

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Newsletter November 2020

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Chairman's Letter

Dear fellow member

For our last Newsletter at the start of this year, our February issue, I wrote : "*In wishing you a Happy New Year, I do hope that 2020 has started well. Certainly, it holds plenty of promising opportunity for Oxford Centre members.*" For so I believed at the time! How very different 2020 has proved to be from the year we anticipated when I wrote and you first read those words.

Everyone has been sorely challenged in adapting to the pandemic, forced to change their habits, routines and daily lives. Yet I find it truly heartening how positive that has proved to be in many different ways. For instance, Oxford Centre has established alternative ways of staying in touch – as colleagues working closely together if very differently, and as members sharing news and maintaining contact in low-risk, newly creative ways

I want to thank my Committee colleagues most sincerely for their hard work and steadfast support in dealing with the difficulties and challenges that have arisen. And together, we thank each and every one of you for your continued support throughout the year, all of us committed to our charitable purpose of *promoting and prospering the National Trust in our region*. This new look newsletter reflects that commitment on every page.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously said "*Change is the only constant in life*" – how true that is today. COVID 19 is changing what we can do, and how we can go about it, and we must all adapt to that. Many of you will remember our Anniversary campaign, *Forward From 50.*, launched in 2019 in order to celebrate the legacy of our very impressive 50 year history as well as to secure the long-term wellbeing of OCNT. Today, Oxford Centre certainly stands at the threshold of *plenty of promising opportunity* but in ways that none of us could have envisaged when I last used that phrase in February:

- **the National Trust** is embracing radical change in its recovery from the drastic impact of the pandemic, seeking the active engagement of all its Supporter Groups in their Reset initiative & Renewal programme to come
- nearly 100 **Centres & Associations** nationwide are communicating closely online, as never before, and now actively and directly negotiating with the Trust at a senior level for the support and recognition we so urgently need to play our part effectively
- **Oxford Centre** is building a working partnership in various ways with the beautiful Coleshill and Buscot estates of West Oxfordshire, closely supporting the somewhat reduced team there in revitalising a local, special place "*for everyone, for ever*"

Thank you for the vital part that you and your membership play in making all this possible.

Pauline Martin, Chair, 07802 390914, chair.ocnt@gmail.com

Coleshill Revisited

Buscot and Coleshill are two wonderfully preserved estates made up of a patchwork quilt of fields, woodland spinney, water meadow and parklands as well as model villages and farms. Until they came into the care of the National Trust, during the 1950s, they were two separate estates both purchased by **Ernest Cook**, grandson of Thomas Cook, who gave them to the National Trust. In this article, I am going to look at Coleshill as that is our current focus.

The National Trust was very keen to have **Coleshill House** – an early if not the first Palladian house initially attributed to Inigo Jones but more likely **Roger Pratt**. It was destroyed by fire in 1952 before being transferred to the Trust. Apart from the house, the entire estate, from watermill and model farm to monastic great barn, still survives intact, with little 20th-century influence. However without the main house, the loss of which caused a great deal of heartache, **Coleshill Park** feels as if it has largely been forgotten with the rolling hills of the parkland, including former gardens and follies along a wonderful long shrubbery walk, now overgrown and lost to time, away from public access.



The Long Shrubbery



Small park gates

In the early 1970s the National Trust took the former **Home Farm** back under its control and over the last 40 years has been trying to find the right use for it.

I was given the wonderful role of General Manager in 2016 and we were able this year to take the parkland back in hand as well, following a tenancy change.

There is considerable backlog with walls and buildings falling at an alarming rate, but the magic remains.

The glorious opportunity to breathe new life for nature and people into the estate, working with farmers, tenants and neighbours, is a complex one with much history to digest and understand. With modern development around the estate, it is quickly becoming a green lung for local communities from a large area and one we need to plan for. We are not short of opportunities with multiple redundant buildings and there is something positive in connecting with people from the outset in the conservation of the estate, creating opportunities to help in a hands-on way to safeguard its future.



The Cucumber House

We launched the idea of a **Conservation Skills Centre** in 2019 and have received wonderful support and the foundations for some partnerships including hosting courses alongside the **Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings** and **Institute for Building Conservation**. 2020 was to be the year it all began but, like much else, this has been paused! There is a great deal to look forward to and get involved with and I look forward to sharing this journey with our partners, **Oxford Centre of the National Trust**.

Christian Walker, General Manager, West Oxfordshire

- Throughout lockdown, and now a cautious new start for the Coleshill estate, we have been exploring with **Christian Walker** and his team how Oxford Centre might help. Our defined charitable purpose is, after all, “to promote and prosper the National Trust in our region”.

His team have kindly offered us a series of illustrated on-line talks (with no speaker fees) covering different aspects of their work at Coleshill: conservation grazing on White Horse Hill; the history of Coleshill House; then a virtual walk with Christian and his lovely dog, in the parklands - abandoned for so long and now to be restored. This launches an exciting new venture for many of us.

Vice Chair, Jonathan Anelay is in contact with **Ranger, Joe Mayled**, and hoping to launch Oxford Centre’s Walking Group from Coleshill in the Spring. He wants also to take up **Ranger, Andy Foley’s** kind invitation to lead a walk on White Horse Hill (as mentioned in the first of our Autumn Lecture series in October).

Pauline Martin, Chair

This is **Middleleaze Paddock**, on the **Coleshill Park Estate** set for restoration with the planting of 500 mixed broadleaf trees and, hopefully, a small pond so as to establish a good, mixed habitat in time.



The planting here will create a small copse linking to the wider landscape through the network of hedges. It sits beside the road into Coleshill so can be readily seen by anyone visiting. This scheme fits in with the Trust’s wider ambition to create more space for nature and restore wildlife habitats across West Oxfordshire.

As a further mark of our emerging partnership, **Oxford Centre** members are offered a unique opportunity to donate towards the planting in this paddock. This is our local contribution to the National Trust’s broader scheme nationaltrust.org.uk/features/everyone-needs-nature A £5 donation will purchase a sapling, tree guard, stake and also cover some of the aftercare costs.

The planting season lasts from November to March. If, during that time, you would like to contribute please either

- email treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com to confirm the date and amount of your bank account transfer, payment reference **Coleshill Park**, bank account details: **Oxford Centre of the National Trust, account no 11035177, sort code 40-35-35**

OR

- write to **Felicity Peacock, OCNT Treasurer, 2 Cots Green, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 1UX**, enclosing your cheque with your letter

We will acknowledge, with grateful thanks, every donation we receive and let you know each month of the appeal how many trees besides yours Oxford Centre is funding towards a lasting legacy “for everyone, for ever” in support of a local estate as it reclaims a remarkable piece of its history.

Our grateful thanks to **Countryside Manager, Richard Watson**, for his expertise, guidance and support

Lectures – Winter 2020–21

We're very sorry that we can't meet up with friends on a Tuesday at Magdalen College Auditorium to listen to the Winter Series of lectures. We all miss the social interaction of getting together to share an interest in the National Trust. I realise it's a poor substitute for many members to have the lectures on line, since there are some of you without a computer or access to one, but for those of you who are able to receive emails, we're offering the opportunity to watch a talk in the comfort of your own home at a time convenient to you.

Hopefully, some of you can share the experience with a friend or fellow member. If you have no computer yourself, do you have a friend in a "bubble" with you who does have one? If so, do contact me with their email address and I could send the online link to them, and you could then watch the lecture together.

Our October talk was warmly received by many who viewed it (thank you for your kind comments!). National Trust Area Ranger Andy Foley talked to me about his job on **White Horse Hill** where he has introduced a new grazing regime this year in order to encourage different types of grass which will in turn support a wider range of wildlife, from orchids to larks. Any member who missed this talk can request a printed transcript from me by sending a large stamped address envelope (with large letter stamp). (*See below for my address.*)

The **November** talk will be **Coleshill House, its Secrets, Trials and Tribulations**, a lecture by Liza Dibble, NT Community Learning Officer for Buscot and Coleshill Estates, who will relate the use of the house by auxiliary services during World War II, when top secret training took place. This will be made available to members to watch from **16th to 22nd November**: an e-letter will give members on email the link needed to view the talk on-line.

Our **December** on-line talk, **Coleshill: Rediscovering an Historic Landscape** will be given by Christian Walker, National Trust General Manager for West Oxfordshire. He describes it as a virtual walk around Coleshill Park with his dog, discovering this lost landscape. This filmed outing will be available to members from **14th to 20th December**, and again an e-letter will be sent out a couple of days in advance to give the link for watching.



2021 lectures will continue on line with a similar procedure each month.

Transcripts may be available for some of the lectures. Please ring me after the lecture date and I will be able to tell you if so.

January 2021: 600 years of Morris Dancing, with Mike Heaney: discussing where Morris Dancing comes from; this illustrated talk disentangles the myth from the real history. To be made available to members on line from **18th to 24th January**.



Mr Hemmings Traditional Abingdon Morris Dancers

February: Making Sense of Portraits in Country Houses Amy Lim, researcher at the University of Oxford and Tate Britain, looks at 17th- and 18th-century portraits in National Trust houses and explores why these portraits were displayed, particularly the "Petworth Beauties" series. To be made available to members on line from **15th to 21st February**.

March: Cliveden: Passion, Pleasure and Politics A complete history of Cliveden with a speaker from Cliveden Talks Service: from devilish dukes to scandalous headlines and boundary-breaking garden design to political notoriety. To be made available to members on line in **March**.

Felicity Peacock, 07975 678475, 2 Cots Green, Kidlington OX5 1UX

Photographic Competition

Thank you to members who submitted photos for the photographic competition, announced in the July News, which has raised £100 towards OCNT funds.

The photos could be of any National Trust property taken within the last 2 years. Twenty entries were received and included photos of Buscot Park, Biddulph Grange, Charlecote, Snowhill Manor, Shugborough, Moseley Old Hall, Little Moreton Hall and Lyme Park.



Snowhill by Phil Kemp

The entries were judged by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer who awarded first place to Phil Kemp for his photo of Snowhill Manor, with Betty Father's photo, taken in the kitchen at Shugborough Hall, a close runner up. Congratulations to the winners!



Shugborough Hall Kitchen by Betty Fathers

Could you be our next Hon Sec?

The search continues for someone with time to spare to help us out. Valerie McCarthy will be stepping down at the end of the year and we may have no-one in the role for our next January meeting. No previous experience is necessary, other than the use of email and Word. The Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer will be delighted to have your input at 4 meetings per year, contact with our committee colleagues being managed by email – dictated by COVID-related restrictions.

Do please get in touch with me if you would like to know a little more?

Pauline Martin, Chair, chair.ocnt@gmail.com 07802 390914

Oxford Centre AGM

Our Constitution (last revised in 1998, when we adopted what was then the National Trust's standard constitution for local Centres) requires the holding of an Annual General Meeting of the members within three months after the end of each Financial Year: ie by the end of March. We were unable to hold our meeting this year because of the lockdown. There is no provision in our Constitution for the holding of Members' meetings online: and anyway not all our Members have computers. So we have adopted the pragmatic course of deferring the AGM until further notice. When this will be remains uncertain.

Therefore we are including below a summary of the 2019 Accounts from our Treasurer, and inviting Members to let her know if they would like the full Report and Accounts. Would they also please contact her if they have any difficulty with the maintenance, unchanged, of the subscription rate, or with the continuation in office of the independent examiner of the Accounts? Members should also know that Daphne Groat and Nesta Jones retired from the Executive Committee in March, having given notice that they did not wish to stand for re-election at the AGM.

We hope very much that it will be possible to hold a normal AGM next March.

Jonathan Anelay, Vice Chair

Treasurer's Report on 2019 Accounts

A summary of the report which was intended for the AGM, March 2020

2019 was a successful year in economic terms for the Oxford Centre. A surplus of £4,191 was made on the organised activities, a profit of £437 was made on the 200 Club and, with donations and other fund raising, we were able to give a donation of £5,000 to the National Trust to be divided among local NT properties for various projects. (Full details of the allocation of these donations were given in the February 2020 Newsletter.)

Our income from subscriptions of £3,461 increased from 2018, and more than covered the Centre's running costs for the year, of £2,589. These costs included sending 3 newsletters to members, and publicity. Newsletter printing and postage costs are decreasing every year as more of our members give us email addresses.

Advertising of our winter lectures to members and to the public resulted in an average attendance of 73 at Magdalen Auditorium, which was a welcome increase over previous years, and meant that we made a healthy surplus on 6 lectures of £863. This was also the result of serving our own coffees before lectures rather than paying the college for this service. Many thanks to the catering team organised by Di McNeile.

12 Visits by coach between March and November with a member average of 44 resulted in a surplus of £3,299. This is our main fund raising activity.

The Balance Sheet at 31 December 2019 showed a bank balance of £5,024, which reflected a surplus of £950 for the year. The "bottom line" showed a Cumulative Surplus carried forward of £4,883 after allowing for minor liabilities.

If any member would like a copy of the audited Final Accounts and Balance Sheet for 2019, please either email me or send me a sae.

Felicity Peacock treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com 2 Cot's Green, Kidlington OX5 1UX

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR OCNT MEMBERSHIP

Firstly, many thanks indeed to our loyal membership and we do hope that at some point next year we can once again bring you a programme of events. We also hope very much that you will continue your membership as this is such an important way to support the National Trust.

This is a reminder that your annual subscriptions will be due on 1 January 2021.

Single member: £10 and two people at the same address: £15 (this covers both people with one mailing. If you are on our email list and want the emails to go to two different email addresses please let the Membership Secretary know).

1. The easiest way for you to pay annually on 1st January is by **Standing Order** set up at your bank/or online.

If you are not able to do this then please either:

2. Pay by a one-off bank transfer online. Our bank details are: Oxford Centre of the National Trust, Sort Code: 40-35-35, Account No: 11035177.
For Standing Orders or one-off bank transfer please use your initials and surname as the "reference".

OR

3. Send a cheque to me, Lauriann Owens, Membership Secretary OCNT, The Black House, Henwood, Wootton, Oxford, OX1 5JX.
Cheques should be made payable to "Oxford Centre of the National Trust". We are unable to accept charity cheques.

If you have joined the Centre since 1 September 2020 please ignore this notice. Your next subscription will be due on 1 January 2022.

Thank you, **Lauriann**

Something to Look Forward to

OCNT 2021 Holiday – Monday 11th to Friday 15th October 2021

Plans are in hand for a 4 night holiday to Hereford and District staying at Warner's Holme Lacy House, a Georgian manor house enjoying listed gardens and views of the Wye Valley which has good reviews. Several of the National Trust properties in that area have not been visited by the Oxford Centre since 2002. There will also be free time in Hereford and Leominster. Properties will be visited also on the outgoing and homeward journeys.



As usual we shall use a Plastow's coach and Gordon McCallum will be our driver; his excellent organisation always adds to the enjoyment and ambience.

The cost of the holiday is £505 for dinner, bed and breakfast. As ever single rooms are limited, this time to 16 with a supplement of £40. If you are interested in coming, please consider sharing. Please put the date in your 2021 diaries. Booking forms will be included in the February newsletter.

Pam Lee

Diary Dates (as fully described on page 4 of this newsletter)

16-22 November: “Coleshill House, its Secrets, Trials and Tribulations” – by *Liza Dribble*

14-20 December: “Coleshill, Rediscovering an Historic Landscape” – a virtual walk with *Christian Walker*

2021:

18-24 January : “600 years of Morris Dancing” – with *Mike Heaney*

15-21 February: “Making Sense of Portraits in Country Houses” – by *Amy Lim*

March date and speaker tbc: “Cliveden – Passion, Pleasure and Politics”

Oxford Centre’s 2020 Executive Committee:

CONTACT US: we warmly welcome your comments, thoughts, ideas

Chairman: Pauline Martin chair.ocnt@gmail.com 07802 390914

Vice-Chairman: Jonathan Anelay

Hon. Treasurer: Felicity Peacock treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com 07975 678475

Hon. Secretary: Valerie McCarthy

200 Club: Felicity Peacock, assisted by member **Daphne Groat** *who draw readers’ attention to the application form for 2021 shares attached to this newsletter*

Communications Advisor: Tim Burman

Hospitality: Di McNeile

Membership Secretary: Lauriann Owens oxfordcnt@gmail.com 07496 308572

Newsletter Editor: Margaret Lipscomb editor.ocnt@gmail.com

Programme Sub-Committee – Lectures: Felicity Peacock

Visits: Carol Smith, Betty Fathers, Cathy Pickin

Publicity: Felicity Peacock, Carol Smith, Rupert McNeile, Tim Burman

Ticket Secretary: Rupert McNeile

See our new website: <http://oxfordcnt.co.uk>

All of us at Oxford Centre send warmest good wishes for a very happy Christmas despite the difficulties and challenges that exist.

We very much hope that we will all have the joyful prospect of meeting up again before too long in the New Year. Let’s see ..

*When you applied for membership of the Oxford Centre of the National Trust you gave us contact information so that we could keep you informed about forthcoming activities and invite you to take part in our events. This personal information is used solely for the purposes of running the Centre and its activities. It may be exchanged among members of the Committee but will not be shared with any other organisation. Your details will be kept securely and you have the right to opt out of our communications at any time. You also have the right to request to see what information we hold about you. If you wish to do this please contact: **Membership Secretary, Lauriann Owens, The Black House, Henwood, Wootton, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5JX** e-mail: oxfordcnt@gmail.com*