



BALLIOL
COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Balliol College: A Tour for prospective applicants - video transcript

<https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate-admissions/why-balliol>

[The outside of Holywell Manor, which is at the centre of Balliol's Graduate Centre and the heart of the Balliol graduate community]

>>THOMAS HANCOCK, DPHIL PARTICLE PHYSICS: Hi, welcome to Balliol! This is Holywell Manor, part of Balliol College. I'm Thomas: I'm a DPhil student in Particle Physics, and also the MCR president.

>>ASHNA PATEL, DPHIL INTERDISCIPLINARY BIOSCIENCE: Hi, I'm Ashna, I'm a second-year DPhil student in Immunology, and Balliol's grad community consists of around 350 students from over 40 countries.

[We follow the students into the bar]

>>THOMAS: So, this is the graduate bar. We keep it open so people can just come and tick off when they want to take something, which is a really nice system: it's a very trusting place here. Last night particularly we had a cocktail evening because it was Halloween, so some of the Freshers brewed up some 'spooky cocktails'. It was a really nice event.

[TV room]

>>ASHNA: So this is the TV room/study space: it's more of a cosy room in the Manor. We regularly host film nights and Thomas recently acquired a VR set.

>>THOMAS: Yeah, it's a lot of fun!

>>ASHNA: But yes, so gaming happens here, and...that doesn't make sense!

>>THOMAS: It does, 'gaming happens here'!

>>ASHNA: Gaming happens here! And, uh, yeah - this is the TV room!

[We walk up the stairs]

>>ASHNA: This is the way to the MCR.

[We go through a wooden door marked 'Private - no entry - common room - no smoking'. We enter a room in which students are working on computers: on the walls of the room are murals depicting the history of Balliol]

>>ASHNA: On these walls is the history of Balliol. Yeah, so that's what all these paintings depict.

>>THOMAS: It starts here then goes around like this. (Thomas moves around the room, pointing at the appropriate parts of the walls) So I believe John de Balliol kidnapped some monks, for reasons that I'm not sure why. And then this is him being flogged for it because he shouldn't have done it. We think this is him - you can see the clothes here match the clothes that he's wearing on the hill there. And then he gets charged for it and he has to pay lots of money to the Crown and that money is used to found the College at some point...that's over here.

>>ASHNA: Over there! They look...people look happy there!

>>THOMAS: Yeah, I think that's 'cause they're now on their way to Balliol.

>>ASHNA: And then they're studying.

>>THOMAS: And they're studying...and the chains are for the books, not the scholars! That took me a long time to realise.

>>ASHNA: Yeah! And this is just another great study space...yeah, on the way to the MCR.

[Middle Common Room]

>>ASHNA: So this is the MCR, which is the centre for the grad students at Balliol.

>>THOMAS: Living together with so many people here and all being at the same college and feeling part of the same community, it really encourages people to kind of get involved.

>>ASHNA: Like, you do feel you have a family. It's one of the reasons I applied, 'cause it...I knew that they had an active MCR, and that was true. Not just active, but just super welcoming and supportive. And there's always people about to just chat to and that's a great help, especially during a PhD.

[We approach a door labelled 'Private - Residents Only']

>>THOMAS: This is now the 'Residents Only' part, so keep it on the DL that we brought you here!

[We go through the door into a large room with a projector screen and sofas]

>>THOMAS: This is called the Cockpit - it's like another social space that's kind of less grand than the MCR, so we hold a lot of game nights here. There's a projector which you can hook up the games consoles to.

>>ASHNA: We recently had Halloween film night two days ago.

>>THOMAS: Yes, we watched the original *Wicker Man* - it was very odd!

>>ASHNA: Interesting!

>>THOMAS: Yes...Yeah, we've recently redecorated the walls as well. So we found...well, our Women's Officer found these portraits on Etsy, and we did a poll around the MCR for which ones, which people the MCR would like to see on the walls, and then we added a ninth one for the founder of Balliol, Lady Dervorguilla. So that's why she's like, the big one and surrounded by the little ones.

>>ASHNA: Thomas drew that!

>>THOMAS: I didn't want to big up myself too much...

>>ASHNA: Thomas actually drew that one and then we got it printed, so creds to our president! Multi-talented!

>>THOMAS: Well, Harriet printed it...I drew it and sent it to her and then she got it printed off. Because funnily enough, they didn't have Lady Dervorguilla on Etsy as an option so (!).

>>ASHNA: Yeah, bit specific!

>>THOMAS: We felt it needed to be amended.

[Move into the Holywell Manor gardens]

>>ASHNA: So, this is our lovely garden. So in summer it becomes, like, a really lovely social space. We've got the barbecue at the back, round the corner. Yeah, Thomas lives up there, so he overlooks the whole garden.

>>THOMAS: I mean, you live over there, so you also overlook the whole garden. I see your window from my window!

>>ASHNA: That is true...

>>THOMAS: So all of these are student rooms or kitchens.

>>ASHNA: Yeah, exactly.

>>THOMAS: It's really nice, so there's a lot of rooms in the Manor. You get a nice view over the garden so you can see what's going on.

>>ASHNA: I think that contributes to the whole, like, community, family feel of the place.

[Shots of Balliol's Broad Street site]

>>THOMAS: And this is the main site of Balliol, as opposed to the grad centre where we just were, and here you have another gym, there's the JCR bar, there's the dining hall

behind us...It's just lots of things where grads can come and use them here as well as in the Manor.

>>ASHNA: And also main site's really not far from Holywell Manor, like a few minutes' walk, so yeah, pretty convenient.

[Move to the hall outside the Balliol Library - Ashna and Thomas stay outside the door but we see images of the Library itself]

>>ASHNA: So just through there is the Balliol Library, main site Library, and it's open 24/7. There's individual desks and also some communal ones. So yeah, the Library has also has like a grad-specific space which is really useful.

[Moving through the Balliol grounds]

>>ASHNA: Another shout out to the gardeners, like...

>>THOMAS: Yes, the gardens are always pristine.

>>ASHNA: They are, like, in summer they're always in full bloom. It's like insane!

>>THOMAS: It's pretty good.

[Ashna and Tom walk up the stairs that lead to the Balliol Hall, which we cut to]

>>THOMAS: So this is the Balliol dining hall, it's where I eat most of my dinners while I'm here. It's just a, it's a lovely place. You just go through, get your food, and you can sit at any of the tables. It's nice to have somewhere to come each day and eat with your friends, it kind of keeps you within the social circle and stops you getting too isolated with your work.

>>ASHNA: And there's 'Formal Hall' on Tuesdays, but it's not a super, sort of, formal affair - it's semi.

>>THOMAS: Yeah, it's not strict formal, you can wear whatever you want basically.

>>ASHNA: But the food's good, the foods really lovely, so it's nice to have that.

>>THOMAS: Yeah, our chef here is...they're so good.

>>ASHNA: Like the MCR puts on a lovely formal meal every term, so there's like Christmas dinner, Burns Night Dinner and May Dinner, and they're so much fun. So the entire MCR just comes and has a great meal and a good time in Hall.

>>THOMAS: Recently, we celebrated 40 years of women at Balliol, so we've added these portraits around the room where they got people, well, women from Balliol who are either MCR members, JCR members, rowers, staff, and they put them into groups and took pictures, and it's really nice. Asha is in one of them, but she doesn't want me to say, so I'm going to say now - it's over there!

>>ASHNA: Thanks, Thomas (!)

>>THOMAS: That's alright...

[Ashna and Thomas leave the Dining Hall. A screen appears, giving two addresses: graduate.ox.ac.uk and balliol.ox.ac.uk]