

PERCY MANNING

THE MAN WHO COLLECTED  
OXFORDSHIRE

edited by

Michael Heaney

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## **Archaeological Lives**

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## **Abbreviations**

AM Ashmolean Museum

BL British Library

BM British Museum

Bodl. Bodleian Libraries

OAHS Oxford Architectural and Historical Society

OHC Oxfordshire History Centre

PRM Pitt Rivers Museum

## Preface

Any published work relies on the good will and support of innumerable people and organizations. My task as editor of this volume was made easier by the fact that, time and again, when people become aware of the remarkable talents of Percy Manning they have been keen to contribute towards celebrating his life and achievements. My first debt, of course, is to my fellow authors, all of whom have fitted the work on their respective chapters into already busy and demanding schedules. Several of them are also working on other aspects of Manning's centenary: on exhibition displays and events, on the creation of digital resources, on lectures and workshops. Those people and institutions who have provided illustrations are listed formally in the Acknowledgements and Sources which follow this Preface, and my thanks are due also to them. In this regard I am pleased to acknowledge with gratitude the financial and in-kind support given by the Ashmolean Museum, the Bodleian Libraries, the Greening Lamborn Trust,<sup>1</sup> the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, the Oxfordshire History Centre and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

The staff at the Bodleian Library in particular have had to cope over the past couple of years with unprecedented demand from me and my fellow authors for the dozens of volumes of Manning material in the Library, with the same volumes often being requested many times over as research progressed and facts were checked. The staff at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford Institute for Archaeology, Pitt Rivers Museum, New College, Oxfordshire History Centre, Sackler Library and Vaughan Williams Memorial Library have been equally assiduous and helpful.

*Michael Heaney*

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<sup>1</sup> The Greening Lamborn Trust's objective is to promote public interest in the history, architecture, old photographs and heritage of Oxford and its neighbourhood by supporting publications and other media that create access to them.

## Contributors

**Faye Belsey** is a curatorial assistant at the Pitt Rivers Museum. She has worked at the Museum since 2008 and during this time has contributed to the documentation of objects from all over the globe. She has a keen interest in researching the histories of objects in Museum collections and a new-found enthusiasm for Percy Manning and local traditions and customs.

**David Clark** is a freelance architectural historian with a particular interest in vernacular buildings. His publications include articles on medieval shops, post-medieval roof structures in Oxfordshire farm buildings, and on timber framing in Berkshire (for the revised *Buildings of England* volume). In 2008 he co-wrote (with Antonia Catchpole and Robert Peberdy) *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town*. Elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2008, he is also an active member of the Vernacular Architecture Group and was its President from 2011 to 2014. He is also active in the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society and the Oxfordshire Buildings Record.

**Madeleine Ding** is currently Curatorial Assistant and Volunteers Officer at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and she has worked in the Object Collections Department of the museum since 2008. She has a keen interest in all aspects of world cultures.

**Brian Durham** trained as a biologist before a 40-year career as a field archaeologist, investigating UK deposits from Neolithic to industrial, but concentrating on post-Roman towns. He retired in 2008 as Archaeologist to Oxford City Council, since when he has continued investigating the planetary carbon cycle, both terrestrial and atmospheric. His recent publications include wetland conservation, heritage presentation and the structure of water. He has enjoyed the privilege of draping his personal curiosity about early Oxford and its county over the figure of an accomplished predecessor in Percy Manning.

**Michael Heaney** is a well-known researcher into folk music and folklore who has published widely on the subject. He combines this with extensive knowledge of the collections in the Bodleian Library where he spent his professional career. He is a past Editor of *Folk Music Journal* (and continues on its board) and acts as adviser to and a Trustee of the country's leading research library in the field, the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. He contributed the entries on Manning and several other folk music luminaries, including Cecil Sharp, Headington Quarry musician and dancer William Kimber and Bampton morris fiddler William Wells to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

**Alice Little** has a BA in Modern History and an MSc in Material Anthropology and Museum Ethnography from the University of Oxford, as part of which she studied ethnomusicology and the history of collecting, specializing in collections of English

musical instruments. She has worked as Assistant Curator of Musical Instruments at the Horniman Museum in London, as well as at the British Museum and at the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments. She returned to Oxford in 2015 to begin her DPhil, this time in the Music Faculty, focusing on collections of English 'national music' from the late eighteenth century.

**Maureen Mellor** is an archaeologist with a special interest in the material culture of interiors and in medieval diet. She has over thirty years' experience, working with the products of English and European clay industries in field archaeology and in museums. She has recently written an overview on 'commerce and industry' for *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Late Medieval Archaeology in Britain* and acts as Reader for Historic England. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, London and sits on the court of the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars, linking the art world and collections to scholarship.

**Peter Millington** is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield, where he gained his PhD on 'The Origins and Development of English Folk Plays' in 2002. He has been researching mumming and guising plays for over 45 years, with particular interests in historical evidence and textual analysis. He runs the Master Mummers website ([www.mastermummers.org](http://www.mastermummers.org)), and inaugurated the Folk Play Research website ([www.folkplay.info](http://www.folkplay.info)). More recently, he has been researching the customs and traditions of the remote South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, and is actively involved in the Tristan da Cunha Association.

**Julian Munby** works for Oxford Archaeology and has a long-standing interest in the buildings and topography of Oxford, and especially in the work of artists who have recorded its vanished streets and buildings. He has used drawings by Buckler and others to reconstruct lost buildings and has published papers on these in *Oxoniensia*. He worked with Colin Harrison on the Ashmolean exhibition on John Malchair in 1998, and occasionally collects topographical drawings.

**Alison Roberts** is Assistant Keeper for European and Early Prehistory at the Ashmolean Museum and is also responsible for the manuscript archives held by the Department of Antiquities. She specialises in early Prehistory, lithic technology and the history of archaeology and antiquarian collecting. Her particular research interests include British Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic material culture, the early prehistory of Oxfordshire, and the antiquarian work of Sir John Evans (1823-1908).





# Introduction

The genesis of this volume can be traced to a workshop on Percy Manning – “the man who collected Oxfordshire” – held at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford in October 2014, which brought together the handful of people with a known interest in him and his collections, and a select group of key people who, it might be hoped, would be interested once they knew a little about him and his activities. The workshop itself was the outcome of a series of discussions starting in October 2012 about the possibility of a display of his collections in the Bodleian to commemorate the centenary of his death in 2017. These initial discussions soon expanded to include the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums, each with significant Manning holdings, and the idea of coordinated displays in all three institutions.

The workshop comprised a series of short presentations on aspects of Manning’s collections. Eleanor Standley, Michael Heaney and Alison Petch outlined the nature and scope of the collections at the Ashmolean, Bodleian and Pitt Rivers respectively, and this was followed by an outline by Peter Rivière of the societies and networks of people in which Manning participated. The remainder of the day was taken up by presentations about specific elements and object groups in the collections: the archaeological survey of Oxfordshire (Alison Roberts), local history (Simon Townley), the truncheons (Leigh Mellor), brasses (Jerome Bertram), pottery (Maureen Mellor); and about Manning’s research into activities, specifically morris dancing (Michael Heaney), mumming (Peter Millington) and sports and pastimes (Michael Heaney).

There were four main outcomes from the workshop. The first was the addition of the Museum of Oxford to the list of co-operating institutions, a welcome acknowledgement of the importance of Manning for town as well as gown. Next was the recognition of the inadequacy of the description and cataloguing of the Manning collection at the Bodleian. Third was the understanding of the continuing importance of Manning’s maps of the county. Fourth was the possibility of a book to bring him to the attention of a wider public.

The problem of the description of the Bodleian’s collections was addressed by the award of a grant from the Marc Fitch Fund to produce a detailed online catalogue, which was published in November 2016. A grant from Oxford University’s Aspire fund has enabled the digitization and georeferencing of Manning’s maps, linked to the collections.

This book is the fourth outcome of the workshop. It was obvious from the presentations that no one person could do justice to Manning and his collections as a whole. Although in one sense his focus can be simply described in the single word “Oxfordshire”, the range and catholicity of his interests required expertise in a range of disciplines, from archaeology and the built environment to art history and folklore. The book also combines a review of his life and work with chapters using his collections as a trigger for new study and research, demonstrating his continuing relevance today.

Although numerous scholars have used Manning's collections over the last century, many of them may not have been aware of their provenance or their context – particularly difficult where related material is spread across the institutions of the University of Oxford. This book addresses these issues by the use of a variety of approaches. A biography and bibliography are of course necessary prerequisites for any appreciation of Percy Manning's life. These are followed by Alison Roberts's chapter on the significance of his maps of the county and their continuing relevance today. David Clark's chapter on the undercroft of Ducklington's inn in St Aldate's shows how Manning's collections can be used in conjunction with other local history collections to throw new light on the history of the buildings of Oxford. It is followed by Maureen Mellor's related piece on the encaustic tiles collected by Manning from the site, in the context of his tile collection as a whole. These two chapters draw together material in the Ashmolean and Bodleian collections and illustrate how each collection can usefully inform the other.

Julian Munby's survey of the artworks and prints at the Bodleian highlights a comparatively neglected component of the collections. In one sense they are heavily used, depictions of individual locations being much in demand in illustrating the history of the city and the county; but the indexes available to guide users to them do not directly identify Manning as their source, and in the case of the prints their provenance can only be established by careful inspection of the objects themselves.

Perhaps Manning's most original contribution to the history of the county is his pursuit of folklore and custom. Three chapters examine this in some detail. In his role as a reviver and scholar of morris dancing Manning was, as he himself recognized, ploughing a lone furrow. Many modern researchers in this field learn of and use the information in his collection by way of the copy of them made by Cecil Sharp in 1912; Sharp as the High Priest of the revival of folk music and dance is much studied, but there remain parts of Manning's morris dance collection still neglected, and Michael Heaney's chapter sets his collecting activity in a chronological narrative and explores the development of his interest and activity. Peter Millington performs a similar service for his mumming plays. Here Manning's direct contribution is more circumscribed, but his interaction with the other scholars in the field – primarily Edward Binney and Thomas Ordish – shows the importance of personal connections and networks, and exemplifies the role which Manning often played as adviser and provider of resources in the background. Alice Little complements these with a study of the music and songs – as Manning himself was no musician, it is easy to ignore his work in this area, but Little shows how musical material forms a recurrent thread in many of the subjects of his folkloric interests.

The chapter by Faye Belsey and Madeleine Ding draws custom and material culture together again in an examination of perhaps the most neglected element of the collections, the gifts Manning made to the Pitt Rivers Museum. They supplement an overview of the collection by an in-depth study of the lighting implements in it and the light they shed – metaphorically! – on the rationale for his collecting.

The closing chapter by Brian Durham might be termed a think-piece imagining what Manning would make of the issues facing an antiquary of his bent today. It demonstrates that Manning's work and activities have continuing relevance today.

It has sometimes been said that Manning published little, though the bibliography reveals that over the years he did publish several tens of items (granted that many of them are small in scale). It is true to say that after the flurry of obituary notices that appeared in the local press and journals after his death, the number of items which have been published directly focusing on his life and work can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Even more is this true of his agent Thomas Carter: until 2016 the sum total of references to him in the published literature amounted to half a dozen sentences at most, the majority of them written by Manning himself. Carter certainly merits further study, and while this volume goes some way to redressing the neglect of Manning over the last century – and it is to be hoped awakens further interest in his life and work – there are still many aspects of his activity which would repay fuller attention. Our aim has been to celebrate this remarkable man, and to provide both the incentive for and the means to facilitate future research into and use of his collections.

*Michael Heaney*