



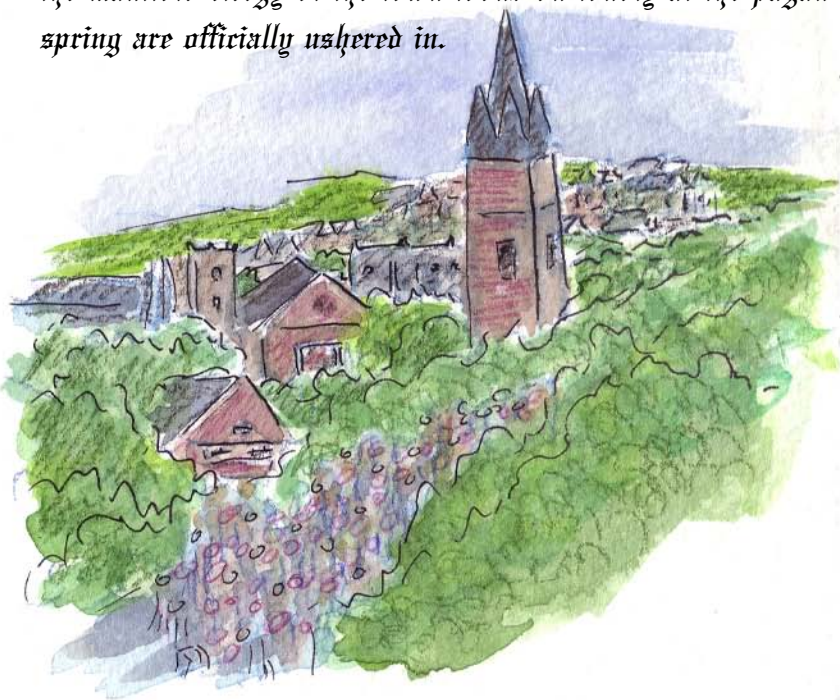
*ay-Day in Oxford is an ancient ritual,*

*which has been suspended from time to time over the centuries due to excessive unculinness. It begins well before dawn, when from all directions people trickle into the high street, making their way in the direction of the Magdalene College tower.*

*At dawn, choir-boys raise their voices to the day, their sweet, high chorus trailing down over the packed street of families and homeless men, passing tradesmen and beersodden undergraduates, antiquarians and tourists. Participants of the previous night's college balls, held upright by the press of the throng, pass around half-empty bottles of cheap champagne, most of them bedraggled, tieless, sometimes shoeless, and often sodden from the puzzling ritual of leaping out of punts or off of bridges in their evening dress.*

*When the snatches of song finish drifting down from on high, the crowd shakes off its attentive silence, gives a noisy pulse, and reverses its progress, out from Magdalene College.*

*Morris dancers bounce and rattle on the paving stones surrounding the Radcliffe Camera, Hobby horses give the kiss of fertility to doomed young women, odd foodstuffs are sold, the manifold clergy of the town looks on fondly at the pagan frenzy, and the rites of spring are officially ushered in.*



*When the sky was still dark overhead, Holmes and I let ourselves out of the gate and joined the trickle, soon stream, of May Day celebrants. However, before the Magdalene choir had finished, we had been spotted.*