

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Newsletter November 2023

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07444 100273

www.oxfordcnt.co.uk

From the Chair

As 2023 draws to a close, we anticipate Christmas and New Year of course – a busy, celebratory time. We've been considering what has gone well for Oxford Centre this year, what hasn't, and why. That's reflected in these pages where we explain what will change for members in 2024, for instance ..

- **our new contact telephone no is 07444 100273** (the old number will continue to take calls for the next 3 months to help manage this transfer)
- **your membership subscription** is shortly due for renewal with the option for everyone to review their preference to receive newsletters in print or digitally (page 2)
- only *YOU* can demonstrate to us whether or not we can continue to offer **live Lectures** (pages 6–7)
- **Visits *must*** show a minimum of 30 bookings by their booking deadline or they won't run (page 4) (We're working out how to simplify our Bookings Form in response to your feedback, by the way)

My five years as Chair comes to an end in March: my colleagues and I have used that time to invigorate and refresh every aspect of OCNT's operations firstly in celebration of our 50th Anniversary and subsequently in recovery from the shattering impact of a global pandemic that shut everything down. *Together we have thrived and continued to support the National Trust, year on year.* My committee colleagues have been stalwarts, entirely dedicated, but absolutely deserve a break and the opportunity to hand over to others. Our shared New Year resolution, then

Unless younger and newer members are willing to come forward, take on the tasks outlined within these pages, OCNT will be forced to restrict what it can offer to its members with immediate effect.

More seriously, the Centre's long-term future will be at risk

For March 2024 Oxford Centre seeks a new Chairperson with responsibility for liaison and compliance with the National Trust, chairing regular Committee meetings (currently quarterly), and ensuring the fulfilment of our charitable objects "*to promote and prosper the Trust in our region, and to ensure that membership is enjoyable*" in all our activities. The Trust is very clear and supportive of its requirements, with help and guidance readily available. The Committee (currently 8) has a wealth of experience to call upon and we have Friends and Supporters as back-up. No previous experience is necessary – email and access to the Web are pretty essential and a ready sense of humour will help!

Oxford Centre exists for its members and for the National Trust. More than anyone, I know how important that is to you – you've told me! Now, OCNT's future rests in your hands. I genuinely look forward to hearing back from anyone who would like to know more about the vacancy for a new Chair or can recommend someone.

Meanwhile, I hope to see lots of you at our next **Tuesday coffee date 28 November** and/or at our **Magdalen lecture on 12 December** where we need to muster a more robust audience if Oxford Centre is to continue to meet the costs of hiring a lecture hall with the necessary technical support for audio-visuals that today's speakers require. Tell your friends, save the date? Thank you!

Pauline Martin, Chair (retiring March 2024) | chair.ocnt@gmail.com | 07802 390914

RENEWING YOUR OCNT MEMBERSHIP FROM 1 JANUARY 2024

Subscription increase for ALL members wishing to receive newsletters by post

Many thanks to our continuing loyal membership, and welcome to all our new members. This is to remind you that **your annual subscriptions will be due on 1 January 2024**, and to explain the new subscription rates for those who receive newsletters and booking forms by post rather than by email.

There is **no subscription increase** for members who receive newsletters and booking forms **by email**. The annual rate for this option will continue to be £10 (single) or £15 (joint membership).

Important Information for members who wish to receive newsletters by post:

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, it was agreed at the AGM in March that annual subscription rates for members receiving newsletters and booking forms by post will increase by £5 to **£15 (single membership) or £20 (joint membership)**. This comes into effect from 1 January 2024. This price rise is to reflect the increased costs of printing and postage.

Action required please:

1. **If you would like to receive our newsletters and booking forms by post from January onwards, even if you're already receiving newsletters by post**, please would you
 - i) **Let us know that this is your choice** by either emailing membership.ocnt@gmail.com or phoning 07444 100273, **and**
 - ii) Arrange payment of the new amount e.g. **amending your Standing Order** if you already have one set up. If you pay by another method e.g. bank transfer or cheque, please **ensure you pay the revised amount (£15 single or £20 joint membership)**
2. **If you have previously received newsletters and booking forms by post but would now like to receive them by email instead**, please let us know by emailing membership.ocnt@gmail.com and confirming the email address you would like them to be sent to, and arranging your subscription payment **as before**.
3. **If you have previously received newsletters and booking forms by email and are happy to continue to do so** then you don't need to do anything other than arranging to pay your subscription at the start of January.

Please note that from January onwards paper copies of the newsletters and any booking forms will only be posted to those who have paid the enhanced subscription rate.

Note that you can read the Newsletters on our website [Newsletters – OCNT \(oxfordcnt.co.uk\)](http://Newsletters-OCNT(oxfordcnt.co.uk)) but booking forms are only sent directly to Members, never published online.

How to pay your subscription

Please help us to maintain our records more easily by paying your subscription **by Standing Order** wherever possible. Anyone with a current account can set up a Standing Order either online, over the phone, or in person at a branch of their bank. After giving the bank your instructions, your subscription should be paid by the bank on 1 January every year – you won't need to remember, and we won't need to remind you if you're late paying! These are the details of our current bank account which you will need to give to your bank:

OXFORD CENTRE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

Sort Code: 20-65-20 Account No: 33248968

(Please quote your surname and initial with the reference SUB) NB Our bank account changed in November 2021. You may need to check with your bank that your Standing Order will be paid to this account, as above.

If you still prefer to pay your subscription by cheque, please send it by 31 December to the Treasurer, 2 Cot's Green, Kidlington OX5 1UX. Thank you. Please ensure you make cheques payable to **Oxford Centre of the National Trust**, written in full (not OCNT).

You may also bring a cheque for your subscription to the Lecture on 12 December at Magdalen Auditorium and give it to the Treasurer in person.

Louise Hodges, Membership Secretary and Felicity Peacock, Treasurer

Our National Trust Neighbour – West Oxfordshire

Sarah Hannis, Senior Volunteering & Community Officer for West Oxfordshire writes:

As oak leaves and acorns fall, the West Oxfordshire team remains busy preparing for tree planting, planning for 2024 and, of course, Christmas.

Christmas is always a lovely time of year for National Trust properties. At **Coleshill**, there will be a Christmas Craft Fayre on Sunday, 26 November from 10am to 4pm. Meanwhile **Chastleton House** will be celebrating a 1960s Christmas. Visitors can discover a different Chastleton, a hive of activity, reminiscent of the parties hosted by Barbara and Alan Clutton-Brock in their heyday. This nostalgic approach last year had many visitors reminiscing with volunteers. Christmas opening at Chastleton is Wednesdays to Sundays, from 29 November to 17 December from 11am to 3pm, last entry at 2.15.

We have been actively **recruiting volunteers**. A new volunteer role for us is Walking volunteer. This is part of a National Trust programme to attract new audiences and introduce them to our beautiful countryside. Volunteer walk leaders will help community groups enjoy a nice, gentle walk without fear of getting lost.

Another role is for volunteers to scythe (yes, the centuries old skill of mowing) a specific area of the countryside. The National Trust along with Freshwater Habitats Trust are **managing a rare habitat of lowland alkaline fen**. This calcium rich, spring-fed water supply needs careful and continuous management. This area is extremely important for wildlife and often very rich in plant species. The fens also help by purifying water and creating wetland buffer zones to reduce flood risks in the surrounding land, as well as being excellent stores of carbon. We are currently in the restoration process of the project, involving scything and raking away the overgrown areas of reeds, reducing the nutrient levels of the fen to allow more diversity in plant species to come through. Why scything? Scything and raking is gentler and more effective for this work.



Walking Group News

This year we have walked from Hughenden, Stowe, Buscot, Long Crendon, Waddesdon and Grey's Court. On each occasion there has been a short (2 miles or so) walk in the morning and a longer (4–6 mile) walk in the afternoon. Some come for just one of these, some for both.

Over the last three spring-to-autumn seasons we have visited most of the Trust properties within 40 or so minutes' drive of Oxford. Next year – starting in March and finishing in October, with a break during the usually hottest period – we will aim to complete the 'set'; and also perhaps repeat one or two of the early outings, such as the Ranger-led walk on White Horse Hill.

Do let us know (oxfordcnt@gmail.com) if you are not already on the list of walkers, and would like to join. You would then receive emailed details in advance of each day of walks.

Jonathan Anelay

Coffee Mornings

We have all enjoyed our informal coffee mornings, held on the last Tuesday in the month, at the Weston Library Café, Broad Street. The last one this year is on **28 November**. Do join us if you can.

Sadly, the venue is not yet able to confirm any bookings for next year, so we don't know if we will be able to hold them at a reserved table in future. We will try to keep you informed of developments.

I will, however, be present at the Weston Library Café from 10.30 on **Tuesday, 30 January 2024** and would be pleased to see anyone who would like to join me, by which time we hope to have news about future gatherings.

Nesta Jones

VISITS JANUARY TO FEBRUARY 2024

Tuesday, 23 January 2023: LUNCH AT BROWNS, 5–11 Woodstock Rd, OX2 6HA

12.30 for 1.00pm Cost: £22 including service charge

MENU

Main

Pork, apple and Somerset cider sausages
Smoked haddock fish cake and lemon hollandaise
Chicken and leek pie
Risotto verde (ve)

Dessert

Bramley apple and blackberry crumble
Chocolate fondant
Lemon posset
Ice cream

Choose one dish from each course.

Send your menu choices to Pauline Martin by e-mail: chair.ocnt@gmail.com OR phone **07444 100273** in the first instance and by **12 noon, Friday, 15 December** latest.

Payment of £22 can be made by Bank Transfer to account 33248968, 20-65-20 – payment reference BROWNS or by cheque payable to Oxford Centre of the National Trust. Pauline will confirm her postal address on request for you to mail your cheque (we never show personal contact details here as our newsletters are always published on our website – see OCNT Newsletters).

Hoping to see you there!

Monday, 5 February 2024: VISIT TO WINDSOR

This trip has been arranged following many requests to visit the scene of recent events including the burial of Queen Elizabeth II and Philip, Duke of Edinburgh in addition to the marriage of Prince Harry.

Although, at first sight, it seems to be expensive for a day trip, it should be remembered that you can use your ticket for free entrance to the Castle as many times as you like for one year if you get your ticket stamped when exiting the Castle.



The coach is not allowed to drop off passengers near the Castle entrance so it will drop us in the coach park in the town centre. Here it will be possible to do some shopping and have a snack or lunch before the visit to the Castle. The visit is booked to start at 1.15pm. It is a 10–15 minute walk mostly uphill from the coach park to the castle entrance. You have to pass through airport-style security before you are allowed in so ensure that you do not have anything in your bag which might be confiscated. You are advised to put keys, phones, cameras, coins etc in something (a bag or a coat) which can go through the x-ray machine separately from yourself. When you get in you can collect a free multimedia guide to help you follow the one-way route through the Castle precincts and St George's Chapel. There are about 10 flights of steps to negotiate during the tour ranging from 3 to 25 stairs in length. Most, but not quite all, have lifts which can be used by those with mobility problems. Some of these need to be operated by Castle Wardens who will be close by. At various places on the tour there are toilets and shops. There is a café for refreshments in the Undercroft.

Cost: £57

Booking deadline: Friday, 5 January

Leader: Rupert McNeile (07957 136926)

Departing:

****Wheatley, Plastow's Yard 9.15am**

Wheatley, Ambrose Rise 9.20

Headington Shops (outside Iceland) 9.30

Cunliffe Close 9.45

Oxford Playhouse 10.00 am

Parkway P&R 10.15

***** Please always ensure you have sought Barbara Plastow's permission before booking with us to board at this point, by phoning her on 01865 872270***

OCNT Holidays

Kent Holiday, May 2024 – cancelled

It is with regret that the Kent holiday has had to be cancelled due to the proposed hotel being unable to provide more Single rooms and requiring two Double/Twin rooms to complete our agreed number of 30 persons. It is hoped that information about an alternative holiday for 2024 will appear in the February newsletter.

Many thanks to those who supported the holidays this year in Plymouth and Chester. **Pam Lee**

Chester Holiday



Thirty-seven of us ventured out on the holiday to Chester staying at the historic Queen at Chester Hotel where we enjoyed good food and comfortable rooms, mostly named after royalty (especially relatives of Queen Victoria) or well-known figures, such as Charles Dickens and Cecil Rhodes, who had stayed there in the past. One of our group even had the luxury of a four-poster bed!

Our visits took in a wide range of historic periods from the religious upheavals and persecutions of the 16th century (particularly highlighted at Baddesley Clinton, Speke Hall and Coughton Court) to the splendour of 17th-century Dunham Massey house and park, through to the Industrial Revolution with a visit to the cotton mill at Quarry Bank, and on to present-day Liverpool with a visit to Albert Dock and the glorious modern Roman Catholic Cathedral. Some of us also took time out to explore the many attractions of Chester including the Cathedral, the Rows, the city wall, and the zoo.

Many thanks are due to Diane from Plastow's for her careful driving and Pam Lee for organising the trip and for remaining cheerful and helpful throughout.



Quarry Bank cotton mill

Day Visits in 2024

We recently invited your feedback – thank you to everyone who responded. We have looked closely at your comments, at the growing cost of hiring a coach and driver, and who's available to research, plan and lead a Day Visit for us. And the outcome to all that?

- Oxford Centre can and will continue to offer **Day Visits** as long as enough members can support them (note within these pages Nesta's proposal for a Lunch in January and Rupert's Booking Form to visit Windsor in February)
- Unless we hold **minimally 30 bookings with payment received** by the published booking deadline a Visit will be cancelled and payments returned (cancellation is a real disappointment to members who have booked and to everyone who has worked on all the detail of the day with us; the return of payments creates extra admin too)
- We are looking at ways to make **Bookings** more straightforward in future. For now, we no longer need to record **next of kin contact details** on your behalf but ask that when travelling with us you please keep these with you, in case they're needed
- We will always issue a **printed ticket** in confirmation of your booking which requires your sae (booking online suits some but not others and incurs costs in setting up a digital system – a situation which OCNT will always avoid, because our funds are channelled towards annual donations to the National Trust)

*Please submit your Booking Form as soon as you can –
remember that postal deliveries are frequently subject to delay.*

We look forward to meeting up soon

Lectures – November 2023 to March 2024

The small size of the audience (only 36) at our lecture at Magdalen Auditorium on 17 October was disappointing, which throws in doubt the viability of our future “live” lecture programme. (*More on this below.*) We therefore hope for your support for the lectures listed here, either by watching a Zoom recording on your own computer, and/or by coming to lectures at Magdalen College Auditorium.

If you watch any Zoom lecture, we invite you to make an “honesty payment” of £5 to Oxford Centre to help defray costs. This can be by cheque payable to Oxford Centre of the National Trust, posted to the Treasurer, 2 Cot’s Green, Kidlington OX5 1UX, or by bank transfer to our bank account no 33248968 sort code 20-65-20, using reference “ZOOM donation”. OR if you come to the live lecture at Magdalen, you can pay there retrospectively, together with your entrance fee of £5. You are welcome to bring friends to our lectures (non-members pay £6).

20 to 26 November, via Zoom, at a time of your own choosing in your own home, or with a friend who has a WiFi connection to their laptop or tablet

Nuneham Courtenay: one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world

The whole Nuneham estate represents an important demonstration of 18th- and 19th-century aristocratic taste and power. It also illustrates the threats to survival which faced English country estates in the decades after World War 2, and the challenges that still lie ahead. This talk by historian **Malcolm Airs** will touch on all these themes in exploring its chequered history.

A link to view this Zoom lecture will be emailed to members a few days before 20 November

Tuesday, 12 December, 11am at Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall St

– our pre-Christmas gathering with mince pies!



Caring for a Nation’s Photographs

National Trust photography collections are widespread; they reflect the development of photography from the 1840s to the present day. Many reveal how our places appeared in the past, while others capture formal and informal portraits of the people who lived there.

Anita Bools, the National Trust’s Senior National Conservator for Paper and Photography, will share some of her favourite photographs and reveal their stories. She will also describe the challenges in caring for such a vast and precious collection.

Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served in the Auditorium Foyer from 10.30am, a chance to chat with old friends and meet new ones!

15 to 21 January 2024, via Zoom at a time of your own choosing in your own home, or with a friend who has a WiFi connection to their laptop or tablet

A History of the National Trust



Speke Hall (1500)

Our speaker, **David Simmonds**, describes his talk: Great oak trees grow from tiny acorns, and this is certainly true of the National Trust. From its humble beginnings in January 1895, the Trust has grown to have over five million members, more than 500 historic buildings, 780 miles of coast and close to 1,000 square miles of countryside. This talk considers how the National Trust has developed over the past 128 years, and suggests ways in which it might change in the future.



Mendips, John Lennon’s family home (1950)

David has been a volunteer for the National Trust since June 2008, and gives talks through the Trust’s East of England Talk Service. He is a keen birdwatcher and walker.

A link to the Zoom lecture will be emailed to members a few days in advance.

Tuesday, 20 February 2024, 11am at Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall St



The archaeology of Stowe Landscape Garden

Archaeologist **Dr Stephen Wass** has been engaged by the National Trust to carry out a variety of archaeological interventions across the park and gardens at Stowe over the past five years. The talk will give an account of these varied investigations and the light they shed on the long history of the site and the challenges that modern management of the gardens face.

Tea and coffee will be served in the Auditorium Foyer from 10.30am, a chance to chat with old friends and meet new ones!

Tuesday, 19 March 2024, 11am at Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall St, after the AGM at 10.45am

The 'Asian Mystery': Benjamin Disraeli and the Poet in Politics

Benjamin Disraeli was the most unlikely prime minister of the 19th century. A Jew, a novelist and a failed poet, he rose to the leadership of the Tory Party while upturning all the social conventions of his day. Critics called him “the Asian mystery”; he himself boasted of having “an Oriental mind”; and his great rival, Gladstone, thought him a dictator in the making.

This talk by **Dr Robert Saunders**, Reader in British History at Queen Mary University of London, explores the life and career of one of Britain’s most colourful and controversial prime ministers, assessing the origins of Disraeli’s politics, his impact on the 19th century and his legacy for later generations.



Tea and coffee will be served in the Auditorium Foyer from 10.20am, a chance to chat with old friends and meet new ones! There will also be a pre-AGM raffle in the Foyer.

The challenge of funding our lectures at Magdalen College Auditorium

We are lucky to have such a pleasant well-equipped lecture theatre to hire at Magdalen, but we need an audience of at least 70 to cover the hire cost if each member pays £5 entrance. In 2019 our lecture audience was up to 80, but of course members have been anxious about attendance since Covid arrived among us. We have the option of raising the entrance fee at Magdalen to £7 per member in 2024 and/or holding more or all lectures via Zoom. What do you think we should do? Please email with your thoughts: treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com.

Could you help with our lecture programme for October 2024 to March 2025?

Over the past couple of years I’ve been ably assisted by Karin Eldredge in finding lecture speakers and drawing up a programme of winter talks. Karin is now stepping aside, so there’s a vacancy for someone to follow up ideas for a programme of six lectures (which may be either “live” or recorded via Zoom), which are relevant to the National Trust’s work or local historic properties. There are some suggested speakers on file to start from, and we should be starting soon to get in touch with them, sort out dates, confirm details etc for next season. This role would suit someone (or two people!) who can work at home, using email and phone, to persuade speakers to talk about their work or their interests to our members. If possible, where relevant, the organiser/s should be able to attend the venue on lecture days and check arrangements, welcome speakers etc. I’d be happy to offer help and advice, and discuss further with anyone interested in helping arrange our lecture programme. I hope to hear from you!

Felicity Peacock (07975 678475, treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com)

200 Club Shares for 2024

All members of Oxford Centre are invited to apply for shares in the **200 Club** for draws in January, February, March, October, November & December 2024

We aim to sell at least 200 shares in January at £5 each; roughly half of the sum raised will be paid out as prizes and the other half will support projects in local NT properties. See enclosed form on which to apply for your shares, and for a fuller explanation of our 200 Club.

Do put these dates into your diary – we really don't want you to miss out ...

NOVEMBER	200 CLUB DRAW, no 5 of 6
20th-26th	Zoom lecture: Malcolm Airs, <i>'Nuneham Courtenay: one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world'</i>
Tues, 28th	Coffee at Weston Library café, just drop-in, 10.30 – 11.45
DECEMBER	200 CLUB DRAW, no 6 of 6
Tues, 12th	Lecture: Magdalen Auditorium, 10.45 – 12 noon, ALL welcome. Anita Bools, <i>'Caring for a Nation's Photographs'</i> , £5 or £6 non-members, payable at the door
Fri, 15th	Booking deadline for Lunch at Brown's (23 Jan)
JANUARY	200 CLUB DRAW, no 1 of 6
Fri, 5th	Booking deadline for Windsor visit (5 Feb)
15th-21st	Zoom lecture: David Simmonds, <i>'A History of the National Trust'</i>
Tues, 23rd	*Lunch at Brown's, 12.30 for 1pm, organised by Nesta Jones
Tues, 30th	Coffee at Weston Library café, just drop-in, 10.30 – 11.45
FEBRUARY	200 CLUB DRAW, no 2 of 6
Mon, 5th	*Day Visit to Windsor with Leader Rupert McNeile
Tues, 20th	Lecture: Magdalen Auditorium, 10.45 – 12 noon, ALL welcome. Dr Stephen Wass, <i>'The archaeology of Stowe Landscape Garden'</i> , £5 or £6 non-members, payable at the door
MARCH	200 CLUB DRAW, no 3 of 6
Tues, 19th	Magdalen Auditorium, 10.45 AGM immediately followed at 11am by Lecture: Dr Robert Saunders, <i>'The "Asian Mystery": Benjamin Disraeli and the Poet in Politics'</i>

Note: *Members need to have booked a place for these events, please refer to pages 4–5

Oxford Centre NT's 2022–3 Executive Committee, Friends and Supporters who extend their warmest good wishes to you all for Christmas and New Year 🎄

President:	Dr Nick Brown , Principal, Linacre College, Oxford
Chair:	Pauline Martin chair.ocnt@gmail.com 07802 390914
Vice Chair:	A Committee vacancy
Hon Treasurer:	Felicity Peacock treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com 07975 678475
Hon Secretary:	Pat Jones
200 Club:	Felicity Peacock
Friends 'in residence':	Pegasus Grange: Pam Lee, Val Gould Tumbling Bay Court: Mark Davies, Sally Roberts
more OCNT Friends at:	Moorside Place, Wingfield Court, William Morris Court residences
Holidays Co-ordinator:	Pam Lee , working with Plastow's Travel Ltd & Airedale Tours Ltd
Lectures:	Felicity Peacock , additional help is urgently sought
Membership Secretary:	Louise Hodges membership.ocnt@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor:	Margaret Lipscomb editor.ocnt@gmail.com with proof-reading by Janet Redfern
Auditorium helpers:	Michael & Rachel Faulkner , David Hodges and Jo Willoughby
Ticket Secretaries:	Rupert McNeile , Guy Rogers
Visits/Events:	Betty Fathers , Rupert McNeile , Guy Rogers, Cathy Pickin, Matthew Johnson, Nesta Jones and others
Walking Group:	Jonathan Anelay
Publicity:	Felicity Peacock , Susan Pfunder, Caroline Walker, Pam Lee
Website Manager:	Ashley Castelino

*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 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 and to request to see what information we hold about you. If you wish to do this please contact: **Membership Secretary**, phone: 07444 100273 email: oxfordcnt@gmail.com*