



*Guest Senior Writer Philip J., Villanova PA:* The brightest student in my high school class went on to college, grad school and then became an Oxford professor. Although we'd occasionally contact each other through the years, I was surprised when he recently called and said he'd be in town for several days.

He was in nearby Philadelphia for a series of lectures at the University of Penn, and I was happy to meet again with my classmate. We had an enjoyable lunch together talking about old times. When he was leaving, he told me that if I were ever in Oxford, I should contact him. I laughed, because just by happy coincidence, my wife and I were planning a vacation flight to London in just a few weeks. I gladly accepted his kind invitation.

When we arrived at the eight-century-old university city after a one-hour train ride from London, my old classmate greeted and guided us on a tour of the campus buildings. We walked in awe through the world's most famous university, viewing for the first time sights we had only seen in history books.

We admired the classic buildings, including tours of the Bodleian Library and Radcliffe Camera, Ashmolean Museum and the Sheldonian Theatre. We also visited various colleges, residence halls and classrooms and many other sites on the picturesque campus.

Our host invited us to be his guests at lunch at the University Club. We were joined at our table by other faculty members, many wearing the familiar flowing black robes traditional for Oxford dons (professors). In the afternoon, we sat in with students at several lecture halls. We listened in on discussions about history, philosophy, science and other academic subjects.

At the end of the day, our host took us to dinner at one of Oxford's typical pubs, The Eagle and Child (49 St. Giles, Oxford). Near the university's St. Johns College, the 360-year-old pub is a favorite hangout for locals, tourists, students and faculty. It has a history through the years of attracting literary figures while they were at Oxford. The list includes J.R.R. Tolkien (The Lord of the Rings) and C.S. Lewis (Chronicles of Narnia).

For dinner, we ordered the pub's famous ale-battered fish and chips platter, which included mushy peas . We had chocolate puddle sponge pudding for dessert, along with glasses of Nicholson's ale.

On the night we visited, there was a string quartet playing softly in a corner, while a lively quiz game brought laughter and fun for patrons. We overnighted at The Old Bank Hotel (92-94 High Street, Oxford).