

**Heritage Statement, comprising the Design and Access Statement and Outline Schedule of Works  
in Support of an Application for Listed Building Consent to Replace a Stone Lion Head Grottesque  
on the Oriel window of the Old Library, Magdalen College, Oxford**

**1.0 General Background Information and Drawing List**

The following notes are to be read in conjunction with the Listed Building Consent Applications and drawings: -

- Photographic Schedule
- Plan and Elevation
- Block Plan
- Location Plan

**2.0 Listing**

The oriel window forms part of the Cloisters at Magdalen College, which is Grade I listed. The list entry name is Magdalen College, Cloister, Great Quadrangle and the list number is 1283245 and the Cloisters were first listed on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1954. The list entry reads as follows;

*Magdalen College1. 1485 Great Quadrangle Cloister SP 5206 SW 10/419J 12.1.54 12. Was built in 1475, the south side being finished in 1490; the west range includes the Old Library, which has a partly renewed roof of probably early 17<sup>th</sup> c. The exterior north front was rebuilt in 1823-4 in Bath Stone and the exterior of the east and south sides in 1825-27, the architect being James Parkinson. Parts were refaced in concrete or synthetic stone in 1946. The south alley was reroofed in 1921-2.*

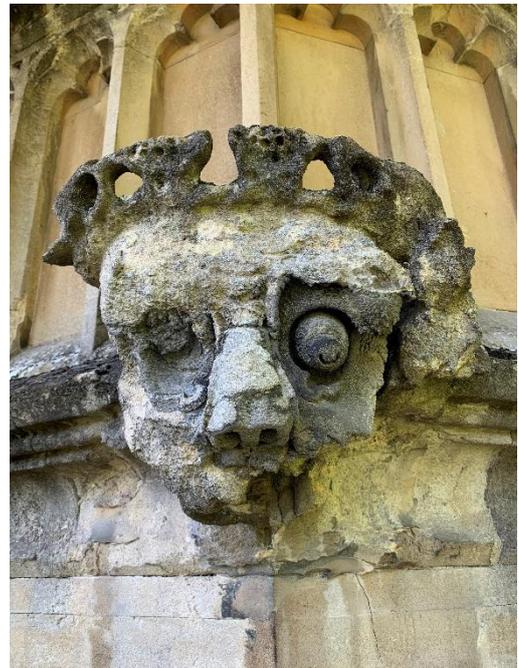
**3.0 Use**

The oriel window forms the only light source to the Old Library at Magdalen College on the northern range of the Cloister. The collections in the Old Library are of national and international significance.

**4.0 Proposed Work**

The application relates to the proposed replacement of a significantly weathered grottesque located on the oriel window. The grottesque forms one of a pair of lion heads located above the three light central window and below the line of the blind arcading. Each lion sits on the angle of the canted bay.

The lion that Magdalen wishes to replace is located towards the eastern side of the window and appears to have sustained significantly more weathering than its counterpart located towards the western side of the window. The carving has become so fragile that it has lost the majority of



*Photograph of lion grottesque  
proposed to be replaced*

its mouth, the lower section of vegetation that originally protruded from its mouth and encircled its head, its eye and eyebrows and some of the nose. We have taken a mould of the original carving in situ in an effort to record as much of the surviving detail as possible because we are concerned that more will be lost over the winter months. Although there is no footpath below the window, the College is also concerned, that due to the fragility of the stone, there is the potential for bits of the carving to break off and fall to the ground.

The proposed work is to replace the existing carving with a new stone carving of a lion's head. The proportions and design of the new carving will be based upon the plaster mould taken from the original, and details taken for the other carved lion that survives in a much better condition on the oriel window which, in its proportions and much of its design, appears to be very similar to the lion we propose to replace



*Plaster mould taken of lion grotesque*

#### **5.0 Access**

Access to the Old Library will be unaffected by the proposed works and will remain as existing.

#### **6.0 Appearance**

The overall appearance of the oriel window will be unaffected by the propose replacement of the carved lion head. The proportions of the original carving will be replicated in the new carving and no surrounding stonework will be altered to accommodate it. As far as possible, the design of the new carving will be based on the original. Its appearance will be informed by the information that can be derived from the original carving as well as the other lion carving on the oriel window, which survives in relatively good condition. The plaster mould taken of the lion will be used as the basis from which a 1:1 scale model will be produced of the proposed new carving. It is proposed

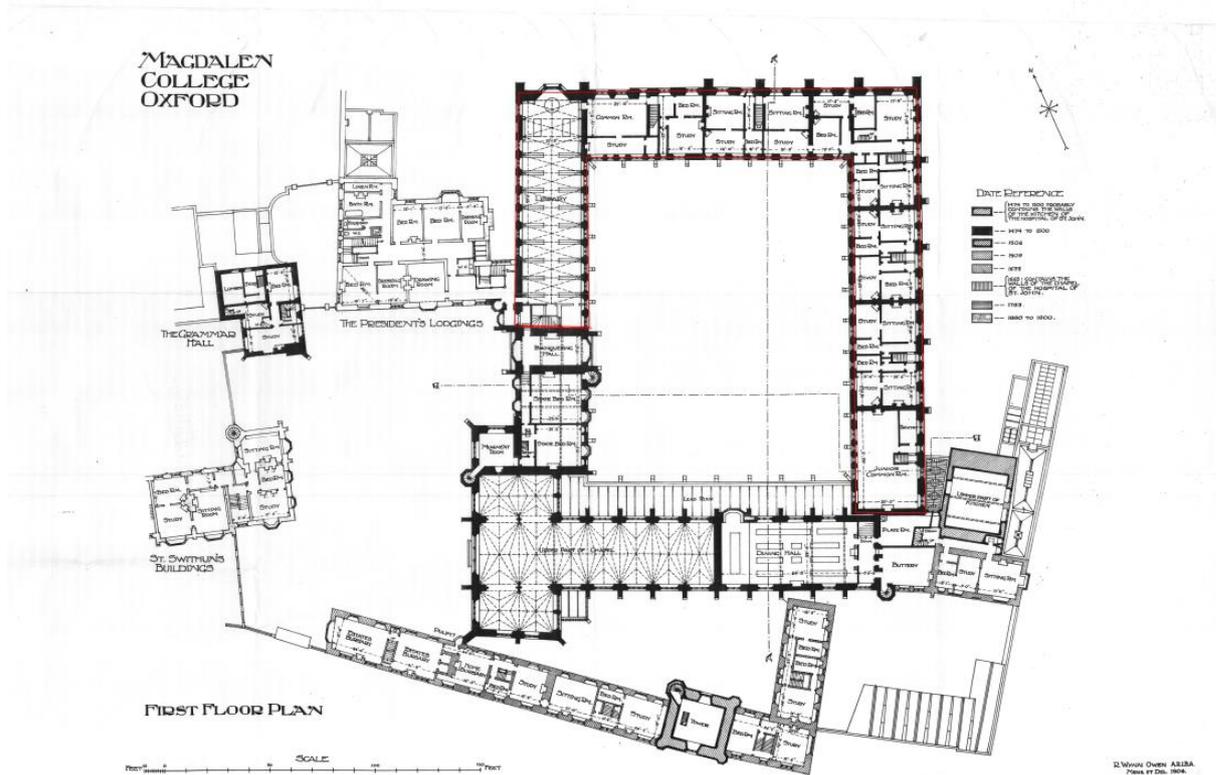


Photograph of the better-preserved lion grotesque on the oriel window

that Listed Building Consent is granted subject to the approval of this model by the Local Planning Authority and Historic England.

## 7.0 Heritage Statement

The Old Library is located on the western corner of the northern range of the Cloister. The Old Library occupies the corner of the range at first floor level. The oriel window is the only light source to the library from the north and overlooks the lawns and New Building. Windows, run along the eastern and western sides of the library overlooking the cloister and President's Lodging's, respectively.

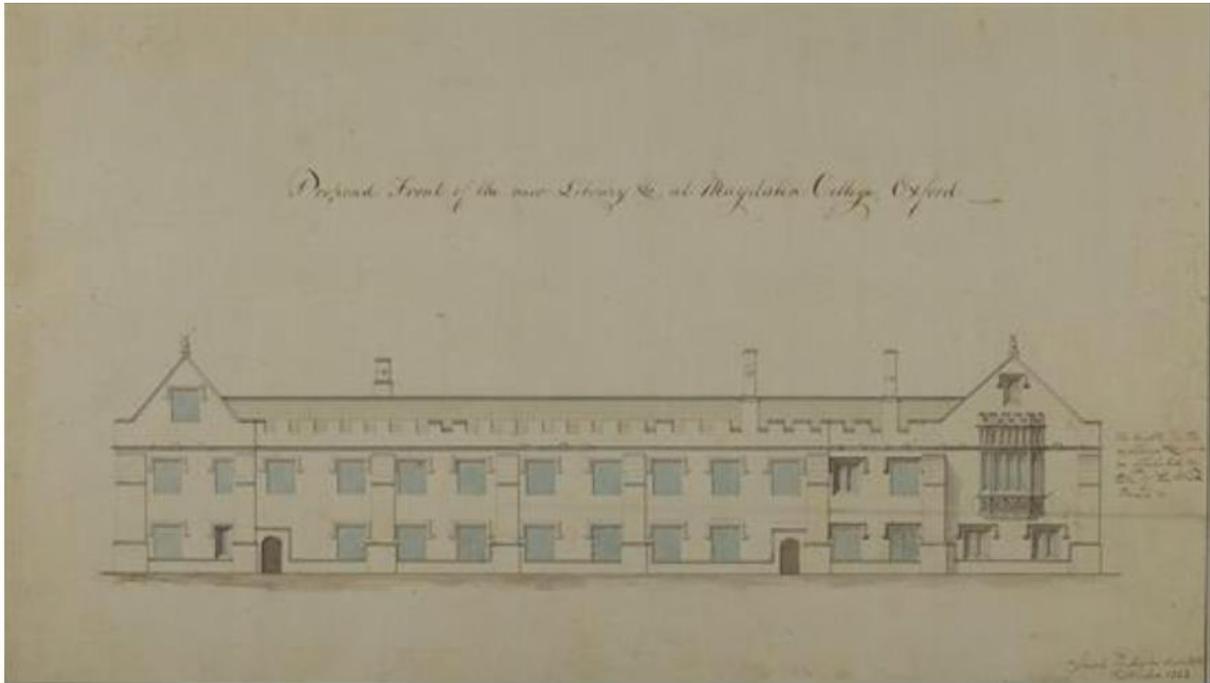


Although the majority of the Cloister dates from the later 15<sup>th</sup> century, the northern range within which the library is located, dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there had been proposal to pull down and rebuild the Cloisters because it was perceived to offer dilapidated and cramped accommodation. In 1733, the New Building, designed by William Townsend, was constructed to the north of the Cloisters in the Palladian style. The construction of this building may have temporarily quietened the aspirations of the College, but it did not entirely assuage them. In the 1790s, the architect James Wyatt, with the support of the then President Martin Routh, proposed the idea of incorporating the New Building into the existing College layout by demolishing the northern range of the Cloister. Over the following years, various architects including Repton, Nash and Buckler proposed schemes designed to improve vistas and unify the eclectic architectural styles within the College.

In 1822, following the production of a report by the architect James Parkinson that condemned the north range of the Cloister as dangerous, it was demolished. The demolition of the northern range caused furore amongst the Fellows and shortly after its demolition, President Routh, was suggesting in his correspondence that the demolition work had been

undertaken in order to 're-edify it in exactly the same style in which it was originally built' (Routh to Samuel Parr 24<sup>th</sup> September 1822).

The northern range of the Cloister was rebuilt 1823-4 in Bath stone to designs produced by the architect Joseph Parkinson. It consists of a long battlemented range, which copied the existing elevations of the Cloister Quadrangle with the addition of the elaborate oriel window at first floor level lighting the northern end of the Old Library.



*Joseph Parkinson's plans for the northern elevation of the Cloister 1823-4*

Unfortunately, the Archives at Magdalen do not hold more detailed plans of the oriel window. Neither does the College's collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century photographs of the gargoyles and grotesques at Magdalen include any details from the oriel window.

In form the oriel window is canted. It is divided into four distinct horizontal bands. At the top are crenellations, below which is a band of blind tracery. Located at the top and the bottom of the blind tracery are the grotesques. There are 10 in all, four located at the junctions with the wall, four at the angles of the canted bay and two centrally within the northern elevation of the window. Below this are the windows, Gothic in form. Single light windows are located

on both the east and west side of the bay and the window is formed by three lights on the northern elevation. The final band consists of a continuous decorative carved frieze.



*Oriel window on northern elevation of the Cloister lighting the Old Library*

The grotesques on the oriel window represent a combination of natural and fantastical forms. Above the blind tracery from left to right (facing) they show;



A two headed dragon



Flowers and vegetation



Flowers and vegetation



Flowers and vegetation



Leaves



Flowers and vegetation



Lion and vegetation (the subject of this application)



Flower



Lion with vegetation



Flower

All the grotesques show evidence of weathering, although those on the western side of the bay, appear to have survived better. The lion which the College would like to replace, is in a much worse condition than the other grotesques and is not only very friable, but has lost a significant amount of detailing. It can only be surmised that the reason for the poor survival of this particular carving, is likely to be due to the quality of the individual stone.

#### Methodology

- A scaffold was erected in the autumn and a plaster mould taken from the original sculpture (still in situ) in order to preserve as much detail as possible in expectation of further deterioration over the winter.
- This mould plaster will be used to form the basis of a model of a 1:1 model of a proposed replacement carving, which will be carved by local stone carver Alex Wenham. Alex has worked extensively in in Oxford, London and France on some of the important historic buildings in these countries.
- The mould from the grotesque on the oriel window has been tinted yellow to distinguish the elements of the original carving from Alex's interpretation of what the missing material is

likely to have looked like. This build up of plaster will be left white and will therefore be easily distinguishable.

- Although there will be an element of interpretation in the build up of the model, this will be heavily based on information gleaned from the surviving sculpture and from comparison with the other lion on the oriel window. The closeness in design, the number of similar details and the comparable carving styles would suggest that both lions are likely to have been produced by the same carver.
- The areas where there will be build up of plasterwork for the model are;

The vegetation around the head of the proposed replacement lion	The vegetation around the head of the retained lion
	
<p>View looking down on the top of the vegetation crown</p>	<p>View looking down on the top of the vegetation crown</p>
	
<p>Form of the flowers along the top of the head differ. In the lion to be replaced, the flowers appear to be more interconnected. However, enough fragmentary detail survives to replicate flowers with a high degree of confidence</p>	<p>The flowers around the top of the head are more obviously separated flower heads and slightly different in form to those on the lion to be replaced.</p>
	



The vegetations detail that would formerly have extended down both sides of the lion's face have been lost and Alex will refer to the better-preserved lion to inform the details of the replacement carving.



**Eyebrows of proposed replacement lion**



The surviving details of the weathered lion indicated that the pronounced eyebrows, deep sockets and surrounding detail, eyes and nose with wrinkles along the bridge were very similar on both lions on the oriel window.

**Eyebrows of retained lion**

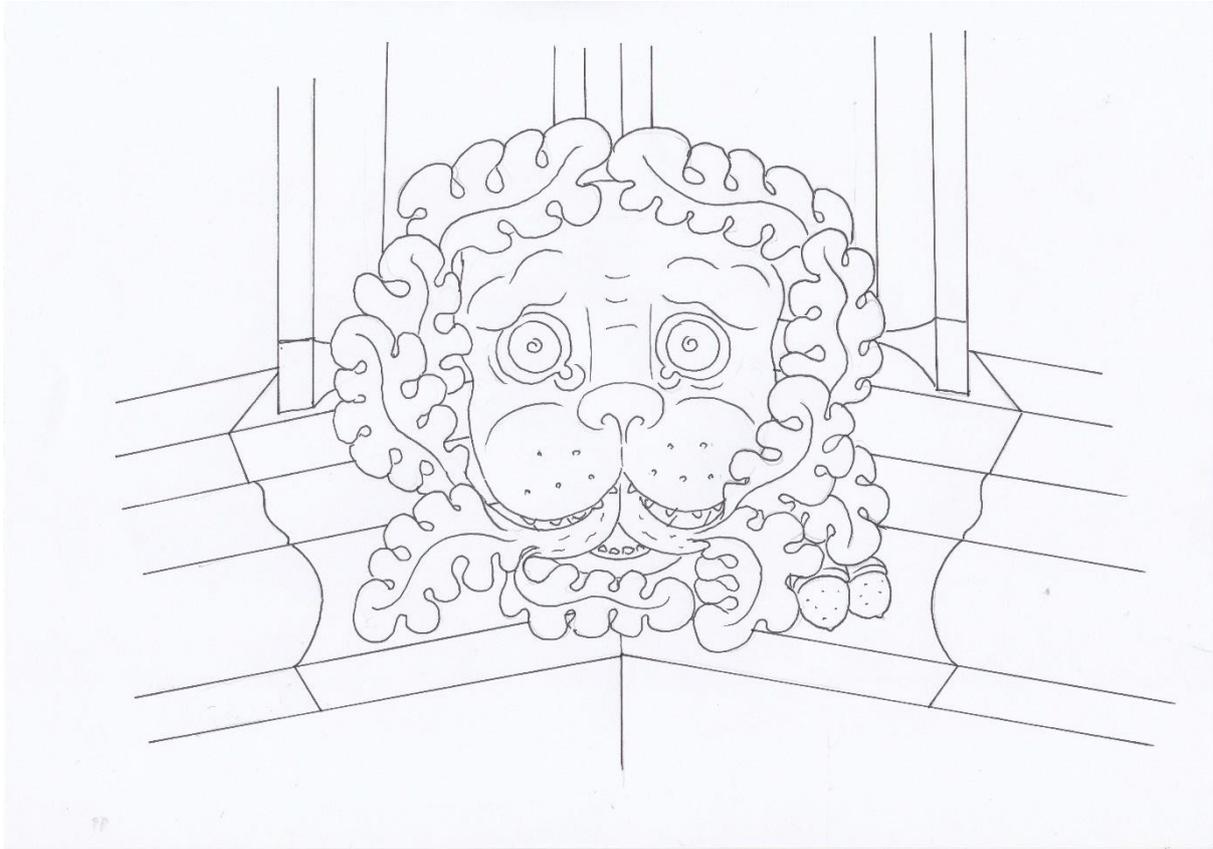


Lower jaw and cheeks of proposed replacement lion	Lower jaw and cheeks of the retained lion
 <p data-bbox="204 775 807 875">The surviving detail indicates that the cheek, muzzle, lower jaw and nose of the weathered lion were comparable to the better-preserved lion.</p>	 <p data-bbox="834 775 1390 981">The replacement carving will also have the vegetation emerging from the lion's mouth (similar to traditional Greenman imagery) and extending to either side of the face and around the crown of the head to form a mane.</p>

- It is proposed that Listed Building Consent is granted for the replacement of the lion subject to the approval of the design of the 1:1 plaster model. The model will give greater clarity as to the exact detailing of the carving, however, for the purposes of this Listed Building Application, below is an indicative sketch drawing of the proposed carving, superimposed on a photograph of the surviving fragment. Please note the joints of the existing stone, visible on the photograph. The location of these joints will be replicated.



- Below is a sketch as above but not superimposed on a photograph. Please note the joints of the existing stone.



- It is proposed that either Cadeby (bed 4) or Purbeck Pond would be used for the carving. Both materials are harder than Bath stone and will better withstand the effects of weathering, in what is a relatively exposed location. Both materials are also able to accommodate the fine detailing, sharp arises and deep undercut details that this carving requires. It is proposed that Listed Building Consent is granted for the replacement of the lion and the choice of stone be conditioned. On site samples of both Cadeby and Purbeck Pond can be provided for textural and colour match. Both materials have been used extensively within the College for repairs, Cadeby most recently for indents in the Bodley and Garner Gate and the west door of the Chapel and Purbeck Pond for the West Door of the Chapel
- Only once Listed Building Consent has been granted and the plaster model and choice of stone has been approved by the Council, will Alex commence with the carving.

