My name is Simon Horobin and I'm a tutor in English at Magdalen College in Oxford and I'm going to take you on a tour of C.S. Lewis's Oxford.

We're going to start our tour on the High Street, at the entrance to Magdalen College. Although this isn't where C.S. Lewis's Oxford career began, it's the place that he is most clearly linked with. The Shadowlands film that tells the story of his marriage to the writer Joy Davidman is set in Magdalen, even though by then Lewis had actually moved to Cambridge. It's at Magdalen that he got his first job, as a Tutorial Fellow in English and where he spent nearly 30 years.

Entering the college through the gate beside the Great Tower we find ourselves in St John's Quad. Opposite is the President's Lodgings, which is where Lewis was admitted to the Fellowship of Magdalen in 1925 in a ceremony that remains unchanged today. Having sworn to uphold the statutes of the College, Lewis shook hands with all of the assembled fellows who wished him Joy: the choice of word seems significant given Lewis's later use of the term in his autobiography – Surprised by Joy – where it refers to a longing that left him unsatisfied which ultimately led to his conversion to Christianity, and given his later relationship with Joy Davidman.

Turning into the cloisters we pass the college chapel on our right, where Lewis attended daily services following his conversion: there is a plaque identifying his usual seat. Coming out of the cloisters, we are confronted by the magnificent, Neo-Georgian stone building that overlooks the deer park, known as the New Building, in which Lewis had a set of rooms on the second floor of staircase 3: the middle of the building as you face it. It was in those rooms that the Inklings met on a Thursday night, reading extracts from their works in progress. During those meetings, Lewis read aloud from his first work of Christian Apologetics, The Problem of Pain, and the first of his science fiction trilogy, Out of this Silent Planet. It was also here that Lewis converted to theism, as memorably described in Surprised by Joy: 'You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.'

His later conversion to Christianity was encouraged by a conversation with two of his friends and fellow Inklings, J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, during an after-dinner stroll around Addison's Walk: one of Lewis's favourite walks that takes a circular route around the College's water meadow. Following the path along the river brings us to Hollywell Ford, where there is a plaque with a poem by Lewis called 'What the Bird Said Early in the Year' which is set on Addison's walk.

Tracing our steps back to the porters' lodge, we emerge on the High Street, heading west towards the city center. On our left we pass The Eastgate Hotel: it was in the hotel bar that Lewis and Tolkien would meet for a drink on Monday mornings, reading poetry to each other, swapping gossip or just indulging in bawdy puns. It was also here that Lewis first met Joy Davidman. Joy had begun writing to Lewis after reading his apologetic works and then came to England in the hope of meeting him in person.

Continuing down the High Street brings us past the Examination Schools, where Lewis lectured to large audiences of eager undergraduates: his hugely popular introductory lectures on medieval and renaissance literature can be read in the posthumously published book, 'The Discarded Image'. Further along we come to to University College, or Univ., which is where Lewis spent his undergraduate years. Lewis came up to Univ in Trinity term 1916: an unusual time to begin since this is traditionally the end of the academic year. But this was not a normal time to start a university career. There were very few students in residence, as most were in action in France. Indeed, Lewis was quickly transferred to Keble College, which had been requisitioned by the army, where he began military training prior to being sent to the Western Front. When he was not busy training, Lewis studied for Responsions: the University's entrance exams in Latin, Greek and Maths. While his Latin and Greek were up to scratch, Lewis struggled in Maths and received instruction from a tutor at Hertford College. But this didn't stop him failing the exam miserably; it was fortunate for Lewis that the university introduced an exemption for soldiers returning from action or he may never have become a student at Oxford.

Lewis was sent to the Western front in 1917 where he fought in the Somerset Light Infantry. He was wounded in April 1918 and sent back to England to convalesce. He was finally discharged from hospital and demobilised from the army in December 1918, returning home to Ireland for Christmas and then back to Oxford in January 1919.

Most of Lewis's fellow students had not survived the war; many who had found themselves psychologically unable to return to Oxford. Lewis dealt with the trauma by immersing himself in his studies: his degree was Literae Humaniores (which means 'More humane letters'), essentially the study of the languages, literature, history and philosophy of the Classical world. At the end of his first year, Lewis sat the exams known as Moderations and was awarded a first; at the end of the third year he sat the exams for the Final Honour School and received another first. This is all the more remarkable given that his lifestyle was not that of a typical undergraduate student. During this time, Lewis was looking after the mother of his army friend Paddy Moore, who was killed in action, and her daughter Maureen. Theirs was a peripatetic life in which they moved between various unsalubrious residences in Headington, a village on the outskirts of the city.

Armed with his double first, Lewis looked around for academic jobs, applying for teaching positions in Philosophy but without any success. His tutor suggested that he would improve his chances of employment if he spent a year studying for an Honours degree in English Language and Literature. In the 1920s the Oxford English course was heavily focused on the language and literature of the Middle Ages, one of Lewis's great passions. Although he was rather sniffy about the people who studied English compared to those reading Classics, Lewis took up this suggestion and in 1923 he graduated with yet another first.

After another round of failed job applications, Lewis was offered a temporary teaching position at Univ, filling in for his philsophy tutor who was spending the year teaching in

the States. In 1925 he successfully applied for the post of tutor in English at Magdalen College. The financial security this position gave him, enabled Lewis and Mrs Moore to purchase a house in Headington, The Kilns, in 1930. It was here that Lewis lived until his death in 1963. The house is open to visitors today and has been kept as it would have looked during Lewis's day, although none of the furnishings or decoration are original – including the yellow nicotine stains on the ceiling.

If we continue further down the High Street we pass the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, where Lewis gave his famous sermon 'The Weight of Glory' in 1941. Pausing at the side entrance to the church, in St Mary's Passage, we can see the doorway that has given rise to many stories about the origins of Narnia. Here we find carvings of two fauns, said to be the inspiration for Mr Tumnus, above a doorway with a carving of a face surrounded by foliage, taken to be that of lion with a shaggy mane. Beside the door there is a Victorian lamppost. The story goes that one snowy night, Lewis came out of the church through this door and found himself confronted by a lamppost, a faun and a lion, giving him all the ingredients of the first of the Narnian Chronicles, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The problem with this attractive claim is that Lewis himself offered an alternative one: according to Lewis the story began with pictures that he had in his head since his teens: one of a faun in a snowy wood carrying parcels, another of a witch on a sleigh. In his 40s he decided it was finally time to see if he could write a story about them; at the same time he found himself dreaming about lions and so Aslan 'bounded in'. This reminds us that, while Lewis was no doubt influenced by the Oxford in which he spent most of his adult life, his fictional writings are primarily works of imagination. This hasn't stopped people trying to identify real-life locations and influences: there are rival lampposts laying claim to be the model for the one shining in Lantern Waste in Cambridge, London and Belfast. The wardrobe from the Lewis family home of Little Lea in the Belfast suburbs, built by Lewis's grandfather, now resides in a museum at Wheaton College outside Chicago; but its claim to be the inspiration behind Lucy's portal into Narnia is somewhat debatable: this wardrobe doesn't have a looking-glass built into the door, which is specifically mentioned in the story.

Returning to the High Street we pass the Mitre Inn, where Lewis first met T.S. Eliot, who endeared himself to Lewis by observing how much older he appeared in person, leading to a rather frosty tea party. Arriving at the end of the High Street we turn right into Cornmarket and then keep going north, up St Giles as far as the famous Eagle and Child pub on our left.

This pub, known to the Inklings as the 'Bird and Baby', was the location of their Tuesday lunchtime drinking sessions. The group was quite informal: there was no strict membership and no minutes or records were made of their discussions. As well as Lewis and Tolkien, it included other members of the English Faculty like Lord David Cecil, friends and fellow-writers like Owen Barfield and Charles Williams, Lewis's brother Warnie (who came to live with Lewis at the Kilns after retiring from the army in 1932) and Lewis's doctor Robert Havard. The name 'Inklings', was borrowed from that of an undergraduate reading group at Univ in the 1930s that Lewis attended. Tolkien described it as 'a pleasantly ingenious pun…suggesting people with vague or

half-formed intimations and ideas plus those who dabble in ink'. Tolkien's major contribution to the Inklings was of course the vast project to write a sequel to the Hobbit, what became the Lord of the Rings, finally published in three volumes between 1954 and 1955. Charles Williams, best-known for his fantasy thrillers, read from his novel All Hallows' Eve, David Cecil offered updates from his biographical writings, while Warnie Lewis, read from his work on French history.

This isn't the final stop on our journey. A few doors down St Giles we find Number 42 St Giles, now a dental practice, but in 1956 the Registry office where Lewis and Joy Davidman were married. This was a marriage of convenience, intended to allow Joy to become a British citizen and remain in England with her two sons, and thereby avoid having to return to the States to an unhappy marriage. But shortly after their wedding, Joy discovered that she had terminal cancer. This sudden diagnosis prompted Lewis to recognise the depth of his feelings for her, leading him to propose a full Christian marriage, which was held at her hospital bed in 1957. Thanks to the cancer going into remission for a time, the couple were able to enjoy several years of marriage, visiting Ireland and Greece, before she died in 1960.

Lewis's relationship with Joy Davidman was one reason for a cooling in his friendship with Tolkien. Another was Lewis's devotion to Charles Williams, who joined the group when staff of the Oxford University Press, moved from London to Oxford during the war. Williams wrote to Lewis full of praise for his first scholarly work, The Allegory of Love, a study of medieval allegorical poetry, while Lewis was a great admirer of Williams's novel The Place of the Lion. Tolkien rather resented the way that Lewis brought Williams along to their meetings at the Eastgate, and – as a committed philologist (who studies the history of languages) - didn't share their more literary interests. In 1945 Williams was rushed into hospital for an emergency operation; Lewis called in to the Radcliffe Infirmary – just a little further north up St Giles – to visit him on his way to a meeting of the Inklings at the Eagle and Child, only to discover that he had died. Lewis was shattered by the loss; the Inklings would never be the same again. Williams is buried in Oxford's Holywell cemetery, next to St. Cross Church at the end of Longwall street, along with another inkling, Hugo Dyson.

In 1954 Lewis was invited to apply for a new Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge. He initially dismissed the idea, since he couldn't imagine uprooting his life and family at the Kilns and moving to Cambridge. It was only when Tolkien intervened, pointing out that it would be possible to commute between the two cities, that Lewis was willing to be considered. He was unanimously elected to a position that he held until his retirement, prompted by ill health, in 1963. When asked which Cambridge college he would wish to be associated with, Lewis chose Magdalene (with an extra 'e'), since he didn't want to confuse the celestial civil service by switching his allegiance to a different saint. But, despite spending those 9 years at Cambridge, Lewis continues to be associated with Oxford - as witnessed by the huge numbers of tourists who flock to the city today in search of Lewis and his legacy.