

# THE FIJI COMMONWEALTH TRAINING CHAMPION'S TRAINING IN ENGLAND



*Oxford*

Located in Southern England, Oxford is renowned for its medieval roots evident in the cobbled streets, ancient colleges, and iconic spires. A wonderful walking day tour was spent viewing Mr Taylor's former college Hertford at the University of Oxford (the oldest university in English speaking world; while Mrs Taylor as an urban planner explained the city's character assessment. The city's architecture spans centuries, blending Gothic, Baroque and Neoclassical styles. Oxford's history is deeply intertwined with academia, religion and politics.

*Source: British History Online 2025, Google Earth 2025, Oxford City Council Character Assessment Toolkit, MICA Architects, Rafael Violy Architects*

## Lessons Learned

**The Oxford City Council's Character Assessment Toolkit was developed to help people understand and articulate distinctive qualities of any built environment, including its historic significance and layers of development.**

## Sympathetic Building Extensions

The Hertford college's architecture reflects a mix of Gothic Revival and classical styles, buildings dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, constructed with local Oxfordshire stone and slate roofs. The New Quadrangle, includes the college chapel, completed in 1908, its octagonal tower and copper dome. MICA Architects are the appointed architects for the refurbishment and extension of the college library. The design respects the historic fabric, access and energy use by sympathetically extending from the basement level to beneath the existing Quadrangle's courtyard to provide the college with a new library archive, additional meeting and seminar rooms.

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## Balancing Heritage and Innovation in Masterplans

Viñoly's Radcliffe Observatory Quarter masterplan strategically removes non-historic additions to highlight Grade II\* landmarks like the Radcliffe Observatory, enhancing sight lines. Rejecting 2D zoning, it employs three-dimensional integration using underground links to unify the academic complex while maintaining above-ground scale. Building heights transition from three-story perimeter structures to five-story central blocks, preserving Oxford's skyline. Dual corridors organize movement: a northern parkland path near the Observatory and an urban southern route by Somerville College. Within this framework, buildings like the Mathematical Institute (NE) with its atrium and the Blavatnik School (SW) with glass drums showcase contrasting architectural identities while maintaining scale and connectivity.

## Harmony of Eras: Architectural and Academic Heritage

Magdalen College's Great Quadrangle (1475-1490) exemplifies Perpendicular Gothic architecture with its ashlar-faced cloisters. Nestled between Oxford's Botanic Garden and the River Cherwell to the northeast, the college harmonizes natural and built environments. The southeast houses a neo-Gothic Grade I chapel, contrasting with the 44-meter Magdalen Tower (1492), Oxford's tallest medieval structure on High Street. To the north, the Palladian New Building (1733) features a ground-floor colonnade, separated from the Gothic Quadrangle by croquet lawns. The college's 20th-century renown stems from figures like C.S. Lewis—writer, scholar, and theologian.

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## Lessons Learned

**Principles of heritage setting for Salisbury Cathedral includes a height restriction policy for buildings at 12.2 meters max. height, with only pitched roofs clad in traditional materials permitted. The policy, formalized in Wiltshire Council's core planning documents ensures that the cathedral's spire that rises up to 123m remains the city's dominant view from near and far. This policy has shaped Salisbury's distinctive low-rise urban landscape for generations and further protects the defining characteristic of Salisbury's historic identity.**

## *Salisbury Cathedral*

An afternoon visit to the Salisbury Cathedral showcased a striking interplay of shadows and golden hues enveloping the cathedral's Chilmark stone (local limestone) facade. Built between 1220-1258, the Early Gothic cathedral features Britain's tallest church spire (123m), the largest cathedral close - spanning 80 acres (historic buildings, gardens, and open lawns - a serene setting that enhances the grandeur of the cathedral. The cathedral's foundations are surprisingly shallow at only 1.2 m deep due to the high water table at the site. Medieval builders used a wide foundation base to distribute the weight of the structure more evenly; waterlogged ground also helped stabilize the foundations by preventing the soil from shifting excessively. Scissor arches and external flying buttresses counteract the outward thrust caused by the spire's weight.

*Source: Salisbury Cathedral, HistoryHit, Wiltshire Council Planning Document*

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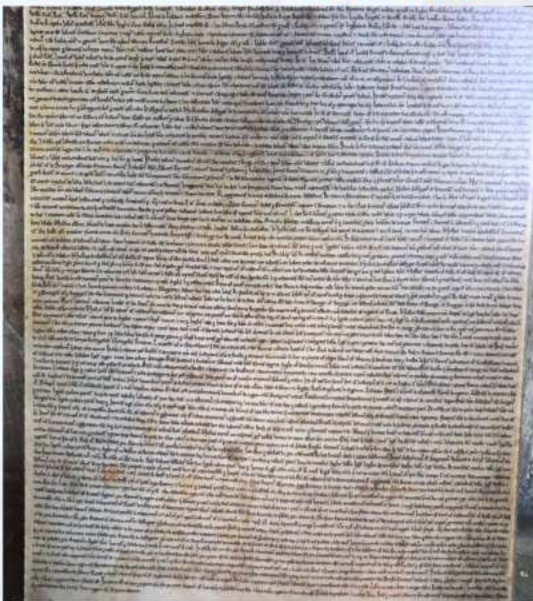
## Preserving Artifacts: Mechanical Clock, 1386

Crafted by three Dutch clockmakers, Salisbury Cathedral's 1386 wrought-iron mechanism—one of the world's oldest working clocks—lacks hands or a dial, designed solely to strike a bell for prayer. Relocated from the bell tower in 1956 and restored, its daily winding ceased to prevent wear; demonstrations now occur sparingly. Housed in the nave, an adjacent panel details its history with a QR code and illustration of its original tower. By limiting operation and indoor display, the cathedral preserves this medieval marvel, sustained by shallow foundations (4ft) stabilized by Salisbury's waterlogged soil—a medieval engineering solution to its towering spire.



## Preserving Artifacts: Magna Carta, 1215

One of only four surviving original copies of the 1215 Magna Carta is safeguarded within the cathedral's Chapter House an incredible octagonal structure with vaulted, ribbed ceiling supported by a single decorated central column of Purbeck marble. The artifact's preservation efforts include limiting exposure to light and maintaining strict environmental controls to prevent deterioration of the parchment and ink. Photography is prohibited to avoid damage caused by camera flashes. The Magna Carta established the principle that no one, not even the monarch, is above the law. The Salisbury original copy is considered the best-preserved and its display is part of a broader effort by the cathedral to educate visitors about its historical and legal importance.



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## Lessons Learned

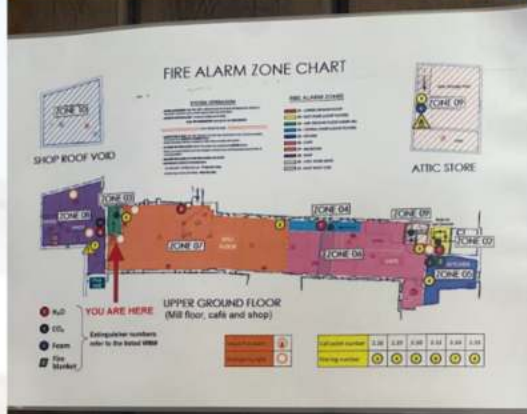
**The National Trust protects Winchester City Mill with advanced L1 (life protection) and P1 (property protection) wireless fire alarm systems featuring detection in all void spaces, designed unobtrusively to preserve historic character. Staff are trained in fire extinguisher use, additionally fire drills are conducted at least once a year to test evacuation procedures, while the P1 system connects to an alarm center for rapid fire brigade response and evacuation.**

## *Winchester Mill*

Winchester City Mill stands as one of Britain's oldest working watermills, with origins dating back to Anglo-Saxon times and documented in the Domesday Book of 1086. This Grade II\* listed building represents an exceptional example of industrial heritage situated on the River Itchen. The Mill utilizes brick for its structural walls, the roof features clay tiles arranged in a gabled design. Timber is integral, with reused medieval oak beams from earlier Saxon and medieval iterations incorporated into the framework, supporting floors and machinery showcase vernacular building techniques, while its position spanning the river illustrates how early industrial structures were integrated with natural water resources. The foundation hints at Roman-era origins, the mill reflects a blend of 18th-century brickwork and centuries-old timber elements, emblematic of its layered history. The mill's survival provides a tangible connection to pre-industrial food production methods and local economic systems that shaped English communities for centuries.

*Source: National Trust 2015, Historic England 2018, National Trust Conservation Report 2022*

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## Flood Management

In 2014, flooding damaged the historic basement and Norman beams, the Trust raised £90,000 for repairs and installed improved flood defenses. These include deployable flood barriers, waterproof membranes, and a specialized pumping system that activates automatically when water levels rise. Regular structural monitoring uses digital sensors to track moisture levels and the building's foundation movement.

## Fire Management

Rodent-resistant MICC (Mineral-Insulated Copper-Clad) cabling has a lifespan of up to 120 years and ensures fire resistance. Rigorous five-year wiring inspections and biennial thermographic surveys identify overheating risks in electrical systems, for preventive maintenance. Fire containment employs compartmentation with solid fire-rated walls every 400 m<sup>2</sup> and sealed penetrations to limit smoke spread. The suppression system combines traditional sprinklers and water mist technology, which reduces water usage by 50–90%. Detection relies on Aspirating Smoke Detectors (ASD) for early smoke particle recognition and wireless fire detectors, ensuring minimal visual intrusion of heritage elements.

## Environmental Management

The National Trust has enhanced the mill's ecological value by installing an underwater camera that allows visitors to observe river wildlife, including otters that have returned to the River Itchen. This holistic approach to stewardship encompasses the building's historical, architectural, technological, and environmental significance, ensuring Winchester City Mill remains a living piece of heritage for future generations.