Drawings by J. B. Malchair in Corpus Christi College

By H. MINN

There have recently come to light in Corpus Christi College library eleven volumes of drawings by J. B. Malchair and his pupils, drawn between the years 1765–1790.¹

Malchair was a music and drawing master, and resided in Broad Street. A full account of all that is known of him will be found in an article by Paul Oppé in the Burlington Magazine for August, 1943.

This collection appears to have been made by John Griffith, Warden of Wadham College, 1871–81, and consists of 339 water-colour, indian ink, and pencil sketches; of these no less than 138 are views in and about the City and drawn by Malchair himself. A full list of all the drawings depicting Oxford or neighbouring places will be found in the Appendix; the remainder of the drawings depict places outside the range of Oxoniensis.

Malchair’s drawings of the City are very valuable records, and it is satisfactory to note that most of his known drawings are now to be found in Oxford; for, in addition to this collection, there is a fine collection in the Ashmolean Museum and a few other drawings are among the Bodleian topographical collection; but there were others of great interest in existence in 1862 (see Proceedings of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, new series, 1, 148), and it is to be hoped that these, if still in existence, may some day find a home in Oxford. The value of Malchair’s drawings is much enhanced by his habit of writing on the back the subject, the year, day of the month and often the hour at which the drawing was made.

It is fortunate that many of Malchair’s drawings were made before the passing of the Mileways Act of 1771, and he was thus able to record much of the mediaeval aspects of the City which were swept away under the improvements carried out under this Act. Had it not been for Malchair’s activities we should have had no pictorial representations of old Magdalen Bridge and the East Gate, and very imperfect ones of old Folly Bridge, the North Gate, the Little Gate, and the Castle environs.

The Corpus Christi collection includes a series of six unique drawings of old Magdalen Bridge, of which only one (Vol. iii, 31) has been published, being engraved by Howarth about 1775 and by Skelton (who then owned the

¹ I am greatly indebted to the President and Fellows for permission to publish this account of the collection.
drawing) in 1819. It is a view of the whole length of the bridge from St. Clement's. Malchair duplicated this drawing, for another more finished copy is in the possession of Mr. Oppé. Either the engraving or one of these drawings was copied by A. Macdonald and used for the Oxford Almanack for the year 1872. The two of greatest interest are only unfinished pencil sketches; one (Vol. III, 36, see pl. XVI, A) depicts the original narrow entrance to the bridge from St. Clement's with the approach to the ford, and shows the offset made in the widening of the bridge in 1723. Gwynne's plan of the bridge in 1771 gives the original width at this point as only 15 feet. Hearne writes on the 22nd of October, 1723: 'It having been a dry summer, the Work at Magdalen Bridge was so effectually carried on yt it was finished a little after Michaelmas last and tis a glorious noble thing, being near as broad again as before, but there is a defect at ye Entrance at ye East end by reason it still continues there as narrow as it was before, because of ye houses.' The second (Vol. III, 37, see pl. XV, B) is a view of the bridge and ford from the entrance to the ford below Magdalen Tower showing a horse and rider crossing the stream. A great deal of traffic must, in suitable weather, have used the ford, for it would have been hardly possible for two carts or coaches to have passed on the bridge, which was about 160 yards in length and about 20 ft. in width. On the passing of any wide vehicle pedestrians must have sheltered in the angular recesses formed by the breakwaters on the upstream side. Other sketches of the bridge are two water-colour views, one from the northwest (Vol. III, 27, see pl. XV, A), the other from Magdalen Water Walks (Vol. I, 40, see pl. XVII), both showing the 15th century arches of the bridge and the houses on the bridge, and also an unfinished pencil sketch of the two eastern arches from the south (Vol. III, 30). These arches were probably part of the 1723 widening. The temporary bridge erected near the end of the Broad Walk for use during the building of the new bridge is recorded by a sepia sketch (Vol. III, 52).

Of Folly Bridge there are two drawings, one in Indian ink from the northwest (Vol. III, 32), which is the original from which A. Macdonald made his drawing for the Oxford Almanack for the year 1873, the second is a pencil sketch of the approach to the bridge from the Abingdon Road with Friar Bacon's Study (Vol. VII, 20). These are valuable additions to Malchair's other pictorial records of this bridge.

The environs of the Castle are depicted, first, in a charming water-colour drawing (Vol. VII, 26, see pl. XVIII, B) from the north looking down what is now Titmouse Lane to the Castle; in the middle background is the tower; and the remains of St. George's Chapel with its apsidal east end can be seen to the left. This is one of only two known drawings showing the last traces of water in the Castle moat (the other is by H. Grimm of near the same date).
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now that of the Oxford County Education Offices; and it is interesting to note that it was necessary to drive piles into the mud of the former moat in order to get a foundation for erecting that building. The second is a view from the Castle ditch of the remains of a large ‘round tower’ (Vol. v, 29) which formed the south-west angle of the outer wall of the Castle; (another crude view of this in the year 1781 is in the Pridden collection, Bodleian Library). A third (Vol. v, 21) is a view in water colour of the north slope of the Castle mound including the site of New Road and the old Church of St. Peter-le-Bailey in the background.

Among the drawings of collegiate interest is a water-colour of the old Canterbury Gate from Oriel Street (Vol. vii, 10, see pl. xvi, b). This drawing depicts in a very charming manner the buildings as seen in the early-morning atmosphere of 5 a.m. It was drawn shortly before the demolition of the old Canterbury buildings in 1775. Beyond the Gate is shown, enclosed by a wall, that part of the old road once leading to St. Frideswide’s, now the entrance to the Lodgings of the President of Corpus Christi College with the tower and east end of the Cathedral in the background; on the right and adjoining the Christ Church buildings is seen the entrance to the former stables and garden of the Provost of Oriel; this area was cleared and part of the site thrown into the street in 1874.

Another water-colour drawing (Vol. x, 14, see pl. xix) is of old Alban Hall and the site of the new Lodgings of the Warden of Merton College as seen from Logic Lane.

A view of ‘Baliol Grove’ (Vol. iv, 25) from St. Giles’ gives the aspect before the new buildings were erected.

Christ Church Meadow was a favourite resort with Malchair, and there are a number of drawings made when he was out with his pupils. Some of these, though not of artistic merit, are of considerable topographical interest, for they show the Meadow with few trees, other than those in the Broad Walk, and the banks of the Cherwell bare even of shrubs (Vol. iii, 24). A short avenue lined with trees led from the Broad Walk to Corpus Christi College and Merton Grove across about the middle of what is now the Christ Church garden east of the Cathedral. This is shown in two water-colours (Vol. x, 10 and 11).

It was Malchair’s custom to conduct his pupils for sketching walks in the rural surroundings of the City, and many of his drawings made on these occasions make valuable topographical records: the Mill, The Cock Pit, the interior of the old Barn, are all interesting records of Holywell Parish in the 18th century. A visit to the Banbury Road is recorded by a drawing of the old inn, ‘The Diamond Hall’, a mile north of the City (Vol. iii, 3). The
site and the name still survive as Diamond Terrace and Cottage. A view on the Woodstock Road 'near the Observatory, 1774', shows the wall of the Observatory, the 'Royal Oak' inn and the distant open fields of St. Giles' stretching away to the north (Vol. vii, 17).

Trips on the upper River Thames afforded Malchair the opportunity to make several drawings, the value of which we can now appreciate from the great changes in the aspects of west Oxford due to the advent of the canal and railways. One of these (Vol. i, 27), a rather faint pencil drawing, shows the site of the Great Western Railway Station from the river, two others (Vol. i, 5 and 6) are views of the old course of the Thames west of Worcester College grounds before the canal was constructed. The occasion of these drawings was a 'House Boat Expedition', 21 July, 1769, with two of his pupils, P. Rashleigh and W. Roundel. Another drawing (Vol. vii, 34, see pl. xviii, a) is a view of the Bridge (now called Paceys) from the 'Middle Fisher Row', looking south. Malchair calls it the New Bridge; it was constructed about 1767, and after alteration and widening was demolished in 1923; moored to the bank is seen the house boat used on these river trips. Other drawings were made on the occasion of a house-boat concert of the Oxford Band, in which Malchair played first violin for some years.

His pupils also arranged outings with him to nearby villages, and some of the drawings made on these excursions are amusingly annotated as 'Porck Griskin to Headington', 'Bacon & Eggs expedition Beckley', 'Bacon and Eggs at Hingsey'. Ferry Hinksey was a favourite walk with Malchair, and several views of the Ferry and neighbourhood are included in this collection.

In the County, Witney, Rycote, Headington, Beckley, Elsfield, and the Church and South Bar at Banbury and many other places furnished subjects for his pencil.

APPENDIX

List of Drawings of Oxford and Neighbourhood by J. B. Malchair in the Collection now in Corpus Christi College Library

Vol. I. Size 24 cm. by 16·5 cm.
2. 'Near Christ Church Walck July 4 1769.' Water colour.
3. 'Ch. Ch. Walck July 13 1769 10/.' (=10 a.m.). Water colour.
4. 'In Marston Lane near Oxford July 20 /7.' (=7 p.m.). Water colour.
*6. 'From the water near High Bridge Oxford July 21 1769 /2 approach of a thunder storm.' Indian ink.
7. 'Bridge on the way to Medley near Oxford July 21 1769 /2.' Pencil, washed colour.

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8. 'Near Ferry Higsey [Hinksey] by Oxford July 21 1769.' Indian ink, washed colour.
10. 'Near Heddington by Oxford April 18 1771.' A ramble a Duo about Heddington Richard Mead & J.M. Indian ink.
12. 'Stanton Church Oxfordshire April 18 1771.' Indian ink, washed colour.
13. 'Near Heddington Oxfordshire April 18 1771.' Pencil.
14. 'Oxford from Heddington Hill April 18 1771.' Water colour.
15. 'From Heddington Hill near Oxford April 18 1771.' Water colour.
17. 'Part of Merton & Corpus Colleges from Merton field May 4 1771.' Pencil.
18. 'In Merton Garden May 4 1771.' Pencil, washed colour.
19. 'In Merton Garden Oxford 1771.' Pencil.
20. 'From the Parks Oxford May 16 1771.' Water colour.
21. 'A view of Oxford from ye Royal Oak near the New Inne April 17 1772 (Bacon & Eggs expedition April 17 1772 P. Rashleigh & J. Malchair.)' Indian ink, washed colour.
22. 'From Christ Church Meddow Oxford June 5 1771.' Pencil.
23. 'Friar Bacon's Studdy Oxford 1771.' Pencil.
24. 'Cowley 7 of July 1771 T. Frankland & P. Rashleigh.' Unfinished pencil.
25. 'Cowley Lane near Oxford July 7 1771.' Pencil, washed Indian ink.
26. 'In Cowley Lane near Oxford July 7 1771.' Pencil, washed Indian ink.
27. 'From the River in Port Meddow near Oxford July 17 1771 House Boat expedition P. Rashleigh T. Frankland Rd. Mead.' Pencil.
29. 'Binsey near Oxford July 10 1771.' Pencil.
30. 'Part of a new Bridge on Botley Causeway near Oxford July 10 1771.' Pencil.
31. 'Bacon & Eggs at Higsey near Oxford Mr Peter Rashleigh & J. M. 12 of July 1771.' Pencil.
32. 'A walk round the Medow Oxford Eliz. & John Malchair 13 of July 1771.' Pencil, washed Indian ink.
34. 'House boat Concert Oxford Bande July 17 1771.' Pencil.
36. 'Hedlington Church.' n.d. Pencil.
37. 'From the Park.' Pencil.
38. 'Mr. & Mrs. M. went in a Chaise to take a Sundays Dinner with Dr. Wynne at Dr. Edward's Par[sonage Besselsleigh].' Pencil.
39. 'A view of Magdalen Bridge from Magdalen Walks the 26th of Nov. 1771 Oxon. 10/.' Water colour. Pl. xvii.

Vol. III. Size 29 cm. by 18 cm.
1. 'The Road from St. Giles' Church to Worcester College June 8 1767.' Pencil.
2. 'Looking West from near the Workhouse Oxford Sep. 21 1767.' Pencil.
3. 'Diamond Hall a mile North of Oxford on the Banbury Rd. June 9 1767.' Indian ink.
4. 'Part of Christ Church Walk with Magdalen Tower June 10 1767.' Pencil.
5. "A view of Christ Church from the river below Friar Bacon’s Study June 10 1767." Pencil.
6. "Elsfield Church June 11 (1767)." Indian ink.
*13. "View from Mr. Cracherode’s window at Ch. Ch. 9th of June 1772 11/2." Water colour.
17. "Ifley 29th of July 1770 /4." Indian ink. (Ifley.)
24. "Round the Ch. Ch. Meddows May 4 1772 /5 a prodigious fine evening, a cessation of a dry cold north wind." Water colour.
27. "Magdalen Bridge Oxford 2nd of June 1772 10/6." Indian ink. PL XV A.
32. "Friar Bacon’s study Oxon. June 5th 1771 /5." Indian ink.
34. "Kennington from the Ifley side of the River Oxon. 10th of June 1772 /6." Indian ink.
40. "Witney Bridge July 17 1772 Oxfordshire." Indian ink.

Vol. IV. Size 29 cm. by 18.6 cm.
1. "By the Stables behind Ch. Ch. Oxon. Dec. 6 1790 /1." Indian ink.
*3. "Little Gate Oxon. March 18 1791 /1." Indian ink.
5. "Part of the Bodleian Library Oxon, from the West May 1791 1/2." Indian ink.
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8. 'Baliol new buildings May 16 1792.' Unfinished sketch in indian ink.
9. 'The Observatory and Infirmary from Woodstock Road May 30 1792 /8.' Water colour.
10. 'Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. May 26 1792 10/.' Indian ink.
*11. 'A view in Ch. Ch. Meaddow drawn with Mr. Amherst June 1 1792 9/.' Indian ink.
12. 'A view in Ch. Ch. Meaddow drawn with Mr. Woodcock June 1 1792 11/.' Indian ink.
13. 'In Merton field 1792.' Unfinished pencil.
15. 'Ch. Ch. Meaddow June 12 1792 /8.' Indian ink.
16. 'Ch. Ch. Meaddow June 12 1792 /8.' Pencil.
20. 'Merton from the Broad Walk.' June 22 1792 9/.' Indian ink.
23. 'Magdalen Tower from Ch. Ch. meadow.' n.d. Pencil.
24. 'In Merton fields Oxon. Oct. 27 1792.' Indian ink.
*25. 'Baliol Grove Nov. 2 1792 /1.' Indian ink.
27. 'Merton fields Oxon. Nov. 5 1792 10/.' Indian ink.
28. 'Merton fields Oxon. Nov. 19 1792 10/.' Indian ink.
29. 'In Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. June 18 1793 1/2.' Indian ink.
30. 'In Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. June 21 1793 10/.' Indian ink.
31. 'In Ch. Ch. Meddow Oxon. June 23 1793 1/2.' Indian ink.
32. 'In Ch. Ch. Walk Oxon. June 23 1793 1/2.' Water colour.
34. 'Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. July 9 1793 1/2.' Water colour.
35. 'Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. July 18 1793 7/.' Pencil.
36. 'In Ch. Ch. Meaddow Oxon. July 19 1793 7/.' Pencil, washed.
38. 'From Maidenhead Bridge Nov. 25 1788.' Pencil.
39. 'Near the one mile stone Woodstock Road Oxon. May 22 1777 1/2.' Pencil.
40. 'Cock Pitt at Oxford April 12 1779 /8.' Unfinished pencil.
41. 'Near Ferry Hingsey Oxford 15 of July 1775.' Pencil.
42. 'Near Ferry Hingsey Oxford 15 of July 1775 7/.' Water colour.
*43. 'At Ferry Hingsey Oxford 13th of June 1775 /7.' Pencil.
44. 'Part of Oxford from ferry Hingsey 13 of June 1775 7/.' Pencil.
45. 'Part of Oxford from Heddington Hill on the north of the hill May 22 1775 /1.' Pencil.

Vol. V. Size 28·7 cm. by 18·5 cm.
1. 'Christ Church Stables,' n.d. Indian ink.
3. 'Mr. Lentil's [Lenthall's] garden wall by the road at Burford Oxfordshire 5th of Sept. 1768.' Indian ink.
10. 'In Merton field Oxon. 3rd of Dec. 1768.' Indian ink.
15. 'Christ Church from St. Clements Oxford Aug. 31 1769 /1.' Indian ink.
18. 'Marlow Sep. 20 1769.' Unfinished pencil.
19. 'Harleyford the seat of Mr. Clayton near Marlow.' n.d. Water colour.
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20. 'From Mr. Clayton's Harleyford near Marlow Sep. 21 1769.' Pencil, washed.
23. 'Bessels Leigh the Parsonage house stable & kitchen June 14 1782 1/2.'
   Indian ink.
28. 'Besselsleigh [Church] July 14 1782 /6.' Indian ink.
*29. 'Ruins of a round tower Castle Wall Oxford Sep. 7 1782 /6.' Pencil, washed.
30. 'On Bottleby Coseway Oxon. Oct. 8 1790 /5.' Indian ink.
31. 'Behind Christ Church Stables Oxon. Oct. 19 1790 /2.' Indian ink.
32. 'Behind Christ Church Stables Oxon. Oct. 25 1790 /1.' Indian ink.
33. 'In Christ Church Meadow Oxon. Oct. 25 1790 /2.' Indian ink.
34. 'In Christ Church Meadow Oxon. Nov. 15 1790 /1.' Indian ink.
35. 'In Christ Church Meadow Oxon. Nov. 20 1790 8/. Water colour.
36. 'In Christ Church Meadow Oxon. Nov. 24 1790 /1.' Indian ink.
37. 'Bruginses Weir Berks. 5 miles from Oxford June 6 1779 /7.' Water colour.
39. 'Bruginses Weir Berks. 5 miles from Oxford June 6 1779 /5.' Indian ink.
40. 'Burcot the house of Mr. Bush near Dorchester Oxon. June 28 1788 /4.'
   Water colour.
41. 'The Bridge over the Canal at Banbury May 20 1778 11/. Water colour.
42. 'Banbury Church from the Assemble Room at the Three Tuns May 20
   1778 9/. In the chancel of this church is a fine picture of a dead Christ,
   the Virgin, St. John, Joseph of Arimathea and an angel, supposed by
   Vandyke, but more likely by an Italian master.' Water colour.
43. 'The South Barr at Banbury May 19 1778 /2 & 6.' Indian ink.

Vol. VI. Size 28 cm. by 18·3 cm.
1. 'Corpus College.' Water colour.
2. 'Christ Church College.'
3. 'Part of Christ Church from the walk.' Water colour.
4. 'View of Wadham Coll.' Water colour.
5. 'Xt Ch. Coll: walk.' Water colour.
7. 'Magdalen Tower from Merton garden.' Water colour.
8. 'St. Peter's Church.' Water colour.
9. 'Merton tower from the garden.' Water colour.
10. 'The Cock Pit & Holywell Church.' Pencil.

Vol. VII. Size 28·3 cm. by 18·5 cm.
5. 'Rycote the seat of the Earle of Abingdon Feb. 18 1773 1/2.' Water colour.

I do not think any of these drawings are by Malchair. They are probably the work of one of his pupils.
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*10. 'Canterbury Gate Ch. Ch. Oxford 4th May 1774 5/.' Water colour. PL. XVI B.
11. 'Heddington Hill Oxford 23 of May 1774.' Unfinished pencil.
12. 'Dr. Kay's Plantation near cabbage Hall Heddington Hill July 11 1774 1/2.' Pencil.
13. 'Near Charley Farme by Comner 26 of May 1774.' Pencil.
15. 'Brasenose Lane Oxford 10th of May 1774 5/.' Water colour.
16. 'Brasenose Lane Oxford 10th of May 1774 5/.' Water colour.
*17. 'Near the Observatory Oxford 1774.' Water colour.
18. 'Part of Oxford from Cowley June 1774.' Water colour.
19. (View of Oxford from the Parks,) 'July 1 1774 1/2.' Unfinished pencil.
*20. 'Friar Bacon's Study July 1 1774 4/.' Pencil.
21. 'In Abingdon July 9 1774.' Water colour. (Abingdon Bridge.)
22. 'Abingdon (road) Causeway near the White House July 13 1774 4/.' Pencil.
24. 'Fair Rosamonds Chapel at Godstow near Oxford July 14 1774.' Water colour.
25. 'St. Giles' Church Oxford July 15 1774 1/2.' Water colour.
*26. 'Oxford Castle July 15 1774 3/.' Water colour. PL. XVIII B.
27. 'St. Thomas' Oxford July 15 1774 8/.' Unfinished pencil.
28. 'The Infirmary Oxon. from a field near Worcester College 25 of July 1774 1/2.' Pencil.
29. 'The Cock Pit Holywell Oxford 25 of July 1774 4/.' Indian ink.
30. 'Oxford Castle from a field near Worcester College 4/.' Unfinished pencil.
*32. 'Near High Bridge Oxon. 30 of July 1774.' Pencil, washed Indian ink.
33. 'Oxford from Foxcombe Hill Berks. Aug. 2 1774.' Water colour.
*34. 'Part of the new Bridge from Fisher Row Oxford Aug. 3 1774 1/.' Water colour. PL. XVIII A.
35. 'Bagley Wood 10 of August 1774 7/.' Pencil.
36. (Oxford) 'from above ferry Hingsey near Oxford 12 of August 1774.' Water colour.

Vol. VIII. Size 29 cm. by 20 cm.
1. 'Magdalen College and Mill July 4 1777 8/.' Water colour.
*2. 'Inside of Holywell large Barn July 7 1777 12/.' Water colour.
3. 'Bagley Wood July 10 1777 4/5.' Water colour.

Vol. X. Size 27.5 by 21 cm.
8. 'Oxford from the pitch going up Comner Hill Oct. 16 1773 1/2.' Pencil.
10. 'Corpus Christi Coll. from Merton field Oct. the 4th 1774 11/.' Water colour.
11. 'Corpus Christi Coll. from Merton field 17th of Oct. 1774 11/.' Water colour.
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*14. 'Alban Hall from Logic Lane Oxford Oct. 18 1774 1/2.' Water colour.  

Vol. XI. Size 32 cm. by 22 cm.
1. 'New College Lane Mar. 21 1775 1/2.' Unfinished pencil.
2. 'St. Peter in the East Oxford 23 of March 1775.' Unfinished pencil.
3. 'Magdalen Bridge &c. 24 of March 1775.' Unfinished pencil.
4. At the end of the book is a small unfinished pencil sketch of the Castle Mound and St. Peter-le-Bailey Church.

Note: Photographic copies of those marked * will be found in the Bodleian Oxford Topographical Collections.
A. MAGDALEN BRIDGE, OXFORD, FROM THE NW.
B. MAGDALEN BRIDGE, SHOWING ENTRANCE TO THE FORD
From drawings by J. B. Malchair, dated 2 June and 18 June, 1772 (p. 160).
A. MAGDALEN TOWER AND BRIDGE, OXFORD, FROM ST. CLEMENTS
B. CANTERBURY GATE, CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD
From drawings by J. B. Malchair, dated 10 June, 1772, and 4 May, 1774 (p. 160 f.).
MAGDALEN BRIDGE FROM MAGDALEN WALKS, OXFORD
From a drawing by J. B. Malchair, dated 26 November, 1771 (p. 160).
PLATE XVIII

A. OLD PACEY'S BRIDGE FROM FISHER ROW, OXFORD
B. OXFORD CASTLE FROM THE NORTH (TITMOUSE LANE)
From drawings by J. B. Malchair, dated 3 August and 15 July, 1774 (pp. 160, 162).

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PLATE XIX

ALBAN HALL FROM LOGIC LANE, OXFORD, LOOKING SOUTHWARDS
From a drawing by J. B. Malchair, dated 18 October, 1774 (p. 161).