor, which is now the home of Balliol's flourishing Graduate Centre. The small congregation and church authorities have no money for repairs and maintenance, and for some time have been looking for someone to restore it and put it to a dignified secular use which can be combined with occasional access for services to be held in the Chancel. Fortunately our need to make better provision for our Historic Collections and free up space in our Main Library can be met in a plan which also addresses their needs.



# BALLIOL'S HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

The eminence of Balliol's Historic Collections is without question.

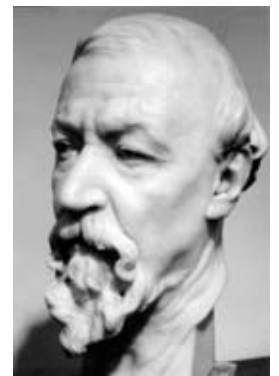
Our holding of more than 400 medieval manuscripts is of international standing. It enjoys the additional and unusual significance that it exists, not as the work of modern curators, but as a surviving part of the College's original library: benefactions date from 1276, the oldest recorded gift to any Oxford library. At its heart is the library of William Gray Bishop of Ely (ca.1414–78), which has been described as “by far the finest, as well as the largest, private collection to survive in England from the Middle Ages”.

Among our later holdings are the largest collection of poetic manuscripts by Browning in the world; literary and personal papers of many Balliol figures, including Arnold, Clough, Swinburne, and Hopkins; the extensive papers of Benjamin Jowett, including his long correspondence with Florence Nightingale; the Conroy, Morier and Jenkyns Papers; and,

from more recent times, among numerous other items, the diary of Harold Nicolson and the papers of Lord Balogh. The College also has more than 15,000 pre-1800 printed books, many of them unique.

The College's administrative archives survive from its very foundation, comprising statutes, thousands of title deeds dating from ca.1200, registers, detailed accounts, estate maps, architectural drawings, correspondence, and legal papers.

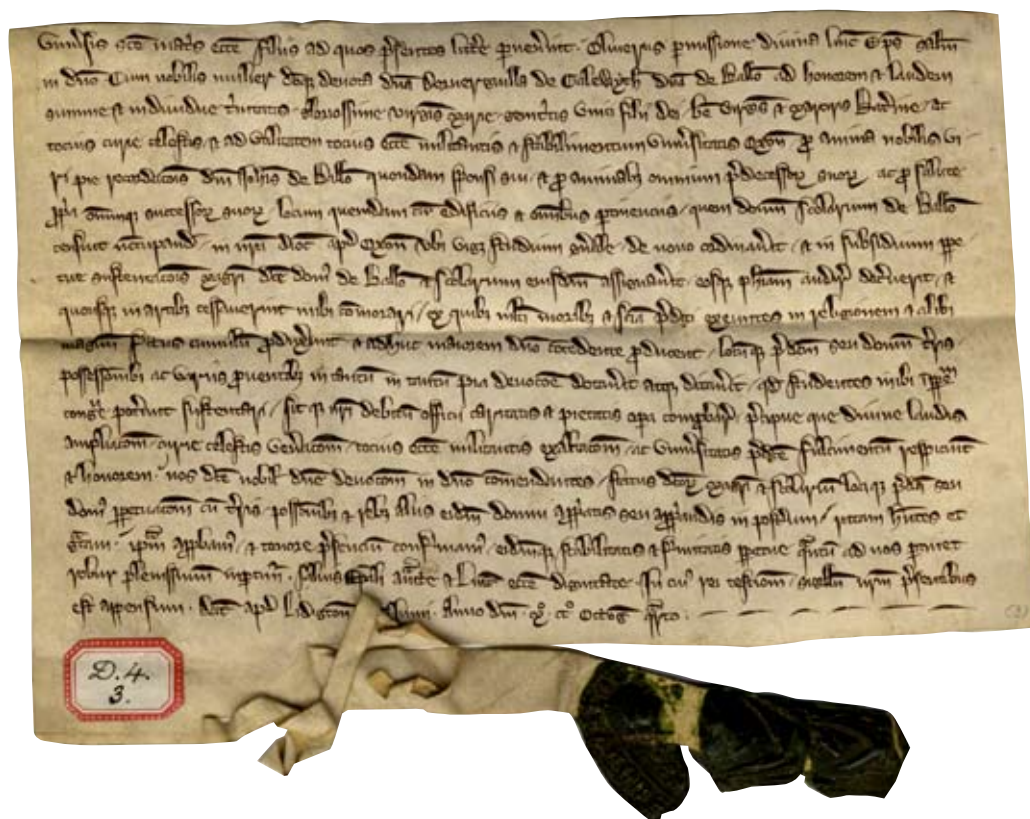
These diverse treasures deserve the best possible modern accommodation, so they can be preserved and consulted by the widest scholarly community. The constraints of space in our landlocked Broad Street site, which is unable to expand, have so far hindered the realisation of this ambition. It would be achieved in the handsome Historic Collections Centre which is planned.



**Top:** A grotesque marginal drawing in another of William Gray's books. This volume alone contains over a hundred such marginalia.

**Above:** Robert Browning. The College has an important collection of Browning manuscripts and memorabilia.

**Left:** A typical early (1284) document from the Archives. It gives the Bishop of Lincoln's approval for the foundation of the College.



# PROJECT DESIGN AND COSTS



**Above:** St Cross Church and Holywell Manor from the southwest, ca.1830.

**Right:** The view down the Nave, February 2008. This area will be cleared and turned into a researchers' workspace flanked with bookcases; the archive and manuscript storage will be mainly in the aisles on either side.

A detailed design has been drawn up by Robert Montgomery, whose practice has extensive experience in church conservation and conversion architecture.

The essence of the plan is for the College to acquire a 999-year lease; restore the fabric, including the painted ceiling and stained glass windows; conserve all the memorials and ancient features; install environmentally controlled archive storage; and create an exhibition and working space for researchers in the Nave. Small research seminars and musical performances will also take place from time to time, as well as occasional religious services in the Chancel.

There are also important incidental attractions: the historic connection of



the Church with Holywell Manor and the College will be cemented, at the same time as enabling the preservation of what is, in large part, one of the oldest buildings in Oxford.

The total cost of restoring the fabric of the Church, making the necessary alterations, and installing all the necessary facilities will be between £3.05 million and £3.2 million, depending on the assessment of VAT.

The Shirley Foundation has already most generously pledged £1 million towards the project, but a further £2 million is therefore needed. The College would be pleased to consider naming the Centre in gratitude for a benefaction enabling it to come to fruition.

This exciting project is being led by the Senior Fellow, John Jones, who will be pleased to answer any questions about the plan, collections and background.

## CONTACT DETAILS

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**Above** The seal of the University of Oxford, 1433.

**Right:** A letter by Florence Nightingale to Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol. They corresponded for over 30 years. The collection includes over 700 of his letters to her and some of hers to him.

