



OCIS NEWS

OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Prince of Wales Inaugurates the Centre's New Building

HRH The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, inaugurated the Centre's new building on 16 May 2017. Many well-wishers sent messages of support for the event, which was attended by around four hundred guests. Following a lunchtime reception, the opening ceremony began with speeches by the Centre's Director, Dr Farhan Nizami, and the co-chair of the Board of Trustees, HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal. HRH The Prince of Wales then gave the inaugural address, after which he unveiled a plaque commemorating the event.

The guests at the inauguration represented national and international institutions that have been actively engaged with the Centre over many years.



HRH The Prince of Wales unveiling the inauguration plaque



The Patron with HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal, co-chair of the Trustees and Shaikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, Chair of the Building Committee

The Centre was honoured and pleased to welcome, among others: HM Sultan Muhammad V The King of Malaysia; HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, The Crown Prince of Bahrain; HRH Prince Muhammad bin Nawaf (representing HM The King of Saudi Arabia); HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz;

HRH Prince Abdul Mateen Al Bolkiah (representing HM The Sultan of Brunei); HE The Sultan of Sokoto;

HH Shaikha Hussa Al-Sabah (representing HH The Amir of Kuwait), HH Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq (representing HM The Sultan of Oman), HE Salah Ghanim Al-Ali (representing HH The Amir of Qatar), HE Alhaji Adamu Adamu (representing HE The President of Nigeria); HE Mr Mikayil Jabbarov (representing HE The President of Azerbaijan); HE Mr Erlan Idrissov (representing HE The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

Among many long-standing friends of the Centre able to attend were: HH Princess Eleena of Perak, HRH Princess Basma bint Talal of Jordan, HE Dr Jamal Al-Suwaidi (Abu Dhabi), HE Dr Surin Pitsuwan (Thailand), HE Dr Rawya Saud Al Busaidi (Oman), Sheikha Altaf Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah (Kuwait) and HE Sayed Ali Al-Hashemi (UAE).

Senior representatives of international organisations



Foreign dignitaries at the inauguration ceremony



The new building of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

included: HE Dr Mohammad Abdul Karim Al-Issa (Secretary-General of the Muslim World League) and the Rt Hon the Baroness Scotland (Secretary-General of the Commonwealth).

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, HE Mr Khalid Al-Duwaisan, and more than thirty Ambassadors, High Commissioners and senior diplomats (representing their respective governments) attended, taking the opportunity to tour the completed building and gardens.



HM The King of Malaysia with HRH The Prince of Wales

In their roles as members of the Centre's International Academic Advisory Committee, HE Shaikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa, HE Shaikh Mohamed Al Thani, HE Dr Usman Bugaje, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and HE Dr Driss Ouauouicha were among the guests.

From among the members of the Centre's Strategy Advisory Committee, the Rt Hon Lord Ashdown, Rt Hon Jack Straw and Rt Hon Dominic Grieve were also present.



HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz with the Patron

Other members of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the UK Civil Service attended the day's events along with representatives of national bodies, including Mr William Shawcross, Chairman of the Charity Commission.

Local representatives included the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, the Lord Mayor of Oxford and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

The Centre was pleased to welcome Sir Peter North, a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and many Heads of House, officials and academics from the University, including the Chair of the Conference of Colleges, Professor Paul Madden.



HH Saiyyid Haitham, Representative of HM The Sultan of Oman arriving for the ceremony

Professor Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, the Chief Architect of the Centre's building, and over twenty others associated with its construction (architects, stonemasons, craftsmen, designers and project



HRH The Prince of Wales addressing the audience (managers), returned as guests of the Centre and were warmly thanked for their contribution over the years. Professor El-Wakil gave a lecture at the end of the day's events on 'Architecture in the Light of Tradition'.

The idea of a building in Oxford dedicated to Islamic studies was conceived by the founding Trustees of the Centre when it was established in 1985. Current and former Trustees of the Centre were thanked for their vision and enduring commitment to the project. Those who had been unable to attend, including the Board's chair Dr Abdullah O. Nasseef, were also remembered and congratulated on their achievement.

With the support of Magdalen College (particularly its then-President, Mr Anthony Smith), the first stone was laid in March 2003. In the construction works that followed, craftsmanship and materials of the highest standard were used. Co-chair of the Board of Trustees, HRH Prince Turki observed that this excellence in construction could not have been achieved without the generous support of many of the guests present at the inauguration. He especially thanked The Prince of Wales for his unstinting support and encouragement to the Centre for nearly a quarter of a century.



HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bahrain being received by the Chairman



HH Shaikha Hussa Al-Sabah, Representative of HH The Amir of Kuwait, with the Patron



HRH Prince Mateen, Representative of HM The Sultan of Brunei with the Chairman



The Chair of the Conference of Colleges with the Patron



Guests from Azerbaijan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Nigeria



Dr Jamal Al-Suwaidi, Director ECSSR, UAE



Centre Trustees, Tun Sarji and Pehin Aziz with guests from South-East Asia



HE Sultan of Sokoto and the Representative of the President of Nigeria

HRH The Prince of Wales expressed his delight at attending the formal opening of the Centre's new home 'built to last, to age gracefully and above all beautifully'.

"I could not be more delighted to join you all for the inauguration of this outstanding new home for the Centre. That so many distinguished figures have travelled so far to be here... is a testament to the strength of the friendships the Centre has forged and... to the enduring significance of the values upon which [it] was founded."

HRH The Prince of Wales

He noted that it required 'extraordinary skill and sensitivity to design a new building, drawing distinctively from the architectural traditions of classical Islam, that can immediately appear so completely at home alongside the



HRH The Princes of Wales arriving for the ceremony



HRH Prince Muhammad bin Nawaf, Representative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (r), Secretary General of MWL and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps



The Patron with the Chair of the Finance Committee



HRH with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth and Marquess of Lothian



HRH with Oxford academics



Princess Eleena (r), Tunku Arishah (c) and Dr Faridah (l) with HRH



Professor Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, Chief Architect of the New Building

celebrated and historic university buildings of Oxford the combination of interconnected courtyards, halls, spaces for learning, reflection and prayer being every bit as familiar historically to the Islamic world as it has been to Oxford Colleges for the last eight centuries. This blending of styles, this symbolism, narrates a wider and vital message about the blending of culture and Faith in contemporary British society to produce a cohesive and unified whole of which we can all be immensely proud.

In concluding his address, His Royal Highness said: ‘this is not an end of the story; it is just the beginning of a new



The Patron with the Chair of the Trustees and the Director of the Centre in The Prince of Wales Garden

chapter.’ He then invited those present (and absent) friends to consider ways to support the Centre in the years ahead,

to build upon what had been achieved, and to seek out further opportunities to achieve the Centre’s goal of promoting dialogue and understanding between civilisations.

After a tour of the building and The Prince of Wales Garden, His Royal Highness planted a tree in the Istanbul Courtyard to mark the occasion. The day’s events closed with a garden party and the lecture by the Centre’s Architect. In it, Professor El-Wakil emphasised the importance of symmetry and proportion, reflected in longstanding cultural traditions that draw on those qualities evident in the natural world. He argued that novelty should not be pursued for its own sake; rather, innovation in forms and materials should be balanced by respect and take inspiration from traditional harmonies, materials and techniques. This was one of the key principles that had made it possible to bring together Islamic styles and Oxford tradition in the design of the Centre’s new building, creating a unique space and environment for the Centre’s future work.



HRH The Prince of Wales planting a tree to mark the inauguration of the building

