

OXFORD PHILOSOPHY IN 10 MERTON STREET, AND BEFORE AND AFTER

I. Before 10 Merton Street

When I arrived in Oxford as a graduate student, in 1967, Philosophy was in 12 Merton Street, next door to number 10. Gilbert Ryle, soon to retire as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysics, presided over Oxford Philosophy. He had established the B.Phil. in Philosophy, in 1946, and made philosophy a subject of graduate study in Oxford. In 1946 Philosophy had no office, or teaching space, or library of its own. Faculty members were all in colleges, teaching took place in colleges and the Exam Schools, and the only University library provision for Philosophy was the non-circulating PPE Reading Room and the book stacks of the Bodleian. At some point the Social Studies Faculty Board established a small lending library, in Wellington Square, for undergraduates reading PPE. In the late 1950s Gilbert Ryle established a small Philosophy lending library for members of the Sub-faculty and B.Phil. students from books sent to him for review in *Mind*, of which he was for many years the editor. Though this was a private collection rather than a library of the University or the Bodleian, he was given room 303 in the New Bodleian in which to house it. Sometime in the early 1960s, Philosophy acquired a seminar room to call its own, in the basement of the Indian Institute. In 1965 Ryle secured 12 Merton Street for Philosophy, in which the library that had been housed in room 303, and for which now there was some University funding, was established on the first floor, where there was also a common room, both open only to Philosophy graduate students and faculty, and a curiously L-shaped seminar room on the ground floor which replaced the seminar room in the Indian Institute, and offices for the UL in Philosophy of Science, Rom Harré, and the Reader in Medieval Philosophy, Lorenzo Minio-Paluello. 12 Merton Street was run by Anson Osmond, as librarian and administrator. At the opening ceremony for 12 Merton Street, Ryle declared, "Philosophy needs premises of its own".

My memories of 12 Merton Street include Paul Grice, on a return to Oxford from Berkeley in 1969, giving four seminars in one week, to packed audiences, on his intentional theory of meaning, with John Searle heckling from the back; a lecture by Tadeusz Kotarbinski, Tarski's teacher, and various talks at the Phil Soc, including Dana Scott reading a paper "Is their life on possible worlds?" with the discussion opened by David Lewis, in which Dana challenged the notion of counterparts in possible worlds by envisaging an ad "wanted, bicycle or similar"; Donald Davidson on "The Third Dogma of Empiricism", with the discussion opened by W.V. Quine, which resulted in Quine's paper, "On the very idea of a third dogma", and a talk by Robin Gandy on "Philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of mind", in which he addressed objections to analysing concepts in terms of imagination, by considering that "perhaps I imagine that the Sub-faculty of Philosophy is planning to do away with me, and that this meeting has been set up for my assassination. Such an act of imagination may certainly lead to communicable, indeed practical conclusions. I request that the meeting be stopped now, or that the chairman provide me instantly with a suit of armour." In the break between the paper and discussion John Lucas dashed out and brought back a suit of samurai armour he had in his rooms in Merton, which he set up behind a door at the front of the seminar room, and persuaded me, as the respondent to Robin's paper, to inform Robin as the discussion got under way that his imagined fears were well-founded, but that I would, indeed, provide him with a suit of armour, which I then did by flinging open the door behind us.

In 1973 University College, which owned 12 Merton Street (acquired in the early 1960s from the University, by swapping the Italianate villas at the bottom of the Banbury Road that have since become the University Computing Service), renewed the lease for a further 10 years, but

also gave notice that it would not renew the lease again. Soon after, the History Faculty decided to move from 10 Merton Street (which had been built for them in 1954-6, designed by Sir Hubert Worthington¹, in 1938-9), and the Philosophy Sub-faculty declared that it would be happy to vacate 12 Merton Street by moving next door. The beautiful library in 10 Merton Street was much larger than the ad hoc library space in 12 Merton Street, and Philosophy had to justify being allocated 10 Merton Street by explaining how it would utilize the library in it. The Philosophy Sub-Faculty agreed to establish a lending library in 10 Merton Street open to undergraduates, as well as graduates, by incorporating the Philosophy books in the Social Studies Library (at 45 Wellington Square).

The History Faculty Library had occupied the whole of the upper floor of 10 Merton Street, in two reading rooms, with issue desk and office between them. The Philosophy Sub-faculty wanted to keep the graduate and undergraduate libraries separate, for which the two upper floor reading rooms would have been used. However, the Libraries Board was unpersuaded as to the need for two separate Philosophy libraries, and unhappy at the expense. The Philosophy Sub-faculty agreed to a single library (subject to restricting access to journals to graduate students and giving graduates special borrowing privileges). This allowed Philosophy to use the splendid reading room looking out over Merton Street and the Fellows' Garden of Merton College as the main reading room for the whole library, and to partition the northern reading room to provide a large seminar room—or, as it came to be called, the Lecture Room—and a stack room (minutes of the Philosophy Sub-faculty meeting 3 May 1976).

II. The move to 10 Merton Street

Philosophy moved into 10 Merton Street in the summer of 1976. The largest room on the ground floor had been used by the History Library as a map room, called the Powicke Room. It now became a seminar room. Among the first acts of the Management Committee in the new place was to instruct the Curator, Justin Gosling, to write to Gilbert Ryle, which he did on 7 September 1976, saying, “Dear Ryle, The Management Committee has been discussing names of rooms in the new building, and felt that it was inappropriate that a Philosophy seminar room should be named after a historian called Powicke. As you have had so much to do with getting the Graduate Library and the associated B.Phil. on their feet, it was felt that it would be a good idea that a Philosophy seminar room should be called the Ryle Room. I have been asked to discover whether you have any reasonable objection?”, to which Gosling added, “If not, we shall go ahead; if so we might of course still use that name, despite the accidental resemblance to your own, but also might not”. Ryle replied, “Dear Gosling, I’m delighted with the idea. I shall always be showing visitors over our new home & pausing for long enough for them to ask ‘And what is this room called?’ Yrs Gilbert Ryle”. A year or two later John Mabbott, Ryle’s long time colleague and friend, and fellow resident of Islip, gave the Sub-faculty an excellent photograph he had taken of Ryle, looking up from reading Pepys in a lawn chair in his garden in Islip, which was framed and put up in the Ryle Room. Later Simon Blackburn donated a striking photograph he had taken of Peter Strawson. These became the nucleus of a photographic pantheon of contemporary Oxford Philosophers in the Ryle Room, established by John Hyman when he was Curator of 10 Merton Street.

¹ Worthington designed a number of other University and college buildings including the Parks Road extension of the Radcliffe Science Library, where the use of squared rubble (as Pevsner describes it) for the elevations, and of oak for doors and trim, and for tables and chairs, is of a piece with 10 Merton Street. The architect’s name was common currency in our early days in 10 Merton Street, when Anson Osmond always referred to the oak arm chairs as Worthington chairs.

Anson Osmond oversaw the move from 12 to 10 Merton Street, and served as Librarian and Administrator of the new establishment. The work of Librarian involved integrating two collections of books with different cataloguing systems, and setting up a new loan system for a much bigger library. Anson was assisted in establishing the new library by her son Richard, who spent the year after he graduated from Cambridge working in the Philosophy Library. When Anson retired, in 1980, she was succeeded by two people, Helen Barnard as Philosophy Librarian, and Jane Hardie as Administrator. Helen was succeeded, with a few short-term people in between, by our present Librarian, Hilla Wait. Jane Hardie died in post, and was memorialized by planting a mulberry tree in the garden with a plaque on the garden wall at 10 Merton in 2000. Photos of Anson Osmond and Jane Hardie were displayed in the administrative corridor of 10 Merton Street, and will be displayed in the RI. Jane was succeeded as Administrator by Karen Heald, who also became the first Secretary of the Philosophy Faculty Board, when the Philosophy Sub-Faculty became a Faculty, in 2000. Karen Heald was succeeded by Tom Moore as Administrator of the Philosophy Centre and Secretary of the Philosophy Faculty Board. Tom has overseen all the planning and preparation for the move from 10 Merton Street to the Radcliffe Infirmary, the move itself, and the settling in.

III. Technologies in 10 Merton Street

The tenure of Philosophy in 10 Merton Street spans the onset of the digital age, and younger readers of this article may be surprised at how things were in in the mid-70s. To begin with Philosophy, in common no doubt with other bits of the University, was backward even in terms of technology already widespread elsewhere. There was no University phone system and while there were systems within colleges, there was no system that linked college systems with each other. The phone in each office in 10 Merton Street had its own phone line (from the Post Office, which in those days ran the phone system in Britain). To phone a colleague in a college one had to hope that the porter would be in the lodge to answer the phone so that the call could be put through. Some years later, the University cobbled together a sort of network in response to design and hands-on work by a member of the Philosophy Sub-Faculty, John Simopoulos, tutorial fellow at St Catz (whose passion for phones has been said to equal his passion for philosophy). There was no voicemail, though some people had answering machines. Of course there was no fax, which arrived sometime in the 1980s. Years later came the present system, properly linking all phones in the University and in the colleges.

The agenda for the meeting of the Sub-faculty on 23 January 1978 includes the following “Note for information: a demonstration of an overhead projector has been arranged at 10 Merton Street on Wednesday 25 January at 12 o’clock. Anyone interested is invited to attend.” John Lucas caught the mood of wonderment at the advent of new technologies by referring to this device as “the shining machine”. Data projection has superseded shining machines to the extent that we left our overhead projectors in 10 Merton Street in the move to the RI.

Though Xerox machines had been widespread for more than ten years, there was no photocopying in 10 Merton Street in 1976. Eventually a coin operated photocopier (two tuppences for each copy) was installed in the Library. Later the Philosophy Sub-Faculty acquired its own photocopier, though this was several years after the installation of a photocopier in the Classics Office in one of the houses in Wellington Square, to which we had access before we acquired our own, either by trekking over there, or by sending the original

and receiving the copies by messenger service. Before photocopiers, making a copy of a letter or document in-house meant sheets of carbon paper in the typewriter, or for a large number of copies of a document, mimeographing, by typing on waxed sheets to produce a stencil, which then had to be run off on temperamental mimeograph machines, of which Elsie Hinkes and Dorothy Cuninghame were masters. The pinnacle of modern technology in 10 Merton Street at that time was the IBM Selectric typewriter, with its golf ball type faces. Dana Scott had one of these, and Elsie Hinkes produced the mimeograph stencils for *Notes on the Formalization of Logic*, and much else. At that time the University used OUP to print papers for University Boards and Council, and for exam papers. Eventually, printing and mimeographing both gave way to high volume photocopying.

In 1983 a desktop computer arrived, which bore the marque CAL PC. This one machine was set up in the cubbyhole office opposite the common room, for use by all and sundry, after training, according to a booking system. The machine had ports for two 5 ¼ inch floppy disks, each with a capacity of 720 Kilobytes. (Nowadays the measure of disk capacity is in Gigabytes, which are a million Kilobytes, and hard disks holding a Terabyte, a thousand Gigabytes, are not uncommon.) There was no internal hard disk. The program disk went in one drive, the work disk went in the other. The program we had was WordStar. The CAL PC drove a daisy wheel printer.

I first used e-mail when I spent the summer of 1985 at CSLI (Center for the Study of Language and Information) at Stanford. By the end of the 1980s e-mail was common in Oxford. Paper shredders arrived in the early 90s.

It's hard to think how we managed before all of this.

IV. Using the space in 10 Merton Street

Even with an undergraduate lending library incorporating philosophy books from Social Studies, the Philosophy Library had no use for the basement book stacks, and the University retained them for storage. A collection of "Greek squeezes", as they were called, were stored there, and hundreds of paintings by Van Houten. I never saw a Greek squeeze (which I understood to be latex impressions of ancient Greek engraved inscriptions), but the Van Houten paintings, oil on unframed canvases on stretchers, hundreds of them, stacked one against another, except for one, framed and standing on a shelf, of a stylishly dressed woman and boy of around 10, with a 1920s look about them, were visible, if one cared to look. These paintings had come to the University with the Van Houten bequest, "a fund left by the late M Van Houten in the 1950s to be used 'for the benefit of the University in such ways as the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, and Council shall see fit'" (as described in a recent notice in the University Gazette inviting applications for grants from it).

M Van Houten's first name was never given, and in writing this article I became curious to know what it was. An obliging functionary in the University Secretariat was able, "after a fascinating hour in the basement trawling through the files", to tell me that it's Georges. There was a potentially embarrassing moment when a nephew of Monsieur Van Houten visited Oxford and asked to see his uncle's paintings. Jane Hardie took him down to the basement. Apparently he was not unduly shocked at the University's treatment of his uncle's artistic legacy.

The basement stack was also used as the staging area for Ruskin School admissions portfolios. This Ruskin connection resulted in several loan exhibitions for the common room of John Newberry's wonderful watercolour views of Oxford buildings. In the early 1990s the walls of the common room became home to a splendid suite of engravings by Roger Vieillard interpreting passages from Descartes' *Discours de la méthode*, which came to the Philosophy Sub-faculty thanks to Peter Hacker's personal contact with the artist.

Eventually we were acutely short of space, and both the Library and the Sub-Faculty needed the basement. The University moved the Greek squeezes and the van Houten paintings, and the old basement stack was divided between the Library and the Faculty, and refurbished with rolling bookshelves for the library as a bookstack on the windowless south side—named the Harré Room by the Library in recognition of Rom's large donation of books when he retired, and as office space for the Sub-faculty on the north side, with windows looking up into the garden.

When Philosophy moved into 10 Merton Street there was a seminar room on the north side of the ground floor corridor leading to the newly named Ryle Room,. After a year it was clear that the Sub-faculty had no great need for two seminar rooms in addition to the upstairs Lecture Room, and the smaller one was allocated to Dana Scott, the first Professor of Mathematical Logic, as a large office in which he could consolidate his massive collection of books and offprints held in several locations. When Dana left Oxford, in 1981, Rom Harré moved into that office, and when Rom retired, it was divided into two (matching the two offices on the south side of that corridor), Philosophy by then having a desperate need for more office space, in particular to house a Graduate Studies Officer performing functions previously carried out by the Graduate Studies Office in Wellington Square.

The room directly opposite the common room originally functioned as a graduate common room, but in those early days proved redundant to the main common room, and became a photocopying room for the Sub-Faculty when we finally acquired our own photocopier. The room in the basement which had housed the mimeograph machine became a computer room for graduates and academic visitors. Later the former graduate common room, then photocopier room, was divided, creating a small office for the newly established Undergraduate Studies Officer, and a small photocopier room. The graduate students were given a new room made from one quarter of the basement book stack, and this was heavily utilized.

In 1995, some forty years after the building was constructed, the by then rather ropey electrical system was completely rewired, and—after a summer of total disruption—there were enough sockets in every room and all were reliable, though it was sad to have lost the brass light switches, apparently designed by the architect (or if off the peg, long since replaced everywhere else).

In the late 90s, under the Curatorship of Harvey Brown, the furnishing and carpets and blinds in the Lecture Room, which had become shabby, were renewed, so it was now comfortable and attractive, and the public spaces were all freshly painted with a strong but subtle colour scheme (shades of yellow and ochre, I would describe it as).

In the course of its thirty-six years there, Philosophy established a well-functioning routine of lectures, seminars, and meetings in 10 Merton Street. Lectures attracting an audience of more than sixty had to be held elsewhere, e.g. lectures for Prelims had to be in Schools, Gareth

Evans Memorial Lectures and John Locke Lectures in the Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre in the St Cross Building, or most recently in the T.S. Eliot Lecture Theatre in Merton, but for audiences up to sixty, the Lecture Room and the Ryle Room provided excellent spaces in which it was pleasant to lecture, or be lectured to. The Sub-faculty, and then Faculty held its meetings in the Lecture Room.

In the early days these meetings were in the evening, as also were meetings of the Phil Soc. Attendance at meetings of the Phil Soc was restricted to members of the Sub-faculty and academic visitors. It was an innovation to invite graduate students to attend. It was also an innovation to move Sub-faculty and Phil Soc meetings to late afternoon, when it came to be recognized that evening meetings were unfriendly to family life. Another innovation was amalgamation of the Phil Soc with the Jowett Society, both retaining their own officers but together putting on a programme of speakers each Friday at 4.30 in term. The Jowett itself underwent massive transformation during this time, from its historical roots as a philosophy society in Balliol run by undergraduates, to a philosophy society in 10 Merton Street run mostly by graduates. Intermittently there was the Ockham Society, which came and went and came back, sometimes spelling its name as “Occam”, run by graduate students as a forum for graduate students and young faculty to present work to each other. There was a period of five years, in the 1990s, when that role was superseded, without anyone exactly noticing before it had happened, by the Wolfson Philosophy Society, which had begun in 1980. Then in 1998 came the announcement that “the Ockham Society has replaced the Wolfson Society as a forum for graduate students in philosophy to present their work to their peers”, and the Ockham resumed its meetings in 10 Merton Street, since when and where it has functioned robustly, and will now in the RI.

I remember some great philosophical moments in 10 Merton Street, and a terrible moment: The terrible moment (which was much more than a moment, and in the end wasn't terrible, but was in the lengthy run up to it) was the first, and fortunately last, QAA visitation, for which Lesley Brown very ably and cheerfully oversaw preparation over the preceding year. Picking a great moment from the Phil Soc, I remember Philippa Foot reading a paper on “Virtue and happiness”, for which the discussion was opened by Jim Griffin. From my memories of the Philosophy of Mathematics seminar, I pick out the meeting with Charles Parsons, speaking on “Some objections to structuralism”, joint with the Mathematical Logic and Philosophy of Physics seminars, which packed the Lecture Room. I remember many lectures by Michael Dummett, both in graduate courses and seminars, in the early days, Michael pacing back and forth at the front of the Lecture Room pensively dragging on a cigarette in a holder, in later years pacing back and forth at the front of the Lecture Room, palpably no cigarette in hand. I especially remember his lectures on links between Frege and Husserl.

V. Development of the Library in 10 Merton Street

The Philosophy Library has greatly grown and developed in this time. With a collection that barely filled the shelves of the main library to begin with, we ended up filling all available stack area, to the point where the collection has had seriously to be weeded from time to time. The post of Philosophy Librarian was upgraded from clerical grade to academic related in the mid 80s. We have been very fortunate in having staff who have been devoted to the Library. Hilla Wait arrived in 1983, while completing her doctorate in History, and apart from a one-year stint teaching at the University of Idaho, has worked in the Philosophy Library since then, and since 1991 as the Philosophy Librarian. Daniel Drury and Colin Cook arrived in 1997,

Valérie Coupland in 2000, John Shimmin in 2008. All have stayed on, providing great continuity and ever helpful expertise.

In the 1990s we went through long and tortuous negotiations over incorporation of the Philosophy Faculty Library into the Bodleian—a momentous step for the Bodleian, which until then hardly thought of itself as a university library. Those negotiations, which went on over several years, were later overtaken by yet more momentous changes, which led to the establishment of a University library service, which, for Oxford, was a remarkable step. Philosophy was, to use a mixed but accurate metaphor, a catalysing guinea pig.

From 1992, until our planned move from 10 Merton Street, the collection of philosophy books bequeathed to Corpus Christi College by Shadworth Hodgson (first president of the Aristotelian Society) were housed in the until then empty shelves of the Lecture Room (for which grills were fitted since many of Hodgson’s books are important and rare).

VI. Philosophy outgrows 10 Merton Street

Having initially not needed all the space in 10 Merton Street, by the mid 1990s Philosophy needed every single bit of space, and more. We were always short of space for academic visitors, and increasingly we wanted to provide work and discussion space for the philosophy graduate students

We were offered the Oxford Boys’ High School, on George Street, which Social Studies was vacating, but while the offices and especially the common room were good, the layout of the library space, which had been cobbled together out of the school hall, was bad, and we declined. History then took the Oxford Boys’ High School, and we were offered the old Indian Institute, where History was. This we declined because, while the library space was excellent (it was purpose built), the office space was poor. (Perhaps even if we had said yes, it would not have happened, since when History moved into the Boys’ High School, they decided to leave their Library in the Indian Institute.)

We then had the idea of building another floor on the building, under a mansard roof. David Wiggins played a key role in developing this idea, and making it into a concrete proposal by prevailing upon the college architect for University College, in a private capacity, to provide a design and also to ascertain that there would be no planning impediment to such a construction. We proposed this to the University, which came back with the estimate that it would cost £1M to build, and that they didn’t have the money.

In 2005 the University foreclosed this possibility by selling 10 Merton Street, with a ten-year leaseback, to Univ, which had long coveted it, not only without discussing this with Philosophy, but also not informing us when the sale occurred. Why the University sold 10 Merton Street was not said; perhaps it was to help the University’s finances, but equally it might have been to force Philosophy to fit into the “three-site” strategy, which called for Humanities to be based on the Radcliffe Infirmary site, which had been acquired from the NHS. In any case, we were soon engaged in an intensive process over a three year period of designing Phase 1 of a Humanities Building and Library on the RI site, into which Philosophy, History, English, and Theology were to go. The process began with a design competition, which Rab Bennetts Associates won, in May 2008. There then ensued detailed discussions among ourselves and with Peter Fisher, the architect in Bennetts Associates leading the design team on this building. We were led in this process by Martin Davies, as Chair of the

Philosophy Faculty Board, and John Hyman, as Faculty representative on the Project Sponsor Group. The project reached RIBA Stage G, in 2011, ready to go to tender, Stage H, when the University suddenly decided that it had to redeploy the money it had earmarked for this project to fill gaps in the budgets for teaching posts in the University, primarily but not only in the Humanities Division.

Officially the project is pending. The University website has a current page headed “Radcliffe Observatory Quarter—Humanities”,

http://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/priorities/find_your_priority/roq.html

which opens with the declaration, “In its most ambitious project since the creation of the University Science Area in the early twentieth century, the University of Oxford seeks to establish a new Humanities Centre that will complement – both academically and architecturally – facilities offered in colleges.” There is a button on that page marked “Give online”, which leads to a page which announces that “In the first phase of the development, English, History, Philosophy and Theology will be moved to the ROQ.” No date for a planned—or even hoped for—start to this construction is given.

VII. The move to the Radcliffe Infirmary

When it became clear that Phase 1 of the Humanities Building and Library would not be built anytime soon (one document spoke of delay by 5-10 years), the Vice-Chancellor offered the Radcliffe Infirmary, which had been earmarked for his office and that of other top University administrators, to the Humanities Division. The RI was considerably too big for the Divisional Headquarters, even with a humanities research centre planned as part of the new Humanities Building, and the Division had to figure out how it would use the rest of the building. They wrote to Humanities faculty boards suggesting that graduate students of their faculties could be given space in the renovated Radcliffe Infirmary. I remember the meeting of the Philosophy Faculty Board, the first meeting in Michaelmas Term 2010, chaired by Martin Davies, in which this prospect was considered. The response that emerged in that discussion was that while concern to give our graduate students facilities in which they could work had driven much of our planning for Philosophy’s space in the new Humanities Building, it was essential that this should be in the context of contact with the Faculty, and that simply giving them space in the RI would not meet this clear need. We would only welcome our graduates being given space in the RI if the Philosophy Faculty itself were moved there as well. And we would only move the Philosophy Faculty if we could also take the Philosophy Library with us. Amazingly, the Division accepted this whole package. Or perhaps it wasn’t so amazing, since the University, having sold 10 Merton Street out from under us, needed to find a new home for Philosophy, and though that had not yet become widely recognized as a burning issue, it would have fairly soon, with the ten-year leaseback on 10 Merton Street, at a favourable rate, expiring in 2015, and the cost of extension thereafter being at a commercial rate.

It was agreed by mid-January 2011 that the Philosophy Faculty and Library would move to the RI, and that the move should take place in the summer of 2012. Restoration work on the RI was already underway, and it was a building site, clad in scaffolding and roof cover (so the whole thing looked from the outside like a work by Christo). Planning the space for the Philosophy Faculty and the Library proceeded at (by Oxford standards) breakneck speed. It’s my perception that we got essentially everything we asked for in this process. When we visited the site it was immediately clear that the most splendid room in the building, the only one that clearly showed its origins in the 18th century, was the board room on the first floor. We asked to have that as our main seminar room, our new Ryle Room, and that the Philosophy Faculty

academic and administrative offices should be on that floor. This was agreed, subject just to the condition that the twice termly meetings of the Humanities Divisional Board could be held in that room. This gave us the *piano nobile* of the building, defined by the OED as “the main storey of a large house, usually on the first floor, containing the principal rooms. Used esp. with reference to Italian or Italianate, esp. Palladian, buildings, in which the first floor is often higher and more impressive than the adjoining floors”, and indeed the building had been designed on Palladian principles, with exterior flanking staircases leading up to first floor, removed in the first part of the 20th century. We also obtained an assurance that we will not be required to move from the RI until we move into the new Humanities Building (so if at some point the VC thinks how nice it would be to have his office in the RI, as had been planned, he’ll have also to think, “must remember to raise £90M to build the first phase of the Humanities building”).

Given that the RI has listed building status, all the original rooms had to be restored, but the open wards at the north and south end of each floor, which had no original features, could be reconfigured. It was agreed that the administrative offices for Philosophy should be located in the open ward on the south of our floor (the north ward to be the upper floor of the Library). We were concerned, given that officially this is a temporary configuration of the building, that the partitioning to create these offices might be flimsy. We insisted that there should be sufficient acoustic separation so that conversation would not be audible between adjacent offices, and this has been achieved, and indeed the standard of finish, not only in the original features of the building that have been restored, but also in these new spaces, is very high. Another happy feature of this move is that we have been allowed to take the oak tables and chairs from 10 Merton Street with us to the Radcliffe Infirmary, both for the Library and for the new Ryle Room. We’ll miss our garden at 10 Merton Street, but perhaps we can use the wide grass verge around the splendidly restored Triton fountain in the forecourt of the RI for our summer garden party.

The one condition that was imposed on us in moving the Philosophy Library to the RI was that the Theology Faculty Library be amalgamated with it. This was presented as partial realization of the amalgamation that had been planned for the new Humanities Library, and in any case that pass had been sold some years before, when Hilla Wait was made Librarian of the Theology Library, along with Philosophy, so that the two libraries had been already been operating almost as a single split-site library. There has had to be some reduction in the total number of Philosophy books, but this is accomplished by removing all printed journals, which is the way of the future (or already the present), careful weeding of books (based on computer records of borrowings) and sending some books to the Bodleian book depository at Swindon, from where they can be recalled from the morning to the afternoon. But it’s not just our own books placed in Swindon that can be called here, but any book in the Bodleian stacks, which can be read in the Philosophy (and Theology) Library, rather than having to be read in central Bodleian.

Sad as we might be at leaving our home of 36 years, with its great library, splendid seminar room and lecture room, lovely garden, I feel confident we shall be very happy in our new home. As an aspect of the quality of our rooms and our Library, it’s great to be in a grade II* listed 18th century building. There are a number of college buildings from the 18th century (including the Radcliffe Observatory that belongs to Green-Templeton College, and all of Queen’s College), but we are the only faculty or department of the University in a building of this era (the other 18th century buildings of the University I can think of are the Radcliffe Camera and the Clarendon Building, which are used for other purposes). It’s also a satisfying

fact that Philosophy is almost the first faculty or department of the University to move into the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, as this whole development is now to be called (we were just piped at the post by the Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, which moved into New Radcliffe House in July). The only disadvantage of the RI is that, having been built without a basement, it has almost no storage space, but this is a price worth paying to be in such a splendid building.

VIII. Personal feelings about 10 Merton Street—and 12 Merton Street and the RI and perhaps beyond

The forty five years since I arrived in Oxford as a Philosophy graduate student span all three of Philosophy's homes, and look forward to a yet possible fourth. I feel great affection to all these places, but though the excitement of moving into the Radcliffe Infirmary (as well as the enormous disruption of it) and the thrill of finding myself in a splendid office in the this splendid building is most salient now, it's 10 Merton Street, which has been my academic home for thirty-five of those years, that looms the largest for me. This is where I have done most of my teaching and research over the past 35 years, lectures and seminars and classes in the Lecture Room and the Ryle Room, tutorials in my office, where my philosophy of mathematics seminar (now run jointly with Volker Halbach) has met over all these years. I've known 10 Merton Street in busy and in quiet times, including late at night, when the eerie clanging of Univ's side gate being opened and shut sounded like special effects from a grade B horror film (which of course I became accustomed to and no longer noticed). The garden of 10 Merton Street has been a delight, both for everyday use, weather permitting, and for our annual summer garden party at the end of Trinity Term. I'm grateful to 10 Merton Street not only as a wonderful place in which to have worked for all these years, but also for having introduced me to my dear wife to be, Cassandra, when she worked as a Library Assistant for a time. It also furthered the course of romance for Tom and Hester, who had met before, but were given the opportunity to get to know each other better when Hester came to help us out as a temp.

From a non-Oxbridge perspective, 10 Merton Street is an Oxford peculiarity, i.e. not the academic home to all, or even most, of its postholders in that subject. Besides administrative offices, it has accommodated just three academics at any given time, initially Rom Harré, Dana Scott, and myself. After Dana left, in 1981, his successor, Angus Macintyre, was given an office in the Mathematical Institute, and Rom Harré moved into Dana's great office, I moved into Rom's old office, and Harvey Brown was appointed with "new blood money" in 1984 and moved into what had been my office. In 1996, Simon Saunders succeeded Rom Harré. Why were we three in this privileged position, with immediate access to the Philosophy Library, administrative support of teaching and examining, and the Faculty's teaching rooms? Because we were each appointed as a ULNTF (University Lecturer not Tutorial Fellow), at colleges, Wolfson and Linacre, that have no undergraduates and (unlike All Souls and a few other colleges with no undergraduates) only give their fellows rooms exceptionally. We have been very lucky being in 10 Merton Street, and now in the RI.

Fond as I am of 10 Merton Street, I'm delighted that Philosophy has moved to the Radcliffe Infirmary. By this move we are bettering ourselves, just as we did in moving from 12 Merton Street to number 10. Also, we are leaving behind one irksome feature, for six weeks of every year, of life in 10 Merton Street, namely the noise and disruption of post-exam celebrations as candidates are let out of the Exam Schools into Merton Street, to be met by great crowds of exuberant friends with flowers and streamers and champagne (to drink), and "friends" with

champagne (to spray) and tins of baked beans and raw eggs and flour with which to attack emerging sub-fusc.

I feel privileged to have been part of Oxford Philosophy in all three of its homes and to have participated in planning what will be, if the Humanities Building is ever built, its most lasting home. Lovely as the Radcliffe Infirmary is, it doesn't give us the space that we had planned in the Humanities building. I hope the Humanities Building will not become a new chapter in an updated edition of Howard Colvin's salutary book, *Unbuilt Oxford* (the Preface to which quotes an anonymous wit's characterization of Oxford as "a hotbed of cold feet"). But if the Humanities Building is never built, and we remain in the RI for decades to come, we should be very happy here, happier even than we have been in 10 Merton Street.

Daniel Isaacson
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Dan Isaacson was a graduate student in the Philosophy Sub-faculty from 1967 to 1969. He then held academic posts in philosophy at the University of Washington in Seattle and The Rockefeller University in New York. He returned to Oxford in 1973 and in 1974 was elected to a Junior Research Fellowship at St John's College. In that year he submitted his D.Phil. thesis, and was appointed University Lecturer in the Philosophy of Mathematics, starting in 1975. He has had an office in 10 Merton Street since 1977. He has, at various times, held the posts of Secretary of the Sub-faculty, Chair of the Library Committee, President of the Philosophical Society, Chair of the Faculty and Vice-Chair of the Faculty Board, and Curator of 10 Merton Street, and has served on numerous standing and ad hoc committees of the Sub-faculty and Faculty, including permanent membership of the Joint Committee of Mathematics and Philosophy.