

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Newsletter February 2025

oxfordcnt@gmail.com

07444 100273

<https://oxfordcnt.co.uk>

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT – Dr Nick Brown

Dr Nick Brown is Principal of Linacre College, Oxford, and has been President of the Oxford Centre since 2014. He has always been very supportive of the Centre's activities and many members will have enjoyed the coffee mornings, afternoon teas, and dinner he has hosted for us at Linacre.

Help Shape the Future of the Oxford Centre of the National Trust

I am delighted to have this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of the National Trust. Our Centre plays a vital role in bringing together like-minded individuals who share a love of our heritage and a commitment to the work of the National Trust.

Through our diverse programme of activities – ranging from talks and visits to social gatherings – we not only enrich our understanding of history, culture, and conservation but also contribute meaningfully to the National Trust's mission of preserving and protecting our treasured places. The sense of community we foster within the Centre is one of its greatest strengths, and I encourage you all to take full advantage of the opportunities it offers.

As we look ahead, I hope you will join us in continuing to explore, learn, and support this important cause. Your enthusiasm and engagement ensure that the legacy of our heritage is safeguarded for future generations.

The Oxford Centre of the National Trust (OCNT) relies on a dedicated volunteer committee to organise the visits, lectures, and social events that our members enjoy. I'm incredibly grateful for all the effort that they put in. However, we currently have several vacancies, including for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair. Without an active committee, we simply cannot continue to provide these wonderful opportunities. I am very concerned that unless, in the very near future, we can find new volunteers to reinforce the committee, we may have to take the difficult decision to close the Centre.

Could you lend your time and enthusiasm to help keep the Centre running? Being part of the committee is a rewarding way to support the National Trust, meet like-minded people, and contribute to the success of our events. No prior experience is necessary – just a passion for heritage and a willingness to get involved.

Joining the committee need not be a huge commitment, but it is guaranteed to be a great deal of fun. You will be part of a close-knit team that takes great pleasure and pride in putting together a delightful programme for our members. The more people who are prepared to step forward and help, the lighter the burden on any individual.

If you value the activities we offer, please consider joining us. To find out more, contact our Secretary, David Hodges (secretary.ocnt@gmail.com). Your Centre needs you!

Dr Nick Brown, OCNT President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

Magdalen College Auditorium at 10.45am on Tuesday, 18 March 2025

*(immediately before Prof. William Whyte's lecture on
'The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities')*

Please make a note of the date and time of our AGM
and give us your views on how OCNT can survive beyond 2025 ...

(Join us from 10.20am for coffee or tea beforehand and the chance to buy raffle tickets)

*The Agenda is enclosed/attached to this Newsletter along with the Minutes of the 2024 AGM.
Please bring these with you to the meeting.*

We urgently need to fill a number of vacancies on the Committee at the AGM, for which nominations will be warmly welcomed. These can be submitted by email to oxfordcnt@gmail.com or by post to **OCNT Secretary, 14 Hillsborough Road, Oxford OX4 3SL** by no later than mid-day on **Tuesday, 4 March**.

Please do consider supporting your Committee in this way. OCNT's Constitution requires that the Committee is made up of 4 Officers (but we only have 2 currently, and no Chair or Vice-Chair), and at least 5 members (we only have 3 members currently, and some of these are planning to retire in 2026).

Do please consider helping us out – you will be warmly welcomed.

We really hope you can join us at the AGM – please come along if you are able.

Thank you!

David Hodges, OCNT Secretary

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2025

Renew now to continue your membership

Membership subscriptions for 2025 were due on 1 January, and very many thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership for this year. If you haven't yet done so, please could you renew your membership now. Subscription rates for 2025 are:

- **Single membership:** £10 to receive newsletters and booking forms by email, or £15 if you prefer to receive our newsletters and booking forms by post.
- **Joint membership** (two people at the same address): £15 to receive newsletters and booking forms by email, or £20 if you prefer to receive our newsletters and booking forms by post.

We will then continue to send you newsletters and other communications about our activities during the year. We regret that if you have not paid your membership subscription by the time of our March AGM we won't send you any further newsletters and you won't be eligible to book for any outings, social events and so on.

Please pay either by

- **Bank Transfer** using the details OXFORD CENTRE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST
Sort Code: 20-65-20, Account No: 33248968 (ref SUB), or
- **sending a cheque** payable to Oxford Centre of the National Trust to OCNT Treasurer,
2 Cot's Green, Kidlington OX5 1UX or
- **in person** (card, cash or cheque) at either our February or March lectures at Magdalen Auditorium

Thank you. We very much appreciate your ongoing support.

Louise Hodges, Membership Secretary and Felicity Peacock, Treasurer

OCNT Winter Lectures

18 February 2025, at Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall St at 11am

*Tea and coffee served in the Auditorium Foyer from 10.30am, a chance to chat with friends! All welcome!
Members £7, non-members £10*

The Happy Journey: the ffennells of Wytham

Local historian **Mervyn Hughes** has researched for over ten years the ffennell family of Wytham and the history of Hill End Centre and the trenches in Wytham Wood.

In 1920 the ffennell family bought the Wytham Estate and used it as a holiday and weekend camping site with large and lavish tents. They were also a philanthropic family, committed to outdoor education and influenced by the philosophy of Steiner. Over the next decades they created innovative outdoor classrooms and dormitories at Hill End.



Wytham Abbey

18 March 2025, AGM followed by a Lecture at Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall St

*Refreshments and raffle from 10.20am; AGM at 10.45am; Lecture at 11.10am All welcome!
Members £7, non-members £10*

The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

We are delighted to welcome **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.



Please note, I'm intending to retire from organising the OCNT lectures after this season. If you would like the lecture series to continue next winter, someone will need to be found to take this on. Two people could share this role. I have some suggestions for speakers that I can pass on and explain. Many thanks to Margaret Lipscomb for her help in the past year.

Felicity Peacock

OCNT Coffee Mornings

Our informal coffee mornings are now held at the Cosy Club on Cornmarket Street, next to WH Smith. It is on the 1st floor, but there is a lift. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew acquaintance with friends and make new ones, as well as enjoying a relaxed cup of coffee or tea in comfortable surroundings. Why not come and join us for a social catch-up and a relaxing hour? The coffee mornings are held on the last Tuesday of the month and forthcoming dates are: **Tuesday, 25 February, 25 March, 29 April, 27 May, and 24 June.**

A Note from the Treasurer about Donations to Local Properties

At the end of 2024 we were able to donate £6,000 to the National Trust for projects at local properties, as follows:

£2,000 to Nuffield Place, for repairs to **BUD, Lady Nuffield's car** which is kept in the garage next to the house, and is in need of some TLC. It is a 1946 Wolseley Eight, and the only working historic vehicle in the National Trust collection (see p. 6 for photo credit and further information).



Blinds in the Dining Room, Basildon

£1,050 to Basildon Park, towards the purchase of **Conservation Vision Blinds** for the Shell Room and Lady Iliffe's bedroom. "This is a very generous donation and is helping us with our continued efforts to protect our collections, for now and for ever. I am delighted to share images from our most recent blinds which have been installed in the House These draw string blinds allow us to control the levels of UV in each room and thus conserving our collection." ... "Our Collections Team will be delighted more rooms, and the collection pieces they hold, will be protected. Once the blinds are installed, members of the Oxford Centre are more than welcome to arrange a visit with us to see them in person." (Fable Bella, Senior Visitor Experience Officer, Thames Valley Portfolio)

£335 to Cliveden for an **All Terrain Wheelchair**, and £1,500 to Cliveden for the **redevelopment of the Long Garden**. Robert Miles, Cliveden General Manager, wrote "I was delighted to receive notification of the Oxford Centre's most generous donation towards the Long Garden project and for the purchase of an all-terrain wheelchair, which will assist our visitors being able to access the garden with ease. Please convey to the Oxford Centre members my sincere thanks and appreciation for this donation to Cliveden."



The Long Garden in Summer ©National Trust/Daniel Dean

£500 to Greys Court towards the purchase of a **Workshop Kit**. "Our Visitor Experience Team will be delighted to be able to put together a vital equipment kit that will allow us to deliver our play trails, workshops and other key visitor experiences." (Fable Bella, Senior Visitor Experience Officer)



£615 to Hughenden to be used in **looking after "3,000 acres of countryside** around the Central Chilterns ... This super kind gift will go towards that work. Please pass on our thanks to the rest of the Oxford Centre." (Louise Walker, General Manager)

OCNT aims to make a surplus on our activities during the year which can be donated to the National Trust. This includes funds from our 200 Club, the AGM raffle, and any surplus from our activities which include outings and social events. Personal donations are also included in the total sum donated. Many thanks to members for your contributions by taking part in our activities during the year. I will give further details in my Treasurer's report at the AGM on 18 March.

Felicity Peacock

The Future of the Oxford Centre in your hands ...

As you will see from the message from our President, Nick Brown, and other items in the Newsletter, this is a rather critical time for the Oxford Centre of the National Trust and we need your support more than ever. For the past year we have lacked both a Chair and Vice Chair and instead of the minimum of nine committee members required by our Constitution, we are now reduced to five and we are all feeling overstretched.

Sadly, both **Betty Fathers** and **Pam Lee** have had to retire from the committee due to health reasons.

Betty is a long-term member of OCNT and has served on the committee for an incredible 23 years. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude for her faithful and loyal service over the years, especially on the Visits team. She has arranged innumerable day visits during that time and, among other contributions, also organised a memorable holiday based in Norfolk. We wish her well in her retirement though she still hopes to attend OCNT events when she is able.

Many of us will have enjoyed the more recent holidays organised by **Pam** based around Plymouth and Chester, which also attracted a number of new members especially from Pegasus Grange. We thank Pam for all her efforts and wish her well for the future.

Our Treasurer, **Felicity Peacock**, has been efficiently carrying out this crucial and important role for many years now and, in addition, took on organising the Lecture programme, as well as overseeing Publicity and maintaining the OCNT website. Felicity is now concentrating on her key role as Treasurer and stepping back from involvement in the Lecture programme and Publicity.

Margaret Lipscomb was due to retire at this AGM but has agreed to stay on for an extra year and to produce the Newsletters (though possibly slimmed-down versions) but she too is withdrawing from assisting in the organisation of Lectures.

Rupert McNeile has been a long-term active member of OCNT for many years and given loyal service in positions of responsibility, including as Chairman and most recently in organising Visits. He still has a lot to offer in terms of experience, but he too is now limited in what he can contribute physically.

Our Membership Secretary, **Louise Hodges**, and Secretary, **David Hodges**, are the most recent recruits to the committee and it has been very encouraging to have younger members with fresh ideas participating in our discussions and activities. They have also played a key role in keeping the successful Coffee Mornings running. But we do need a few more like them to join us if we are to continue.

As you will see from this Newsletter, we have no Visits to offer at present (though we do hope we may have one or two offerings in the summer), the Walking Group is no longer active and there is a possibility there will be no Lectures next Autumn/Winter. Whether we are able to keep any of these activities going depends on members being prepared to become involved and take a more active part in the Oxford Centre. As you will see from the report on p. 4 our past activities enabled us to give substantial donations to help support local National Trust properties which make a difference and are greatly appreciated, as can be seen from the messages of thanks from the properties themselves, including Nuffield Place on p. 6. It would be a pity if we were no longer able to do this.

So it is now over to you ... and we look forward to hearing from you.

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

News from our National Trust Neighbours

Nuffield Place Update

Since I wrote a piece for the Oxford Centre newsletter back in July 2024, a lot of exciting projects have been undertaken and I am pleased to be given the opportunity to share these with you.

Firstly, we have been exploring how to improve **accessibility at Nuffield Place**. This ranges from acquiring seven new accessible picnic benches and tables, all with designated spaces for wheelchair users, around our horsebox concession on the tennis court, through to getting a stair climber that enables staff to help wheelchair users or those unable to manage stairs to the first floor of the property. We have also recorded a virtual tour of some of the first-floor showrooms and this will be ready for when the property re-opens in March 2025 so that visitors can choose to use this rather than going upstairs. Our future work now includes producing braille and large print guides for the rooms along with foreign language guides. I am also pleased to say that our sister properties **Greys Court** and **Basildon Park** also have stair climbers, with virtual tours and accessible guides, so please do spread the word! The stair climbers need to be pre-booked through our website, but the virtual tours and accessible guides will be available from late February on-property.



*One of the new stair climbers
©National Trust/Steven Williams*



*Above: Lady Nuffield's Wolseley 8 "BUD"
©National Trust/Rachel Batho*

Our other projects have all been collection focused, with clock restoration, curtain restoration, condition surveys of various items all around the property and, most relevant to the OCNT, starting the process of caring for **Lady Nuffield's Wolseley 8 "BUD"**. The OCNT donation to Nuffield Place in 2024 of £2,000 towards maintaining BUD and supporting the repairs or conservation that is required is wonderful and so generous. We are currently waiting on the report following a full condition survey of BUD (undertaken in November 2024) to then decide the next steps of conservation and focus of work, but BUD has already been treated to a brand-new battery (installed in January 2025) to keep the engine running. The donation that the OCNT has made will form a core part of supporting this work going forward.



*Right: A new battery for BUD
©National Trust/Freya Pook*

Nuffield Place will re-open for the regular season from Wednesday, 5 March to Sunday, 2 November (please check the website for up-to-date opening), and I look forward to welcoming many of you to the property in 2025!

Steven Williams, Site Manager, Nuffield Place

News from the West Oxfordshire Portfolio

In January, we said goodbye to Christian Walker and have given new General Manager, Keith Assirati-Wilkie, a warm welcome. Keith has come from a regional National Trust role in facilities management so our buildings and land continue in good hands (as do staff and volunteers). I'm sure you will have the opportunity to meet Keith in the coming months.

Coming up in 2025

After a busy 2024, 2025 looks like it's going to be another busy one with more courses, events and activities to come. Here are some key dates for your diaries, more dates will follow in the coming months.

Ashdown House opens Wednesday, 2nd April and on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons until Saturday, 1st November.

Chastleton House opens Wednesday, 5th March and on Wednesday to Sunday afternoons until Sunday, 2nd November.

Coleshill Village Open Days restart on the second Sunday of the month from 13th April.

A new behind the scenes guided tour, **Secrets of Coleshill**, begins on 17th April and will be available on Thursday and Saturday afternoons until 11th October

Thursday 26th June - **A Supporter Group networking day** is being arranged for groups from London & South East region. As we are hosting at Coleshill, our closest supporters from South West region – Upper Thames and Ridgeway and North Cotswold Associations – are included in the invitation.

I am continuing to spread the news about Supporter Groups. This year's Volunteer Yearbook for West Oxfordshire includes a feature on Supporter groups. All volunteers will receive a copy at the pre-season briefings and I hope you can recruit new members.

A note on nature on the Buscot and Coleshill Estate

Last year we recruited ecology volunteers and river guardians to support two exciting nature projects running on the Estate – nature recovery and riverlands. For the nature recovery project, volunteers have been surveying butterfly transects on the Estate to provide baseline data for the future. While the work began with butterflies and will expand to other flora and fauna during the year. Volunteers without experience were supported by more experienced survey takers to build their confidence in the task. There has also been a group that went out into woodland to collect nibbled hazelnuts. I didn't know that the shape of the nibbled holes indicate which species is eating them. The team are hoping for signs of rare hazel dormice.



©Martin Trehwella

The Riverlands project is part of a national network of projects at NT places which are home to some of the UK's most precious rivers. These projects will bring riverlands back to life, working to alleviate flooding, creating new habitats and tackling the rise of non-native invasive species, as well as working with local communities to help them rediscover and reconnect with their rivers. Volunteers have been taking water samples that are analysed for water quality and to monitor birds on the river Cole.

The Buscot & Coleshill Estate is one of 17 Nature Accelerator sites across the Trust. The sites are places which have been identified as having significant potential opportunity to accelerate delivery of our ambitions for nature and climate.

You can find out more about these climate ambitions here - [Climate change and sustainability | National Trust](#) and the Riverlands conservation here [The Riverlands conservation project | National Trust](#) I look forward to meeting as many supporters as possible in 2025.

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

Dates for your diary ...

FEBRUARY	200 Club Draw, no 2 of 7
Tues, 18th	Lecture: Magdalen Auditorium, 10.30am coffee, 11–12 noon, ALL welcome. Mervyn Hughes, 'The Happy Journey: the ffennells of Wytham'
Tues, 25th	Coffee Morning at The Cosy Club, just drop in 10.30 to 11.30am
MARCH	200 Club Draw, no 3 of 7
Tues, 18th	Magdalen Auditorium, 10.20 coffee, 10.45 AGM immediately followed at 11.10am by Lecture: Prof William Whyte, 'The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities'
Tues, 25th	Coffee Morning at the Cosy Club, just drop in 10.30 to 11.30am
APRIL	
Mon, 7th	Executive Committee Meeting, 10.30am
Tues, 29th	Coffee Morning at The Cosy Club, just drop in 10.30 to 11.30am
MAY	
Tues, 27th	Coffee Morning at The Cosy Club, just drop in 10.30 to 11.30am
JUNE	
Tues, 24th	Coffee Morning at the Cosy Club, just drop in 10.30 to 11.30am

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

President:	Dr Nick Brown, Principal, Linacre College, Oxford
Chair:	Committee vacancy
Vice Chair:	Committee vacancy
Hon Treasurer:	Felicity Peacock treasurer.ocnt@gmail.com 07975 678475
Hon Secretary:	David Hodges secretary.ocnt@gmail.com
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 with proof-reading by Janet Redfern
Auditorium helpers:	David Hodges, Fran Billington, Hilary Whitehouse
Ticket Secretaries:	Rupert McNeile, Guy Rogers
Visits/Events:	Rupert McNeile, Matthew Johnson
Publicity:	Felicity Peacock, Caroline Walker
Website Manager:	Ashley Castelino
Friends 'in residence':	Pegasus Grange: Pam Lee, Val Gould

We would like to thank all the Volunteers who have helped run our activities over the past years and who have now stepped back from involvement. We hope very much we can find replacements for them in the coming months. Please contact us if you can help.

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**