

PRESS RELEASE

***Oxford Castle – Unlocked* Revealing History Imprisoned for Centuries**

Oxford Castle – Unlocked is a visitor attraction with a past stretching far beyond your imagination. For hundreds of years the site has held both famous and infamous residents, serving time as a religious site, a home for royalty, a centre of justice and as the County Gaol.

The castle itself was originally built in 1071 for William the Conqueror, to enable the Normans to control the area. Soon after, a prison was built within the castle and it continued to be used as a place of incarceration until 1996, holding public executions until 1863.

After almost one millennia filled with episodes of violence, executions, great escapes, betrayal and even romance, only now can this ancient castle reveal its stories about the ordinary people who roamed the site and the extraordinary tales that connect them to it.

Having been preserved and redeveloped, the old buildings are now open to the public. Visitors to the site can experience the austere confines of the 18th-century Debtors' Tower and Prison D-wing; feel the dark and oppressive atmosphere of the 900 year old underground Crypt where it is said, began the education for which Oxford is famed; marvel at the Mound of the 11th-century motte and bailey castle with vaulted well chamber; climb the Saxon St George's Tower – the oldest surviving example; and enjoy the unique 360° panoramic views over the historic city of Oxford.

The secrets of Oxford Castle's turbulent past have finally been unlocked, and visitors to the ancient building can journey through the past as they wander through, learning about the real people linked to the site including: Marshall William Smith, the King's prison keeper, who in the 1600s made Oxford Prison as feared and as notorious as Colditz; Mary Blandy a convicted murderess, who became an 18th century celebrity; Jack Ketch, the public executioner and the man on which the Punch & Judy hangman character was modelled; and Anne Green, who survived her own hanging and narrowly escaped being anatomised by an Oxford medical student in 1650!

In addition, the visitor attraction has a rolling calendar of enthralling events for visitors to take part in, one of which is England's premier ghost festival, as *Oxford Castle – Unlocked* is thought to be one of Britain's most haunted sites.

Visit *Oxford Castle – Unlocked* and discover the secrets for yourself...

Cont...

Oxford Castle – Unlocked is open daily from 10.00am to 5.30pm (last tour 4.20pm). See www.oxfordcastleunlocked.co.uk or call 01865 260666 to find out more!

ENDS

For further media information, images or to arrange a visit, please contact: Keira Relton or Heidi Folland on 01904 527700 or krelton@continuum-group.com / hfolland@continuum-group.com.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Oxford Castle - Unlocked is open daily from 10.00am to 5.30pm (last tour 4.20pm). Admission prices: Adults £7.50, Children £5.35, Concessions £6.20.

Oxford Castle - Unlocked opened on 2 June 2006 and gives visitors the opportunity to learn about the real people who lived and died throughout site's turbulent past. Visitors are able to walk through the ancient buildings and experience the stories that connect the real people to these extraordinary events.

The guardians of this important historic site, The Oxford Preservation Trust were awarded a £3.8 million grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the castle and site buildings. The post of Learning and Access Officer is funded by Oxfordshire County Council.

Oxford Castle - Unlocked is operated by Continuum - visitor attraction operators and specialists in the tourism and leisure industry. See www.continuum-group.com