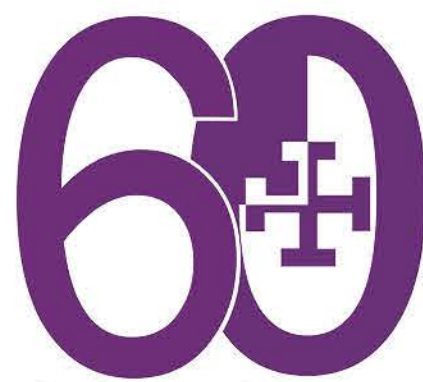




St Cross College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
1965-2025

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The Origins of St Cross College



Postwar Oxford

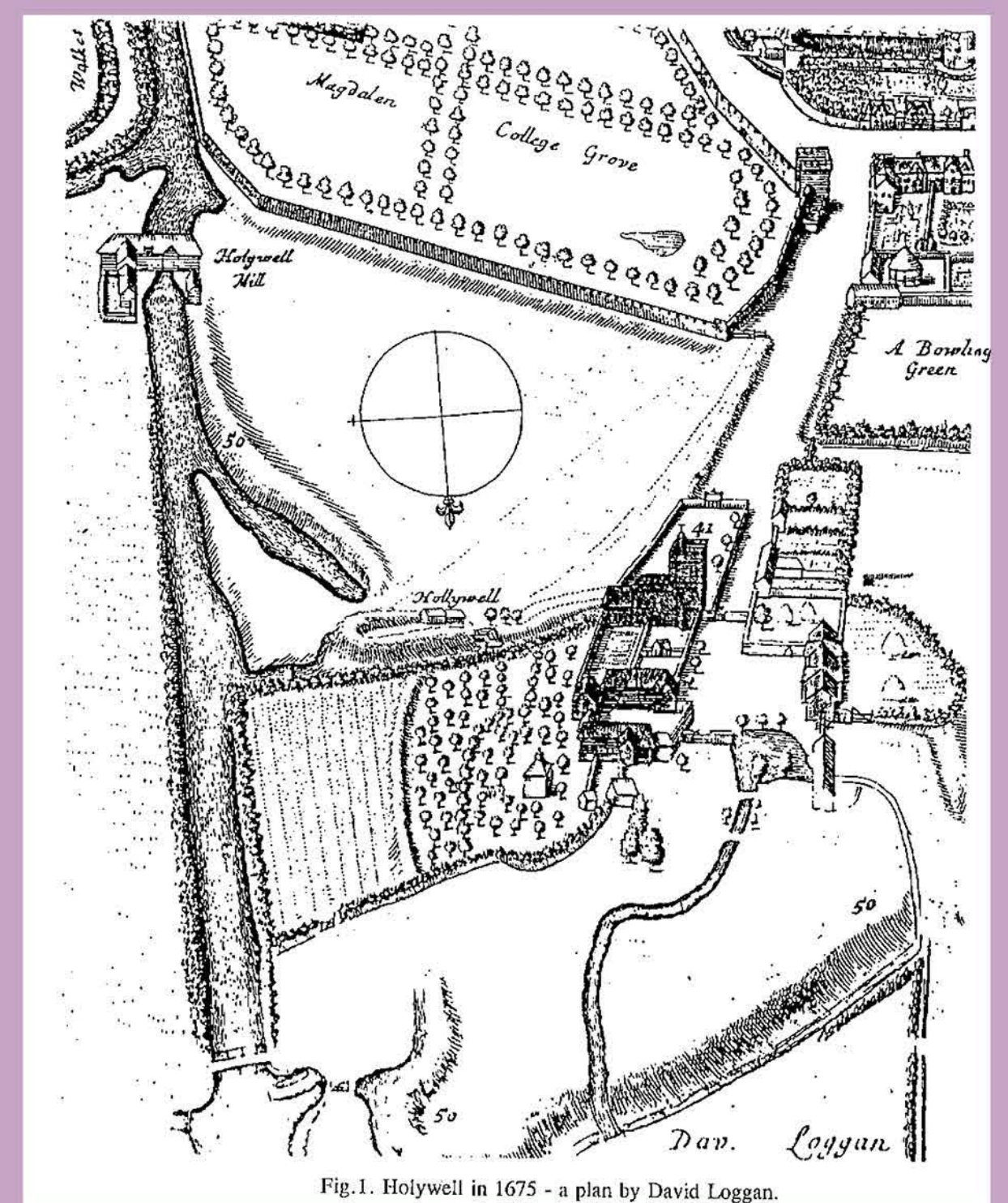
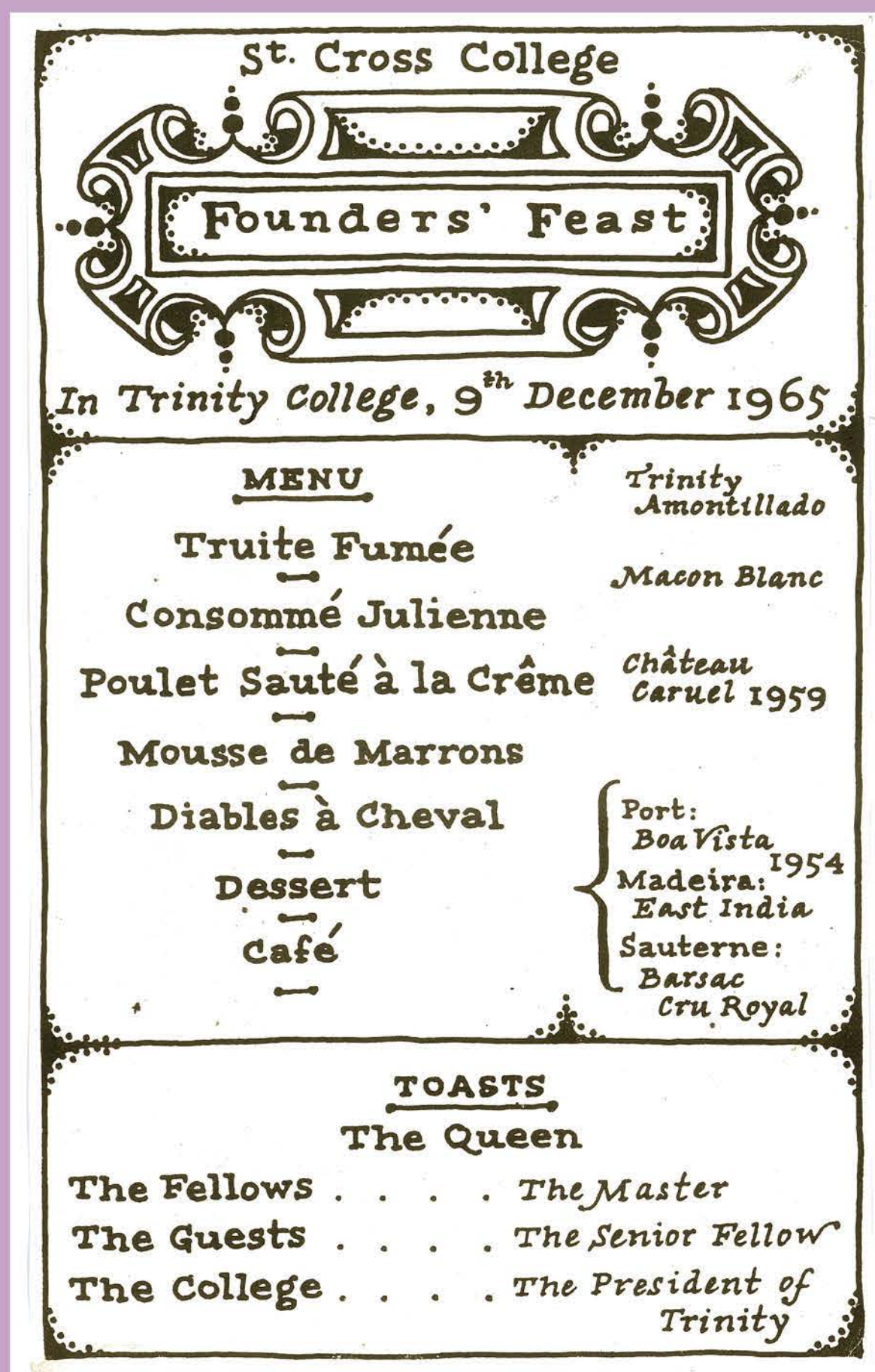
The decades following the Second World War saw profound transformation in Oxford. Graduate student numbers rose sharply, driven by the expansion of scientific disciplines and the introduction of new fields in the arts and social sciences. Yet the university's collegiate structure remained

focused on undergraduates, leaving many postgraduates and academic staff without meaningful integration into college life. By the early 1960s, Oxford faced a critical challenge: how to remain a collegiate university while adapting to its evolving academic landscape.

LEFT: 1835 engraving of Holywell Church, adjacent to the original St Cross site

The Non-Dons

Among those excluded from college fellowships were a growing number of senior academics—often referred to as “non-dons”—who taught and supervised graduate students but lacked access to college governance, facilities, and community. In 1961, a group of these scholars, including W.E. Kits van Heyningen and Marshall “Mac” Spencer, began campaigning for reform. Their efforts led to the formation of the Oxford Collegiate Society and a proposal to establish new graduate colleges welcoming graduate students and non-dons into full collegiate life.



ABOVE: 1675 map of the area that would become the first home of St Cross

LEFT: Menu from the first Founders' Feast in 1965



ABOVE: Ruth and Kits van Heyningen, the first Master of St Cross, Nov 1980

RIGHT: Ruth van Heyningen, Founding Fellow and wife of our first Master, 1966



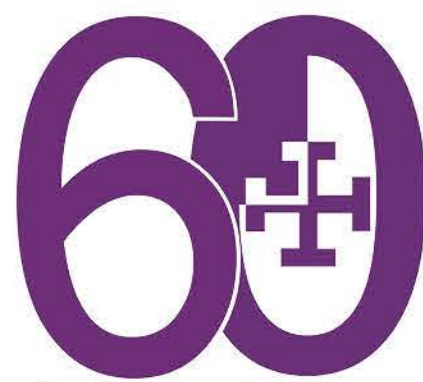
Graduate Colleges

St Cross became a college in 1965 as part of this movement, alongside Linacre and what would later be known as Wolfson. Named after its original site on St Cross Road, the college embodied a new vision: interdisciplinary, inclusive, and

international. Its founding marked a turning point in Oxford's history, affirming the importance of graduate education and offering a new model of collegiate community—one that continues to define St Cross today.



LEFT: Fellows attend the first St Cross Governing Body meeting hosted at Merton College, 5 October 1965



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A Hut on St Cross Road

What's in a Name?

St Cross takes its name from the road where it was first established – a quiet corner of Oxford named after Holy Cross Church, later known as St Cross Church. The college's original site, purchased from Merton College, included a Victorian vicarage, two school buildings, and a cemetery lodge. The vicarage was demolished

due to structural decay, and in its place rose a temporary wooden structure – the “hut” – which became the college's central hub. Though the name “St Cross” was initially provisional, it quickly became interconnected with the college's identity.

RIGHT: St Crossers pose in front of the Hut before dinner, ca. 1970s



Life on St Cross Road

The hut housed the common room, offices, and kitchen, while the Old School House served as a library and meeting room. Although the facilities were in many ways simple, St Cross had an early distinction in being the first Oxford college, and indeed one of the first institutions in Europe, to have a direct link to a computer network. This link was intended for use in arts and humanities research in addition to the sciences. The first Master, Kits van Heyningen, personally oversaw

the furnishing of the hut, ensuring it was elegant and welcoming. Meals prepared by Mrs. Collins, the porter's wife, became a cherished tradition, featuring hearty soups, generous Stilton cheese, and mulberry tarts from the garden tree. The atmosphere was informal and collegial, with Fellows and students dining side by side—some at dining chairs, others in easy chairs, forming distinct but friendly factions.

LEFT: Inside the Old School House, the original library and meeting room on St Cross Road



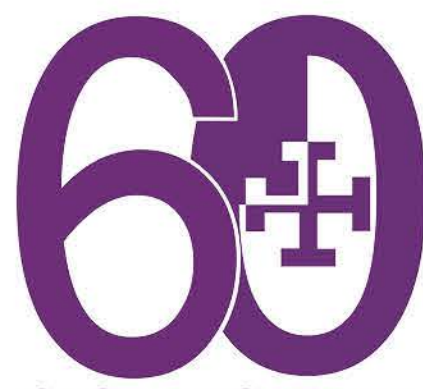
ABOVE: The common room in the Hut

RIGHT: Michael Collins, the College's first porter, alongside his wife who prepared lunches and much-loved mulberry tarts during the College's early years, ca. Late 1960s



A Unique Community

From its earliest days, St Cross fostered a culture of openness and equality. With no high table or senior common room, the college encouraged interaction across disciplines and generations. The first five graduate students arrived in 1966 and were treated as scholars, not subordinates. Traditions emerged organically in these early days, from croquet on the uneven lawn, to grazing on the fresh supply of mulberries from the tree. Though the hut was temporary, the community it nurtured laid the foundation for the college's enduring ethos—egalitarian, interdisciplinary, and welcoming.



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Moving to St Giles'



ABOVE: Pusey House under construction, ca. 1914

Pusey House, a New Home in the Centre of Oxford

By the late 1970s, St Cross College had outgrown its original site on St Cross Road. The wooden hut and modest facilities could no longer support the college's ambitions or its growing community. A suggestion by Fellow John Barton sparked a new possibility: sharing the precinct of Pusey House, a distinguished Anglo-Catholic foundation with a rich architectural heritage. The idea gained traction, and negotiations began between the College and Pusey House, just as Kits van Heyningen was planning his retirement as Master. The University supported the plan, and in July 1980, a 999-year lease was signed, securing the college's future in the

heart of Oxford. The move was made possible by a major benefaction from Richard Blackwell, whose support transformed a speculative idea into an opportunity set in stone.



ABOVE & BELOW: From Cloister to Dining Room, ca. 1981



Renovation Fit for a College

The buildings on St Giles', designed by Temple Moore in the Gothic Revival style, offered both grandeur and complexity. Master Godfrey Stafford oversaw extensive renovations to the Pusey House site to adapt it for collegiate life. This included enclosing the cloisters to create a new dining hall – no small feat, as it required significant

structural alterations. The front quad was also remodeled into the form it retains today, thanks largely to the Blackwell benefaction, after which it is named. These renovations not only made the site suitable for a college, but also earned an Oxford Preservation Trust Award in 1983, affirming the quality and sensitivity of the transformation.



ABOVE: Aerial view of St Cross College's new home on St Giles'



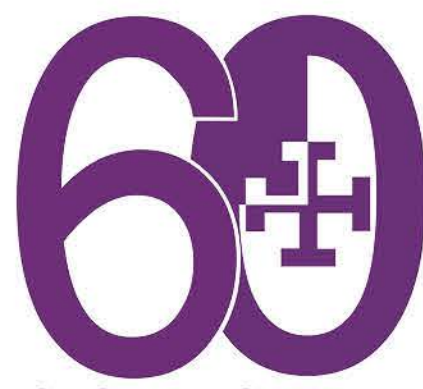
ABOVE: St Crossers enjoying the private garden on St Giles'

RIGHT: Pusey House before and after cleaning, which was conducted starting in 1982



Open Spaces

Behind the buildings lay a walled garden – an unusually large open space for central Oxford. This area offered scope for development and became a focal point for college life. Plans for a new wing began to take shape, and the garden hosted barbecues, croquet, and quiet reflection. The move to St Giles' was more than a change of address; it was a redefinition of the college's identity, blending tradition with innovation and setting the stage for decades of growth.



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Renovation and Expansion

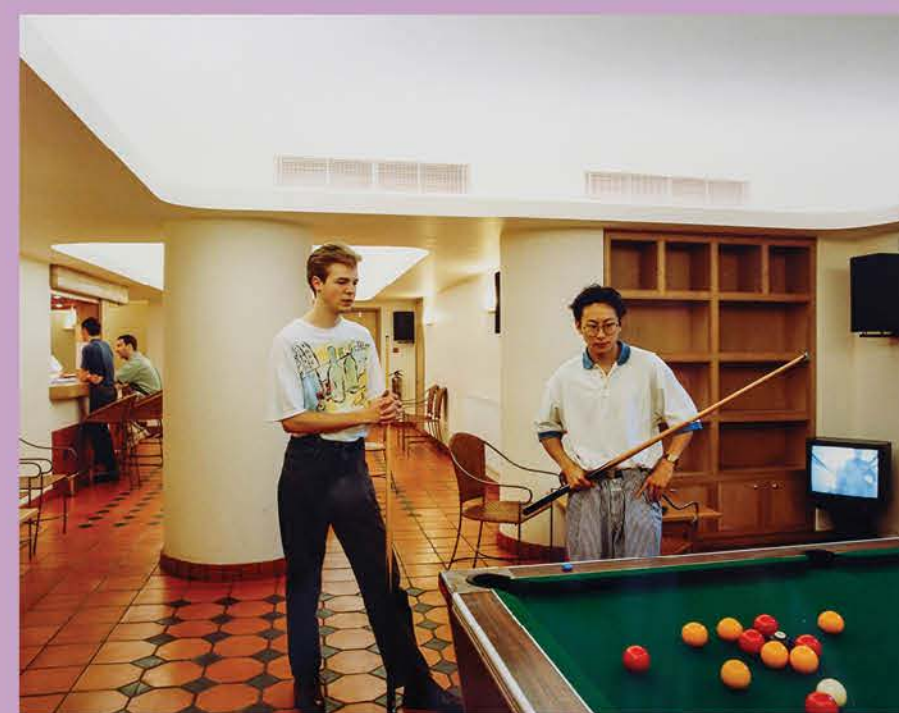
The South Wing

The completion of the South Wing in 1993, overseen by Master Dick Repp, marked a turning point in the life of St Cross College. Designed to meet the needs of a growing graduate community, the new wing introduced a purpose-built dining hall, student accommodation, and communal spaces that transformed the rhythm of college life. The new

facilities supported a more vibrant and inclusive environment, where students could gather, dine, and relax in surroundings that reflected the college's evolving identity. The South Wing helped foster a stronger sense of community, offering spaces for conversation, celebration, and study—all essential ingredients in the life of a graduate college.



ABOVE: The new South Wing, completed in 1993



ABOVE (LEFT-RIGHT): College's new library, now the Lange Common Room. College Gym, now the Caroline Miles Room. Students enjoying the new bar underneath the South Wing, and the College computer room.

New Uses for Old Spaces

As the college expanded, existing spaces were thoughtfully repurposed. The former dining hall became a common room, and the old common room was adapted into a college library. These adaptations reflected a commitment to

fostering a welcoming and practical environment for students and Fellows alike. Updated furnishings, lighting, and layout helped create an atmosphere both comfortable and distinctive, making St Cross feel ever more like home for its

growing community. Throughout, the college's informal ethos endured, with its enlarged spaces strengthening its role as a centre for collaboration and growth without departing from its founding principles.



ABOVE: Replacing the hut with the Annexe 1995-96

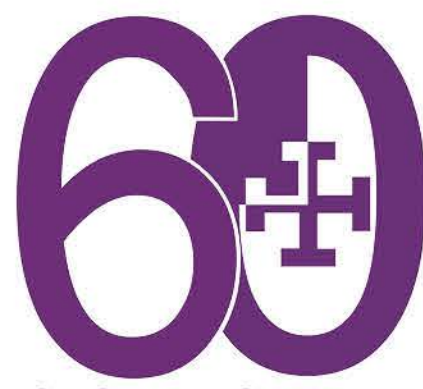
Renewing St Cross Road

In 1996, the college returned to its original site on St Cross Road, which had been in use by the Centre for Islamic Studies in the meantime, partnering with Brasenose College to develop new graduate accommodation. The project preserved the historic Kirby Old School House and the much-loved mulberry tree, while replacing the original hut with modern facilities. The new building provided nearly fifty student rooms, easing pressure on housing and allowing more students to live within the college community. This return to St Cross Road was more than symbolic — it was a practical step forward, reinforcing the college's commitment to growth while honouring its roots.



TOP: A student in his room at the Annexe

BOTTOM: The Annexe from the outside, with the mulberry tree, 1995



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The College Finds its Colours



ABOVE: The armillary sphere in its original location

Symbols of St Cross

As St Cross matured into a fully-fledged college, the need for a visual identity became clear. In the early 1980s, discussions began about creating a corporate symbol that could reflect the college's ethos and heritage. Though initially limited by its status as a University Department, which precluded a formal grant of arms, the college adopted a logo

designed by Fellow John Tiffany. This design, featuring a cross potent drawn from architectural details on the old St Cross vicarage, found uses around college, particularly on early parking permits. It would later become the basis for the official coat of arms, granted by the College of Arms in 2000.

A Coat of Arms at Last

The colours, purple and white, were chosen for their rarity in heraldry and their regal associations, as well as for being the colours of mulberries, with which the college was much associated in its early years. The design is strikingly simple: a single cross on a divided field, with one quarter counterchanged to add visual interest. Tiffany noted that the resulting shapes subtly resemble a cobbler's last and boot: symbols of St Crispin, whose feast day, 25 October, is celebrated as the college's Founders' Day. The

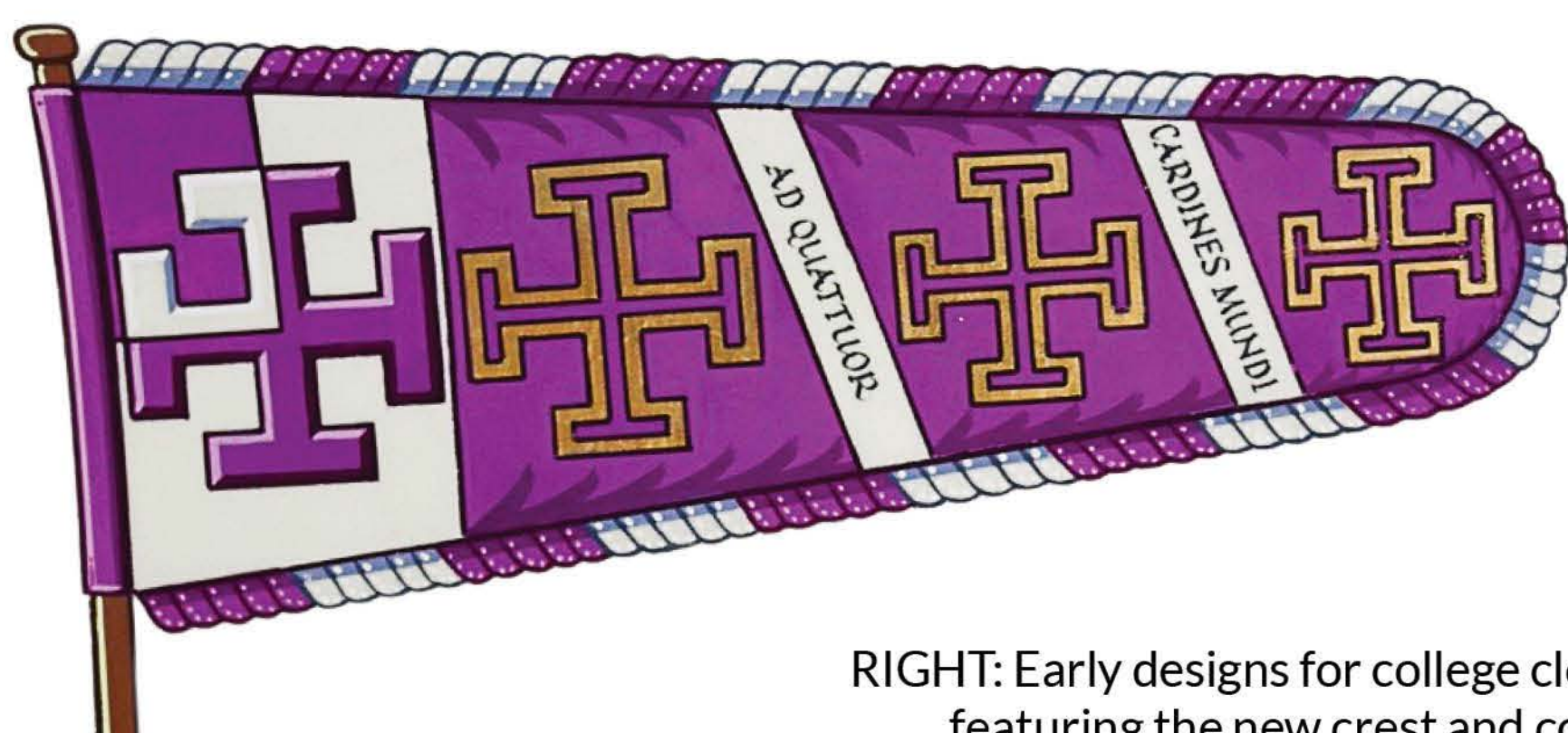
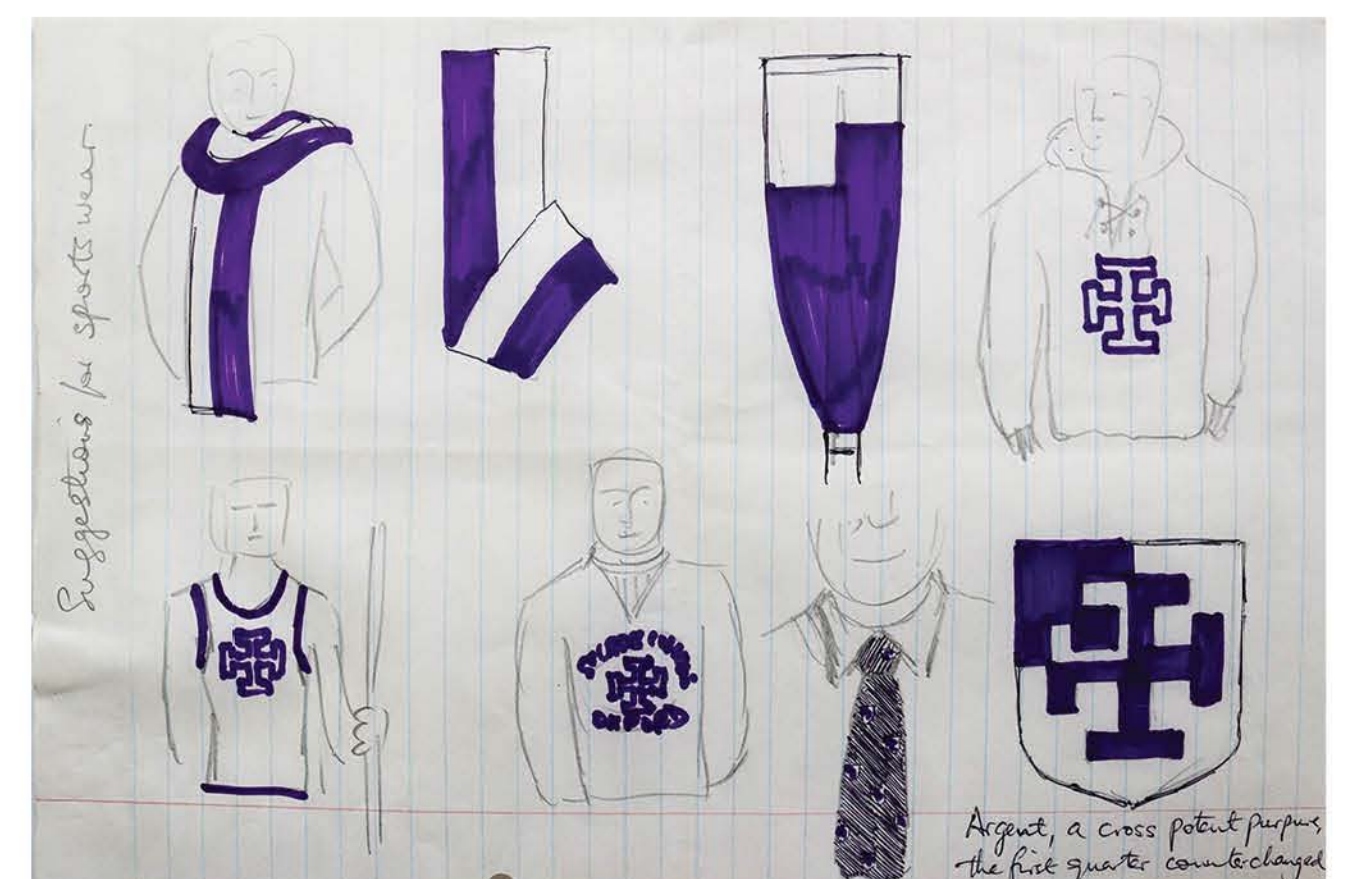
crest above the shield features an armillary sphere, symbolising the college's international character, and a dove bearing a sprig of mulberry, a nod to the mulberry trees found at both the original St Cross Road site and the new home in St Giles'. The motto, *Ad quattuor cardines mundi* "To the four corners of the world", reflects the college's global outlook. With its coat of arms, St Cross claimed its place among Oxford's colleges—not just in name, but in symbol and spirit.



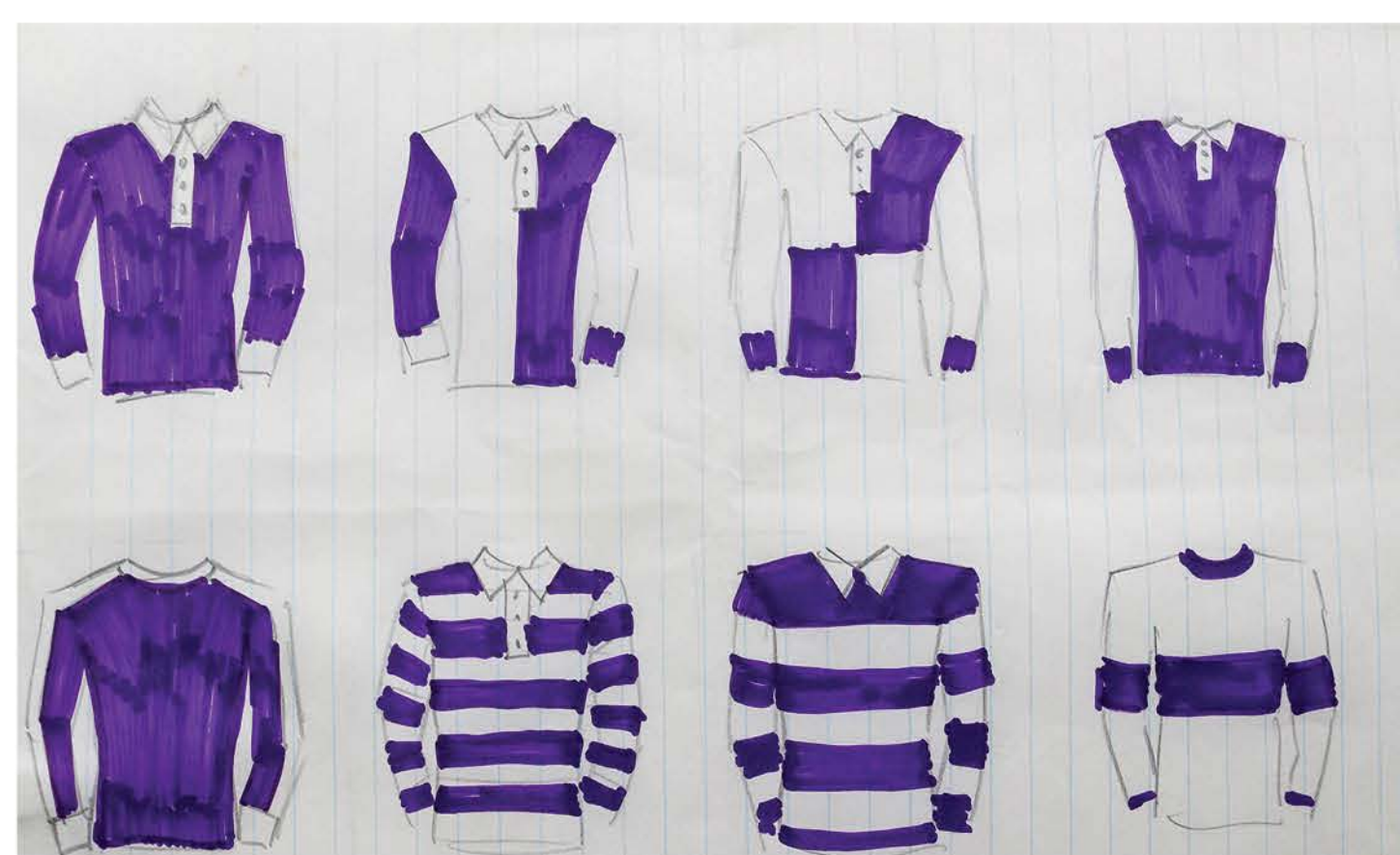
Purple Pride

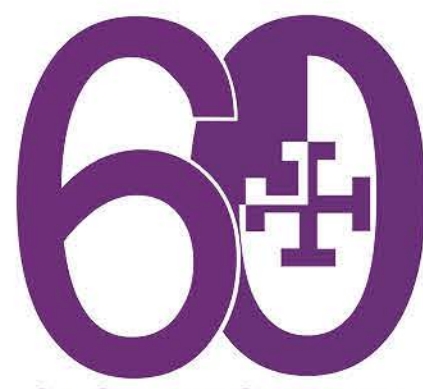
With its coat of arms, St Cross gained a visual identity that matched its growing presence and character, and inspired a new sense of pride among students and fellows. The development of traditions, some revived and others newly invented, helped foster a sense of belonging. The gong that calls members to

dinner, the Carol Service in Pusey Chapel, and events like Musical Evenings and Fred's Lunch, became part of the college's rhythm. These shared experiences, rooted in community rather than hierarchy, helped shape a culture that is informal, inclusive, and distinctly St Cross.



RIGHT: Early designs for college clothing featuring the new crest and colours, creator and date unknown





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St Cross Scales Up

The West Wing: A Promise Fulfilled

When St Cross moved to St Giles in 1981, it did so with limited space and ambitious hopes. Over the following decades, the College expanded and adapted, yet the vision of a fully realised site remained unfinished. The Annexe, opened more than twenty years earlier, had already extended accommodation for students beyond the main site. But it was the opening of the West Wing in

2017, a project led by Master Mark Jones, that fulfilled the long-held promise of Pusey House's garden. With 53 student rooms, a library, a lecture theatre, and versatile meeting spaces, the West Wing made it possible for more than 100 students to live in College accommodation, with more than half now resident within the College's walls.



ABOVE: The promise of the West Quad was fulfilled in 2017



ABOVE: St Crossers enjoy the 2022 College Ball

Space for Celebration

Over the past sixty years, St Cross developed a distinctive culture—informal, inclusive, and rooted in shared experience. Many cherished traditions, from formal dinners to annual celebrations, continue to thrive and evolve with each generation. Under Master Andrew Goudie's leadership, the College saw significant growth as the student body expanded and brought fresh energy to college life, enriching its social and academic rhythms. Whether through sport, conversation, or celebration, members of St Cross carry forward the College's values of connection, creativity, and continuity.



ABOVE: Students enjoying Diwali Hall, 2024

A Global Community

St Cross has been home to students from more than 100 countries, studying across nearly every discipline offered at Oxford. This diversity is not just a reflection of the College's founding ideals—it is the living reality of its community today. The international character of St Cross fosters a culture of openness, exchange, and shared purpose that defines life here. With Carole Souter as Master, bonds between College and its students became stronger and efforts were redoubled to expand scholarships, an initiative that continues to guide the College today. As the College enters its seventh decade, it continues to look



ABOVE: Master Kate Mavor and Development Director Milos Martinov meeting Alumni in Japan

ahead. The long-held ambition of full independence remains a guiding goal, alongside plans to expand student accommodation and strengthen the College's role within the University. St Cross has come a long way from its origins in a wooden hut on St Cross Road—but its commitment to equality, curiosity, and global engagement remains unchanged.