Mapping the Quartet
Oxford Self-Guided Audio Walking Tour

Welcome to our Mapping the Quartet Oxford self-guided audio walking tour.

This tour comprises fifteen stops, and, on standard walking speed and listening times, it should take around two hours to complete. If you take a leisurely approach, it will take you longer. Bear this in mind because you might welcome a break or two during the tour.

There is a map of the tour which you can download under the Podcasts heading in the Curated Resources section of WomenInParenthesis.co.uk. There you can also find a transcript of this audio.

Before we get going, let us tell you a little bit about how Oxford featured in the lives of the Quartet. The Quartet comprised Elizabeth Anscombe, Mary Midgley, Iris Murdoch, and Philippa Foot. The four were philosophers and friends, and Oxford was the place where their philosophical views were shaped, and their friendship was cemented.

They all arrived as undergraduates in the late 1930s, as Europe was heading towards war. Following graduation in 1942, Mary, Iris, and Philippa left Oxford to take up wartime jobs, but they all returned once the war was over and joined Elizabeth, who had remained to study towards a doctorate.

The four stayed at Oxford teaching, doing postgraduate research, or a mixture of both, until 1950, when Mary was the first to leave, first for a job at Reading University, then to Newcastle with her husband Geoff Midgley. Philippa stayed until 1969, when she moved to America to take up various visiting positions, and Elizabeth stayed until 1970, when she took up the Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge, a post previously held by Wittgenstein. Iris never left.

For this tour we have put together some of the places where events of significance in the lives of the women took place from the wartime period until the mid-Fifties. The order in which we have placed the locations is based on what we thought would make for a pleasant and economic walk, rather than by the chronology of the various events.

We hope this works for you, but if you want to design your own trajectory to better accommodate personal requirements you can, as we have also provided the audio for each location as individual episodes. Either way, we hope you get an enjoyable and informative time out of this tour. If you wish to tell us about how you get on or to make any suggestions, we'd love to hear! You can tweet us at @parenthesis_in, or send us an email at info@womeninparenthesis.co.uk.

Now, let's get started.

Bodleian Library, stop A on your map

We commence our tour at the Bodleian Libraries complex. There are two sections of the complex which are of interest to us: Convocation House, and the Divinity School.

The audio for this section is about seven minutes long.

Take yourself, if you would, into the space between the Sheldonian Theatre and the Divinity School.

Convocation House

You can't see Convocation House from any public space outside, but if you stand facing the Divinity School, with the Sheldonian Theatre behind you, Convocation is in front of you to the right. It follows on Chancellor's Court, which protrudes at the right end of Divinity, such that, if you looked from above you'd see a T shape arrangement, with Divinity forming the vertical line, and Chancellor's Court and Convocation House, the horizontal one.

Convocation House is where the governing body of Oxford University meets. One of its roles is to approve proposals for the conferral of honorary degrees to selected individuals.

On May 1st, 1956, the members were supposed to approve the award of an honorary degree for former US president, Mr Harry S. Truman. But rumours had it that some of the women members were opposed to the award and might be minded to stir up trouble.

In the event, it was only Elizabeth Anscombe who voiced her opposition.

She did it in English, rather than the customary Latin, even though she was proficient in the ancient tongue. She did, however, submit to the university's directives in wearing a skirt and stockings, instead of trousers, by far her preferred choice.

Standing in front of the assembled, Elizabeth presented her case:

Mr Truman is a murderer. He is a 'mediocre person' with 'a couple of massacres to his name'.

When he ordered the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mr Truman did not order the killing of war combatants, something which might be a legitimate act in war. Rather, he intentionally ordered the killing of innocent civilians. That is murder.

The proposal to award him an honour is ‘sycophancy’, and it puts the assembly at risk of ‘[sharing] in the guilt’ of the wrong committed by Mr Truman.

Those who spoke in support of the nomination agreed with Elizabeth that the dropping of the bombs ‘was a mistake’ – they did not ‘approve the action’. Still, they thought the degree was merited.

To defend their position they sought both to diminish Mr Truman’s responsibility for the dropping of the bombs, and to lessen its significance.

To diminish Mr Truman’s responsibility, proponents of the degree pointed out that Mr Truman ‘did not make the bombs by himself’. He ‘was only responsible for the decision’ to drop the bombs on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and he didn’t do that ‘without consulting anyone’. All Mr Truman did was put his ‘signature at the foot of the order’.

To lessen the significance of the dropping of the bombs, proponents insisted that, anyway, that was but ‘only one episode: an incidental, as it were, in a career. Mr Truman has done some good’.

After the speeches came the vote. The official record indicates assent with one accord to the conferral of the degree. But some of those present were sure they’d heard opposing calls.

The event was reported in the international press and reached Mr Truman himself. He was asked by a journalist what he thought of Miss Anscombe’s position, and he replied that he had ‘made the decision on the facts as they existed at that time, and if I had to do it again I would do it all over again’.

The award was conferred in full pomp and ceremony later that summer at the Sheldonian Theatre (just behind you, if you’re facing Convocation House).

A spot of trivia: the same body turned down a proposed honorary degree for Mrs Margaret Thatcher. By tradition, all Oxford University alumni who make it to the office of Prime Minister are awarded an honorary degree. Mrs Thatcher was a Somervillian, so she would have stood to receive the award when she first became Prime Minister, in 1979. Because she was so unpopular, the proposal for the degree was withheld until 1986, when her ratings seemed more favourable. But they were not favourable enough in academic circles, and the proposal was rejected anyway. It is said that this snub further fuelled Mrs Thatcher’s well known animosity towards universities.

Divinity School

The other site of interest to us here is the Divinity School.

This is where Mary and Iris sat their exams in March 1940. The exams were not usually taken here. But it was wartime, and the University had ceded many of its facilities to wartime service. So things were seldom as usual.

This occasion was also unusual in that England was in the grip of an extraordinarily cold and long winter – the coldest in 45 years. And because of the war, fuel was in short supply. Divinity would have been desperately cold. Mary and Iris resolved to take hot-water bottles into the examination room. Down they both cycled to Divinity, holding tight to their bottles. But, once in the room, against the three-hour papers, the comfort afforded by their bottles did not amount to much. This was not a setting that would induce anyone's best performance, and both Mary and Iris expected calamitous marks.

Iris was found that afternoon by some friends 'keening and crying with alarm, sure she had failed'. And Mary braced herself for 'a Third or even a Fourth'.

In the end, they both gained a Second.

Mary put her own unexpected performance down to the 'amazingly serene atmosphere' in the room, and the inspiration that she found staring into the 'particularly splendid fan-vaulted ceiling'.

Our next stop is 13 King Edward Street, one of Iris's numerous Oxford addresses. It is stop B on your map, and is about a four minutes' walk away. The audio for that section is under two minutes long.

To get there, step out of the Bodleian complex onto Catte Street. Walk south towards Radcliffe Square. Turn right onto the High Street, and then take the second left onto King Edward Street. Number 13 is about 60 metres on the left. You won't actually see the no. 13, as it has been incorporated, with no. 12, into the Oxford Sixth Form College. At the time of recording, the number 13 has not been retained, but the number 12 has. Number 13 would have been the door to the left of no. 12.

13 King Edward Street, stop B

Iris changed addresses often. We don't always know why she moved from one address to the next, but we do know why she moved here.

This was the place she found when, returning home at 58 Park Town from out of town, she was instructed by a displeased landlady to vacate her lodgings. It was due to Elizabeth and their friend Georg Kreisel. We will learn about their antics when we arrive at 58 Park Town.

At 13 King Edward Street, Iris rented two unfurnished rooms.

Alas, she was also thrown out of this address. This time we don't know why. Whatever the reason, though, she was sanguine about it. In a letter to a friend, she wrote that it was 'just as well' that she had been kicked out, 'in light of the homicidal feelings towards my landlady … who is destined to be killed with a hatchet'.

From here she moved into 48 Southmoor Road. This address is far up north, too distant from all the other locations in the tour, so we have not included it.

Our next stop is 3 Cornmarket Street, where an incident took place between our women. It is stop C on your map, and it takes about four minutes to walk there. The audio entry for it is four minutes long.

To get there, head back towards the High Street. At the High Street, turn left and walk towards Cornmarket Street. When you reach Cornmarket Street, turn right. Number 3 is on the right. At the time of recording it is a Vodafone shop.

3 Cornmarket Street, stop C

Number 3 Cornmarket Street used to be one of the popular Lyons' tea rooms. Sometime in 1948, the four women were enjoying their afternoon teas and coffees here, whilst they pondered over Philippa's insights on words like 'rude'. Philippa had observed that words such as 'rude' were important because they posed a challenge to a view that had become fashionable among Oxford philosophers, according to which facts and values were independent from each other.

On that view, if two people disagree about the facts of a situation, at least one of them must be wrong. But if they disagree about the value of a situation, it is possible that neither of them is wrong. This is because, the view goes, the standards for facts are objective, whilst the standards for value are subjective. For example, if two people disagree about whether Mr Truman was a president of the USA, at least one of them must be wrong. But if they disagree about whether Mr Truman was a good president, then, on this view, it is possible for neither to be wrong.

Philippa thought that words like 'rude' pose a challenge to that doctrine. She argued that the facts to which those words refer cannot be separated from their evaluation. For example, the facts to which the word 'rude' refer involve something like causing offence by showing lack of respect. But causing offence by showing a lack of respect is itself a bad thing. And we cannot separate the fact of causing offence by showing a lack of respect from its being a bad thing. Hence, if we agree that something is rude, we must agree both to the facts of that situation and on their value. The same would go for a description of Truman's action as 'murder'.

In Lyons' Tearoom, Iris attempted to refine the point by means of an example that involved Elizabeth. Mary recalls how things unfolded. Iris said: 'Of course, the evaluative meaning of rudeness might not be all bad. For instance, Elizabeth, I should imagine that some people might describe you as "rude"?'.

This remark should have been uncontroversial. As Mary recalls:

'Elizabeth's unbridled rudeness was so proverbial that it simply didn't occur to Iris for a moment that [Elizabeth] herself might not be perfectly well aware of it and indeed take pride in it. Iris couldn't have been more wrong. Elizabeth froze and was wholly silent for a long time, removing herself to an arctic silence. She then stood up and made a short speech, showing that she regarded any such suggestion as an intolerable and extraordinary insult, after which she marched out in dignified silence'.

There is another place of interest nearby. The Cadena Café was at 45-46 Cornmarket St. (now a Leon restaurant). Elizabeth used to go there as an undergraduate, often on her own, and mull over the questions that exercised

her. That's my coffee and my cigarette packet, but what do I *really* see? Do I see those things themselves, or just their surfaces?.

She would still be musing on this question in the 60s, and she began to answer it in her paper 'The Intentionality of Sensation', in 1965. Here she made the point that when we say 'I see a cigarette packet', we might be saying something about the world, or we might be saying something about ourselves; or, most commonly, both.

Our next stop is the Oxfam shop, on Broad Street. It is stop D on your map. It takes about four minutes to walk there, and the audio for that stop is about two minutes long.

From 3 Cornmarket Street, walk north the length of the street. When you reach its end, Broad Street will be on your right. Take that turn. The Oxfam Shop is a little over 100 metres along, on the right.

17 Broad Street, Oxfam Shop and Collecting Centre, stop D

The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) was formed by a group of Oxford progressives in 1942 to assist in alleviating the mass starvation in Greece caused by the war. But the war had also prompted mass displacements of peoples in mainland Europe, and their plight remained dire even after the war had ended. Oxfam directed its efforts here too. In 1945 Oxfam put up advertisements around Oxford asking for volunteers to help organise donated goods. Philippa, recently returned to Oxford from her wartime work in London, responded and soon she was sorting and folding clothes and sundries. In around 1948 she was recruited to the governing committee. The committee would meet in this store, and would sit in the bow window overlooking the street.

In an unpublished interview, Philippa related that one of the things that kept her in Oxfam was the egalitarian ethos brought in by its Quaker founders. Oxfam remained a permanent fixture in her life.

Our next stop is the Ashmolean Museum, where Mary was subject to an unexpected examination. It is stop E on your map. The walk there is about four minutes long, and the audio is about two minutes long.

If you are facing the Oxfam shop, turn right and walk back up Broad Street. Turn right onto Magdalen Street – be careful not to mistake it for Magdalen Street East, which is a few metres before. You are heading for Beaumont Street. The Ashmolean Museum is about 60 metres on. You will recognise it from a distance through the banners advertising events.

Ashmolean Museum, stop E

In June 1942, having sat her final exams, Mary was awaiting her degree mark. But before it was decided, she was made to sit through a viva at the Ashmolean. The viva turned into a three-hour long ordeal and Mary blamed Elizabeth for it. This is how she recounts it in her memoir:

'One reason for this long viva was undoubtedly that these … examiners had lately been having a lot of trouble in grading previous students whose work was good in part of the course and resoundingly awful in another… there had been a specially bad case of this in the previous year over Elizabeth Anscombe, who had hardly looked at any part of the syllabus except the bits of philosophy that interested her'.

Indeed, Elizabeth's uneven approach to her studies has become legendary. Her philosophy examiners wanted to award her a First, but the historians did not: she had neglected the history part of her degree and when she sat her exams, it showed. A viva was arranged to settle the matter, but things didn't fare much better. Eventually one of the examiners resorted to a direct question:

'Miss Anscombe, is there any fact at all about the history of the ancient world which you would like to comment on?'

After a pause, Elizabeth mournfully shook her head: No.

In the end, and despite Elizabeth's fantastically bad performance, both she and Mary got a First.

Our next stop is Blackfriars, a Dominican priory, and a site of deep importance to Elizabeth. It is stop F on your map. It is a two minutes' walk away, and the audio is three and a half minutes long.

From the Ashmolean, retrace your steps back towards the junction between Magdalen Street and St Giles'. St Giles' is branched out at this point. Take a left onto the first branch of St Giles'. Blackfriars is about 130 metres up St Giles', on your left. It has a self-identifying plaque by its main, arched, doorway.

Blackfriars, stop F

When Elizabeth arrived in Oxford in 1937, she had already been schooling herself on Catholicism for some years. Her family had tried to deter her, but once in Oxford, she quickly sought out those who would guide her into the Church. She found them at Blackfriars.

Although she considered herself 'converted' as early as 1935, she was officially received into the Roman Catholic Church on Easter Day in 1938.

Blackfriars was also formative of Elizabeth's ethical outlook. It was a site where Catholic thinking on the morality of war was taken seriously. There were seminars and talks discussing the issue, and Elizabeth and her future husband, conscientious objector Peter Geach, were frequent attendees.

In addition, during her undergraduate studies, Elizabeth received tutorials at Blackfriars on Aquinas from Father Victor White. White was one of the foremost writers on Catholic social and political thought, much of which was at that time occupied by war, including the Spanish Civil war which raged from 1936-1939. It was a most unusual arrangement for an undergraduate to receive tutorials from a friar, on a subject which was not even part of her curriculum. But both tutor and tutee found their sessions rewarding, and White wrote glowing reports on Elizabeth's progress.

The intellectual environment at Blackfriars, as well as conversations with her philosophy tutor, the theologian Donald MacKinnon, helped Elizabeth shape her views on Britain entering the war.

Elizabeth teamed up with Norman Daniel, a history undergraduate at St John's, (later a scholar of Islam) and produced a pamphlet called: *The Justice of the Present War Examined: A Criticism Based on Traditional Catholic Principles and on Natural Reason*. In this, they laid out the conditions for a just war and explained that those conditions were not met by the British government. Therefore, they concluded, the war was not just. It was immoral, and sinful. The pamphlet came out in April of 1940.

The pamphlet earned Elizabeth and Norman a reprimand from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Thomas Leighton Williams. On 1st May 1940 the Archbishop wrote to the Prior of Blackfriars pointing out that it was not within the authors' rights to call the pamphlet 'Catholic', because they had not 'submitted it to ecclesiastical authority'.

They were asked to withdraw all unsold copies. Although they judged the Archbishop's judgement 'wrong and unreasonable', they did as told. Sort of. As late as December of 1940, the pamphlet was still being recommended by a Catholic bulletin.

Elizabeth's section of this pamphlet is now published – lawfully – in her *Ethics, Religion and Politics* collection (1981).

Our next stop is 27 St John Street, home of Elizabeth for much of her time in Oxford. It is stop G on your map. It is about three minutes' walk away, and the audio is about four minutes long.

Walk north on St Giles' and turn left onto Pusey Street. Walk up to the end of the street, where you will hit St John Street. When you do, turn right. Number 27 is about 30 metres along, on your right.

27 St John Street, stop G

This was Elizabeth's home for much of her time in Oxford. Initially she lodged in a box-room on the top floor, at a time when the house was in a sorry state. The window frames were rotting, the ceiling of one of the rooms was collapsed, and it lacked basic facilities: no hot water, inside WC, or heating. The building belonged to St John's College, and when the College's bursar visited in 1949, he recorded having been 'horrified' by the conditions. He wrote in his report: 'The place is dirty and in every way discreditable to the College'.

The house had to be vacated for several months to allow for a renovation overhaul. When the work was completed, Elizabeth returned as the main tenant taking a larger room on the first floor, at the back of the house and letting out the remaining rooms.

The four women would sometimes meet here. Iris was a particularly frequent visitor, often staying until the small hours, drinking wine and brandy.

For a time during 1948 Iris's diary entries are full of references to 'E.' and even include a romantic sonnet; at the same time, a mutual friend believed Elizabeth to be in love with Iris.

Wittgenstein also stayed here with Elizabeth for a while. Elizabeth met Wittgenstein at Cambridge in 1944 and the pair quickly became friends and collaborators. On the floor of her room in St John Street, she laid out jottings and *Zettel* from Wittgenstein notebooks. These notes would eventually come to form part of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. In December 1949, Wittgenstein was diagnosed with terminal cancer. A few months later, in April 1950, he moved into the attic here. Some of the conversations the two had during this time became part of Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*. Wittgenstein was terrified of dying in an English hospital, so on the 8th February 1951 Elizabeth took him on the train to Cambridge, to his doctor's own home, to be looked after there in his final days. He died on the 29th April 1951. Elizabeth, three other friends, and a priest were at his bedside.

Later that year, Elizabeth's husband Peter Geach, who had been living in Cambridge with their children, secured a stable job at the University of Birmingham. An easy commute from Oxford, he and the children joined Elizabeth at 27 St John Street. They also welcomed a cat, Tibbles.

They were still living here in 1956, when Elizabeth made her speech in Convocation House against the award of a degree to Mr Truman. She published her speech as a pamphlet with the title *Mr Truman's Degree* and sold it from this address. As the news of her position spread, many sent letters. Most praised Elizabeth and celebrated her courage and dignity. But others accused her of disregard for the POWs, who would have remained in the hands of the Japanese were it not for the dropping of the bombs. The pamphlet is now reprinted in her collection *Ethics, Religion and Politics* (1981).

Our next stop is St Aloysius Church, which opened its doors to Elizabeth, but not to Iris. This is stop H on your map. It is a five minute walk away, and the audio is about a minute and a half long.

To get there walk north along St John Street. When you get to Wellington Square, walk around the square turning first right and then left. Follow on the pathway to Little Clarendon Street. Turn right onto Little Clarendon Street, and continue straight on until you hit the Woodstock Road. There, take a left. St Aloysius Church is about 80 meters up the road, on the left.

St Aloysius Church, stop H

Although Elizabeth's religious life was centred around Blackfriars, she would worship at St Aloysius too. But it looks like her unconventional ways were less tolerated here. In March 1949, a fellow churchgoer complained that Elizabeth had been wearing trousers at early mass. Objections to Elizabeth's apparel were not uncommon. Her wardrobe preferences were in misalignment with the University's, and the University was in a constant battle to make Elizabeth comply. She was not troubled by that, but a complaint regarding her attire in Church was another matter. Elizabeth was so deeply affected that she considered seeing a psychiatrist. In the end, she opted for a priest, choosing the 'oldest & most sober & most severe' that she could find. He reassured her that the Church had no objection to her wearing trousers, and she was ebullient with relief, so much so that Iris thought she might be high on caffeine.

St Aloysius had a different significance for Iris. In Autumn 1938, newly arrived in Oxford, Iris knocked on the door but received no answer.

Our next stop is Somerville College, which was a big part of the lives of all our women. It is stop I on your map. It is just a minute up the road, and the audio is four minutes long.

To get there, simply carry on up the Woodstock Road for about 30 metres. Somerville College is on your left. You will recognise it by its self-identifying plaque and by its arched gateway.

Somerville College, stop I

Somerville was at the centre of much of our women's lives in Oxford.

Mary and Iris arrived as undergraduate students in October 1938, both to study Honour Moderations and Literae Humaniores, the four-year course better known as 'Mods and Greats'. Mary arrived on a Deakin Scholarship: £50 for three of the four years. Iris on an Open Exhibition award of £40 a year. Mary recalled that Iris was one of the first people she met upon arriving at Oxford. 'I liked her at once and she quickly became one of my closest friends', she said.

Philippa arrived a year later, in October 1939. She was to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE), a three-year course. She chose PPE, instead of Mods and Greats, because she wanted to do philosophy but didn't know any Greek. PPE allowed her to avoid the classics.

Philippa and Mary met in Somerville in the spring of 1940 and soon became friends. When and where Philippa and Iris met is less clear. It is likely that they would have become aware of each other within the walls of Somerville, but it looks like the friendship that would fulfil them throughout their lives didn't take off until, at their tutor Donald MacKinnon's suggestion, Iris visited Philippa when she was ill in bed, in the Spring of 1942.

Elizabeth was an undergraduate at St Hugh's, but it was in Somerville's dining room, invited by a friend and Iris's flatmate, Jean Coutts, that she met Iris and Mary. This was also in the spring of 1940.

In 1942, after they had all graduated and Iris, Mary, and Philippa went on to do wartime jobs, Elizabeth stayed in Oxford, taking on some tutoring work at Somerville as she began postgraduate work. This became a research fellowship in 1946. By now Elizabeth had been close to Wittgenstein for some time, and since he was not keen on Oxford's philosophy or philosophers, Elizabeth served as a kind of Wittgenstein envoy. Later she would become a Fellow of Somerville, and would stay until 1970, when she moved to Cambridge to take Wittgenstein's old Chair.

Philippa returned to Somerville to take up a teaching job in 1945, when her wartime work at Chatham House, London, wound up at the end of the war. By October 1947, her teaching job had become a lectureship.

In October 1957, as Elizabeth's research fellowship at Somerville was coming to an end, Philippa wrote to the Principal of Somerville urging that she employ her. Elizabeth, Philippa stressed, was possibly the best philosopher in the country. She – Philippa – had just got 'on to something in ethics', and could dearly use Elizabeth's company to help her along. Philippa offered to share her own job with Elizabeth, or else she would have to resign, for 'to stay on, keeping Elizabeth out would be a thing which would leave one without a shred of self respect [sic]'.

But there was no need for such drastic measures. Elizabeth was given a fellowship, and Philippa kept hers until 1969, when she resigned in order to take on various visiting posts in the US. She remained a fellow at Somerville for life.

Our next stop is the Royal Oak pub, which is stop J on your map. It is barely a minute walk away from Somerville, and the audio is one minute long.

To get to the Royal Oak, simply carry on northbound on the Woodstock Road, and you'll find it some 100 metres up the road on your right.

Royal Oak, stop J

The Royal Oak is where Iris had her first alcoholic drink. It was October 1938, and she had a gimlet – a cocktail made from gin and lime juice. It seems like Iris liked the experience, as pubs became a prominent fixture in her life. Her taste in drinks also became extraordinarily capacious. Anthony Kenny recalls her thinking nothing of mixing different wines together, and even 'the mingling of white and red to form a murky rosé' was perfectly acceptable.

Our next stop is St Anne's College, where Iris gained a permanent position as a philosopher. It is stop K on your map. It is two minutes' away up the road, and the audio is three and a half minutes long.

To get there, carry on northbound on the Woodstock Road for about 150 metres. St Anne's is on your right.

St Anne's College (then Society), stop K

In April 1948 St Anne's advertised for a philosophy tutor. Iris was torn. She wanted the job 'very much indeed', but Mary was applying too, and Iris was pained at the thought of the friends competing against each other. Also, Iris and St Anne's principal, Miss Plumer, had a history. Immediately after the war, Iris had worked in various capacities for the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). Miss Plumer had been Chair to a committee to which Iris had been Secretary, and neither saw the best in each other. The prospect of being under Miss Plumer's direction once again, was not enticing. Despite her misgivings, Iris applied, along with Mary.

Donald MacKinnon and Isobel Henderson, tutors of theirs from undergraduate days, wrote references for both. Henderson produced a two-page letter outlining why she could not choose between the two. Mary is the 'better scholar', Iris 'a person of unlimited enterprise'; Mary 'strikes me as a better Oxford don', Iris 'is the more original'. 'I wish you could appoint them both'. MacKinnon was equally conflicted. Of Mary he said that she was 'unquestionably the better scholar of the two', of Iris that she was 'the better philosopher'. Mary's level of intelligence and sound character 'obviously make her a very strong candidate', whilst Iris 'makes a very strong impact on people and can easily, without knowing it, influence them a great deal'. Given MacKinnon's complicated relationship with Iris – we will hear more about that at the Keble stop – we cannot help but wonder whether that last remark was meant as a recommendation or as a warning.

In July Iris got the job. Dejected, Mary sought solace in decapitating irises in Philippa's garden.

Iris taught mostly to students of PPE and of Greats. Her subjects included the standard repertoire: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Berkeley, Kant, and moral philosophy. But she also liked to deviate from the orthodoxy, and one year she taught Lenin's *State and Revolution*.

Iris was not terribly interested in administrative matters. Her biographer, Peter Conradi, notes that there are no records of Iris in the college's governing records, suggesting that she did not contribute to board meetings. Instead, she was sometimes caught reading under the table during those meetings. Despite this, she was generally liked and admired by staff as well as her students, towards whom she was remarkably generous and dedicated even if her unconventional ways – she would sometimes lie on the floor – confounded some of them.

Our next stop is St Hugh's College, where Elizabeth completed her undergraduate degree. It is stop L on your map. It is about 10 minutes away, and the audio is two minutes long.

To get there, carry on northbound on the Woodstock Road. Turn right onto St Margaret's Road, and walk along for about 650 metres. St Hugh's is on your right. You will recognise it by its self-identifying plaque, and by the expansive gate, a good distance behind which stands the college's main building.

St Hugh's College, stop L

Elizabeth arrived at St Hugh's in 1937, on a £60 scholarship, to study the four-year Mods and Greats. St Hugh's had a reputation for religious girls, and Elizabeth certainly was that, although the singular seriousness and intensity with which she pursued theological questions might have exceeded the stereotype.

When preparing for her Greats exams in the Spring of 1941, Elizabeth turned to Miss Mary Glover, the college's philosophy tutor, for help. Miss Glover advised Elizabeth to follow her heart when choosing her subjects of study, rather than considering prospective exam questions. Elizabeth embraced that advice wholeheartedly. Evidence of that approach is reflected in the comments she received from her tutors. One of them observed that Elizabeth's 'chief obstacle is her reluctance to give the necessary attention to philosophers who repel her'. Despite this, she gained a First.

Our next stop is Park Town. This comprises the set of stops M on your map. The walk there is five minutes, but there are a number of addresses of interest there. To walk by all of them will take about 5 minutes - longer if you pause at each of them. The audio for the whole visit to Park Town is about six minutes long.

Carry on along St Margaret's Road towards the Banbury Road. At the Banbury Road turn right. Head down until you find Park Town on your left. Turn into it. Walk along it and take the first left to stay on Park Town. Walk all the way ahead till you meet the crescents. When you do take the right crescent and bear left. The first address of interest there is no. 16, which is the second house in the terrace.

Park Town, stops M

This set of crescents was home at various times to Philippa, Iris (twice), and Mary. For a while, they all lived here at the same time.

16 Park Town

The longest resident of the three was Philippa, at no. 16 Park Town.

When Philippa, newly wed to Michael Foot, returned to Oxford after the war, they bought this house. They took in lodgers and kept the ground floor for themselves as their living space.

When all four friends had reconvened in Oxford after the war, they would often meet in Philippa's front room. Here, they would try to unpick the philosophy credo that was sweeping Oxford: the view that there was a sharp division between fact and value, and that the individual was the only source of value.

When Iris got her tutoring job at St Anne's in July 1948, Philippa suggested that she move in with her. She did, and stayed for about a year, after which she moved into a place of her own, just up the street, at 58 Park Town. At Philippa's, Iris's room was on the middle floor. The previous occupant of that room had been Prue Smith, from the BBC Third Programme. Prue had met Iris here, and was taken by her voice, which Prue described as 'lovely'. Prue commissioned two broadcasts from Iris in 1949. They became the essays 'The Novelist as Metaphysician', and 'The Existentialist Hero', both of which are now reprinted in the collection *Existentialists and Mystics*, edited by Peter Conradi.

It was the irises in the garden here that met with Mary's disappointment at losing the St Anne's job to Iris. You might recall this anecdote from the episode for St Anne's College.

It was also from here that, in October 1957, when Philippa was convalescing with the flu, she wrote her letter to the Principal of Somerville encouraging her to employ Elizabeth. We heard about this in the episode for Somerville College.

43 Park Town

Much earlier, no 43 Park Town had been Iris's temporary undergraduate accommodation. In 1939, the university effected a range of relocations so it could lend some of its facilities to war related activities. As part of those rearrangements, Iris moved here with three other friends. This would have given the young undergraduates considerably more freedom than the College's own rooms. But it was curtailed by the harsh facts of war. Although Oxford was

left unscathed by aerial bombing, there were occasional sirens that would send them into the basement, to huddle together until the danger had passed.

55 Park Town

Mary joined the Park Town folk in the summer of 1945. She was at no. 55 Park Town.

Mary came back to Oxford after the war to work as a secretary for classicist Gilbert Murray. Murray was the translator of the Greek plays Mary had studied as a schoolgirl and was one of the founders of Oxfam.

Mary's room was a bedsit on the top floor of no. 55, from which she had a 'sweeping view' that included both Philippa and Iris. Mary relished this time. She would see a good deal of her friends, and gradually got 'back into the philosophical scene'.

58 Park Town

In the Autumn of 1946, a year after Iris had moved in with Philippa and Michael, she moved out and took up room at no. 58 Park Town.

Iris would often have Elizabeth around for supper, and the two women would carry on their discussions, be it at home or down at the pub, into the small hours.

Iris was thrown out of this address sometime in late 1951, owing to the frolics of Elizabeth and a mutual friend, Georg Kreisel. Iris was out of town, and Elizabeth and Georg used her kitchen to attempt some feat concerning a herring soup. The soup was reportedly a success, but they also produced an almighty mess and stench. Iris's landlady could only infer that an orgy had taken place, and when Iris returned, the landlady delivered Iris her marching orders. From here, Iris moved to 13 King Edward Street. We stopped at this location earlier in our tour.

In addition to our women, the crescents of Park Town boasted many an illustrious resident.

No 14 was home to Bloomsbury potter Phyllis Keyes. She was one of those who sent a note to Elizabeth congratulating her on taking a stand against the proposal to award an honorary degree to Mr Truman.

At **No 20** lived Lydia Pasternak. She was a Russian poet and chemist. Her dad was the post-impressionist painter Leonid Pasternak, and her mum was pianist Rozalia Isodorovna Kofman. Her brother was Boris Pasternak, author of *Dr*

Zhivago. Lydia and her family first moved to Germany escaping the Russian October Revolution of 1917, and in 1935 she came to Oxford escaping the Nazis.

Hermann (Hugh) Blaschko, the biochemist and pharmacologist, who was also in Hitler's Black Book, lived at **No 24**.

Our next stop is no. 2 Bradmore Road, where Iris and Philippa's lifelong friendship properly began. It is stop N on your map. It is 7 minutes' walk away, and the audio is just over one minute long.

Exit Park Town through the arch marked The Terrace that you'll have passed when visiting 55 and 58. At the end of the alley turn right and head down Dragon Lane. This brings you to Benson Place which turns into Norham Road as you turn right. Carry along Norham Road until you get to a left hand turn onto Bradmore Road. Number 2 is on your right, towards the end of the street. It is an intriguing neo-gothic detached house, set a little bit back from the road.

2 Bradmore Road, stop N

When Philippa was preparing for her finals in the Spring of 1942, she suffered a bout of tuberculosis – a repeat of an illness that had blighted her childhood. She moved in with a friend, Anne Cobbe, and Anne's mum arranged for Philippa's tutors to come to teach her at her bedside. Iris and Philippa had met but had yet to become close. Their tutor Donald MacKinnon suggested to Iris that Philippa, bedridden as she was, might appreciate a friendly visit. Iris obliged, bearing a bunch of wildflowers. Thus a lifelong friendship, one of the most important in both women's lives, began.

Our next and last stop is Keble College, where all our women's nascent philosophical outlook was indelibly shaped by the same tutor: Donald MacKinnon. It is stop O on your map. It is about eight minutes' away, and the audio is three minutes long.

Carry on down Bradmore Road. Turn right onto Norham Gardens and walk all the way to the Parks Road junction. Once there, bear left to stay on Park Road. Head south for about 500 meters. Keble College is on your right. It is the long, imposing building with patterned brickwork echoing High Victorian Gothic.

Keble College, stop O

All our women had tutorials with Donald MacKinnon here, at Keble College. MacKinnon was young, in his late 20s and early 30s when he taught the women. By age, he should have been serving in the war. However, he was a devout Christian and initially a conscientious objector. He later decided that the Nazi horrors made his stance unsustainable, but when he tried to sign up, he was rejected because of his asthma. So he stayed in Oxford. This was lucky for Elizabeth, Iris, Mary, and Philippa, for, despite being one of the new generation of philosophers, MacKinnon had not been convinced by the neat, slick, clean-cut world picture of logical positivism. Logical positivism held an unbridgeable distinction between facts and values – recall that we encountered a version of that distinction earlier, in the scene at 3 Cornmarket Street. But, unlike other views which also accepted that distinction, logical positivism construes facts as those things which can be studied through the method of science, and the only things about which we can think and talk meaningfully. Values, by contrast, in not being amenable to the scientific method, are seen as something about which we cannot talk or think meaningfully. All 'talk' or 'thought' about the Good, the Right, and the Beautiful is nothing but gibberish.

MacKinnon, and his philosophical outlook, maintained that there was much more to being human than the new fashionable view recognised. Humans, he put it to his tutees, are *metaphysical animals*. It is in our nature to seek meaning deeper than meets the eye. But logical positivism declared that all we can think about and talk about is what meets the eye. Therefore, logical positivism is not a view for humans – it is not a view for creatures like us. This spurred our women to think beyond what the new orthodoxy allowed. All their subsequent work, in one way or another, opposes that orthodoxy. Iris, Mary and Philippa all avowed their great indebtedness to Donal MacKinnon.

He kept contact with Philippa and with Iris for many years. His relationship with Iris, though, strayed from the merely pastoral. Donald and Iris were infatuated with each other, causing MacKinnon's young wife, Lois Dryer, much suffering.

Lois pleaded with Donald to cease contact with Iris. He did for a while, but then in 1947, as Iris was preparing her return to philosophy, Donald was at hand to assist, and their relationship was revived. Lois was again in distress as she witnessed the rekindling of their relationship. Luckily, Donald was offered the Regius Chair of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen University. He and Lois moved there before Iris was back in the Oxford scene.

Much later, in 1954, Philippa and Iris returned to Keble, this time as teachers. Together, they would lead their graduate students to explore the relation between morality, concepts, and the shared world that sustains all these things. Their crop of students included Bernard Williams, who took his influential distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' concepts from these sessions.

Closing

Thank you very much for using our Oxford audio self-guided tour. We hope you have found it enjoyable and illuminating. If you would like to learn more about the Quartet, head to our websites womeninparenthesis.co.uk, and mappingthequartet.org. You can read much more about the women's lives, friendships, and philosophy in *Metaphysical Animals*, by Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman.

This tour is based on the story told in *Metaphysical Animals*. Additionally, we have consulted the following works:

'The Influence of Victor White on G. E. M. Anscombe', by John Berkman

Iris Murdoch: A Life, by Peter Conradi.

The Owl of Minerva, by Mary Midgley

'Moral Arguments', by Philippa Foot

Brief Encounters, by Anthony Kenny

Wittgenstein, Duty of Genius, by Ray Monk

Living on Paper: letters from Iris Murdoch 1934 – 1995, edited by Avril Horner and Anne Rowe

A Memoir: People and Places, by Mary Warnock

And an unpublished interview of Philippa Foot by Martin Gornall.

This production was brought to you by In Parenthesis. The script was written by Ana Barandalla, with input from Rachael Wiseman, Amy Ward, Rachel Bollen, and Clare Mac Cumhaill. Music and sound production by Amy Ward. Technical assistance by Sally Pilkington and Rachel Bollen.

And I've been your narrator, Amy Ward. Thank you for listening.