

J.R.R. Tolkien in Oxford



A guide to the archive resources held by Oxford University institutions that have either been created by, mention or are associated with J.R.R. Tolkien.

J.R.R. Tolkien

Tolkien and Oxford – a brief history

Tolkien began his association with Oxford in 1911 as a student at Exeter College, where he graduated with first class honours in 1915. After a time at the Oxford English Dictionary as an assistant lexicographer, his academic career began in 1920, not at Oxford but at Leeds University as Reader in English Language.

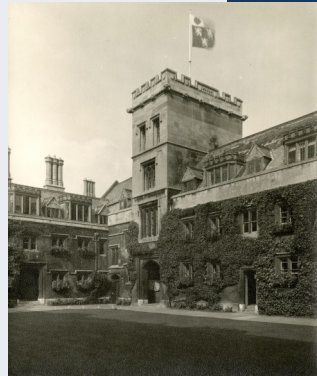
In 1925, Tolkien returned to Oxford, this time as a Fellow of Pembroke College where he became the Rawlinson & Bosworth Professor of Anglo Saxon. He remained at Pembroke for 20 years, while living at his home in North Oxford with his wife, Edith, and children.

In 1945, Tolkien moved to Merton College as Professor of English Language and Literature. It is from this College that he retired in 1959 and he and Edith moved to Poole, Dorset, in 1968.

After Edith's death in 1971, Tolkien moved back to Oxford. In March 1972, he took up residence in a set of rooms provided by Merton College as an Emeritus Fellow where he lived until his death in September 1973.



Front Quad, Exeter College



Old Quad, Pembroke College



Fellows Quad, Merton College

Tolkien in the Archives

Tolkien left varying footprints in the colleges where he lived and worked. These range from letters in his own hand and photographs to simply passing mentions in documents and his name in college records. Some colleges have more of a Tolkien footprint than others; taken together they are an invaluable record of Tolkien's 34 year career at Oxford.

The main Tolkien Archive is held at the Bodleian Library and includes literary papers, academic papers, personal papers, correspondence and artwork.

Each institution has its own archivist and processes for arranging a visit. For guidance on how to apply, please see the individual entries in this booklet.

Brief Timeline:

3 Jan 1892	Born in South Africa
1911 – 1915	Student at Exeter College, Oxford
1920 – 1925	Leeds University: Reader in English Language
1925 – 1945	Pembroke College, Oxford: Rawlinson & Bosworth Professor of Anglo Saxon
1937	<i>The Hobbit</i> is published
1945 – 1959	Merton College, Oxford: Professor of English Language and Literature
1954-1955	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i> is published
2 Sep 1973	Died while on a visit to Bournemouth

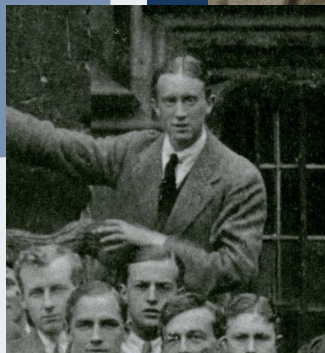
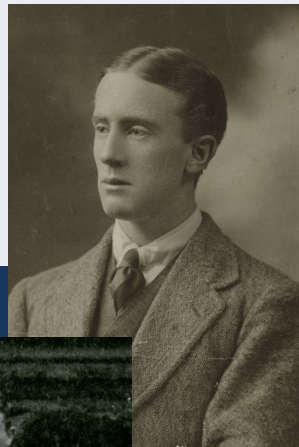
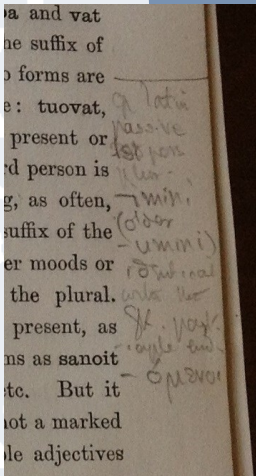
Exeter College

Founded by Walter de Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter in 1314, Exeter College is the fourth oldest in the University and has a long literary and artistic heritage. Famous Exonians include William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, Alan Bennett, Philip Pullman and Martin Amis.

Exeter College Archive has information on Tolkien's time as an undergraduate and for a short period after WWI. Institutional records document his entrance to the College (matriculation), examination results and accommodation payments (battels), as well as library loans. He played a prominent role in organising the College's sexcentenary celebrations in 1914, and his accounts of meetings and signature can be found in minute books of the Stapeldon Society and Essay Club. He also appears in several College photographs.

Visiting the Archive

A full list of material relating to Tolkien is available on request. Researchers may visit the Archives by appointment only. To arrange a visit, please write or email the College Archivist archives@exeter.ox.ac.uk



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Pembroke College

Pembroke College, founded in 1624 by King James I, is named after William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain and Chancellor of the University. Notable Pembrokiens include Samuel Johnson, William Blackstone and Sir Michael Heseltine.

Tolkien's fellowship at Pembroke as Rawlinson & Bosworth Professor of Anglo Saxon was to last 20 years. In this time, Tolkien wrote *The Hobbit* and the first two books of *The Lord of the Rings*. Although he was a Fellow of Pembroke, he did not live in College, and, aside from his name mentioned in administrative documents, the archive possesses only a small number of letters related to his time there.

Visiting the Archive

Access to the Archive is by appointment only and the Archivist is normally available on Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday. For all enquiries, please write to or email the archivist: archive@pmb.ox.ac.uk

Merton College

Founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, Chancellor of England and later Bishop of Rochester, Merton College is one of the oldest in Oxford, and home to the world's oldest continuously functioning library for university academics and students. Its alumni include, amongst many, four Nobel Prize winners and the founder of the Bodleian Library.

Tolkien was appointed Merton Professor of English Language and Literature in 1945, a position he held until his retirement in 1959. He served as Sub-Warden 1953-1955, and was appointed Emeritus Fellow in 1963. It was during his time at Merton that *The Lord of the Rings* was published. Tolkien had a study in Fellows Quad, with windows looking out over Christ Church Meadow. Following the death of his wife Edith in 1971, Tolkien returned to Oxford from Bournemouth and lived in a flat in Merton Street provided by the college. He was elected an Honorary Fellow in May 1973.

As with Pembroke, Merton archive holds very few original items relating to Tolkien. He appears in a couple of college group photographs, but is principally represented by inscribed copies of two of his works which he presented to his successor as Merton Professor, Norman Davis: *The Hobbit* inscribed in Elvish and a German translation of *Farmer Giles of Ham* inscribed in German. The archive also houses some items of associated ephemera.

Visiting the Archive

The Merton College Archivist, is available on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, when archives can be viewed. An appointment is essential and appropriate picture ID must be produced.

For more information, please email: Julian.Reid@merton.ox.ac.uk

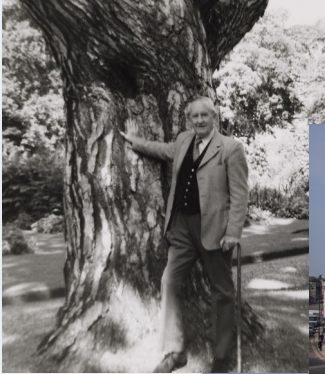


© Merton College



This Siberian jasper vase that stands in the Merton chapel is rumoured to have provided the inspiration for the 'Mirror of Galadriel'.





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The Bodleian 'Tolkien Archive' - Weston Library

The Tolkien Archive has been held by the Bodleian Library since 1979, and is cared for by a dedicated Archivist.

This extensive collection, mainly donated by the Tolkien Trust, includes literary, academic and personal papers, correspondence, artwork and volumes from his personal library.






Please note: the library does not hold the original manuscripts of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* - these are held at Marquette University, Milwaukee, USA.

Visiting the Archive

The Tolkien archive is only available to academic researchers. To access the archive you will need to demonstrate a specific research need and provide details of your research outcome.

For more information on how to access the Tolkien Archive, please email catherine.mcilwaine@bodleian.ox.ac.uk

More Oxford Colleges and organisations with Tolkien resources

-  **Worcester College:** minutes of the Lovelace Club meeting at which Tolkien first read *Farmer Giles of Ham* to a public audience. For details, see the 'Treasures of Worcester College' blog at:
<https://worcestercollegelibrary.wordpress.com/2016/02/>
-  **St. Anne's College:** a letter of recommendation written by Tolkien in the student file of Elizabeth Jennings (poet) - Tolkien was a family friend.
<http://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/about/library/archives>
-  **University College:** mention of payment to Tolkien in the College's account books as an external tutor.
<https://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/content/j-r-r-tolkien-and-univ-unexpected-link>
-  **Oxford University Press:** the Press archive holds about half a dozen editorial files containing contributions from Tolkien, including the surviving correspondence on titles such as *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*. The OED archive also contains original dictionary slips compiled by Tolkien when he worked on the Dictionary c.1919, as well as a couple of letters.
<http://global.oup.com/uk/archives/index.html>
-  **Lincoln College:** A postcard advertising 'Lincoln Concerts' for Hilary 1946, where Tolkien's talk on Anglo-Saxon Minstrels was scheduled for 30 January.
<https://www.lincoln.ox.ac.uk/Archive>
-  **Magdalen College:** The Magdalen Senior Common Room weight book, (record of a tradition whereby SCR members and their guests would weigh themselves and write down the results); an exercise book containing notes from Tolkien's Anglo-Saxon lectures; and the minute book of the Michaelmas Club, to which Tolkien gave a talk on invented languages in Trinity Term 1930, including an appreciative write-up.
<http://www.magd.ox.ac.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives/>
-  **Lady Margaret Hall:** Notes taken at Professor J.R.R. Tolkien's lectures on Old English Verse, 1939, by Joan Brewer.
<http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/about-lmh/history-and-archives/visiting-archives>

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