



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Oxford Preservation Trust Celebrates 175 Years of the Rewley Road Swing Bridge**

*Join Oxford Preservation Trust on Wednesday 20 May for a drop-in event and guided walks celebrating one of Oxford's most remarkable pieces of Victorian engineering.*

On **Wednesday 20 May 2026**, Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) invites the public to join a drop-in to celebrate the **175th anniversary** of the Rewley Road Swing Bridge — a scheduled monument and remarkable survival of Victorian railway engineering.

Designed by the celebrated engineer Robert Stephenson, son of George Stephenson, and brought into use in 1851, the Rewley Road Swing Bridge is thought to be the earliest surviving moving-element railway bridge in the world. Spanning the Sheepwash Channel, which links the Oxford Canal and the River Thames, the 22-metre, 85-tonne bridge was built to carry the Buckinghamshire Railway's trains into Oxford's Rewley Road terminus.

After closing to passengers in 1951 and to goods traffic in 1984, the bridge fell into severe disrepair and was added to the national Heritage at Risk Register in 2013. Ownership of the bridge transferred to OPT in 2019, who led a £900,000 restoration funded by the Railway Heritage Trust, Historic England and Network Rail. Completed in 2021, the restoration saw the bridge removed from the At Risk Register.

OPT continues to care for the bridge today, with monthly volunteer work parties carrying out maintenance on the bridge and managing the surrounding landscape, including vegetation clearance and general upkeep.

In 2026, OPT contracted Greenford Ltd to carry out finishing works on the bridge and the surrounding area. The works involved stabilising the northern bank of the channel near the road bridge, repairing the bank edging and re-painting the railings. They also worked on repairing the locking slides and control gear either side of the bridge so in the future it will be possible to swing the bridge at events like Open Doors (this year on 12 & 13 September), to share this special and important feat of engineering.

**Event details: Wednesday 20 May 2026**

**Drop-In Event: 10:30am – 3:30pm (Free, no booking required)**

Members of the public are warmly invited to come along throughout the day and get up close with one of Oxford's most extraordinary historic structures. OPT's Green Spaces Manager, **Hannah Brockwell**, and a team of dedicated volunteers, including **David Mather**, former British Rail Area Manager for Oxford, will be on hand to explain how the bridge is maintained and cared for, and to share stories from its extraordinary past.

**Guided Walks: 11:00am and 2:00pm (Advance booking required)**

OPT Vice President and Founding Director of Oxford Archaeology, **Tom Hassall** who lives just steps from the bridge, will lead two expert guided walks exploring the bridge and its surrounding area, at 11:00am and 2:00pm. Places on these walks are limited and must be booked in advance.

**Book your place on the 11:00am walk:**

[https://app.sheepcrm.com/oxfordpreservation/events/oxfordpreservation-booking-69e0ca5f8a38413b9e506f82/?force\\_reload=1](https://app.sheepcrm.com/oxfordpreservation/events/oxfordpreservation-booking-69e0ca5f8a38413b9e506f82/?force_reload=1)

**Book your place on the 2:00pm walk:**

[https://app.sheepcrm.com/oxfordpreservation/events/oxfordpreservation-booking-69e0cbdd05c4850d0e506f37/?force\\_reload=1](https://app.sheepcrm.com/oxfordpreservation/events/oxfordpreservation-booking-69e0cbdd05c4850d0e506f37/?force_reload=1)

**Getting There**

From central Oxford, Rewley Road Swing Bridge is best reached on foot by walking to the north end of Upper Fisher Row and continuing on the footpath. It can also be reached from the canal towpath.

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**Notes to Editors:**

Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) is an independent charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing the character and setting of Oxford for the benefit of those who live in, work in, and visit the city. OPT took ownership of the Rewley Road Swing Bridge in 2019 and led its £900,000 restoration, which was completed in 2021.

The Rewley Road Swing Bridge is a Scheduled Monument (list entry 1003651). It is one of only two moving bridges on the Thames waterway system and is believed to be the earliest surviving moving-element railway bridge in the world.

For further information, high-resolution images, or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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