

Significant Individuals: Oxfordshire



The individuals listed here have been researched and collated by members and affiliates of the Historical Association Primary Committee for use as a starting point to think about framing a local study around an individual and/or an important site. The list represents the collated research of the author and is by no means an exhaustive list. In their research, every effort has been made for representation and balance, but as is the nature of significance, different people will know of different people locally who they feel are significant to them. If you think there is someone that should be included on the list for your local area – let us know!

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LOCATION	SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE	Location	Biographical Summary and Suggested Enquiry Questions	Historical period	Example of Links
Oxfordshire	Alfred the Great Anglo-Saxon king	Wantage	Alfred, also spelled Aelfred, was born in Wantage in 849. He was king of Wessex (871–899), a Saxon kingdom in southwestern England. He prevented England from falling to the Danes and by the end of his reign was known as ‘king of the English’. As an administrator Alfred promoted justice and established a code of laws. He also organised for the translation of books from Latin to Anglo-Saxon. Alfred died in October 899 and was buried at his capital city of Winchester. Suggested enquiry questions:	Anglo-Saxon	https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zxsbcm/articles/z9tdq6f

			How did the House of Wessex become so powerful? Does Alfred deserve the title 'the great'? What is his legacy?		
John Betjeman Writer and poet laureate	Wantage	<p>Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984) lived in Wantage for many years. He was UK Poet Laureate from 1972 until his death, and became one of Britain's best-loved poets of the twentieth century. He was also an authority on English architecture and campaigned to preserve Victorian buildings from destruction.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What is a poet laureate? Which of Betjeman's poems best describe life in the 20th century? Betjeman was passionate about preserving Victorian architecture; how did buildings change in the UK during his lifetime?</p>	20 th century	http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/betjeman.html	
Agatha Christie Writer	Wallingford	<p>Agatha Christie (1890–1976) was a crime novelist, short-story writer and playwright. She wrote sixty-six detective novels and fourteen short story collections, as well as <i>The Mousetrap</i> - the world's longest-running play. Her books have sold over a billion copies in the English language and she remains the best-selling novelist of all time. She lived for over forty years on the outskirts of Wallingford. She is buried in the churchyard of St Mary's, Cholsey, near Wallingford.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: How did life change for women in the UK during Christie's life? What were her main achievements? In what way(s) could she be</p>	19/20 th century	https://www.agathachristie.com/about-christie#christies-life	

			considered to be significant? Why do you think her work continues to be so popular today?		
	Winston Churchill Prime Minister	Woodstock	<p>Sir Winston Churchill (30 November 1874 – 24 January 1965) was a politician, army officer, and writer. He was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from May 1940 to July 1945, when he led the country to victory in the Second World War, and again from October 1951 to April 1955.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What kind of leader was Churchill? Do Churchill's achievements in WW2 tell us all we need to know about him?</p>	19/20 th century	https://www.biography.com/political-figure/winston-churchill
	Edward the Confessor Anglo-Saxon king	Islip	<p>Edward the Confessor was born in Islip in 1003. He is also known as Saint Edward the Confessor due to his piety; he founded Westminster Abbey during his reign. Usually considered the last king of the House of Wessex, he ruled from 1042 to 1066. His deathbed promise prompted conflict between Harold Godwin and William of Normandy, leading to the Battle of Hastings.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: Why was Edward called 'the confessor'? What were the achievements of his reign? Why did his deathbed promise prove to be a turning point?</p>	Anglo-Saxon	http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/edward_confessor.shtml
	Sarah Wildes Convicted of witchcraft	Chipping Norton	<p>Sarah Wildes was born in Chipping Norton in 1627. Her family later moved to the Massachusetts Bay Colony around 1637. She was wrongly convicted of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials and was executed by hanging.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions:</p>	17 th century	https://historyofmassachusetts.org/sarah-wildes/

			Why do you think Wildes' family left Chipping Norton to live in Massachusetts, America? What were the Salem Witch trials? What does her death tell us about attitudes towards religion and beliefs about women at this time?		
	Makereti Papakura (married name: Margaret Staples-Brown) Anthropologist	Oddington	<p>Makareti Papakura was a Maori princess who was born in New Zealand in 1873. She was an accomplished Maori guide and entertainer who performed for Queen Mary and King George V on their trip to New Zealand. She married an English landowner, studied anthropology at Oxford and lived the rest of her life in the small village of Oddington. She died in Oxford in 1930.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What does her life tell us about Britain and empire at the turn of the 20th century? What was life like for the Maori at that time? How do you think her life changed when she moved from New Zealand to the UK?</p>	20 th century	https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p5/papakura-makereti
	George Harrison Musician	Henley-on-Thames	<p>George Harrison (1943 –2001) was an English musician, and music and film producer who was the lead guitarist of the Beatles. He was born in Liverpool but bought Friar Park, a Victorian neo-Gothic mansion, in Henley-on-Thames in 1970. He spent much of the rest of life there.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: Were the sixties a turning point in British culture? What can the Beatles tell us about the music and culture of the sixties? What made the Fab Four so</p>	20 th century	https://www.biography.com/musician/george-harrison

			'fab'?		
	Frideswide Abbess	Oxford	<p>St Frideswide is the patron saint of Oxford, the university and the diocese of Oxford. Very little is known about her life. Her name, means Peace (frithes) <i>and</i> Strong (withe). She is believed to have been born in 680 and to have died in 727, though the earliest written accounts of her life date only from the twelfth century. An Anglo-Saxon, she is credited with founding the first church in the city, on the site where the Cathedral now stands.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: Why is Frideswide the patron saint of Oxford? In what ways was she both peaceful and strong? What evidence do we have of her life? What else do we know about the life of Anglo-Saxon women at this time?</p>	Anglo-Saxon	https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/blog/st-frideswide
	Felicia Skene Social reformer	Oxford	<p>Felicia Skene was born in France in 1821. Much of Skene's early life was spent in Paris, Edinburgh and Athens. She moved to Oxford in 1849 and spent the rest of her life living in the city. She was a writer, and a campaigner for prisons and social reform. She was the first woman in England to be appointed as a Prison Visitor. She also trained and organised nurses who worked under Florence Nightingale in the Crimea. She died in 1899 – her memorial plaque can be found in the cathedral.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions:</p>	19 th century	http://oxfordshireblueplagues.org.uk/plaques/skene.html

			How is Felicia Skene significant for the people of Oxford? Who should she be compared with: Florence Nightingale or Elizabeth Fry?		
	Cecil Jackson-Cole Founding member of Oxfam	Oxford	<p>Cecil Jackson-Cole was born in London in 1901. A successful business man, he joined a group of Quakers in Oxford in 1942 who began campaigning for famine relief. This was the beginning of Oxfam as a global charity. A devout Christian, he spent the rest of his life setting up and supporting charitable trusts (e.g. Help the Aged and Action Aid). In particular, he encouraged businesses to set up links to charities. He died in 1979.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What were the links between his beliefs as a Quaker and his charity work? How should he be remembered: as an entrepreneur or as a philanthropist? How did one shop on 17 Broad Street, Oxford become a global charity?</p>	20 th century	http://www.oxfordshireblueplaques.org.uk/plaques/jacksoncole.html
	William Morris Car manufacturer & Philanthropist	Cowley, Oxford	<p>William Morris (1877-1963) lived in Oxford and Oxfordshire for most of his life. In his youth he was a champion cyclist. He later set up a car manufacturing company, Morris Motors, in Cowley. In his later years, as Viscount Nuffield, he donated funds to support the University of Oxford and medical research.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: How did the mass production of cars change life in Britain? What is Morris' legacy for the people of Oxford today? Who is an example of 21st century philanthropist?</p>	19/20 th century	http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/ocal/oxford/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8354000/8354459.stm

	J.R.R. Tolkien Writer	Oxford	<p>Tolkien (1892-1973) was born in South Africa. He was a writer and academic. As a writer, he is most famous for his fantasy works, The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit. As an academic at Oxford University, he was an expert on Anglo-Saxon English. He is buried in Wolvercote cemetery, Oxford.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What were Tolkien's experiences as a soldier in WW1? How did Tolkien's knowledge of old and middle English inspire his works of fiction and his invention of a runic alphabet?</p>	19/20 th century	https://www.tolkiensociety.org/author/biography/
	Dorothy Hodgkin Scientist	Oxford	<p>The Oxford chemist Dorothy Hodgkin was born in 1910 in Cairo, Egypt. She is the only British female winner of the Nobel Prize for chemistry and only the second British woman to be awarded the Order of Merit (the other was Florence Nightingale). In her twenties, she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and she spent much of her later working life as a wheelchair user. She died in 1994.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: Why should we remember Dorothy Hodgkin? What challenges did she overcome during her life? <i>There are opportunities for a cross-curricular link with the study of important scientists in the KS2 National Curriculum for science.</i></p>	20 th century	http://www.rsc.org/diversity/175-faces/all-faces/dorothy-hodgkin-om-frs/
	Roger Bannister Athlete	Oxford	<p>Roger Bannister (1929-2018) was an Olympic athlete and neurologist. In 1954, Bannister became the first person to run a mile in under four minutes, at Iffley Road track in Oxford. He</p>	20 th century	https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records/hall-of-fame/first-sub-four-minute-mile

		<p>spent his career as a neurologist and later became the Master of Pembroke College, Oxford.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: How does Bannister's experiences as an Olympian compare with those of Ancient Greece? Should Bannister best be remembered as a scientist or as an athlete?</p>		
Cornelia Sorabji Lawyer	Oxford	<p>Cornelia Sorabji (1866 – 1954). Born in India, Sorabji was the first woman to graduate from the University of Bombay. She became the first woman and the first Indian to graduate in law from Oxford. She later became the first female barrister in India.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What was Sorabji's biggest achievement? What barriers did she overcome, both at Oxford and in India? What can her life tell us about the relationship between Britain and India during this period?</p>	19/20 th century	https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/content/alumna-cornelia-sorabji-1866-1954
John Henry Brookes Craftsman & Educationalist	Headington, Oxford	<p>Brookes was born in Northampton in 1891. He originally qualified as an art teacher and silversmith. He became principal of the Schools of Technology, Arts & Commerce in Oxford and spent many years campaigning on behalf of young people. The Schools evolved into Oxford College of Technology, Oxford Polytechnic and finally Oxford Brookes University. He died in Headington, in 1975.</p> <p>Suggested enquiry questions: What were his key achievements? What struggles did he overcome as an educational campaigner?</p>	20 th century	http://www.headington.org.uk/history/famous-people/brookes.htm

			Why is Oxford Brookes University named after him?		