



A Healthy Alliance between The Medical Centre • Occupational Health • School of Biological & Molecular Sciences • Environment Forum •

Landscape and Wildlife notes

Point 1 In the verge on the right of the path along Cheney Field, there are many flowers to be seen over the course of the year. In spring, the brilliant blue flowers of alkanet are close to the start of the path, with yellow celandine and lords-and-ladies, with flower spikes in green sheaths, further along. In autumn, lords-and-ladies bear spikes of poisonous orange berries. Among the trees are horse chestnuts with white “candles” of flowers in May. When the flowers have been pollinated they develop pink colouring inside, a signal to insects to look for other flowers.



Point 2 The bridge over the road was built in 1877 to link the two parts of the large Morrell estate, the owners of Headington Hall House for many years. The raised footpath, still used today, was made around 1700 to level out the rough hollow-way which led up from Oxford to the fields. The funds for this work were raised from the University through the efforts of Josiah Pullen. The road itself was a “new” road with the deep cutting constructed in 1775 when the Stokenchurch Turnpike Trust diverted the road north of its earlier route. Previously the main road into Oxford from the east came over the steep climb of Shotover and continued along the route of Old Road and Cheney Lane.

Point 3 Headington Park is another remnant of the Morrell’s estate, originally part of the ornamental grounds belonging to the house. As you enter the park look for the Green Man on the metal gates. A small building on the left is the old Dairy, again dating from the Morrell’s time. It is to be used as an art gallery for Brookes and the City with a variety of events and exhibitions. It will be left unmodernised to keep the link with the past.



Point 4 The yew tree near the entrance is an Irish yew with upright branches and leaves all round the stem, so looks very different to the usual spreading trees which can also be seen here. Sticky pink yew berries are edible but the seeds and the rest of the plant is poisonous. In medieval times, yews were often planted in churchyards inaccessible to grazing animals but also to ward off evil spirits. The wood was used for long bows, being strong and flexible.

The curator of Oxford Botanical Gardens planted a collection of conifers here in the 1850’s as well as other unusual trees, such as Japanese walnut and a foxglove tree (Paulownia) which has large purple bells in May. Amongst recent planting is a flowering cherry to commemorate victims of HIV.

Point 5 Leaving the park, the path goes uphill past Morrell Hall and the allotments. Although most of the allotments are under cultivation this is a useful open area for wildlife with plenty of wild flowers for insects and birds. Allotments were provided for the “labouring poor” to grow their food during the 19th century when open fields were enclosed.

Point 6 Pullen’s Lane was named after Josiah Pullen who was Vice-president of Magdalen Hall. He used to walk regularly to the top of Headington Hill where the footpath came up from Oxford. He planted an elm tree at the turning point of his walk, and both the tree and the lane became known by his name. The tree burnt down in 1909 but is commemorated in a plaque set in the wall in Pullen’s Lane.

