

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Newsletter July 2024

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OUR SUMMER AND AUTUMN PROGRAMME: DATES FOR YOUR DIARY *(see inside for further details)*

Thursday, 8 Aug: Visit to *Baddesley Clinton*, with Cathy Pickin

Tuesday, 24 Sep: Visit to *Beaulieu*, with Rupert McNeile

Wednesday, 16 Oct: Visit to *Sheffield Park*, with Rupert McNeile

Tuesday, 22 Oct: Lecture: Prof William Whyte, *'The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities'*, Magdalen Auditorium

Tuesday, 19 Nov: Lecture: Gillian Lamb and Siân Pooley *'Histories of Childhood: uncovering new heritage narratives'*, Magdalen Auditorium

9–15 Dec: Lecture: Ben Cowell, *'Saving Country Houses'*, Zoom recording available

New Honorary Secretary

At a recent Committee meeting Pat Jones retired from the Committee and as OCNT's Honorary Secretary, and David Hodges has been co-opted and taken over the position. We thank Pat for all her meticulous work on behalf of the Committee over the past few years and welcome David and thank him for volunteering to take over the role.

Important Message from the Committee

We would like you to take a moment to think about why you joined the Oxford Centre and what you most enjoy or appreciate about your membership. Maybe it is the visits, the talks, the walks, the holidays, the opportunity to socialise at coffee mornings, or a combination of these, together of course with the knowledge that you are supporting and contributing towards the continuing work of the National Trust.

Whatever the reason, the various activities offered by the Oxford Centre are entirely dependent on the voluntary work and dedication of its members and currently much of the load is falling on only a few shoulders. In addition, some members, who have been actively involved for several years and contributed more than their fair share, have now reached the stage where they need to step down due to health or other reasons. ***If we do not have more members coming forward to help out at this stage, we are in danger of losing the variety of activities we are currently able to offer our members to enjoy.***

Overleaf is a list of the areas where help is currently needed. Many of the roles could be shared between two or more members, which would not only lighten the load but also offer mutual support. Help and advice can be offered to any potential volunteers from other experienced members – so please do consider if there is some way in which you could make a contribution. The future of the Oxford Centre is in your hands!

If you are interested in finding out more, please email: oxfordcnt@gmail.com or phone: **07444 100273** and you will be put in touch with the relevant person.

Help is urgently needed in the following areas:

Committee - The Oxford Centre currently has no Chair or Vice Chair, which is putting extra burdens on some current members of the Committee. While it would be ideal if someone would step forward to take over as Chair (and we would really love to hear from you!), we would also like one or two new active members of the Committee to help oversee the activities of the Centre. The Committee meets four times a year, currently in members' homes. If you'd like to find out more, please get in touch.

Lectures - Felicity Peacock has been organising the lecture programme for a number of years and would like to hand this task over so she can concentrate on her role as Treasurer. The 2024–25 programme is already in place (see pp. 6–7) and work would normally start on making arrangements for the 2025–26 programme in early 2025. Putting together a programme of interesting speakers is a task which could be shared between two or even three members.

Walks - As you will read on p. 7, Jonathan Anelay is no longer able to continue leading the walking group which now needs a new organiser/coordinator – a role which could easily be shared between one or two members. It would be a pity if the walks had to cease as they are a popular as well as healthy activity. Please consider whether this is something you could take on, together with a friend or colleague, particularly if you are keen walkers. Organisers should be prepared to recce each walk beforehand to spot any potential hazards or problems.

Visits - The visits team is still working hard on your behalf (see pp. 4–5) but would welcome one or two new members prepared to take on organising day visits.

Holidays - Many of us have enjoyed the holidays arranged in recent years – and some members joined Oxford Centre specifically to participate in these – but we have been unable to offer a holiday this year. If this is something you would be interested in exploring, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Newsletter - Margaret Lipscomb will be retiring from the Committee at the AGM next March and we will need a new Newsletter Editor. If you might be interested in taking this over, perhaps you'd like to shadow and take part in the production of the November 2024 and February 2025 editions. If so, please do get in touch.

Publicity - We would also welcome additional help with publicising the Oxford Centre locally as we need to continue to recruit new members in order to flourish as a society. Do you have any ideas to share with the small publicity committee? Could you share the responsibility for distributing fliers, placing editorial or ads in local news outlets, writing editorials for the website etc?

As you can see from the list above, there is a lot of work and effort required behind the scenes to keep the Oxford Centre running and offering a range of events and activities for its members. Please do consider if you may be able help in some way towards ensuring the Centre's future.

OCNT Committee:

Betty Fathers, David Hodges, Louise Hodges, Pam Lee, Margaret Lipscomb, Rupert McNeile, Felicity Peacock
Email: oxfordcnt@gmail.com or phone: **07444 100273**

News from our National Trust Neighbours

Nuffield Place – New Carpet and Drystone Wall Repairs



Carpet before ...

The process of emptying the room, removing the old carpet, then laying the new and replacing all the furniture took two and a half days and was managed by staff at Nuffield Place. The new carpet is a Wilton Velvet. It has a cotton backing and is a blend of wool and polyamide. The underlay beneath it is made from a man-made fibre that offers maximum pest protection and has been designed to protect the floor and carpet. We are thrilled with the result and look forward to people seeing it in all its glory!



... and after



Meanwhile, in the garden, the drystone wall that runs along the edge of the croquet lawn at the back of Nuffield Place has been slowly repaired through the spring by our team of garden volunteers. Stone by stone, the wall has been taken down and then rebuilt back up to prevent it becoming damaged or falling down further. The result is a beautiful drystone wall that complements the borders above and below, as the garden comes to life in the summer. If you would like to learn more about Lord and Lady Nuffield, Nuffield Place is open

Wednesday–Sunday, 10am–5pm, with guided house tours in the morning (prebooking recommended).

Steven Williams, Site Manager at Nuffield Place

West Oxfordshire

Once again, we have been delighted to welcome Oxford Centre walking group to **White Horse Hill** when Ranger, Andy Foley, led the group and shared the history, geology and flora and fauna of the site (see p. 7). The Horse is about to undergo work to widen it, taking it back to the size it was in the 1900s before the grass encroached on the chalk. This means that the public chalking days are on hold for this year.

In March, **Coleshill** received a very generous donation to benefit the Heritage and Rural Skills Centre. Christian and the team are currently planning how the funds can support development of the Skills Centre, through adding and improving teaching spaces, building capacity for more skills to be taught and improving our visitor infrastructure. We will keep you posted on the progress. Art is coming to Coleshill in August with an exhibition from Cotswolds landscape artist, Rupert Aker.

Continuing the art theme, at **Chastleton House** artists and photographers have been enjoying the 'Inspired by Chastleton' days. One artist has been coming to record the changes in the gardens, others have come with easels and settled in for the day, and a group came with their art tutor. Continuing at Chastleton have been the successful Behind Closed Doors tours. This year, Barbara, Conservation & Collections Officer, has developed a Textiles Tour showing the unique textiles from the 17th to 20th centuries.

Finally, something for your Autumn diaries. On Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th October, **Coleshill** is having a 1940s weekend. The Home Front and WW2 will be supplemented with music of the time.

Sarah Hannis, Senior Volunteering & Community Officer for West Oxfordshire portfolio

VISITS AUGUST TO OCTOBER 2024

Thursday, 8 August 2024: BADDESLEY CLINTON, WARWICKSHIRE (NT)

This atmospheric moated medieval manor house was given to the National Trust in 1980. It is set in parkland in the Forest of Arden. The bridge over the moat leads to a gatehouse, then to a pretty courtyard, and into the great hall. From here there are other rooms to visit such as the chapel, library, kitchen, a bedroom and 19th-century artists' studio.



We will learn the fascinating history of the house and be shown the priests' holes where the Catholic priests hid in the 15th century.

In the gardens there are medieval fishponds, a lakeside walk, a walled garden and an orchard. Please note there are gravel paths and uneven surfaces.

In the Barnyard there is a cafe serving meals, light bites, cakes and drinks. Here also there is a National Trust shop, a secondhand bookshop and plant sales.

Cost: £29

Booking deadline: Friday, 26 July

Leader: Cathy Pickin (07798 931633)

Departing: **Wheatley, Plastow's Yard 8.30am

Wheatley, Ambrose Rise 8.35

Headington Shops (outside Iceland) 8.45

Cunliffe Close 9.00

Oxford Playhouse 9.15

Parkway P&R 9.30

Tuesday, 24 September 2024: VISIT TO BEAULIEU



With a range of attractions guaranteed to satisfy a variety of interests, Beaulieu is an ideal destination for group visits. All the attractions are covered by your entrance ticket so you can plan your day without paying any more. There is a stately home, a world famous motor museum containing 285 vehicles and a 13th-century abbey surrounded by

picturesque gardens; over 800 years of heritage are to be seen at this well-established venue. A new attraction for 2024 is a special exhibition commemorating two Beaulieu-trained agents who served in France during World War II as members of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Francis Suttill (code name 'Prosper') headed the biggest SOE network in France, while Yvonne Rudellat (code name 'Jacqueline') was one of his couriers. The display recounts what happened to them after they finished their training at Beaulieu and were sent into Occupied France to undertake clandestine warfare.

If you do not want to walk all round the grounds there are two alternative ways to get from one end to the other – a veteran replica 1912 open-topped London bus or a mile-long monorail, the oldest in England, which gives you an aerial view of the estate below. There are a limited number of manual wheelchairs and electric scooters available to hire, free of charge, but these are subject to availability and it is advisable to book them in advance by calling 01590 614646 between 10:00am and 5:00pm. A DVD tour is available to show the upper floors of Palace House and views from the monorail for people who cannot access these areas. Speak to a member of staff for more information.

Hot and cold lunches are available in the Brabazon restaurant and there is also a coffee shop and various gift shops if you would like a souvenir of your visit.

Cost: £48

Booking deadline: Friday, 6 September

Leader: Rupert McNeile (07957 136926)

Departing: **Wheatley, Plastow's Yard 8.30am

Wheatley, Ambrose Rise 8.35

Headington shops (outside Iceland) 8.45

Cunliffe Close 9.00

Oxford Playhouse 9.15

Redbridge P&R 9.30

Wednesday, 16 October 2024: VISIT TO SHEFFIELD PARK (NT), EAST SUSSEX

The garden is a horticultural work of art, formed through centuries of landscape design, with influences of ‘Capability’ Brown and Humphry Repton. Four lakes form its heart, with paths circulating through the glades and wooded areas surrounding them. Each owner has left their impression, which can still be seen today. The vast collection of trees and large shrubs are planted to create vistas that enhance the feeling of scale and grandeur of the property. The garden has received a Grade I listing and holds the National



Collection of Ghent Azaleas. The garden boasts 14,500 trees and includes over 80 Champion trees, such as an original tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) ‘Sheffield Park’ planted by Arthur Soames that was discovered by former head gardener, Archie Skinner. It was awarded its champion status for girth and height and differs from others of the genus in that it colours 10 days earlier with particular intensity. The oldest recorded living tree in the garden is an English oak (*Quercus robur*), dated to 1485. Make sure you walk down Big Tree Walk to see the giants of the garden, including the Giant Redwood.

Sheffield Wood has a mosaic of different habitats: conifer woods, broadleaf woods, coppice hornbeam, open rides and glades, all of which are vital for wildlife. The rides and paths that have been created in the woods are the perfect habitat to see many species of insects such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies, including the speckled wood, silver washed fritillary and the white admiral. Sheffield Wood is also a paradise for fungi spotters.

The Coach House café serves hot and cold food in addition to tea, coffee, cakes and other snacks. There is a National Trust shop, secondhand bookshop and plant sales area.

A large part of the garden is accessible; there are some slopes and paths made of a non-gravel surface. It is possible to reserve a mobility vehicle. Call 01825 790231 to reserve one if available. It is also possible to borrow a wheelchair.

Cost: £37

Booking deadline: Friday, 6 September

Leader: Rupert McNeile (07957 136926)

Departing:

****Wheatley, Plastow’s Yard 8.00am**

Wheatley, Ambrose Rise 8.05

Headington shops (outside Iceland) 8.15

Cunliffe Close 8.30

Oxford Playhouse 8.45

Parkway P&R 9.00

*** 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***

Future visits to look forward to in Winter 2025:

January - Visit to Windsor Castle, with Blue Badge guide, Matthew Johnson

February - Lunch at Brown’s, organised by Nesta Jones

Summer Visit to Worcester



It was a fine day for the Oxford Centre’s visit to Worcester on 18 June led by Matthew Johnson. Our time was divided between Greyfriars House and Garden and The Commandery with informative guided tours at both.

Greyfriars is a medieval timbered merchant’s house, which was saved from demolition in the 1930s and lovingly restored, often with recycled materials, by siblings Elsie and Matley Moore, and handed to the Trust in 1966.

The Commandery is most famous for being the Royalist Headquarters during the deciding battle of the English Civil War – the Battle of Worcester 1651 – and includes much memorabilia from this period. Built on the site of an early medieval chapel, The Commandery has also been a monastic hospital, family home, school for the blind, and the location of the Littlebury Printworks, before becoming today’s museum revealing significant stories of the city’s history. A very interesting day enjoyed by all!

OCNT Winter Lecture Series

We will be presenting **six monthly lectures** between October and March on a range of topics which we think will be of interest to members. Four of the lectures will be held at Magdalen College Auditorium, off Longwall Street, on Tuesday mornings, and the other two – in December and January – will be available as a Zoom recording to view in your own home.

I regret that it has been necessary, because of rising costs, to increase the entrance charge for the in-person lectures at Magdalen Auditorium, **from £5 to £7 per person**, to include a hot drink. The ‘honesty payment’ for watching the Zoom lectures remains at £5 per person, payable by cheque or bank transfer. Reminders about these charges and how to pay will be sent by email. Our annual subscription at £10/£15 is not intended to cover the cost of arranging lectures, and is still excellent value!

Tuesday, 22 October 2024, at Magdalen Auditorium at 11am Coffee/tea served from 10.30am

The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

Our speaker is **Professor William Whyte**, architectural historian, fellow of St John’s College, Chair of Oxford Preservation Trust, who is currently responsible for the building of the new Centre for the Humanities.

The largest single building project in the University’s history, the new Humanities Centre is the outcome of the largest single gift ever given to Oxford. It will house seven academic departments, seven libraries, and provide a suite of performance and exhibition spaces open to the public, including a 500-seat concert hall.



Tuesday, 19 November, at Magdalen Auditorium at 11am Coffee/tea served from 10.30am

Histories of Childhood: uncovering new heritage narratives



This talk examines how histories of childhood offer fresh perspectives on collections and properties now in the care of heritage organisations, including the National Trust. Heritage professionals and researchers have adopted innovative approaches to histories of childhood, drawing on case studies ranging from castles to country houses and from forts to workhouses. The talk will also explore an ongoing collaboration with the National Trust on the history of residential war nurseries that were founded in country houses across Britain during the Second World War. The speakers are **Gillian Lamb**, lecturer in Modern British History at King’s College London; and **Siân Pooley**, fellow at Magdalen College and associate professor in the History Faculty, Oxford, where she is a director of the Centre for the History of Childhood.

9 – 15 December via Zoom link to your computer/tablet at a time of your choosing

Saving Country Houses

The Speaker is **Ben Cowell**, Director General of Historic Houses, which has recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Historic house attractions are often associated with large national bodies such as the National Trust or English Heritage. Historic Houses was created in part to put the collected efforts of independent owners and custodians on a par with these much-loved national institutions, and ensure equal representation for their needs and achievements.

This talk tells the story of how country houses have fared since 1974 when the V&A hosted a landmark exhibition on ‘The Destruction of the Country House’.



Browsholme, Forest of Bowland

Lecture Dates for your Diary in 2025

13–19 January, via Zoom link to your computer/tablet at a time of your choosing
Shells, curtains and doll houses: the challenges of paper conservation within the National Trust with Nicola Walker, Senior National Conservator, Paper & Photography, National Trust

Tuesday, 18 February, at Magdalen Auditorium at 11am Coffee/tea served from 10.30am
The Happy Journey: the ffennells of Wytham with local historian Mervyn Hughes

Tuesday, 18 March, at Magdalen Auditorium: AGM at 10.45am, lecture at 11.10am Coffee/tea served from 10.20am
Sharing the skills, stories, dilemmas and ambitions of caring for our National Trust gardens and plant collections with Pam Smith, Senior National Consultant for Gardens and Parkland, National Trust

The Last Walks?

The last two walks of the season were very different! Our visit to **Nuffield Place** in May was on a very wet day, with only four of us present. We were due to walk through the woods and along part of the Ridgeway path near Nuffield village, after a briefing about the history of Lady Nuffield's restored garden. However, the House Manager, Steven, took pity on us and invited us to an indoor tour of the House in the dry, which we enjoyed very much. It was still raining when we had our very interesting guided garden tour with volunteer Gill from under umbrellas! We abandoned any idea of walking beyond the café across the road.



Our June walk was on **White Horse Hill** near Uffington, when we were much luckier with the weather, as after early rain it cleared and we had sunshine for exploring up the hill with National Trust Ranger Andy who told us fascinating facts about the history, geology, flora and fauna. We were able to go close to the white chalk lines of the horse on the hillside, finding out how they would be cleaned and rechalked at the end of June. At the highest point of Uffington Castle we could see 360 degrees to the horizon in seven counties!

Unfortunately, these were the *last walks for our Walking Group*, as I regret to say that **Jonathan Anelay** has stepped back as the organiser and Leader after three years of very interesting and enjoyable walks at or near National Trust properties around Oxfordshire. Members of the Walking Group are very grateful to Jonathan for his detailed planning and expert leadership of the walks. I regret that we have been unable to find a replacement Leader so far: if you are interested please do get in touch!

Felicity Peacock

Coffee Mornings

Coffee mornings are taking a summer break, partly due the fact that our usual venues are currently not available and we have not been able to find a suitable alternative. However we hope to resume our popular meet-ups over coffee later in the summer. Please look out for notices via email and in the next Newsletter.

Nesta Jones

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

JULY	
Fri, 26 th	Booking deadline for visit to Baddesley Clinton (8 Aug)
AUGUST	
Thurs, 8 th	*Day Visit to Baddesley Clinton, with Cathy Pickin
SEPTEMBER	
Fri, 6 th	Booking deadline for visits to Beaulieu (24 Sep) and Sheffield Park (16 Oct)
Tues, 24 th	*Day Visit to Beaulieu, with Rupert McNeile
OCTOBER	200 Club Draw, no 4 of 6
Wed, 16 th	*Day Visit to Sheffield Park, with Rupert McNeile
Tues, 22 nd	Lecture: Magdalen Auditorium , 10.30am coffee, 11–12 noon Prof William Whyte, <i>'The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities'</i> , £7 members, £10 non-members, payable at the door
NOVEMBER	200 Club Draw, no 5 of 6
Tues, 19 th	Lecture: Magdalen Auditorium , 10.30am coffee, 11–12 noon Gillian Lamb and Siân Pooley, <i>'Histories of Childhood: uncovering new heritage narratives'</i> , £7 members, £10 non-members, payable at the door
DECEMBER	200 Club Draw, no 6 of 6
9 th –15 th	Zoom Lecture: Ben Cowell, <i>'Saving Country Houses'</i>

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

Oxford Centre NT's 2024–25 Executive Committee, Friends and Supporters

President:	Dr Nick Brown, Principal, Linacre College, Oxford
Chair:	<i>Committee vacancy</i>
Vice Chair:	<i>Committee vacancy</i>
Hon Treasurer:	Felicity Peacock treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com 07975 678475
Hon Secretary:	David Hodges
200 Club:	Felicity Peacock
Lectures:	Felicity Peacock, Margaret Lipscomb
Membership Secretary:	Louise Hodges membership.ocnt@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor:	Margaret Lipscomb editor.ocnt@gmail.com <i>retiring March 2025</i> with proof-reading by Janet Redfern
Auditorium helpers:	Michael & Rachel Faulkner, David Hodges, and Cathy Pickin
Ticket Secretaries:	Rupert McNeile, Guy Rogers
Visits/Events:	Betty Fathers, Rupert McNeile, Guy Rogers, Cathy Pickin, Matthew Johnson, Nesta Jones and Helen Grainger
Publicity:	Felicity Peacock, Susan Pfunder, Caroline Walker, Pam Lee
Website Manager:	Ashley Castelino
Friends 'in residence':	<u>Pegasus Grange:</u> Pam Lee, Val Gould <u>Tumbling Bay Court:</u> Mark Davies, Sally Roberts

*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 membership.ocnt@gmail.com***