



A Quaint Description of the Carfax Conduit, Oxford.

*From a MS. Transcript made in 1784, communicated
by Walter Money, F.S.A.*

THE Conduit is a curious peice of Architecture Built in the year 1610, as appears by the Date facing the East, by Mr. Tho. Nicholson, Master of Arts, of Christ Church College, the Building thereof with the charge of bringing Water by pipes from the Conduit House near Hinksey, two miles from the City, cost no less than two Thousand five Hundred pounds. the founder was afterwards made Treasurer to King James the first. He was much skilled in the Oriental Tongues, &c., had travelled abroad into several countries, he was a gentelman much beloved, and whose Death was much lamented. in Christ Church Old Library as is at present but was formerly a Chapel near to the Stone pulpit is a small Monument containing an Inscription well worth the Inspection of a Curious Eye, the Year of our Lord at that time beeing so promiscuously placed by Capital Letter's as to make the date of the Year in Gold Letters, over which is a Coat of Arms beeing the same in likeness as is carv'd on every side of the Conduit (Viz.) East West North & South of the ornaments that adorn the Conduit, first the whole is exactly square built with fine polished stone the four sides beeing made with hard Stone, Cut all over in imitation of the Waves of the Sea, but since the University had it where it was damaged by time notwithstanding the great weight of stone work above the square walls it was so well contrived by props and pilly's whilst doing as to support the whole top while the sides of the old work was pull'd down, the Arms of the University City and founder are under the Cornish then on the East side the University City & Founder's Arms the last of which is azure two bars ermine in Crest three Suns in their Glory alluding to his name Nicholson. Note on every is the same coat of Arms, on each Corner above the Cornish is placed on the three sides of each Cube as many Sundials makeing

in all 12. Each Corner dial facing North, East, West and South, is finely carved assart (a sort ?) of open work, consisting of Capital letters the Sun in his glory, & Mearmaids holding Combs and Mirrors. Note that the Letters O.N. Compassers are a rebus being the Initial Letters of his Name, and was an Antient way of Expressing Devices, the four side walls hereof proceeding from the Corners of it stands as many Curious Arches, which centre Arch is the upper part supporting a stately Fabrick of an Octangular form, under and between those Arches is Contained a large Cistern over which extends Queen Maud Stister to the Emperor riding on an Ox over a ford. Alludeing to the Name of Oxford, or Oxon, the Water which comes from the fountain head at Hinksey is conveyed into the body of an Ox, thereby the City is supplyd with good & wholesome water, which contrimenally running (running) into the Cistern underneath proceeds a leaden pipe which upon extraordinary days of regoiceing runs Wine; above the foot of each Grand arch, which supports the other Work, is one of the supporters of the Royal Arms of England. According to the time they were used in manner following to the North West point is an Antelope born as a supporter in the Reign of Henery the 8th, on the South-west point is a Dragon used in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, the South-East point is a Lion as is now used on the Dexter Arms of England. To the North-East point is a Unicorn used on the Sinister, side of them supporters is Serjeant sitting holding in there fore feet a Banner, containing the Several Quartering of the Royal Arms of England, Scotland, France & Ireland, between the above supporters are carved Various Ornaments as Boy's Obliques Interchangeably transposed. Over all four sides of the Conduit, above the middle of each arch, Stands figures neatly carved representing the four cordinal Virtues, the first to the North-West Stands Justice richly habited holding in her right hand a Sword, in Her left a pair of Scales and Her eyes covered to show her Impartial Administration of Justice, to the North-East stands Temperance pooring out Wine out of a large Vessel into a smaller measure. To the South-East stands Fortitude holding in Her right hand a broken pillar, and in her left the Column, to the South-West stands Providence holding in her left hand a serpent denoting Eternity Eternity.—where the above four Arches meet at the top stands a curious pile of stone work, of an Octangular form haveing as many Niches in Each of which stands a fine Stature under a Canopy fluted,—Each figure haveing a Crown of Gold on his head, as sceptor in his hand and as

a sheild on his Arm, Containing his Device or Coat of Arms, those figures which stand in the above mentioned Niches are the Worthies, —and our then Worthy King Jame 1st made up the number & as followthe to the East stands Kjing David, holding in his right hand a scepture, in his sheild with those Arms, Sapry a hart—Gold Stringed Silver Diaperval Rube and Diamond,, The second Alexander the Great holding a Shield, with those Arms a Lion Rampart Regardant,—The third Godfrey of Bullion Crown'd with Thorns in Imitation of our Saviour on his sheild those Arms across patent between,,—4 Crosses Tapez,,—The fourth Anclatieus, whose shield is 3 Crown volant,,—The Fifth is Chorlemaine whose shield is partly tapaz and Sapur,,—The Sixth is James the First, on his sheild the Royal Arms of England, Scotland, France and Ireland,,—The Seventh Hector of Troy, whose shield is Tapaz, a Lion, Rubie Serjant in a chair Purpure, holding a Battle ax Pearl,,—The Eight is Julius Ceasar, whose sheild is Tapez an Eagle display'd with two swords and Diamonds, above those three worthies stands out at some distance several curious figures Representing the Liberal Sciences, one of which is Orpheus with his harp embellished with several sorts of Musical Instruments Trumpets Lutes &c,, on the top over all the Niches and above above the faur Ground Arches which support the rest stands two figures of human shaps back to back Representing Janus beeing an old man,, [looking westward] Looking Westward, holding in his left hand a shield whereon is carv'd a Batt, with wings display'd, the other is a young Woman with a Scepture in her hand, both standing under a Canopy above which is an Iron rod on the top is a Vane shewing the several points of the Wind and over is a Cross representing the faur Cordinall points of the Heavens also between the Niches wherein stands the Eight Kings, are contain'd Ornaments Consisting of a Woman upwards, and scales of Fish downwards, and tapering to the feet under which [is] are Interchangeabley placed they Royal Badges of the Faur Kingdoms, The Rose for England, the Thistle for Scotland,,—The flower de lue For France,—And the Harp for Ireland,,—Much more might have been said in Commendation of so curious and well contrived structure which for usefullness Beauty and Stateliness is not to be exceeded in the three Kingdoms.

The above interesting document which was written in the last century, containing so accurate a description of the old Carfax Conduit, has been kindly lent to me by Mrs. Surrey, of St. Helen's, Newbury.—W.M.