

## Carfax Conduit

By CATHERINE COLE

### THE HISTORY OF THE CONDUIT

UNTIL the year 1617 wells and unpurified river water had formed the chief supply available to the citizens of Oxford. This was neither healthy nor convenient. The proximity of cess and rubbish pits must often have rendered the shallow wells foul and evil-tasting and the transport of river water was cumbersome, depending on water-bearers.<sup>1</sup> It was, therefore, with alacrity that local residents accepted the offer of a supply of fresh spring water made to them by the generous old lawyer, Otho Nicholson, whose bounty had already restored the ancient Library at Christ Church.

To point out that Nicholson's benefactions to Oxford were not entirely disinterested is perhaps superfluous in an age when any aspirant to position had need of powerful friends and above all of Royal patronage. Nicholson, one of His Majesty's Examiners in Chancery, had acted as Receiver of Fines to the Commission set up by King James in 1604 to exploit the financial possibilities of assart lands. His task of extracting money from reluctant owners, though apparently carried out with tact, had brought him a certain degree of unpopularity, and it was doubtless to counter this that he determined to allot a part of the fortune he had acquired from this appointment to the repair of Christ Church Library. In so bestowing his money he was probably much influenced by Sir Thomas Bodley's recent highly popular restoration of the Public Library in Oxford, and particularly by the interest which the King had shown in the project.<sup>2</sup>

In his second benefaction to Oxford Nicholson seems again to have copied another's successful venture and again to have attempted to gain the royal approbation. During the reign of Elizabeth the increasing population of London had caused uneasiness over the City's water supply and the Queen had empowered the citizens to divert a river to London from any part of Hertfordshire or Middlesex, but the project was dropped as being too difficult and too expensive. King James renewed the idea and a Commission to consider it was

<sup>1</sup> A. Wood, *Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford*, ed. Clark (O.H.S. xv), 63; for the date 1610 often given to the Conduit see below, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> See *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/vii. 229, 230.

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set up in 1605 on which Nicholson himself had served.<sup>3</sup> In 1608 Chadwell and Amwell springs in Hertfordshire were chosen, and the whole scheme was undertaken and largely financed by Sir Hugh Middleton, a wealthy goldsmith. Water from these two springs was taken to London, a distance of about 40 miles, and 'New River', as it was called, flowed into a great reservoir or cistern fashioned out of the old ducking pool at Camberwell and from there into the City in pipes of lead and elm. It was an immense undertaking on which as many as 600 workmen were employed at once. The whole project took several years, and its conclusion was celebrated with great rejoicing in the presence of most of the leading citizens of London, the master-workmen performing a march around the new cistern to mark the occasion. King James, himself a substantial shareholder, took a great interest in the scheme, particularly in the cutting of the section which crossed his favourite Royal Park at Theobalds.<sup>4</sup>

It was only about two years after the opening of London's water-supply that Otho Nicholson proposed a similar, though less ambitious, scheme to supply Oxford from the springs on Hinksey Hill, a site which no doubt suggested itself because the monks of Oseney had brought water to their monastery from there and the memory of their conduit still survived.<sup>5</sup> In carrying out his plan Nicholson had a willing negotiator in Philip King, auditor of Christ Church, to whom he left a gilt cup worth £10 in his will, 'as a small remembrance of his great pains taken for me at Oxford'.<sup>6</sup> King conducted most of the necessary transactions for the donor, journeying to and from London for this purpose. Dr. John Wall, another Christ Church man, was probably also concerned in the business, since he too received a legacy of £40, and wrote a Latin poem to celebrate King James's expected visit to Oxford in 1617, in which he eulogized the Conduit and referred to it as 'in adventum regis extructum', proof that Nicholson had the royal favour in mind.<sup>7</sup> The plumber chosen was a London man, Hugh Justyce, a member, and later warden, of the London Plumbers' Guild. He may have been chosen because he had been connected with the earlier undertaking.<sup>8</sup>

Justyce's plan was to utilize the numerous small springs which rise on the slopes of North Hinksey Hill. He channelled them into two vaulted gullies

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. S.P. Dom. Addenda, 1580-1625*, p. 473 (104).

<sup>4</sup> John Stowe, *Annals of England* (1631), ed. E. Howes, 1614-16; J. W. Gough, *Sir Hugh Myddelton* (Oxford 1964).

<sup>5</sup> H. E. Salter, *Oxford Council Acts, 1583-1626* (O.H.S. LXXXVII), 245; Wood, *Oxford*, I, 438 n. 5; 63 n. 1; II (O.H.S. XVII), 205. For the monastic water supply see also *Early Register of Godstow Nunnery*, ed. Clarke, I (E.E.T.S. CXXIX), 44-6; *Oseney Abbey Cart.*, IV (O.H.S. XCVII), 471-5.

<sup>6</sup> P.C.C. 75 Savile. King was brother of Dr. John King, and in 1638 built part of the Chaplain's quadrangle at Christ Church.

<sup>7</sup> *Ara Jacobi* (1617). The visit did not take place, as far as we know.

<sup>8</sup> See *Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80*, 28.

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and led them into a leaden cistern with a capacity of 20,000 gallons. This was set in a stone chamber on the hillside and covered by a little stone-built and stone-roofed wellhouse with an entrance door facing down towards Oxford; over this Nicholson had his arms carved.<sup>9</sup> The water was conveyed underground through the meadows in a lead pipe, encased in hollowed elm trunks where it crossed the various branches of the river.<sup>10</sup> It reached Oxford at Preachers' or Meadow Bridge, came on up through Littlegate to the south of Pembroke, passed west of St. Aldate's Church by Pennyfarthing or Pembroke Street to Fish Lane (now St. Aldate's), and so up to Carfax where it mounted into two great cisterns, the upper designed for the University and the lower, fed by the overflow, for the City.<sup>11</sup>

The spot chosen for these cisterns was a plot of ground on the site of the old Bull Ring at Carfax: 'In umbolico urbis ad quodrivium situm'. It also had the advantage of being the highest point within the walls, which would facilitate the flow of water in all directions. The grant to Otho Nicholson and his heirs of this piece of land mentioned a yearly rent of 4*d.* to be paid if demanded, and stipulated that he should erect 'a fair conduit or cistern with three cocks which should ever more be kept running'. The original intention was for one cock each for the Town, the University and the water piped to Christ Church.<sup>12</sup> For the mason's work on 'this fair conduit', which was to occupy so important a position in so famous a city, Nicholson was fortunate in having at hand a craftsman whose work was well known to him: John Clark, a Yorkshire carver with London training, whom he had already used at Christ Church, and who was at that time still working in Oxford.<sup>13</sup> It was John Clark who built the Carfax Conduit, a monument described as 'such for its wealth of images about it, gilt and exquisite carving, the like, except probably in London, not to be found in England'.<sup>14</sup>

An agreement for the plot at Carfax was signed on 7 May 1616, and on 15 May, at a little ceremony held on the site, Philip King, as Nicholson's representative, made over seizin of the land to the University's attorney and the Town Clerk, representatives of the two bodies who jointly controlled

<sup>9</sup> The wellhouse is still in reasonably good preservation and was officially scheduled in 1963. For an illustration see Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c 299, f. 186.

<sup>10</sup> In August 1615 the City Council gave him permission to lay 'pipes of leade, hollow trunks, or other such engine for the bringing of water up to Carfax', but it seems that wood was only used to encase the lead pipes at danger points such as rivers. The water pipes were afterwards laid down High St., etc. The girth of 'the great pipe' in High St. was about 7½ ins., the smaller pipes 2½ ins. to 5 ins. with 4½ ins. as the most usual measure.

<sup>11</sup> Wood, *Oxford*, i. 447.

<sup>12</sup> Oxf. Univ. Arch. Convoc. Reg. N, p. 20; Salter, *Oxford City Properties* (O.H.S. LXXXIII), 353. The Mermaid, Crown and one or two private houses later had supplies from the Town cistern.

<sup>13</sup> *Oxonensis*, xxvi/vii. 234-6.

<sup>14</sup> Salter, *Council Acts*, 263; Wood, *Oxford*, i. 62.

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the waterworks in the early days.<sup>15</sup> The Conduit was solemnly opened and the occasion marked by a speech from Dr. John Wall, who had in that year become Rector of St. Aldate's. The whole undertaking was said to have cost its donor some £2,500.<sup>16</sup>

As soon as the Conduit was opened the colleges hastened to avail themselves of the new supply. From the Carfax cistern the water was speedily conveyed to two other cisterns, one at Christ Church, which supplied the six canons and the fountain, the other against the church wall on the south side of All Saints church. From here the pipes were quickly laid, north to Lincoln, Jesus and Exeter, east to All Souls, Magdalen Hall and College, Queen's and New College, and south to Corpus. Pembroke drew its water direct from the main supply pipe from Hinksey. In addition to this, some eleven private persons soon had cocks or taps along the line of the pipes.<sup>17</sup>

Otho Nicholson died in 1622, leaving in his will £100 to 'the conduit committee' to produce an income of £7 per annum for the repair and maintenance of the Conduit.<sup>18</sup> As Nicholson's executors found that his assets were insufficient to meet all his bequests, it seems unlikely that this £100, or the £20 he had bequeathed to help Laud carry the Conduit water to St. John's, was ever paid over from his estate. To the Conduit committee no subsequent references are made, and it is improbable that it ever came into existence. The finances of the Conduit were thus early in confusion, and no help could be looked for from the executors.<sup>19</sup> They were still active in 1626 when they prosecuted for tapping the main pipe without warrant, but one, Sir Henry Yelverton, the Solicitor General, died in 1629 after a period of imprisonment in the Tower, and the other, William Allen, a cousin of Nicholson, was also dead in 1631 when the estate was still unsettled, since letters of administration were granted to his brother, Ralph Allen of Little Baldon, near Oxford, in that year. This Ralph Allen was himself shortly afterwards imprisoned in London for debt.<sup>20</sup>

It appears that Nicholson's agreement with Hugh Justyce, if ratified, also came to a speedy end, for a local plumber, William Hobbs, stated in 1635 that he had had the care of the Conduit since it was opened.<sup>21</sup> His appointment

<sup>15</sup> Wood, *Oxford*, i. 62; Oxf. Univ. Arch. N.W.15.

<sup>16</sup> *Gent's Mag.* (1771), 534. At 15s. a cwt for pig lead the lead for the waterworks would cost about £2,000, but as a Commissioner Nicholson may have bought in some cheaply. The additional £500 would cover labour and the Conduit case. The figure £2,200 sometimes quoted perhaps represented the cost without the case: e.g. Wood, *Oxford*, i. 62. For prices for the London works see Gough, *Myddelton*, a work published since this article was written.

<sup>17</sup> See p. 148; Bodl. MS. Twyne, vi. 195.

<sup>18</sup> P.C.C. 75 Savile.

<sup>19</sup> *Gent's Mag. Library topog.*, pt. ix, p. 203.

<sup>20</sup> Twyne, vi. 181, 185, 201; Miss Taylor MS. notes.

<sup>21</sup> Twyne, vi. 197.

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seems to have been renewed in 1620, when an agreement was drawn up between Hobbs and Dr. Prideaux, then Vice-Chancellor, authorizing him to take charge of the waterworks at a reasonable rate (not specified), and the University tacitly shouldered ultimate responsibility for the Conduit finances.<sup>22</sup>

The difference in the fresh spring water and the convenience of pipes and taps close at hand was quickly realized and there was a rush to tap the pipes wherever possible. The result was that the supply rapidly became insufficient for the original receivers, and in 1627 Dr. Bayley, the Vice-Chancellor, found it necessary to draw up a new agreement with Hobbs. This is an interesting document, shedding considerable light on the ordinary working problems of the new water system. Among other regulations he ordered that only Colleges and Halls were to be allowed pipes out of the main pipe, and no one was to tap the great pipe between Hinksey and the University cistern at All Saints. This was because there had been constant trouble at Pembroke, for, when anyone left the cock open, little or no water could reach the cistern at Carfax. All Colleges and Halls were to have cocks or taps to their supply and only to use what water was necessary, paying a fine of 3s. 4d. to the plumber if he could prove misuse. Every College and Hall had to keep its own branch pipe in repair and was to pay 20s. a year towards the upkeep of the waterworks to William Hobbs. Hobbs for his part was bound to attend promptly to any fault in the Colleges' branch pipes or cocks. In summer when the ground was dry he had to inspect the stone channels and the great pipe, lest any break or stoppage should occur in winter when flooding made repair difficult. Finally, the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses undertook to see that Hobbs was paid and to assist when necessary with their authority.<sup>23</sup>

In 1635 Hobbs was again in trouble. It seems that the Colleges and other users were still grossly behindhand with their payments. Indeed, in 1644 it was stated that Christ Church had paid only once in twenty-eight years, some Colleges only three times out of twelve, and others never at all.<sup>24</sup> Hobbs complained in 1635 that ever since the erection of the Conduit he had repaired it almost wholly at his own charge, and that, though the ordinary repairs might well be made for less than five pounds a year, if a break occurred where the pipe crossed the river, the repair might well cost as much as £30. The fact was that at Meadow Bridge the pipes passed under the river just at the common watering place, so that when the carts were heavily laden they were apt to crush the elm trunks and the lead pipes inside them; in the Thames itself the pipes were often broken by boat poles.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Twyne, vi. 186, 196.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 197, 202, 204.

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Hobbs enquired what had become of Nicholson's legacy and whether it could be recovered and converted into an annuity for himself. Dr. Pink, the Vice-Chancellor, seems to have gone into Hobb's queries carefully and sympathetically and to have attempted to improve matters. He proposed to levy a charge of 5s. a year on all householders regularly drawing the water at Carfax, and suggested that the great pipe should be carried along the arches of the bridge above water level; but in spite of his efforts to improve the situation the Commissioners in charge of the fortification of Oxford in 1644 again found the Conduit water stopped. This was a serious matter in wartime and they took immediate measures to restore the pipes, for which the University and City were ordered to pay in just proportion. They also appointed a committee to put the Conduit finances on a sound basis and caused the Town to shoulder more of the burden, which it may have been more willing to do because of a serious fire in the autumn of 1644.<sup>26</sup> Current University accounts give us some idea of the constant expense of the water system during succeeding years, but it seems that popular outcry forced the authorities to act if the pipes became blocked, in spite of the high cost of repairs.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the ornate structure over the cisterns at Carfax was also causing trouble. It was a large obstruction to stand in such a frequented quarter of the town, and, as we learn from Anthony Wood, the corner houses here had gradually been built out and so appreciably diminished the available space. As early as 1637 the Conduit was presented as a nuisance to Archbishop Laud as Chancellor by a jury of twelve privileged persons and twelve freemen empanelled for the Michaelmas court leet of the University. They ruled that the Conduit should be removed to the old Butchery or some other convenient place, but they appointed no date for the removal and Laud like a wise Chancellor let the matter die down.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the grievance continued, and the structure itself began to need constant repair. In 1686 at the instigation of Dr. Charlet, apparently proctor at this time, it was decided to rebuild the case in proper fashion instead of merely patching it. The University rose to the occasion, considering that it should shoulder the duty of repairing the Conduit, and all, except the upper part which rested on arches, was rebuilt, while a new statue of the Empress Maud riding on an ox was put up under Anthony Wood's direction.<sup>29</sup> The bill for all this work came to over

<sup>26</sup> Twyne, vi. 197-205. For a plan which must be dated 1644, since it exactly corresponds with the information given to the Commissioners, see Bodl. MS. Rawl. e 421 and below fig. 39; cf. the plumbers' plan of 1687 showing that several more colleges in the vicinity of High St. had acquired water pipes, though Magdalen had been cut off owing to a dispute: see below n. 34.

<sup>27</sup> Wood, *Life and Times*, ed. Clark, iv (O.H.S. xxx), 80-1.

<sup>28</sup> Wood, *Oxford*, i. 63; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1637-8, 295.

<sup>29</sup> Wood, *Life and Times*, iii (O.H.S. xxvi), 202.

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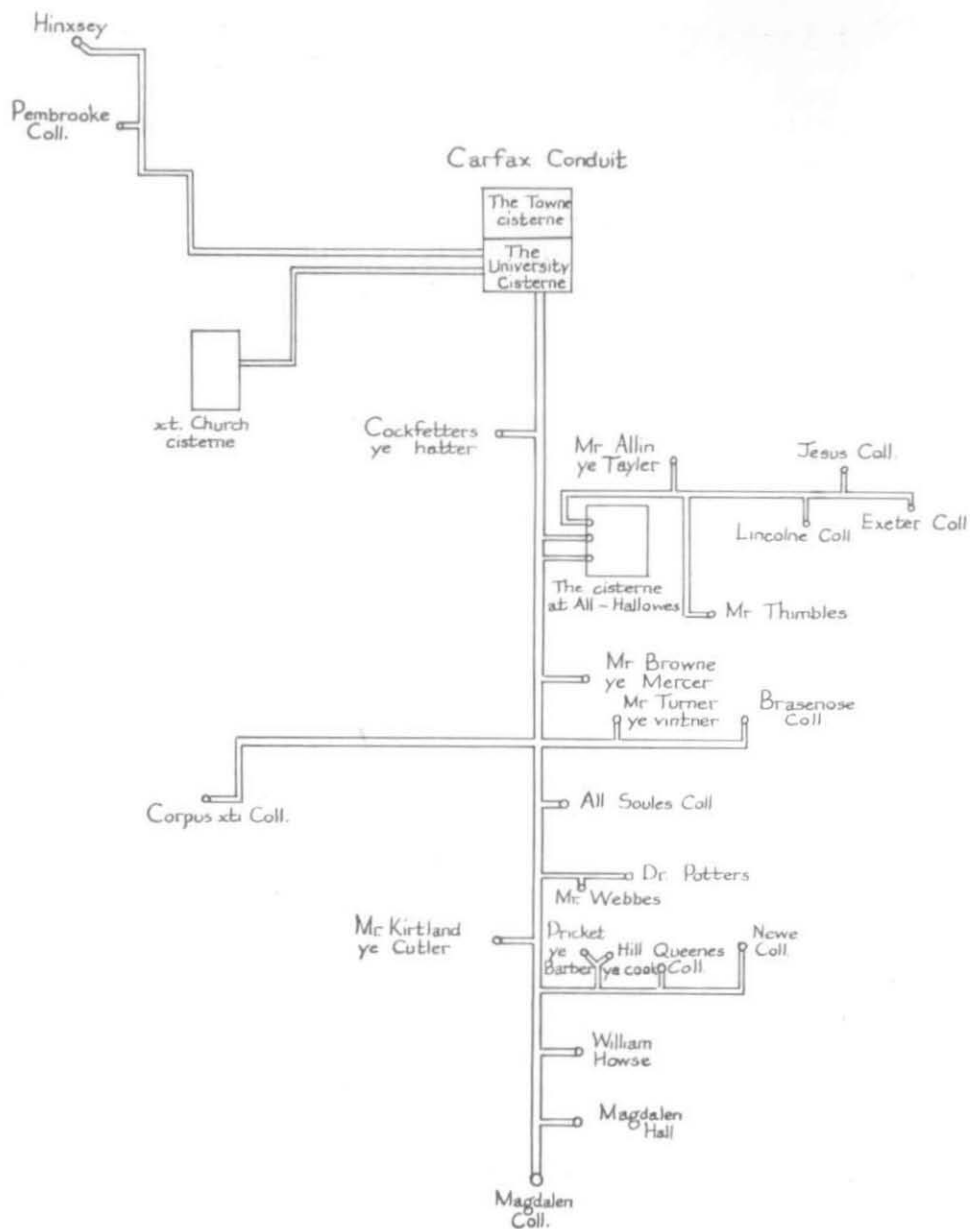


FIG. 39  
Plan of the Water Pipes, c. 1644. Bodl. MS. Rawl. e 421.



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£220.<sup>30</sup> Wood and Hearne both grumbled that the new base and statue were not a patch on the old one,<sup>31</sup> though the recarving was probably carried out by that most elegant of 17th-century Oxford sculptors, Thomas Wood. The renovators apparently made one serious error: they accidentally left out the three final letters of the date (VII), thus stating that Nicholson had built the Conduit in MCCX or 1610.<sup>32</sup>

While the monument was under repair, the plumbers and carpenter were asked to report on the state of the waterworks and the exact course of the pipes which was perhaps somewhat forgotten.<sup>33</sup> They gave the course as follows: from the wellhouse across Hinksey Field and common, across the river, Hinksey Meadow, King's Meadow, across Isis, part of Oseney Meadow, Oseney Mill Stream, Oseney Walk, by the Sconce near to Woollake, through the Friars to the Tampin, across Littlegate river, Littlegate street, up Pembroke College Lane, through the little lane by St. Aldate's churchyard and into Penny-farthing Street and so up South Street to Carfax; in all 7,691 feet.<sup>34</sup> They referred to the cistern at All Hallows as 'over the shop next All Hallows Church on the south side'.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of early protestation, it was always felt that Nicholson's Conduit should serve the University before the Town, and in any case by the end of the century it was totally inadequate for the rising population of Oxford. A more extended as well as more lavish supply was badly needed, both for domestic cleanliness and for the prevention of fire. This was provided in 1694 when the City decided to embark on a scheme of its own, and leased a site at Folly Bridge to some private individuals, who undertook to build a pumping station to abstract river water from the Thames.<sup>36</sup> This water was to be carried in elm, not leaden, pipes up to Carfax and along Northgate to a cistern on Market Hill, raised 10 feet above the ground on pillars, so as not to impede the passers-by

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.* iv. 81: Vice-Chancellor's accounts for 1687/8, 'Item paid Mr. Robinson mason, Cole the plumber, Mr. Wood stonecutter, Young the smith and John White the carpenter, several bills about the conduit £112. 10. 10'. In 1706/7 Wildgoose the painter was paid £20 6s. 3d. and Townsend the carver £15 4s. 6d. for work at Carfax. In subsequent accounts there is no likely item for painting which can be attributed to the Conduit.

<sup>31</sup> *Hearne's Collections*, 1721, vii (O.H.S. XLVIII), 241; Wood, *Oxford*, I. 442.

<sup>32</sup> The inscription was on the E. side: Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c 6.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Rawlins had then taken over the waterworks from Hobbs: cf. *Univ. Arch.* N.W.15.

<sup>34</sup> *Univ. Arch.* N.W.15. The plumbers submitted a plan (based on Loggan) to support their statements. The Sconce was a gun emplacement belonging to the civil war defences of Oxford, situated on a small island near a little lake called Woollake, formed by the junction at this point of two streams: see Gomme's map: *Oxoniensia*, I. 167-8. The Tampin was a stopcock on the water pipes.

<sup>35</sup> When All Saints was demolished in 1699 the cistern was moved to a spot just north of Carfax.

<sup>36</sup> Salter, *Oxford City Properties*, 356-8. The agreement with Edward Green, who took charge of the waterworks in 1732, shows that they were then city property; the lessees had handed them over in 1730.



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beneath.<sup>37</sup> The keeper of these waterworks received much more generous terms than Hobbs.

In April 1694 Anthony Wood, then almost at the end of his long life, watched the workmen digging a trench  $3\frac{1}{4}$  yards deep on the west side of Northgate to receive the wide-bored elm trunks. In June he saw them working down Fish Street and towards the end of July they had begun to build the water-house at Welcome's Folly, which was the tower variously known as Bachelor Tower or Friar Bacon's Study on Folly Bridge.<sup>38</sup> The keeper of the waterworks subsequently lived here, inhabiting the two rooms in the upper story of the tower, while the two below were known as 'the engine room' and 'workroom' respectively.<sup>39</sup> The pump itself was encased in a wooden structure beside the third arch of the bridge. The wooden pipes laid down in 1695 were not so serviceable as Nicholson's leaden ones. Some, made of old wood, apparently soon gave trouble, and the rest were not really durable, for Hearne records that in 1731 new pipes were being made as the old ones were useless.<sup>40</sup> The pumping station at Folly Bridge continued in use until about 1826 when the present Folly Bridge was built. Shortly after this it was transferred to a new site in Isis Street.

The 18th century, not less than its predecessor, found the monument at Carfax a source of grave inconvenience, but the general pride and admiration which it had once excited died slowly. It had endeared itself to the citizens and was a part of the life of Oxford.<sup>41</sup> It was doubtless for these reasons, as well as for its usefulness, that it was so long reprieved.

But sentence was passed at last. In October 1786 at a meeting of the Commissioners for the Paving and Lighting of the City, a beneficent body who were then effecting considerable improvements, it was decided that the Conduit must go.<sup>42</sup> 'A monument no less sacred than venerable' had been doomed to destruction in spite of the protest of one of its most ardent defenders 'that it gave a noble termination to the High Street and that, if it were demolished, the

<sup>37</sup> This cistern is not again mentioned in these deeds, but reference is perhaps made to it, or its successor, in an account of a fire in 1857 where it is said that water for the hoses was turned on at Carfax and from a storage tank in Market Street: Thomas Green, *A Record of Fires in Oxford* (1894), 15. For further details of the Oxford water supply see H. H. Crawley, *Journal of the British Waterworks Association*, xxix (April 1947).

<sup>38</sup> Wood, *Life and Times*, III, 485; *The Flemings in Oxford*, III (O.H.S. LXXIX), 233. Some fragments of these wooden pipes can be seen on request in the City Engineer's and Surveyor's office.

<sup>39</sup> Salter, *City Properties*, 102, 357; this house was a part of the old fortifications of Oxford and, therefore, city property. In 1602 it was let to Thomas Waltham *alias* Welcome with a proviso to build up the Tower into a house within five years. This was clearly not carried out and there must have been some jest about it at the time which perhaps gave Folly Bridge its name: Salter, *Council Acts, 1583-1626*, 145.

<sup>40</sup> Hearne's *Collections 1731*, x (O.H.S. LXVII), 447.

<sup>41</sup> On festive occasions wine ran freely from the Conduit, e.g. Wood, *Life and Times*, III, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. d. 282, f. 34.

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lover of taste would no longer behold an elegant pile, but would have his eye offended with the gables of an ill-built church'.

The Conduit had to go, but there were many who wished that a worthy place of exile could be found for it, rather than destruction. In those difficult circumstances the University had the happy thought of offering the whole great structure to Lord Harcourt, who was then engaged on beautifying his seat at Nuneham, eight miles from Oxford, where his improvements were being made in the grand manner. In all his plans he was advised and aided by his friend, the poet William Mason, who was much under the influence of the Strawberry Hill circle. In 1789 Lord Harcourt had already laid out a garden under the supervision of 'Capability' Brown; only a Gothic ruin was needed to close a vista, and for this plans had already been prepared by Francis Horne, a specialist in garden conceits, when, in the teeth of Mason's horrified protests, Lord Harcourt suddenly accepted the University's offer. He even asked the unhappy poet to busy himself with a scheme for the Conduit's re-erection. 'It is letting my ideas dreadfully down', wrote poor Mason, 'to think about such a thing of yesterday as Carfax.' Gradually, however, he got used to the horrid idea and admitted grudgingly that it would make 'a conspicuous object' and certainly appear 'monumental'. He also paid an unconscious compliment to his friend's antiquarian probity. 'But I well know', he wrote after urging some structural modifications, 'that you would not make a single alteration for the world.'<sup>43</sup> This was, fortunately, true, and it was probably only because he knew that the base was not original that Lord Harcourt permitted two inscriptions to be cut upon it: one in Latin, the other in English; one for the University, the other for the Town; explaining the former use of the monument and the reason for its present resting place.

At the time of its removal the stonework of the original superstructure was so much decayed that the masons used iron rods freely in re-erecting it. These unfortunately hastened the deterioration of the carving so much that this part of the monument was by 1960 in an advanced state of decay. The carvings are at present under repair and it is hoped that the Conduit may one day again occupy an honourable position in Oxford. Its erection at Carfax at the south end of Cornmarket (which becomes a closed pedestrian and shopping precinct under the City's revised Development Plan) was proposed in 1963.

Even after the removal of the monument itself, Nicholson's waterworks continued to be used, and the supply of water to the city from this source was not abandoned until 1868. By that time the pipes must have silted up, surface soil had accumulated over them and their position was often forgotten, so that they provided only a very small part of the city's total supply. A report of 1866

<sup>43</sup> *The Harcourt Papers* ed. E. W. Harcourt (Oxford 1876-1905), VII. 127.

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stated that the water from the University waterworks was so scanty that it sufficed only for the chief part of Christ Church, the stables of Lincoln College and some dozen houses in High Street, and that, even so, the supply was gradually decreasing.<sup>44</sup>

Nicholson's Conduit had served its turn and the inhabitants of Oxford had to content themselves once again with the unpalatable water of the river Thames.

### THE MONUMENT AT CARFAX

There is no contemporary account of the Carfax Conduit and no early illustrations have survived, but we are fortunate in having in the Bodleian Library a detailed description of the whole monument.<sup>45</sup> This manuscript, bought at a bookseller's sale in Bristol in 1868, is itself a copy from an older manuscript which seems to have been written towards the end of the 17th century.<sup>46</sup> One or two other versions of this account of the Conduit are extant;<sup>47</sup> among them, the closest is one to which Dr. Pridden calls our attention in his 'Collections'. He refers us to a letter in the first volume of the *Antiquities Repertory* (1775), in which is printed a full account of the Conduit monument, 'taken from a MS. formerly belonging to a Mr. Hanwell, Deputy Treasurer of Christ Church, which he had transcribed from some of the public libraries in Oxford'.<sup>48</sup> Though this manuscript differs in several minor respects from the version now in the Bodleian Library, both are very close and are clearly derived from the same original. For the account published in *Antiquities Repertory* Dr. Pridden vouches in person, saying that he has compared it with the monument itself and found it 'entirely' accurate. We may therefore assume that the Bodleian version, printed below, is at least equally accurate in describing the Conduit after the repairs in 1686 and before its removal to Nuneham.

That neither text is an entirely satisfactory description of the monument, as it appeared in the 18th century, will quickly be apparent, nor is Dr. Pridden, by our standards, a wholly accurate observer. Indeed all the existing texts are so

<sup>44</sup> Among the City archives is the conveyance of the University waterworks to the City for £500 in 1869. This refers chiefly to the wellhouse and some land at Hinksey which Lord Harcourt purchased from the City for building land in 1910, when he also laid claim to the wellhouse. This is now the property of Miss Winifred Toynbee on whose land it stands. Until 1944 the water from Nicholson's spring still supplied a house and two cottages at Hinksey.

<sup>45</sup> For 18th- and 19th-century illustrations see Bodl. G.A. Oxon. a 63, f. 100; MS. Top. Oxon. d. 282, f. 28; c. 299, ff. 16-19; and below, pl. Ia; for the monument in 1959 see below, pl. Ib.

<sup>46</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. e 6: *Summary Cat.* no. 28943. An earlier MS. referred to in the text cannot much precede it since its author already thought the monument needed repair.

<sup>47</sup> For a free version with considerable changes of language and fact which Peshall apparently followed again with much alteration see Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. b 116, f. 65. There is a brief description in Bodl. G.A. Oxon. a 63, f. 98; a varied account in *Gent's Mag.* (1771), f. 533.

<sup>48</sup> Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. d. 282, f. 29.

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involved and self-contradictory that they cannot be accepted as representing at all closely the original from which they are derived. This original was probably a much shorter account of the Conduit, possibly written in Latin, and destined to be presented to or read by King James when he first viewed the monument. Along the margins of this manuscript a great many explanatory and sometimes incorrect notes were later scribbled, where and how space allowed, and probably in a cramped and almost illegible handwriting. These notes subsequently crept into the texts, the conscientious scribes making what order and sense they could of them, and creating in so doing some of the errors and obscurities which passed unobserved by Dr. Pridden.

### OF THE ORNAMENTS THAT ADORN THE CONDUIT<sup>49</sup>

First, the whole is exactly square, built with fine polish'd stone, and was formerly more beautiful than now it is ; the four sides being made with hard stone, cut all over in imitation of the waves of the sea, indented one in each other ; but, since, the University had it repaired where it was damaged or decay'd by time.<sup>50</sup>

Notwithstanding the great weight of stone-work above the square walls, it was so well contrived by props and pullies (whilst doing) as to support the whole top while the sides of the old work were pulled down and refitted up again, as it now stands being of free-stone, also with the arms of the University, City and founder under the cornish.

Thus—

On the east side, stands the University, City and Founder's arms, the last of which is ' azure two bars ermine and in chief three suns shining in their full glory ' alluding to his name, viz ' Nicholson '.

On the west side is the City, University and Founder's coat of arms.

On the north side is the Founder's, University, and City arms—and the same on the south.<sup>51</sup>

On each corner above the cornish are placed on the three sides of each cube as many sun dials—making in all twelve—that is—three at the North, three at the South, and the like number at the E. and W. points.

<sup>49</sup> The Bodleian text : MS. Top. Oxon. c 6, with the exception of the opening paragraphs. As printed in Wood, *Oxford*, i. 442, but with amended spellings.

<sup>50</sup> ' Damaged ' may mean that the monument was mutilated in the civil wars. The wavy lines probably indicated water as on the city seal or the passage may describe the scale ornament also used on the stonework of the cupole and still visible in some illustrations. The original version probably read ' . . . made with fine polished stone the four sides being made with hard stone, cut all over in imitation of the waves of the sea, indented one in each other, with the arms of the City, Founder and University under the cornice '.

<sup>51</sup> Not the order at Nuneham.

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Between each corner dial facing the North, the E., S., and W., is finely carv'd a sort of open work, consisting of capital letters, the Sun in his glory, and mermaids holding combs and looking glasses as under.<sup>52</sup>



FIG. 40

Note. That the letters O.N. compose a rebus—being the initial letters of his name, and was an ancient way of expressing devices when there is some analogy between the arms and the name of the person using it.<sup>53</sup>

On the four side walls hereof proceeding from the corners of it stands as many curious arches, which concentre in the top (or upper part, supporting a stately) fabrick of an octangular figure. Under and between these arches is contained a large cistern, over which stands carved by a good hand Queen Maud, sister to the Emperor, riding on an ox over a ford alluding to the name Oxford or Oxon.<sup>54</sup> The water which comes from the fountain head or conduit-house near Hinksey abovementioned is convey'd into the body of the carved ox and thereby the city is supply'd with good and wholesome water, issuing from his pizzle, which continually pisses into the cistern<sup>55</sup> underneath from whence proceeds a leaden pipe out of which runs wine on extraordinary days of rejoicing.

Above the foot of each grand arch which supports the other work, is one of the supporters to the royal arms of England according to the time they were used, in manner following :

To the N.W. point is an antelope born as a supporter to the English arms in the reign of K.H(enry) the 8th.

To the S.W. point is a dragon, used in the reign of Q. Eliz(abe)th.

To the S.E. point is a lion, as now used on the dexter side of the arms of England.

<sup>52</sup> A common motif in decorative art at this time : cf. the ballroom frieze at Knole, where Paul Issacson worked ; and the designs for the Fishmongers pageant of 1616 : John Gough Nichols, *Crysanaleia*, with illustrations (London 1844). The tavern at the S.W. corner of Carfax changed its name during the 17th century to the Mermaid : see bottle stopper in Ashmolean Museum. The suns appear in Nicholson's coat of arms.

<sup>53</sup> Lettering, in place of ballustrading, was becoming very fashionable at this time, and it was almost a *sine qua non* to represent the current Lord Mayor by some play or pun upon his name in contemporary City shows.

<sup>54</sup> The group seems to have faced S.E. towards Christ Church ; the queen was cloaked and wore a crown : Bodl. G.A. Oxon. a 63, f. 105. The arches form a vault which has at its centre a radiant sun : it is the only part of the monument in which considerable areas of paint are still preserved.

<sup>55</sup> i.e. two cisterns.

## CARFAX CONDUIT

And to the N.E. point is an unicorn used on the sinister side, as at present it is.

Each of these supporters is sejant, or sitting, holding in his forefeet a banner, containing the several quarterings of the royal arms of England Scotland France and Ireland.<sup>56</sup>

Between the aforesaid supporters are carved various ornaments, as boys, obelisks, flowers and fruitage interchangeably transposed on all the four sides of the conduit.<sup>57</sup>

Above the middle of each arch that supports this curious and stately fabrick, stand figures neatly carved representing the four cardinal virtues<sup>58</sup> :— as,

first, to the N.W. Justice, richly habited, holding on her right hand a sword, in her left a pair of scales, and her eyes cover'd to shew her impartial administration of justice ;<sup>59</sup>

2d, to the S.W. stands Temperance, in a rich robe, pouring of wing out of a large vessell into a smaller measure, a fit emblem of it.

3d, to the S.E. stands Fortitude, holding in her right arm a broken pillar, or column, and in her left the capitol belonging thereto of the Corinthian order in architecture.

4th, to the N.E. stands Prudence or Wisdom, holding in her left hand a serpent in a circular form, the tail being in the mouth, denoting eternity as having no end.<sup>60</sup>

Where the abovesaid four arches meet at the top stands a curious pile of stonework of an octangular form or eight sides, having as many niches, in each of which stands a fine statue under a canopy which is fluted within, each figure having a crown of gold on his head, a sceptre in his hand, and a shield on his arm containing his device or coat of arms.<sup>61</sup> These figures which stand in the above mentioned niches are the seven worthies; and out then worthy K(ing) J(ames) the 1st, made the number eight, as followeth.

<sup>56</sup> Apparently the correct order ; cf. *Oxonienis*, xxvi/vii. 224-5, for this favourite form of architectural embellishment.

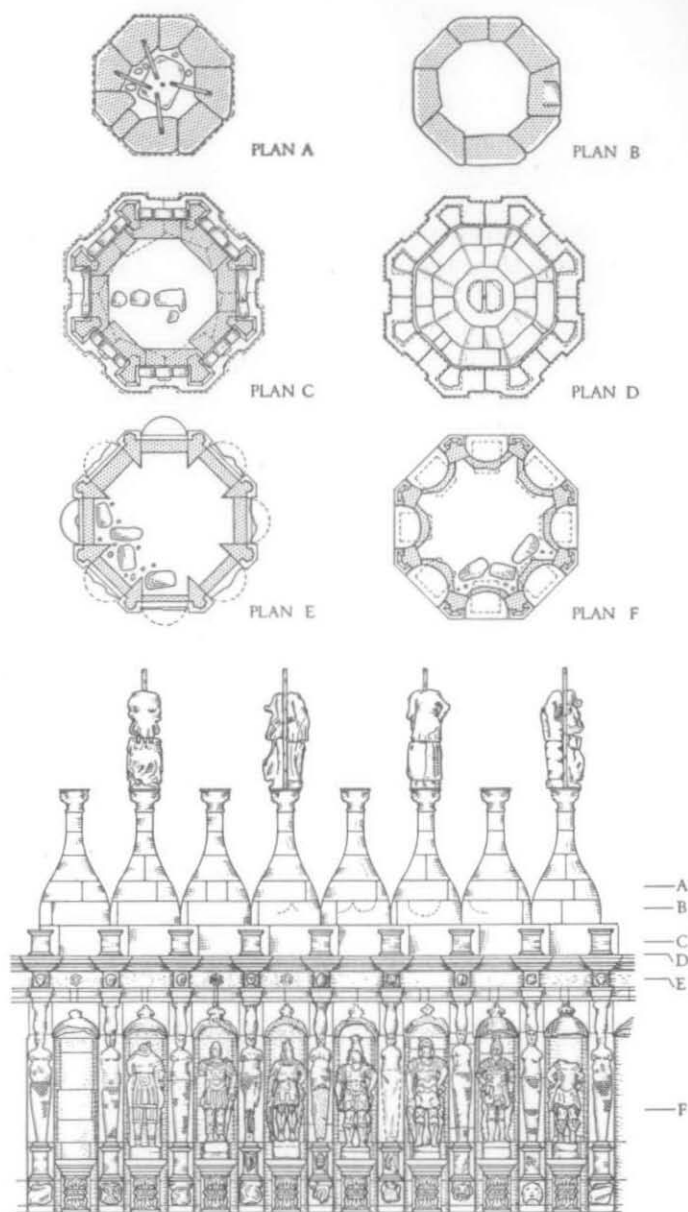
<sup>57</sup> For ' boys ' see 18th-century illustrations ; cf. Henry Peacham, *The Gentlemans Exercise* (London 1612), 49, 50. The female figure now on the balustrade is not a part of the original Conduit carvings.

<sup>58</sup> The Virtues appear in all forms of contemporary art and their attributes and dress followed an almost rigid formula. Their order at Nuneham corresponds with the MS.

<sup>59</sup> Decker (*The Magnificent Entertainment*) speaks of Justice as having garments strewn with stars, a silver veil and a crown of stars upon her head. He found it unnecessary to describe the properties she held, ' sithence every painted back-cloth can inform you '. Compare the Conduit figure with her counterpart on the Tower of the Five Orders in the Bodleian quadrangle, where the emblematic figures also carry metal insignia.

<sup>60</sup> Mr. Willis the Ministry's sculptor has not followed this description exactly in his renewal of the figure because it was not indicated by the decayed statue. Nor was it so illustrated in 18th-century prints : see pl. IA. ' Wisdom ' sometimes held a dove in her other hand.

<sup>61</sup> Some accounts say the canopies were gilded. The vaults within them are very delicately carved. The figures wear differing head dresses, some of which may have been partially gilded, and, where they can be seen, they hold not sceptres but swords : see below pl. IIA.



DEVELOPED ELEVATIONS AND PLANS  
**CARFAX CONDUIT**  
 AS EXISTING AT NUNEHAM COURTENAY, 1959  
 BEFORE REPAIR



FIG. 41





NORTH ELEVATION

# CARFAX CONDUIT

AS EXISTING AT NUNEHAM COURTENAY, 1959  
BEFORE REPAIR



FIG. 42

## CATHERINE COLE

1st, to the E. stands K. David crown'd holding in his right hand a sceptre, in his left a shield on which is depicted his device, viz. 'blew, a harp gold, string'd silver, within a bordure diaper'd with red and black'.<sup>62</sup>

2nd, Alexander the Great, crown'd with gold, holding a shield of the same whereon is 'a lion rampant regardant, or, and armed and langued azure', i.e. tongued and clawed blue.

3, Godfrey of Bullion, crown'd with thorns in imitation of our Saviour, he being the chief of the Christian worthies that was then engaged in a war against the Grand Turk to enlarge the bounds of Christianity and from thence it was called the Holy War. He borne on his shield 'a cross potent between four crosslets, or'.

4, Ardaticus or Strapila, Roy des Lepides or Gepides, whose shield is 'Or, three corbeuz volant'.<sup>63</sup>

5, Charlemain or Charles the great, whose shield is 'party per pale or and azure; the first part, or, a demi-eagle displayed sable, member'd gules, within an orle of twelve fleur-de-lis or'.<sup>64</sup>

6, K(ing) J(ames) the 1st, on whose shield is depicted the royal arms of France and England, England and France quarterly (quarter'd with Scotland and Ireland).<sup>65</sup>

7, Hector of Troy, whose shield is 'Or a lion gules, sejant in a chair purple, holding a battle ax argent'.

8, Julius Caesar the 1st of the twelve Roman Emperors, whose shield is 'Or, an eagle display'd with two heads, sable'.<sup>66</sup>

Above these eight worthies stands out at some distance several curious figures representing the liberal sciencies; one of which is Orpheus with his harp representing the science of Musick, embellished with several sorts of

<sup>62</sup> This simplified border on David's shield is given as an accepted variant in de Bara: see below n. 92. Only the shields of David, Hector and Charlemagne are still in part legible: see below, pl. IIA.

<sup>63</sup> de Bara's description of this worthy was clearly unknown to the copyists, all of whom differ in their rendering of this apparently obscure name, 'Ardaticus', or more correctly 'Ardaricus', led a revolt against the tyranny of the sons of Atilla the Hun and was victorious in a famous battle at the unknown river 'Nedar' in Pannonia, thus freeing his people. This story is told by Jordanus and was printed in F. Lindenbrog, *Diversarum Gentium Historiae Antiquae Scriptores Tres*. (Hamburg 1611), a work not among the books presented by Nicholson to Christ Church, but his donation includes other works by the author as well as many on German and E. European history, and it was probably well known to him.

<sup>64</sup> Not the coat given by de Bara. The crowns which appear in place of the demi-eagle seem to show confusion on the part of the painter, for in de Bara's book this coat (of King Arthur) is illustrated alongside that of Charlemagne. Only the account in the *Gent's Mag.* (1771), 533, gives the full description of this passage.

<sup>65</sup> This statue is missing from the Conduit. Since its loss would surely have been recorded by Dr. Pridden, we may presume that it disappeared at Nuneham.

<sup>66</sup> The foregoing description of the worthies, after the opening reference to David but including the description of his shield, is probably one of the main glosses which have crept into our text, originally only the names of the worthies being given. The true order here must be one which ends with King James and brings him to the position over the lion, i.e. the S.E. corner.

## CARFAX CONDUIT

musical instruments as trumpets, lutes, bass violins, musick books some open others shut, and figures of boys singing.<sup>67</sup>

On the top of all over the niches and above the four grand arches which support the rest, stand two figures of human shape back to back representing Janus ; being an old man looking W(est)ward holding in his left hand a shield whereon is carved and painted a bat with its wings displayed, the other is a young woman with a sceptre in her hand ; and both standing under a canopy, above which is an iron rod :<sup>68</sup> on the top of it is a vane shewing the several points of the winds, and over that is a cross representing the four cardinal points of the heavens.

Also between the niches, wherein stands the eight kings (i.e. the eight worthies),<sup>69</sup> are contained ornaments consisting of a woman upwards and scales of fish downwards and tapering towards their feet. Under which are interchangeably plac'd the royal badges of the four kingdoms, vizt., the rose for England, the thistle for Scotland, the fleur-de-lis for France, and the harp for Ireland.<sup>70</sup>

Thus in few words and small space is given a short but true account of the Conduit. Much more might have been said in commendation of so curious and well contriv'd a structure, which for usefullness beauty and neatness is not to be exceeded in the three kingdoms.

<sup>67</sup> The words 'carefully wrought', 'embellished', refer to 'the several curious figures'. See below pl. II. As on the arches, some of the statues seem to hold scrolls or books. This whole passage recalls a phrase in Decker's *Magnificent Entertainment* where James is hailed as the Delean patron both of the Muses and Arts. 'The Singing Boys' perhaps refer to the figures with books, and like 'Orpheus' represent a guess on the part of the commentators. No reference is made to the ornaments which adorn the fabric between the worthies and the Janus figures. On the cornice above each of the mermaid caryatids mentioned here are a series of human heads and animal masks most elegantly rendered. Between them, over each worthy, a radiant sun is carved, which was also probably gilded. Above these carvings and between the liberal arts on the Conduit at Nuneham are a series of hideous grotesque masks which stand somewhat away from their present much decayed and shapeless background. These are some of the unfortunate repairs carried out, often in Roman cement, and which now mar the Conduit. As designed by Clark each of the elegantly grotesque masks was attached to a strapwork ornament whose decayed shape is still partly visible : for their outline and the mask which has suffered least damage or repair see pl. IIb. Some not very accurate idea of what these ornaments looked like c. 1770 can be gained from 18th-century illustrations, e.g. see below pl. I ; cf. the details on the Arches of Triumph where similar ornaments are used : pls. III, IV.

<sup>68</sup> The London Temple was erected to 'Janus Quadrifrons', but it was, as so often, the idea rather than the exact form which Clark followed : cf. pl. IIIa. The Janus figures must have been a vigorous windswept group. Their form can be seen fairly adequately in the illustrations which also show that the stonework of the cupola below them was decorated with the scale ornament : see pl. II. Faint traces of this survive. The canopy was said to have been of hard stone, doubtless to withstand the weather : *Gen's Mag.* (1717), 534.

<sup>69</sup> Perhaps another echo of the London pageants, since 'The Eight Kings' who had been free of the Merchant Taylors' Company were familiar recurrent figures in the Lord Mayor's shows.

<sup>70</sup> The harp, the rose and the thistle are still visible, in whole or in part. The fleur-de-lis is entirely lost and also one other ornament. Other badges carved are the portcullis (Henry VII and VIII) and the pomegranate of Catherine of Aragon, also sometimes used by her daughter Mary.

## CATHERINE COLE

Thus far concerning the Conduit, and is copied from an original MS.—  
only at the conclusion of that MS. is added thus—

‘ But I leave a more elegant account to be done by a better hand only I  
say this

He that won't commend me  
Let him come and mend me.  
Finis.’

This description of the Conduit shows that it was a striking monument, brilliantly painted and gilded. For this reason, no doubt, it was built of a fine polished stone that would take paint. This stone from the Headington quarries was probably the ‘ Oxford freestone ’ about which Nicholson was later questioned in London.<sup>71</sup> The quarries also produced a harder stone suitable for the base. It is interesting that a similar description is given of the stone used for the part of the Chaplain's quadrangle at Christ Church erected at Philip King's expense in 1638.<sup>72</sup> The base of the Conduit was exactly square and the whole structure was set out upon a mathematical ratio, that is, in unexceptionable Renaissance idiom. In theory the decorative carvings also conformed to the fashionable ideas of art then current, but it is clear that their carver had not yet mastered the new style to which he aspired, for the Conduit remains essentially Gothic in spirit. Mr. Lees-Milne is to be pardoned for dismissing it lightly as a ‘ Renaissance version of a Eleanor cross ’, but he has missed the essential meaning of this monument, for it is a creation not so much of orthodox architecture as of the world of the show, the tournament and the masque, and it is this fantastic background which gives the Conduit its special place in the history of Oxford building.

That John Clark should have designed such a piece of pageantry is hardly surprising: in much of his other work in Oxford he was closely associated with members of the London Painter-Stainers Guild, and Mr. Rouse has pointed out that the quality of the shadows in some of the Christ Church painting is theatrical, and that a great part of the work done by him and his assistants in the Bodleian Library appears to be that of men accustomed to painting sets for masques and pageants.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, it seems extremely likely that a rising young craftsman such as Clark, moving in City circles, would have shared in the busy preparations for King James's state entry and would thus have gained

<sup>71</sup> The opinion also of Mr. Edmonds, Curator of the University Department of Geology in Oxford, who kindly examined them. Stone from these quarries will take a polish. For Nicholson see J. D. Walker in *Records of the Hon. Soc. of Lincoln's Inn, Black Books*, ed. W. P. Baildon (1898), II, intro. p. vi.

<sup>72</sup> Wood, *History & Antiquities of the Colleges and Halls in the University of Oxford*, ed. Gutch (1786), 448.

<sup>73</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/viii. 226.

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a unique opportunity to study the fashionable work not only of some leading London painter-stainers but also of the artists from the Continent as well.

To mark King James's state entry into the City on his accession the citizens of London and members of the foreign colonies established there erected a series of magnificent triumphal arches along the route of the Royal procession.<sup>74</sup> Their Committee probably selected craftsmen employed upon other important royal and civic occasions.<sup>75</sup> The architect was Stephen Harrison<sup>76</sup> who was commissioned to draw up the designs and to be responsible for all the work carried out upon the arches,<sup>77</sup> with the exception of the painting, which was put into the hands of seven established painter-stainers, William Frissfield, George Moss, John Knight, Paul Issacson, Samuel Goodrick, Richard Wood and George Heron.<sup>78</sup> The Dutch colony, who had appointed as their architect one Conraet Janson of Bar le Duc, were obliged to send 'at great expense' for workmen from Antwerp, 'because painters were so difficult to get and the best English and Italian ones were all engaged'.<sup>79</sup> Although we cannot discover under what master Clark received his training as a painter-stainer,<sup>80</sup> the list of Harrison's assistants offers some likely names. John Knight the elder was almost certainly the father of Clark's partners in Oxford,<sup>81</sup> and Paul Issacson and George Heron were both of Yorkshire descent. Remembering the clannishness of other Yorkshire craftsmen, it is probable that Clark was trained as a young man under one or other of this set of painters, all well established in City circles, and that through them he was in close touch with the state entry.

In 1604 Stephen Harrison published a book of illustrations of the triumphal arches for whose design he had been responsible,<sup>82</sup> and he 'presented a copy of this book of plotts and models to be kept by Mr. Chamberlain for the City's use'.<sup>83</sup> It was thus early established as a pattern book for future shows and

<sup>74</sup> John Nichols, *the Progresses, Processions & Magnificent Festivities of King James I* (London 1828), i. 328 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Perhaps related to Christopher and Albert Harrison, joiners, in 1573/4: *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels at the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. A. Feuillerat (1908); and to John Harrison who worked at St. Paul's in 1566/7: *Antiquities Jnl.*, XLIII (2), 130.

<sup>77</sup> He was responsible for the five arches erected and paid for by the City of London. The Dutch and Italian communities financed their own arches and chose their own workpeople.

<sup>78</sup> Nichols, *Progresses*, p. 376; more work is needed on this group and their associates, see below, appendix.

<sup>79</sup> Pamphlet at Antwerp: I am indebted to Mr. Croft Murray for allowing me to use his MS. translation of this pamphlet and to read some of his unpublished notes on the painters concerned.

<sup>80</sup> He perhaps trained as a carver under Thomas Styles: *Oxonienisia*, xxvi/vii. 236.

<sup>81</sup> *Oxonienisia*, xxvi/vii. 234, 235.

<sup>82</sup> *The arches of triumph erected in honour of King James I at his majestie's entrances and passage through his honerable city and chamber of London, 15 March 1603*, invented and published by Stephen Harrison, joiner and architect, and graven by W. Kip (London 1604). Harrison included illustrations of the Italian and Dutch arch in this book. See below pls. III, IV.

<sup>83</sup> *Collections* (Malone Soc. 1954), iii, intro. p. xxxiii.

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pageants, and would most certainly be the model to which a young artist belonging to this set would turn for inspiration. If we study Harrison's illustrations carefully we shall see that they are clearly the source of a large part of the Conduit carvings, and that this was indeed the pattern book Clark used.

The idea of closing the vistas of four of the main streets of Oxford with a variation on the theme of the triumphal arches was a happy one. Nicholson, a City man and courtier, was probably almost as much enamoured of the fashionable glitter of masque and pageant as his carver, and he would be quick to appreciate the implied compliment to James.<sup>84</sup> Even Philip King must have recollected the ephemeral splendour of the state entry with pleasure. His brother, Dr. John King, had been chosen to preach the sermon before the Royal party upon that memorable occasion.

What part Nicholson and King took in planning the details of the Conduit we cannot now determine. No doubt Clark received substantial help from his patron, or rather perhaps from his patron's deputies in Oxford, especially on the literary side of his work, but even if he was only in part responsible for the design he must have been a man of considerable artistic experience and some personal erudition. He was also, it seems, acquainted with the literature upon the state entry as well as with the illustrations and could use and adapt both to his own purposes.<sup>85</sup>

As architect of the Conduit he would be expected to follow the fashion of his time in expressing his meaning in a medley of allegory, rebus and emblem, closely allied to the tradition of the masque and pageant. In addition, in planning his design, he would have to bear in mind the conflicting wishes of both interested parties. For Nicholson the purpose of the Conduit was to link his name with some striking act of homage to the King; the citizens of Oxford would expect a reference to its more immediate usefulness. Their claims Clark dealt with on the lower half of the monument, the upper he reserved for James. Midway, conspicuous, and in the height of fashion, he carved the letters O and N, interspersing them with little suns and sundials in punning reference to his patron's name.

For his main group of sculpture on this lower half of the monument, Clark used the motif of the City seal.<sup>86</sup> The rebus doubtless pleased him. It is indeed a pity that these much-admired carvings perished so quickly, and that their elegant successors from the yard of Thomas Wood have also vanished. Upon the City seal the ox is riderless; upon the back of Clark's statue sat the

<sup>84</sup> The fashion for painted monuments endured in City circles long after Court taste had rejected it: *Archaeological Journal*, CX. 162-3.

<sup>85</sup> *The Magnificent Entertainment*.

<sup>86</sup> There are various versions of this seal. For an illustration see Salter, *Oxford City Properties*, frontispiece.



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crowned and cloaked figures of James's ancestress, the Empress Maud, thus leading the beholder gently on to the main theme of the monument and the elaborate upper structure, the watery motif of the mermaids running through the whole.<sup>87</sup>

It is in this upper part of the Conduit that we quickly perceive the carver's debt to his pattern book. The heraldic beasts, the virtues, the row of statues, each displaying his device upon his shield, the intermingled liberal arts, and the two Janus figures which crown the monument, all have their corresponding motif upon the arches, and, though the individual themes are generally common ones, it is their marshalling in this manner and the overall resemblance which form a strikingly suggestive whole, and makes it almost possible to watch Clark, in imagination, as he turns the pages, gathering inspiration from each.<sup>88</sup>

The 'Worthies' themselves do not, of course, appear upon Harrison's arches and may well be a part of the design which was originally suggested by the patron. They probably came into fashion both in France and England from Romantic literature.<sup>89</sup> Though earlier in their history their number and identity had been more rigid, by the early 17th century their presentation had become lax and they had grown very popular both in art and pageantry, so that it would be with no sense of shock that a Jacobean public would perceive the inclusion of King James within their ranks. Indeed, such an equation with the heroes of antiquity was one of the most constant themes of his courtiers. Many illustrations of the worthies are to be found, both in the literature and in the decorative art of the period, but the originals of Clark's carvings have so far not been traced; it is possible that here too he may have turned to the stage for inspiration and to the numerous costume sketches which then abounded.<sup>90</sup> But if the prototypes of Clark's figures are still to be sought, the source of his heraldry and his selection of worthies are easily identified, for they are drawn straight from Jerome de Bara's book, *Le Blason des Amories*, published at Lyon in 1604. This book was probably well known to the Company of Painter-Stainers as a useful source of heraldic painting generally and of such exotic information, then much in vogue, as the devices suitable to an assortment of Biblical, Classical and Romantic heroes.

<sup>87</sup> Richard Wood, the brother of Thomas, did a good deal of work for the City, but this was an important carving and was probably Thomas's work. Queen Maud was one of the female worthies and thus forms a double link with the subjects of the superstructure: J. Fern, *The Blazon of Gentry* (London 1586), 157, 222.

<sup>88</sup> See below, pls. III, IV.

<sup>89</sup> They were usually selected to include three from the Bible, three from the Classics and three from Romance.

<sup>90</sup> e.g. David is commonly represented either as a prophet or in armour and wearing a crown, and the rather theatrical peaked cap worn in Clark's statue seems very much a stage property: see below pl. IIA; cf. the much earlier and cruder series of worthies at Amersham, where David wears a rather similar cap; it is suggested that they owe their origin to a local pageant: *Archaeol. Jnl.*, LXXIX, 134 ff.



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Flattering as was the presentation of King James to the general public in such august company, the Conduit carvings were intended to convey a further message to the erudite, for both Nicholson and Clark doubtless subscribed to Thomas Decker's dictum, 'that such devices should be so presented that they might declare themselves to the sharp and learned, while the multitude merely admired and were satisfied'.<sup>91</sup> It was in their implications and undertones that the full flavour of these carvings was intended to be savoured, and though Clark's choice was confined to de Bara's rather limited selection of characters 'renowned for the excellence of their person', the list was amply long enough to convey the subtler message of the Conduit 'to the sharp and learned'. Some of these subtleties probably now escape us; others are still obvious. The heroes chosen to adorn the Conduit were all men who sought to impose upon this world a rule of peace: 'Pacis imponere morem'; they are the 'beati pacifici' of the King's chosen motto. In addition, each had his special link with James. As with the central group, the subsidiary carvings on the superstructure all contributed to flatter the sovereign's august person and had probably their 'double entendre'. Below the worthies stand the Royal beasts and the four Cardinal or Kingly virtues, which emphasized the Monarch's public attributes; surmounting them, a concourse of the liberal arts paid homage to James's personal culture and erudition. Crowning all stand the two Janus figures: facing North, the Past, an old blind man; facing South, the Future, young and glorious, stepping confidently forth under the King's guiding hand.<sup>92</sup>

The quality of the main Conduit carvings was much admired by contemporary taste. These carvings are most delicately and skilfully cut, clearly by the hand of a proficient craftsman. The architectural details also are fluid and graceful, resembling somewhat the frontispiece at Merton and in strong contrast with the rigid work at Wadham. A great deal of the carving on the Conduit appears to be Clark's own work, including such elegant details as the Royal emblems and the small heads and masks above the mermaids, but there is evidence that at the end the task was hurriedly performed, since the tracery of the vault below the superstructure was left unfinished by the carver. In

<sup>91</sup> Decker, *The Magnificent Entertainment*.

<sup>92</sup> The position of David at the head of the worthies and his choice as the only Biblical character represented may be regarded as a tribute to the translator of the Psalms, an office which the King had reserved for himself in the compilation of the new Bible. Fairfax's recent poem on Geoffrey of Boulogne was known to be amongst the King's most valued poetry: *Godfrey of Bulloigne or the recovery of Jerusalem by Edward Fairfax gent.* (reprinted in 1844 in *Allots English Parnassery*), intro. Hector and Caesar are perhaps deliberately intended to recall once again the State Entry to the King's mind, for on that occasion the lector claimed for London the epithet of 'New Troy' and greeted James in a paraphrase of Virgil's famous lines beginning, 'Te, Jacobe, memento . . .'. The messages of Alexander and of Charlemagne are less clear, but I think it possible that Ardaricus was chosen because he had met and subdued his powerful foes in that very region where the hard-pressed Protestants were then struggling, a subtle invitation to stand forth boldly as the champion of Protestants in Europe.

## CARFAX CONDUIT

contrast with its general high proficiency parts of the monument appear to be crudely and indeed clumsily cut. This obvious, and at times painful, disparity in the work is due to the constant patching and rude recutting which the Conduit has suffered throughout its history ; particularly unfortunate being the unhappy restoration of Godfrey of Boulogne and the masks below the twin Janus figures.<sup>93</sup>

On such a monument paint and gilding played a part only second to the stonework in the impact of the total composition, and during the winter and spring of 1616 Clark must have needed the assistance of a skilful and experienced painter. The man he seems possibly to have chosen was a well-known craftsman in local circles, a colleague with whom he had worked before and, probably, a member of his London set. At the beginning of September, Will Davis, Bodley's able if sometimes tiresome painter, who had been working intermittently for some years in Oxford, suddenly became a member of the local gild.<sup>94</sup> As part of his fee he undertook to paint the arms for the new Guildhall, and this may indeed have been his only City contract, but I prefer to think that his admission was connected with an undertaking to help Clark in the decoration of his carvings.<sup>95</sup>

Our generation is now witnessing the decay and loss of so much fine architecture through lack of funds for restoration, that it may well be questioned whether the large sum which would be required to recut and re-erect the Conduit as nearly as possible in its original condition would be justified. Moreover, to restore the paint, the gildings and all the metal properties would be a heavy additional expense, though without these the whole work would certainly lose a large part of its meaning. Yet the Conduit is a lovely monument, designed to fill and beautify a special place, and if, at any time, the centre of Oxford were to become a precinct and regain something of its former spaciousness, both the City and the University would be richly rewarded for any outlay incurred in its re-erection.<sup>96</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the late Miss M. V. Taylor for giving me her MS. material on the Conduit, to Mr. P. S. Spokes for his references and advice, to the city engineer for his co-operation and to the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of

<sup>93</sup> Largely with cement. T. G. Jackson found that the figures on the Schools Tower were also heavily repaired in 'Roman cement', probably in the early 19th century.

<sup>94</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/vi. 233.

<sup>95</sup> Salter, *Council Acts*, 260. Clark became a freeman in the following April : *ibid.*, 263.

<sup>96</sup> FIGS. 41, 42, show the state of the monument as it was in 1959 when the Ministry of Public Building and Works made a survey of it. The Society is indebted to the Ministry for providing these drawings.

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the Ministry of Public Building and Works for their encouragement and help, and for providing the drawings of the monument as it was in 1959. The Council for British Archaeology and the City of Oxford have both generously contributed towards the cost of publication of this article.

### APPENDIX

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE LONDON PAINTER-STAINERS

William Frissingfield, or Frissfield : a member of the Painter-Stainers' Company ; held the office of ' City Painter ' until his death in 1624.

George Moss : a member of the Painter-Stainers' Company ; acted as one of the feoffees for the Company's Hall in 1580 and 1605.

John Knight the elder : Warden of the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1578 ; was decorating and painting for the revels in 1551 and 1558.

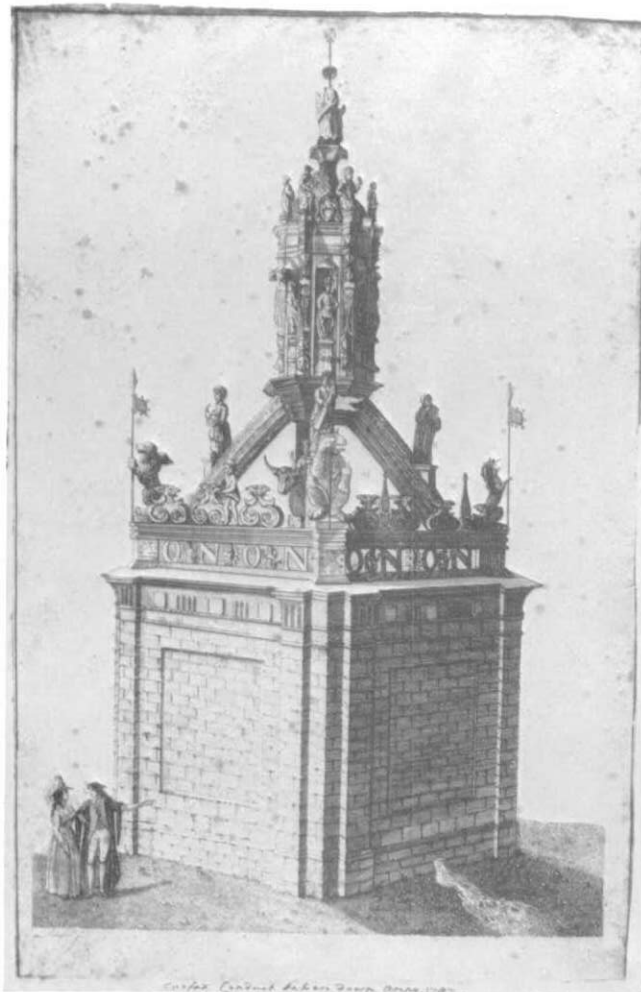
Paul Issacson or Jackson, 1594(?) - 1655 : member of the Painter-Stainer's Company ; son of William Issacson of Sheffield and brother of Richard, painter-stainer and Sheriff of London ; probably a relative of George Jackson who often painted for the City shows. Worked at Knole and Gorumby ; often worked with Peake and Butler ; friend of Richard Butler who witnessed his will.

Samuel Goodrick : member of the Painter-Stainers' Company ; received part of William Hearn's annuity in 1571 when he was painting for the revels ; probably a relative (perhaps father) of Matthew Goodrick who worked with Stone at Holyrood in 1617, and was later in the service of King Charles I as a decorative painter.

Richard Wood : nothing is at present known except that he painted for the revels and was resident in St. Olave's parish in 1599.

George Heron : the eldest son of William Heror, born at Darton in Yorkshire, not far from Halifax ; painted a model of the tomb of Henry VIII with Richard Rowland. Both he and his wife were painters.

For further details of some of these painters and of the Dutch artists mentioned above see : Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England, 1537-1837* (1962) ; E. K. Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain, 1530-1790* (Pelican Hist. Art) ; Erna Auerbach, *Tudor Artists* (1954).



A

CARFAX CONDUIT

A. In the 18th century. Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c. 299, f. 17.

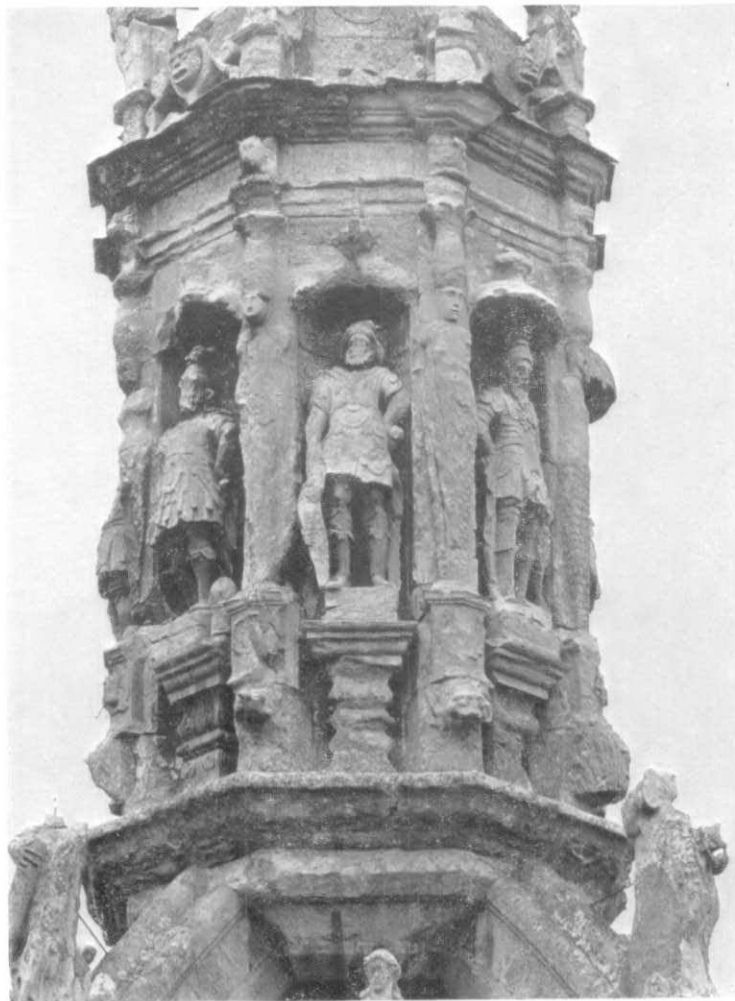
Ph.: by permission of the Bodleian Library



B

B. In 1959, at Nuneham Courtenay.

Ph.: The National Buildings Record



A

A. Showing the figure of David.



B

B. Showing figures and grotesque masks.

CARFAX CONDUIT IN 1959 : details.