

Oxford Gaol - later HMP Oxford.

Like some other cities, Oxford found itself with a redundant castle which it turned into a prison in the 14th century, when the military need for castles had passed. After the Civil War the remains of the castle continued to be used as a prison and also administrative and judicial centre. Christ Church College owned the castle at this period and rented it out to jailers who made their living by charging prisoners for their keep.

Control passed to the Oxford County Justices and as with most counties in the late 18th century a new prison was constructed, to the design of William Blackburn. This was started in 1786 and gradually expanded during the 19th century. Originally the new building had two wings, one for debtors and the other for felons. The keeper's house was in the centre of the site. A Wing formed the core of the new prison, being a four story structure with large windows.

In 1788 two new wings were added, one each for male and female prisoners. The total capacity was 133 inmates. The prison was further enlarged between 1848 and 1856, bringing the capacity up to 218 male and 24 female felons and 133 male and 25 female debtors. A new Governor's House was built outside the walls in 1848. Female inmates ceased to be housed at Oxford after 1924.

The prison closed in 1996 and ownership passed to Oxford County Council. The prison was re-developed into the Malmaison Hotel, which opened in 2004.

The gallows at Oxford.

In the 18th century hangings could take place in the Castle Yard and it is not known whether there was a permanent gallows, prior to 1790. It is known that Mary Blandy was hanged from a beam set between two trees in the Castle Yard in 1752. County executions took place on the Castle Green and on a mound just outside the West Gate of the City.

From 1790, until the ending of public hangings the New Drop gallows was erected above the main gate, as was common practice in British prisons. After 1868, when public hanging had been abolished, it was set up in one of the prison's yards just under St. George's Tower. This location was reportedly used for the hanging of Edward Roberts, the first private hanging here, which took place on the 18th of March 1872. William Calcraft was the hangman.

Henry Rowles was hanged by William Marwood on the 1st of April 1878 and it was recorded that a pit had been dug beneath the gallows which had been reduced in height to bring the platform nearer to ground level. This enabled Marwood to give a drop of 7 feet 6 inches. The gallows was set up near the Deputy Governor's garden some 40 - 50 yards from the condemned cell and the platform was reached by a short flight of stairs. A new gallows was erected in 1885 for the execution of one Mr. Bodkin, who was later reprieved. This was then sent to Worcester and another new one constructed in a wing of the prison, presumably C Wing, for the execution of Charles Smith on Monday the 9th of May 1887 by James Berry. This was close to the condemned cell but not visible from it. The beam was set in the walls at each end and painted black. It had a an iron band

with a ring for attachment of the rope. Beneath were the trap doors that opened into a pit of 10 12 feet in depth. The details of this gallows were reported in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* newspaper of Saturday the 14th of May. The condemned cell was some 12 yards (36 feet) from the gallows.

63 year old Smith and his wife and family were gypsies, living in a tent at Open Brasenose near Cowley. On the night of Saturday the 19th of February 1887, Smith beat his wife, Lucy, to death with a hammer, whilst the children slept. Just as Berry went to operate the trap, Smith fainted. He had intended to give Smith a drop of four feet.

The next hanging at Oxford was that of Joseph Walker on Tuesday the 15th of November 1887. Walker was a saddle maker from Chipping Norton and had also murdered his wife.

Berry noted that he was a heavy man at 16 stone (224 lbs.) and gave him a drop of 2 feet 10 inches, the shortest he had ever used. Death was reported as instantaneous.

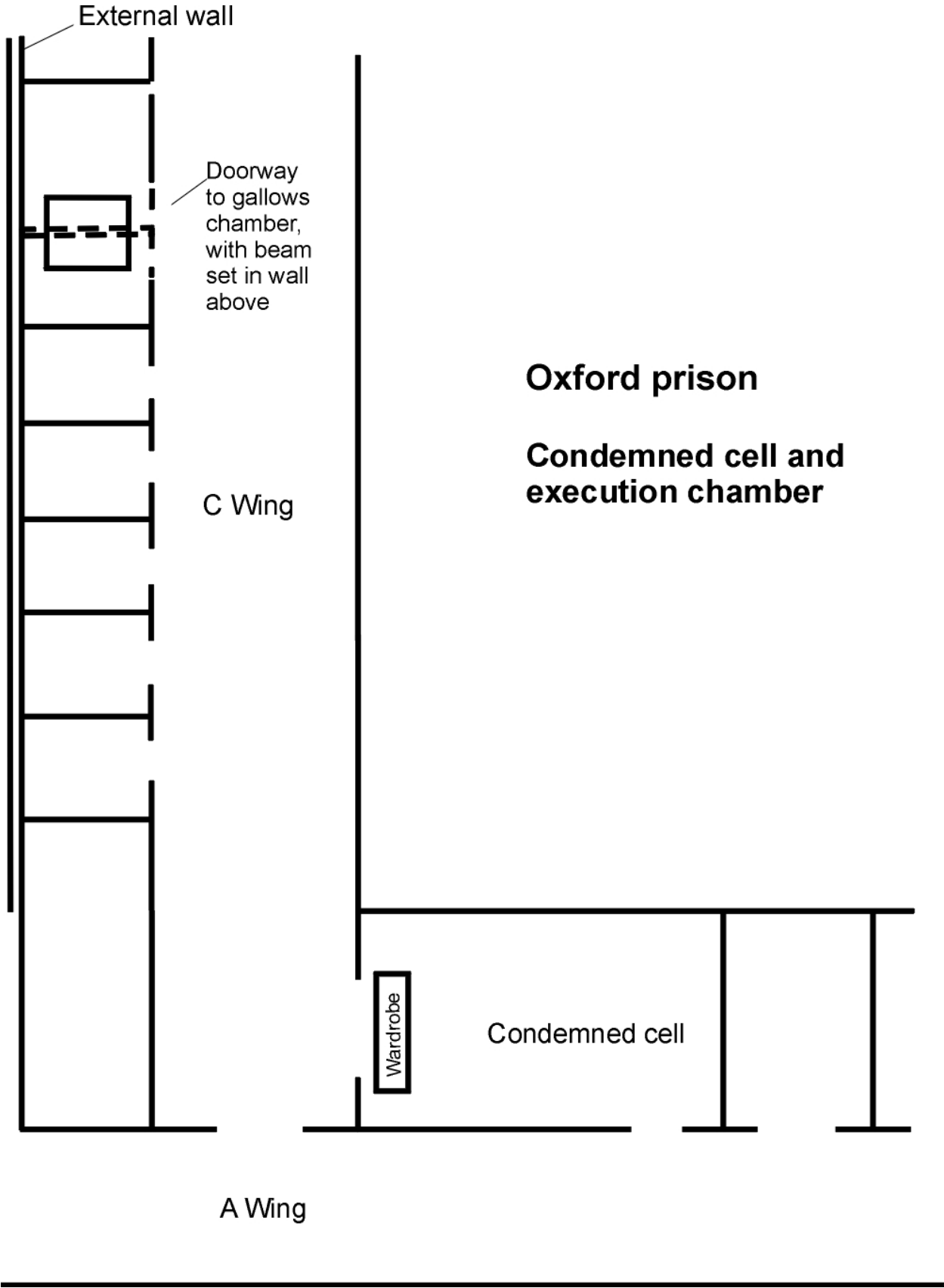
Berry's last execution here was that of Robert Upton on Tuesday the 17th of July 1887. Like Smith, Upton had beaten his wife to death. He had attacked Emma with an iron bar on the 23rd of May 1887 at Milton under Wychwood. Upton was nearly decapitated by the drop and his clothes were saturated with blood. Berry claimed to have given Upton a drop of five feet, but the medical officer, Henry Banks Spencer, thought the drop was nearer seven feet. 61 year old Upton weighed 147 lbs and was 5 feet 10 1/2 inches tall with a thin neck. Berry told the subsequent inquest that he had only realised on the gallows that Upton had a degenerative condition of the neck but it was too late at that point to alter the drop length. He had not been able to observe Upton prior to the hanging.

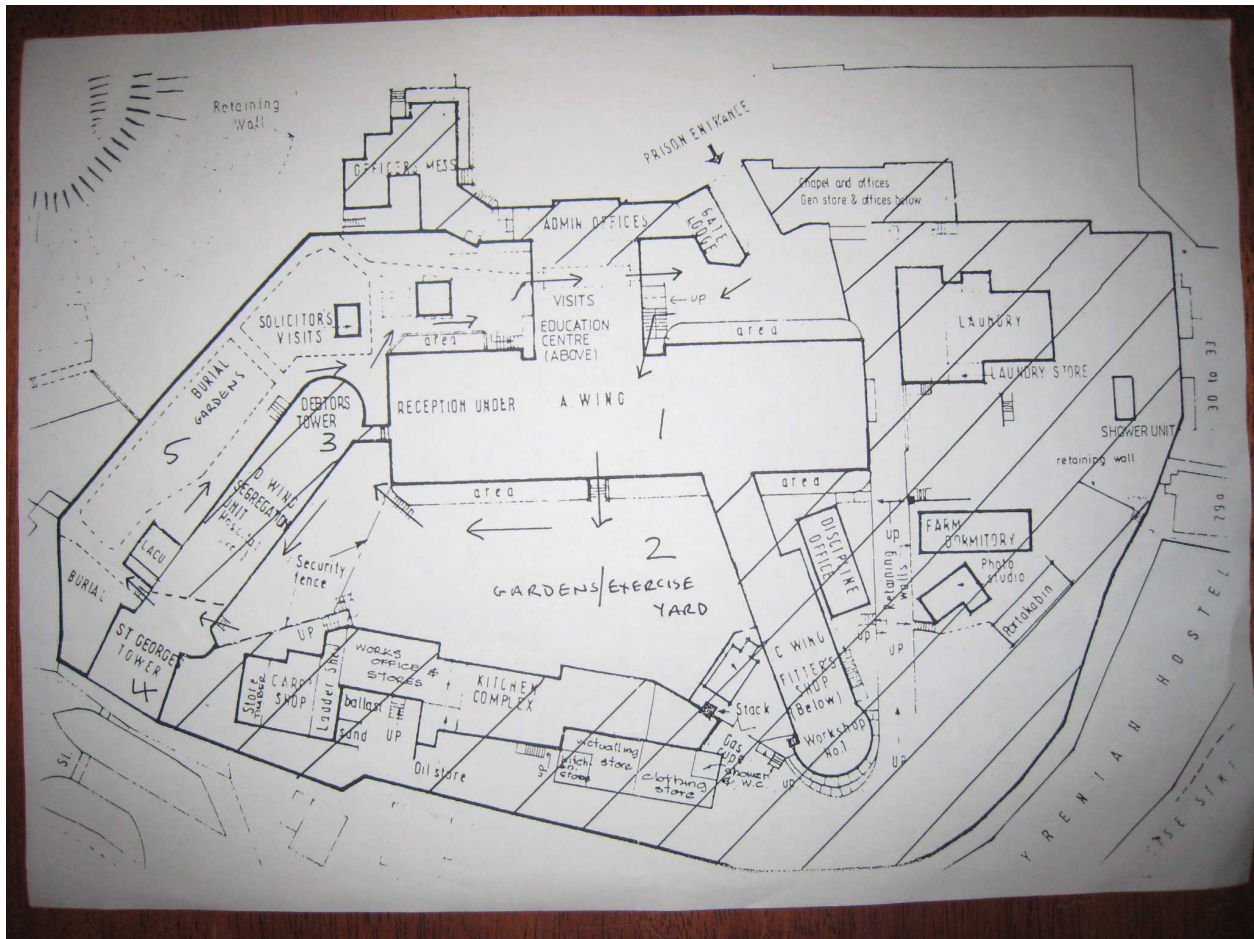
James Billington carried out the double execution of 31 year old Charles Raynor and 35 year old Frederick Eggleton on Thursday the 17th of March 1892. They had murdered Joseph Crawley and William Puddiphatt, two gamekeepers, in a wood at Aldbury near Aylesbury. Billington gave Eggleton who weighed 167 lbs, a drop of six feet nine inches and Raynor who weighed 157 lbs, a drop of seven feet. In both cases the LPC4 forms records that there was fracture dislocation of the vertebrae. Billington worked without an assistant at this hanging. *Jackson's Oxford Journal* newspaper of the 19th of March 1892, reported the executions in detail and stated that the gallows was situated just 15 yards from the condemned cells.

Sometime in the 1920's a new condemned cell was built on A Wing at the junction with C Wing (see sketch). The gallows was in C Wing and at a distance of 40 feet, an unusually long way from the condemned cell. The prisoner was led through a doorway that had been concealed by a wardrobe into the corridor in C Wing to the gallows chamber formed from three cells on the left hand side of the corridor reached via a large square opening (the width of the original central cell of the three knocked together), that replaced the original cell doorway, and later filled in with an expanse of brick.. The gallows were permanent. The beam ran square across the chamber from wall to wall, but at 90 degrees to the corridor alignment (i.e. from the inside of the corridor wall, above the doorway across to the inside of the external wall, above the window, along

the long axis of the former cell). Presumably the entry to the execution area was usually closed by shutters (similar to Wandsworth, although not as wide). A door in the outer wall of the two ground floor cells, which had been demolished to form the drop room, led out to the yard where burial took place in the in the shadow of the Norman St. George's tower.

Here is a simplified diagram of the arrangement.





Layout of Oxford prison in later years.

Here are unique selection of photos taken by my friend Nick Short of the prison prior to its conversion into a hotel.



Oxford Gaol, Administration Block. The small barred doorway in the centre of the picture leads to a spiral stair that emerges at the door to the gallows platform, visible to right of stair tower. Last used 1863 for the execution of Noah Austin.



Oxford Gaol, general view of A Wing, top landing of four.



Oxford Gaol, A Wing “ground” floor actually the 2nd level and slightly above ground level, with the lowest level being slightly below ground. Square doorway on right is shower room and condemned cell is the next 2 doorways. Corridor to C Wing and gallows is square doorway beyond these.



View of condemned cell from observation post.



Another view of condemned cell, with corridor to gallows to left.



Just inside corridor, looking towards gallows. Exit door from condemned cell, now bricked up.



Looking back down corridor towards condemned cell. Witnesses' door to execution chamber on right, main doorway now bricked up, but where patch of sunlight is.



View into execution chamber from witnesses' doorway.



Execution chamber. Three cells knocked into one. Low concrete beams for support. Main (blocked) entrance from corridor is patch of brickwork left of centre, with beam socket above it (not visible). Traps were in centre of floor but have been removed and boards laid across drop. Small trapdoor (not original) is for access to pit (used for storage after 1965), but original gallows trap leaf leaning against wall.



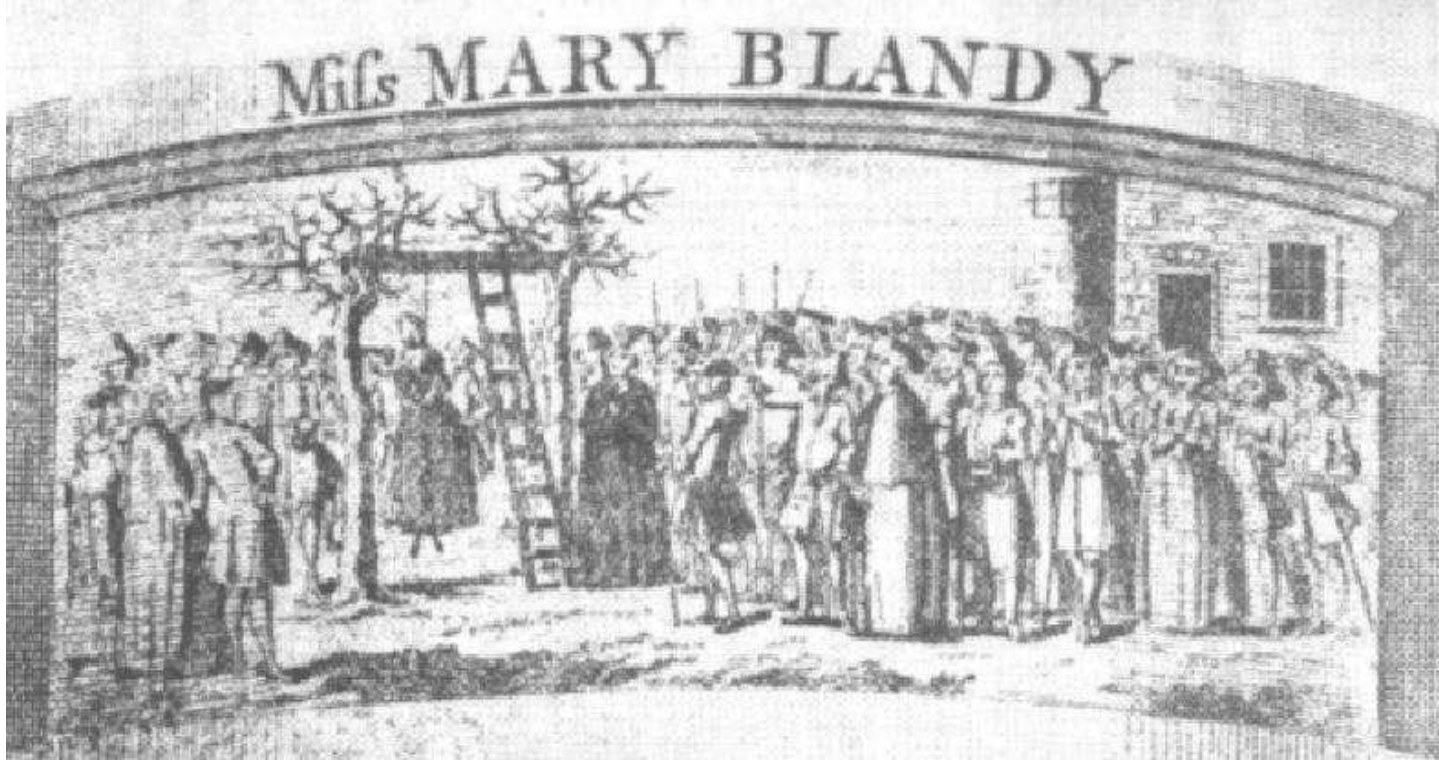
Blocked window and beam socket above.



View into pit. Last used 12.8.52.

Executions at Oxford.

In all 100 confirmed executions were carried out at Oxford between 1735 and 1952, with a further three possible ones in 1742 for which no record of a reprieve has been found. Four women were hanged here in the 1735 to 1766 period, with one more possibly executed in 1742. They were the only women hanged at Oxford. Mary Blandy was the most well known of these. Find a detailed article on her case on the Contents Page and a woodcut picture of her hanging below.



List of executions 1735 - 1799.

240 death sentences led to 59 confirmed executions and 3 possible ones.

These were carried out on a mound outside the West Gate or on the Castle Green

Assize date	Name	Crime	Execution date
1735 - 1737 - No executions			
1738 - 1 execution			
W 1 March	William Clifford	Burglary	M 20 March
1739 - 1 execution			
W 7 March	John Martin	Highway robbery	M 26 March
1740 & 1741 - No executions			
1742 - No confirmed executions but 3 possible where no reprieves have been traced			

W 10 March	Francis Battin	Highway robbery	Unknown
"	Elizabeth Cox	Sheep theft	Unknown
"	William Harding	Sheep theft	Unknown
1743 - 2 executions			
W 2 March	John Gale	Highway robbery	F 25 March
"	Milly Gray	Horse theft	F 25 March
1744 & 1745 - No executions			
1746 - 2 executions			
W 5 March	Rose Hurle	Murder of William Hurle (son)	Unknown
W 6 August	Robert Rowwright	Murder of Rose Rowwright Fuller	W 20 August
1747 & 1748 - No executions			
1749 - 1 execution			
W 12 July	Paul Wells jr.	Forgery	F 1 September
1750 - 2 executions			
W 7 March	James Smith	Housebreaking	M 2 April
"	John Walker	Highway robbery	M 2 April
1751 - No executions			
1752 - 1 execution			
S 29 February	Mary Blandy	Murder of her father, Francis	M 6 April
1753 - 1 execution			
W 7 March	William Grindy	At large	Unknown
1754 - 3 executions			
W 6 March	Richard Baylis &	Highway robbery	F 22 March
"	Adam Brice	Highway robbery	F 22 March
"	James Till (17)	Stole in dwelling house	F 26 April
1755 - 3 executions			
W 5 March	Richard Mansfield &	Highway robbery	F 21 March
"	Richard Dancer	Highway robbery	F 21 March
"	Robert Randell	Sheep theft	M 28 April
1756 & 1757 - No executions			
1758 - 1 execution			
Th. 2 March	William Hardiman	Highway robbery	M 20 March
1759 & 1760 - No executions			
1761 - 1 execution			
W 4 March	Isaac Dorking	Highway robbery	M 23 March

1762 - 3 executions

W 3 March	Shadrack Smith	Highway robbery	M 22 March
W 21 July	Susannah Harris	Murder of her female bastard	S 24 July
"	James Costard	Murder of his mother, Sarah	S 24 July

1763 & 1764 - No executions

1765 - 1 execution

W 13 March	Parker Hall	Burglary	M 22 April
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1766 - 3 executions

W 5 March	Mary Lamphrey	Murder of her daughter's bastard	M 10 March
W 9 July	John Williams &	Highway robbery	M 28 July
"	John Brown	Highway robbery	M 28 July

1767 & 1770 - No executions

1771 - 2 executions

Tu. 9 July	Martin Reader	Burglary	M 29 July
"	William Crooke (Cook)	Burglary	F 16 August

1772 - 1 execution

W 4 March	Richard Gardner	Burglary	M 23 March
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1773 & 1774 - No executions

1775 - 2 executions

W 8 March	George Strapp	Murder of Edward Bowden	M 13 March
W 26 July	James Corbett	Burglary	M 14 August

1776 - 1 execution

	Richard Churn	Highway robbery	M 25 March
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1777 - No executions

1778 - 1 execution

W 4 March	Robert Hitchcock	Murder of his father, Edward	M 9 March
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1779 - 1 execution

W 3 March	William Hide	Burglary	M 22 March
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1780 - 1 execution

W 26 July	Richard Wells	Horse theft	W 30 August
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1781 - 1783 - No executions

1784 - 4 executions

W 3 March	Daniel Cato	Murder of Thomas Rossen	M 8 March
"	Benjamin Webb &	Housebreaking	M 22 March

"	George Ward	Housebreaking	M 22 March
"	Giles Freeman	Highway robbery	Tu. 30 March
1785 - 1 execution			
W 2 March	John Price	Highway robbery	M 7 March
1786 - 4 executions			
W 8 March	John Cox &	Killing a sheep	M 27 March
"	Richard Cox	Killing a sheep	M 27 March
"	John Grace	Sheep theft	M 27 March
"	Miles Ward	Stealing in a College	M 27 March
1787 - 2 executions			
W 18 July	Thomas White	Stole in dwelling house	M 6 August
"	Charles Wyatt	Stole from a letter	M 6 August
1788 - 1 execution			
W 5 March	Charles Smith	Horse theft	M 24 March
1789 - No executions			
1790 - 4 executions			
W 3 March	Thomas Davis	Horse theft	M 22 March
W 14 July	Charles Evans Shury &	Murder of David Charteris	M 19 July
"	John Castle	Murder of David Charteris	M 19 July
"	James Williams	Burglary	M 2 August
1791 - 2 executions			
W 2 March	Giles Covington	Aiding murder of David Charteris	M 7 March
"	John Kelly	Highway robbery	M 21 March
1792 - 1 execution			
W 7 March	Joseph Tapp	Highway robbery	M 26 March
1793 - 1 execution			
W 10 July	Robert Jenkinson	Horse theft	M 29 July
1794 - 1796 - No executions			
1797 - 3 executions			
W 2 August	John Marshall	Horse theft	M 21 August
"	William Ure	Burglary	M 21 August
"	Thomas Andrews	Horse theft	M 21 August
1798 - 1 execution			
W 7 March	James Carpenter	Burglary	M 26 March
1799 - No executions			

20 men were hanged in public between 1800 and 1863.

In 1832, there were still a large number of capital crimes and on Monday the 19th of March two young men were to die for a crime other than murder. 32 year old John Gibbs was hanged for setting fire to several hayricks, the property of Mr. Wing at Steeple Aston on the 12th of February. Beside him on the gallows was 19 year old George Lay who was to die for the violent highway robbery of a Mr. Pullen, whom he had robbed of five sovereigns and his watch. *Jackson's Oxford Journal* newspaper reported it was "surprised to see such an immense number of young females" in the crowd. The name of the hangman was not reported.

Thomas Clay was hanged on Saturday the 5th of March 1836 for the murder by shooting of gamekeeper Thomas Cooper on the 3rd of November 1835 at Woodeaton.

Italian immigrant, Guglielmo Kalabergo was hanged by William Calcraft on Monday the 21st of March 1852 for the murder of his uncle at Banbury. He made a full confession to Dr. Faa, a Catholic priest. The execution was witnessed by upwards of 8,000 people. It is notable that the newspapers of the day anglicised his first name, Guglielmo, to William.

The last public hanging at Oxford was that of 26 year old Noah Austin who was to die for the murder of James Allen at Upper Heyford. He was hanged on the roof of the gatehouse by William Calcraft on Tuesday the 24th of March 1863, before a crowd estimated at between 9,000 and 10,000 people. Austin had shot his girlfriend's father because he had been mistreating his daughter. He made a full confession prior to the execution which was published in the press.

A further seven men were executed in private between 1872 and 1892. See in the gallows section above for brief details.

Seven men were hanged at Oxford in the 20th century. They were :
Joseph Rose.

Rose had been living with his 19 year old cousin Sarah for some 18 months at Eastbourne in Sussex and had a five month old baby, called Isabella, by her. He was 25 at the time of the crime and the family were on the way to Newbury in Berkshire when it happened. It took place on Monday the 28th of October 1918 at Love Lane, Shaw-cum-Donnington near Newbury.

The murders were discovered by Ada Edge who was cycling down Love Lane when she was approached by Rose who had white hair and red eyes and a large wound to his throat. Rose wanted Ada to look at a nearby hedgerow with him but fortunately two men had arrived on the scene at this time and they made the gruesome discovery of Sarah and Isabella's bodies lying in the hedge with their throats cut. Rose claimed that all three of them had been attacked by a man he referred to as Harry and whom he said Sarah knew.

The police were called and arrested Rose. They were unable to find the murder weapon or any trace of Harry and duly charged Joseph with the murders.

Rose came to trial at Berkshire Assizes at Reading on the 16th of January 1919 before Mr. Justice Rowlatt. The prosecution was led by Mr. Lort-Williams and the defence by Reginald Coventry.

Sarah's father gave evidence on Rose's behalf saying that he and she had been on good terms when they left Eastbourne. However this was contradicted by the evidence of Daisy Black who knew Sarah and told the court she had seen her arguing with a man with white hair and red eyes at around 11.30 on the fateful Monday morning and that the man had hit Sarah.

The defence said that no sign of bruising was found in Sarah's face however.

Although there was no obvious motive nor murder weapon produced in court the jury convicted Rose and he was hanged by John Ellis, assisted by Edward Taylor, on Wednesday the 19th of February at Oxford prison (which was the nearest "hanging" prison to Reading). It was the first execution at Oxford for 27 years.

George Bailey - the first murderer convicted by a jury containing women.

Prisoner 776 in the condemned cell at Oxford in early 1921 was 33 year old George Arthur Bailey. Bailey had been convicted of murdering his wife, 22 year old Kate Lillian Bailey by poisoning her.

He was a milkman in Little Marlow in Buckinghamshire and lived at Barn Cottage. He was also musically inclined. In 1920 he had advertised for women to assist him with a notation system for musical scores which he had invented. As he was already known to the police and had used several aliases they took interest in the advertisements, all of which required the applicant to be young and attractive.

One of the applicants was Lillian Marks who was invited to stay the night of Wednesday the 29th of September 1920. During the night Bailey went into her bedroom and tried to force himself on her. She reported this to the police and they visited Barn Cottage where they discovered the body of Kate laying on the bed with pink froth coming from her mouth. The autopsy revealed Prussic acid poisoning. Bailey had left the house and taken his three year old daughter to relatives in Swindon. He was arrested at Reading station three days later and charged with murder. Four types of poison were found on him as was a note showing that he had originally intended to kill his daughter and himself.

Bailey was tried at Aylesbury on the 13th to the 17th of January 1921, before Mr. Justice McCardie. For the first time the jury contained ladies, three of them to be exact. This was revolutionary and Pathé News showed them in a silent newsreel. The prosecution argued that Bailey murdered his wife in order to be free to seduce other women. Bailey's previous bad character including a record of forgery, fraud, theft, false information and army desertion did nothing to help his case. His defence was that his wife had taken the poison voluntarily and thus committed suicide.

His appeal was dismissed and he was duly hanged at Oxford on Wednesday the 2nd of March by John Ellis and Edward Taylor. The LPC4 form recorded that he was rather short with a muscular neck. The drop of 7' 1' proving sufficient to dislocate it, however. The same form also records his age as 33 although it is given as 22 elsewhere.

Henry Seymour - a miscarriage of justice?

The body of 58 year old Annie Louisa Kempson was discovered by her brother at her home, "Boundary House" in the St' Clements area of Oxford. She had been battered and stabbed to death and robbed of a few pounds.

It is thought that the murder took place on the morning of Saturday the 1st of August 1931. Annie was due to stay with a friend in London on the Sunday and when she didn't arrive, her friend phoned Annie's brother, Albert Reynolds, who lived nearby and he went to Annie's home on Monday the 3rd, and managed to gain entry.

The Chief Constable of Oxfordshire, Charles Fox, called in Scotland Yard to help in the investigation and over 300 people were interviewed. Annie's body was autopsied by Sir Bernard Spilsbury. He put the time of death at around 10 am. on the Saturday and this was supported by the fact that there were breakfast things out on the kitchen table and her bed was unmade. A delivery boy got no answer when he tried to deliver some shoes to Annie at around 11 am.

In the house the police discovered a business card bearing the name of Henry Seymour. 39 year old Seymour was a commercial traveller who worked for a company called Tellus selling door to door. He became the sole suspect and was traced to Brighton where he was arrested on the 15th of August. The murder weapon or weapons were never recovered.

Seymour was tried at the Oxfordshire Assizes between the 20th and 25th of October, before Mr. Justice Swift. He adamantly denied any involvement in the crime. He admitted that he had been in Oxford on the Friday and had been staying in the Greyhound Hotel in Aylesbury all the preceding week. This was confirmed by the landlord. He had missed the last bus back to Aylesbury on the Friday night and had stayed with Alice Andrews, leaving her at 9.30 am on the Saturday morning. She testified that she saw him with a hammer and chisel, although he said it was a hammer and screwdriver. Seymour caught the 11.03 bus back to Aylesbury and the bus stop was about a 20 minute walk from Alice's house. Witnesses confirmed that he was indeed on the bus.

The defence introduced a number of witnesses who testified to seeing Annie alive after 10.30 am on the Saturday. William Law saw her in Pembroke Street at 11.20 am. John Woodward served her in his shop between 12 and 1 pm. Frederick Taylor who had known her for 20 years saw at 12.30. and Kate Barron who had known Annie all her life saw her at 3 pm. The prosecution could offer no witnesses who had seen Seymour at Annie's home on the Saturday. Other than his business card, there was no physical evidence linking him to the crime, either.

It took the jury just 38 minutes to return a guilty verdict.

Despite the witness testimony to Annie being alive after Seymour had left for Aylesbury, the Appeal Court denied Seymour's appeal and he was hanged at 8 am on Tuesday the 10th of December 1931, by Thomas Pierrepoint and Alfred Allen.

A new book on the case, "The Oxford Murder" by Michael Tanner, suggests that there was indeed a miscarriage of justice.

George Thomas Pople

George Pople was a 22-year-old soldier in the South Wales Borderers' Regiment who was on leave in December of 1931. He decided to use the time for a cycling tour, starting in Bath and then going on to London to stay with relatives. As his leave drew to a close he began the journey back to Brecon. By Saturday the 19th of December he had reached Burford in Oxfordshire when his cycle lamp gave out. He got off and started pushing the bike when along came 56 year old Mabel Elizabeth Matthews on her bike with a working light. Pople pushed Elizabeth off the bike and stole her lamp, before escaping. She was still alive at this time and was discovered by two men at around 8.30 pm. who flagged down a passing car. The car owner fetched a doctor but Elizabeth quickly succumbed to her injuries. She had, to quote the words of Sir Reginald Coventry QC, prosecuting, been "brutally maltreated" with 23 blows to her body. The autopsy carried out by Sir Bernard Spilsbury revealed that she had suffered two blows to the back of the head, eleven broken ribs, a fractured jaw and other injuries. A man's mackintosh with sausage sandwiches in a pocket was found at the scene. It was noted that the lamp was missing from Elizabeth's bike.

Pople was stopped by the police the following day in Abergavenny. The officer noted that his shoes were muddy. As a result he was interviewed again and admitted taking the lamp. In his version of events he had reached out to grab it and accidentally knocked Elizabeth off the bike and causing her to crash into a telegraph pole.

Pople was tried at Gloucester before Mr. Justice Roche on the 1st and 2nd of February 1932. He maintained his version of events and that Elizabeth's death was an accident. The relative Pople had stayed with in London testified that he had given the accused the sausage sandwiches. Blood stains matching Elizabeth's group were found on Pople's clothes. The accident defence was rubbished by Sir Bernard Spilsbury's testimony and the jury convicted him.

On Wednesday the 9th of March 1932, Pople was led to the gallows and hanged by Thomas Pierrepoint and Henry Pollard. There were just a handful of people outside the prison and by 8.10 am they had dispersed having read the notices of the execution.

Ernest Hutchinson.

Hutchinson was a 43 year old un-employed man who was living with a married mother of two, 37 Gwendoline Annie Warren.

Gwendoline had moved out of her family home June 1932 and gone to live with Hutchinson in a rented house in Haywood Avenue in Maidenhead in Berkshire. They

quarrelled over his lack of work and income and on the weekend of the 10th and 11th of September, things came to a head. Hutchinson suffocated Gwendoline under a mattress and other bedding. 12 year old Ronald Warren had visited his mother on Saturday the 10th of September and then gone to stay with his aunt for the rest of the weekend. He returned to Haywood Avenue on Wednesday the 14th but Hutchinson would not let him in. He went back to his aunt, Miss Fleet, and told her what had happened. She and Ronald went to the house but couldn't get an answer. With the help of a neighbour, Miss Fleet gained entry and discovered Gwendoline's body. She called the police and they began searching for Hutchinson who was arrested in Southend in the company of a prostitute on September the 15th.

He told the police that they had argued on the night of Saturday the 10th of September and afterwards Gwendoline had slept alone in the spare bedroom. The next morning he discovered her body and also claimed that the front door was unlocked. He therefore thought that someone had got into the house and murdered Gwendoline. He assumed that someone to be her husband, William. He further claimed to have been too upset to report the death and had stayed in the house with the dead body for three days. He told neighbours that Gwendoline had gone to Birmingham. He took some items from the house which he sold and went at first to London and then to Southend.

The trial was held at Oxford on the 14th to the 16th of October before Mr. Justice MacKinnon. The famous pathologist, Sir Bernard Spilsbury, told the court that Gwendoline had suffered multiple blows from a blunt object but had died from suffocation. His barrister, Mr. Micklethwait related the story that Hutchinson had given to the police. The jury were not impressed and reached a guilty verdict after an hour and ten minutes. Hutchinson reportedly smiled when this was delivered.

He was hanged on Wednesday the 23rd of November by Alfred Allen and Henry Pollard, with a Mr. Stanley observing. Hutchinson weighed 162 lbs. and was given a drop of 6' 6 1/2".

Harold Hill.

Doreen Hearne, aged 8 and Kathleen Trundell age 6, left school as usual at 4 pm. on the afternoon of Wednesday the 10th of November 1941. The pair started their journey home on foot but at around 4.15 pm. was seen by fellow students climbing into an army truck. One of the more observant ones, 13 year old Gordon Page, noted the truck's identification number and also that it had a Remembrance Day poppy in the grille. A huge search was mounted by police and volunteers.

On the 22nd of November the girl's bodies were found in Rough Wood in Penn, Buckinghamshire some four miles from their home. Both had been strangled and repeatedly stabbed in the throat and chest, but had not been sexually assaulted.

Police investigations showed the truck was based at an army camp at Haselmere Lodge in Suffolk.

One of the child witnesses was able to pick out 26 year old Harold Hill at an identity parade, as the driver of the truck. Hill was overheard to tell another soldier "You saw me at 4.20 pm." At this point the officers had made no mention had been made of the time of the abduction.

The investigation uncovered more evidence against Hill. There were 20 miles more on the trucks odometer than he could account for. There was a tunic with blood stains and a handkerchief found at the crime scene bore the same laundry mark as other items of Hill's clothing. His fingerprints matched those found on one of the little girl's gas masks. Tyre tracks found at the crime scene matched those of the truck Hill had been driving.

Hill was arrested and subsequently tried at the Old Bailey before Mr. Justice Humphreys on the 2nd to the 5th of March 1942. His counsel put forward a defence of schizophrenia but the jury didn't accept this. He was hanged at 8.00 a.m. on Friday the 1st of May 1942, by Tom and Albert Pierrepoint.

George Russell.

94 year old Minnie Freeman Lee lived alone at a large house named "Wynford" in Raypark Avenue in Maidenhead in Berkshire. There were local rumours that she was wealthy although these were unfounded.

On Monday the 1st of June 1948 the milkman noticed that his previous delivery was still on the doorstep and knowing this was unlike Minnie, he called the police.

They forced an entry and searched the house, finally finding Minnie's body in a trunk. She had been battered about the head, tied up, gagged and asphyxiated. The house had been ransacked but police were able to find a good partial finger print. It is thought that the murder took place on Saturday and 29th of May 1948.

When compared to those of known local criminals the finger print was a match to 45 year old George Russell. He was arrested in St. Albans but denied any involvement in the crime. When confronted with the fingerprint he admitted visiting the house looking for work as a gardener. During his questioning he allegedly said to the detective "Did I murder this poor woman for something she was supposed to have and had not?"

Russell was tried at Reading on the 15th and 16th of October 1948 before Mr. Justice Hallett. The fingerprint and Russell's statement were enough to convince the jury.

Russell was transferred to Oxford for execution and hanged at 8 am. on Thursday the 2nd of December by Albert Pierrepoint and Steve Wade. The LPC4 Form recorded that Russell weighed 142 lbs and was given a drop of 7' 8" which caused fracture/dislocation of the vertebrae and left marked bruising and a rope groove.

Oliver George Butler.

On Tuesday the 12th of August 1952, 23 year old Oliver Butler became the last man to be hanged at Oxford. He had been convicted of the murder of his girlfriend, 21 year old Rose Meadows. Rose was found strangled in a field near her home at Horley, near

Banbury, in 1952. The couple had met at the Northern Aluminium factory in Banbury where they both worked.

Butler was married but Rose's mother could see that he really loved her daughter and let him move in with them. Around noon on the 19th of May 1952, Rose and Butler went for a walk together. At 3.30 p.m. Butler went to a railway signal box and asked the signalman to call the police, as he had strangled his girlfriend. The signalman noted Butler's distressed state and by the time PC Robinson arrived he was crying.

Butler told the police that Rose told him that one day he would go back to his wife and she would meet another man. He put his hands round her throat, allegedly to frighten her and persuade her to stay with him. She laughed at him and dared him to strangle her. Sadly he did.

He was tried at Stafford before Mr. Justice Hallett on the 4th of July 1952. The prosecution case rested heavily on Butler's statement to police. Butler claimed her death was an accident and that he had confessed to police while he was still overwhelmed with grief. Summing up, the judge told the jury: "It may well be that you think that this is as plain a case as you are ever likely to find of intentional murder and intentional confession."

The jury found Butler guilty, but made a recommendation to mercy. His appeal was rejected on the 18th of July and three days before the execution, the Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, announce that there were no grounds for a reprieve. A petition for a reprieve had been organised by Tommy Haskins, secretary of the Banbury branch of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, of which both Butler and Rose were members.

Butler was reportedly kept in the prison hospital and only moved to the condemned cell the night before the execution. He was hanged by Albert Pierrepoint and Harry Smith at 8.00 a.m. on the Tuesday morning. Some 50 people had gathered outside the prison to see the execution notices posted.

List of executions 1800 - 1952.

Date	Name	Age	Crime	Hangman
28/07/1800	Edward Thorne		Murder of Amy Jacob	
23/03/1801	Jesse Wiggins		Sheep theft	
25/03/1805	Thomas Davis		Uttering	
10/07/1815	James Bannister		Murder of wife	
24/03/1817	William Archer		Arson	
03/08/1818	Richard Wiggins		Sheep theft	
03/08/1818	John Bradley		Highway robbery	
05/08/1822	John Matthews		Highway robbery	
02/08/1824	William James &		Murder of James Milton	
02/08/1824	Henry Pittaway		Murder of James Milton	
20/0/3/1826	William Clack		Horse theft	
26/03/1827	Richard Webb		Horse theft	
13/08/1827	George Allum		Robbery	
24/03/1828	Thomas Shaglor	22	Robbery	
19/03/1832	John Gibbs	32	Arson	
19/03/1832	George Lay	19	Highway robbery	
05/03/1836	Thomas Clay	-	Murder of Thomas Cooper	WC

23/03/1840	Charles Morley	34	Murder of Fanny Phillips	WC
22/03/1852	Guglielmo Kalabergo		Murder of his uncle, John Kalabergo	WC
24/03/1863	Noah Austin	26	James Allen	WC
18/03/1872	Edward Roberts	35	Ann Merrick	WC
01/04/1878	Henry Rowles	26	Mary Allen (fiancée)	WM
09/05/1887	Charles Smith	63	Wife	JBy
15/11/1887	Joseph Walker	46	Wife	JBy
17/07/1888	Robert Upton	61	Wife	JBy
17/03/1892	Frederick Eggleton &	35	Joseph Crawley & William Puddephatt	JBn
17/03/1892	Charles Raynor	31	Crawley & Puddephatt (Gamekeepers)	JBn
19/02/1919	Joseph Rose	25	Sarah Rose & Isabella Rose	JE
02/03/1921	George Bailey	22	Kate Lillian Bailey (wife)	JE
10/12/1931	Henry Seymour	39	Annie Louise Kempson	TP
09/03/1932	George Pople	22	Mabel Matthews	TP
23/11/1932	Ernest Hutchinson	43	Gwendoline Warren	AA
01/05/1942	Harold Hill	26	Doreen Hearne & Kathleen Trundall	TP
02/12/1948	George Russell	45	Minnie Lee	AP
12/08/1952	Oliver Butler	24	Rose Meadows	AP

WC = William Calcraft, WM = William Marwood, JBy = James Berry, JBn = John Billington,

JE =John Ellis, TP = Thomas Pierrepoint, AA = Alfred Allen and AP = Albert Pierrepoint.