

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Bulletin May/June 2025

OUR SUMMER PROGRAMME 2025 – DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Tuesday, 27 May: Coffee Morning: The Cosy Club

Tuesday, 24 June: Coffee Morning: The Cosy Club

Tuesday, 22 July: Visit: Wimpole Estate, with Carol Smith

Tuesday, 29 July: Coffee Morning: The Cosy Club

Thursday, 7 August: Visit: Waddesdon, with Carol Smith

Tuesday, 26 August: Coffee Morning: The Cosy Club

From the Committee

We have some encouraging news! Since our February Newsletter and the AGM we have a new (or rather returning) committee member, Carol Smith, who has already got down to work and arranged two visits this summer – to **Wimpole** and **Waddesdon** – which is the reason for this special Bulletin as bookings have to be made before our July/August Newsletter is due. One of the visits (to Waddesdon) is aimed at those who prefer a later start and shorter journey and the other (to Wimpole) for those who don't mind a longer day and more travelling (*further details on p. 3*). Below you will find a message from Carol about the visits and the new, and hopefully more efficient, booking procedures. We are very grateful to Carol for acting so quickly in setting up a visits programme.

In addition two members have come forward and offered to join the Committee and we plan to co-opt them officially at the next Executive Committee meeting on 18 June. As a result we are hopeful they may be able to help arrange a Lecture programme for the winter months. Further information will follow in the next Newsletter.

However, we still do not have a Chair, Vice-Chair or full Committee so we would welcome any further offers of help. If you would be interested in helping Carol to arrange the occasional lunch, social event, or visit, please do get in touch.

Wishing you all an enjoyable summer.

OCNT Committee: David Hodges (Hon Sec), Louise Hodges (Membership Sec), Margaret Lipscomb (Newsletter Editor), Rupert McNeile (Bookings Sec), Felicity Peacock (Hon Treasurer), Carol Smith (Visits & Events)

Changes to the Booking System

Many of us in Oxford are experiencing very serious postal delays, so in an attempt to be less reliant on Royal Mail we are modifying our booking system. In a nutshell, we are increasing the time we assume is needed for you to receive a Newsletter/Bulletin and to complete and return your Booking Form.

If you receive our newsletters and booking forms by email you are much less affected.

Also, we will not be issuing actual tickets to anyone and therefore doing away with the need for you to supply us with SAEs (stamped addressed envelopes). Hooray! Instead, you will hear by email or phone if you have a place on a visit.

Here is a fuller explanation:

Every member with an email address will receive the Newsletter/Bulletin and Booking Form by email. Those who have paid an extra £5 membership fee will also receive the printed, paper versions by post.

We have two Bookings Secretaries, Rupert McNeile and Guy Rogers, who take it in turns to handle your applications. However, to try to keep this explanation as simple as possible, we are using Rupert's contact details as an example but the procedure will apply equally when Guy is in charge.

There are now two ways to book – by post or by email.

Booking by Post:

If you receive the Booking Form by email, print it off, complete and return it to the Bookings Secretary (Rupert) by post, by the closing date. You can pay by bank transfer (our preferred method) or enclosing a cheque(s). See the Booking Form for our bank details.

If you receive the Booking Form on paper, complete and return it to the Bookings Secretary (Rupert) by post, by the closing date. Again, you can pay by bank transfer (our preferred method) or enclosing a cheque(s). See the Booking Form for our bank details.

Once you have posted your completed Booking Form, then, if you have access to email, send a message to Rupert at rupertmcneile@supanet.com saying your Booking Form is in the post. Please do this even if you were sent a paper copy of the Booking Form in the first place.

There are two reasons to email this message to Rupert, if you are able to. He will know to expect your booking and, more importantly, he will be able to reply to your email to notify you if you have a place. Please consider this notification as your 'ticket'. There is no need to print it out as your name will be on the Passenger List.

If you don't have access to email, then we will phone to tell you if you have a place. This phone call will be instead of a ticket.

Booking by Email:

If you receive the Booking Form by email, it will be as a Word document. Please complete it onscreen, save a copy to your device using the 'Save as' facility and adding your surname to the form name (eg Booking Form Smith), and then attach it to an email and send to rupertmcneile@supanet.com

Please pay by bank transfer using the account details on the Booking Form. Also remember to confirm the date and amount of your bank transfer(s) on the Booking Form. Rupert will reply to your email to notify you if you have a place. Please consider this notification as your 'ticket'. There is no need to print it out as your name will be on the Passenger List.

A few things to bear in mind:

- You are welcome to book a place for a friend, who need not be a member of the National Trust or the Oxford Centre of the National Trust. Members get priority but if space is available, we will be pleased to accommodate them.
- Because of postal delays, if you are booking by post, we strongly recommend that you complete and return your Booking Form as soon as possible so it reaches the Bookings Secretary by the closing date – don't delay!
- As you will not be receiving an actual, physical ticket, we suggest you make a note in your diary/calendar of the date and location of the visit, the boarding point and departure time you have chosen and the mobile number of the Visit Leader.
- When you come on a visit, please bring details of a friend or relative that we could contact in case of an emergency.

I hope this explanation is reasonably clear, makes sense and is not too overwhelming but if there is anything you are unsure about, please contact me at carol.smith1591@outlook.com or by phoning 01865 769277 or 07967 297782. When I am unavailable (5–18 June) please email oxfordcnt@gmail.com or phone 07444 100273 instead.

Carol Smith (Visits and Events)

NB Information about National Trust Volunteer Cards (referred to for both visits) and an explanation about the pricing of each visit and can be found on p. 4.

Tuesday, 22 July 2025: VISIT TO WIMPOLE (NT), Royston, nr Cambridge

Please remember to bring your National Trust Membership Card or National Trust Volunteer Card

Wimpole is a working estate set in acres of parkland. It has an impressive 17th-century mansion, walled kitchen garden, parterre, pleasure grounds and a rare-breeds farm, including Shire horses.

In the house you can explore lavish Georgian interiors (including Soane's Yellow Drawing Room) intimate family rooms and 'life below stairs' in the basement.

If you do not hold a National Trust Membership or Volunteer Card, you will need to pay the discounted, group entrance fee of £19 on the day. Please bring this fee in cash.

Catering: The Old Rectory Restaurant serves light lunches and homemade cakes. Refreshments are also available at The Stables and Farm Cafes. Picnics welcome.

Access: The coach will drop us off by the Visitor Welcome Centre. There is a hard standing route from the Visitor Centre to the house, garden, farm, cafes and shop, although there are some gravel and cobbled areas too. Wimpole has a 7-seater buggy service to transport you between these key locations. Entering the main entrance of the house involves 12 stone steps but a 'stair climber'(weight limit 14 stone) has been requested to overcome these for anyone who needs assistance. Once inside the house, there is step-free access on the ground floor. The first floor can be reached only by stairs (15 steps). An information booklet about the first-floor rooms is available if you cannot manage these. There are 13 steps down to the basement. There is step-free, ramp, slope or level access into the cafés, shop, garden and farm.

Cost: £35	Booking deadline: Friday, 20 June	Leader: Carol Smith (07967 297782)
Departing:	**Wheatley, Plastows Depot 8.00 am	Wheatley, Ambrose Rise 8.05
	Headington Shops (outside Iceland) 8.15	Cunliffe Close 8.30
	Oxford Playhouse 8.45	Parkway P&R 9.00

Thursday, 7 August 2025: VISIT TO WADDESDON (NT), nr Aylesbury

Please remember to bring your National Trust Membership or Volunteer Card, Historic Houses or Art Fund Membership Card

Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild started building this French- style chateau in 1874 to entertain fashionable society and display his wealth of treasures, including 18th-century French decorative objects, English portraits and Dutch Old Masters. Waddesdon is also famous for its Victorian gardens, parterre, classical and contemporary sculpture and an ornate aviary which still houses exotic birds.

We plan to arrive around 11.30am so you will have some free time to wander around and have lunch before we enter the house, as a group, at 1.00pm.

Catering: You have the choice of the Manor Restaurant, Stables Cafe, Food to Go outlets and Coffee Bar. Picnics are welcome. There are benches around the grounds and you can use the tables and seating outside the Stables Cafe for your picnic.

Access: The coach will drop us off at the North Fountain. From there it is 150 yds to the house across a flat, hard surface, although there is some gravel near the house. There are 2/3 steps or ramps into the house. The Manor Restaurant and toilets are next to the house. The Stables Cafe is a 15-minute walk away down quite a steep slope. There is level access to the gardens around the house and to the aviary.

A fully accessible shuttle bus does a circuit around the site, stopping off at various points including the Stables Cafe and North Fountain; £2.50 (inc. members) for an all-day ticket from the driver.

Once inside the house, you have step-free access on the ground floor and staff-operated lifts between all floors and to the wine cellar! Walking frames such as rollators can be used in the house but *not* carry chairs or seat sticks. Chairs are available in most rooms if you need to rest.

Cost: National Trust Members/Volunteers (NT), Historic Houses (HH) or Art Fund (AF) Members £28; Non-members £51

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	Oxford Playhouse 10.15	Parkway P&R 10.30

**** Before choosing this boarding point for either visit, please phone 01865 872270 for permission to park your vehicle here as space is limited**

Volunteer Cards

The places we are visiting in July and August (Wimpole and Waddesdon) are good examples of the way in which not all NT properties operate in exactly the same way. For example, Wimpole allows free entry for holders of NT Membership Cards and NT Volunteer Cards, whereas Waddesdon accepts not only those but also Historic Houses and Art Fund Membership Cards.

You may not have heard of a NT Volunteer Card before and be wondering what it is. Some of your fellow OCNT members volunteer for at least 50 hours a year at NT properties, perhaps as a room steward or in some other capacity. As a reward for this, they receive an annual NT Volunteer Card which gives them discounts in NT cafes and shops and also free entry to NT properties. If they are already a NT member in their own right, they can use their Volunteer Card to gain free entry for an accompanying friend or relative.

Most of us on the OCNT Committee achieve at least 50 hours of volunteering a year by the work we do for OCNT, so we are also rewarded with a Volunteer Card which comes with the same benefits as above ...yet another good reason for coming forward to take on a role with us! Do consider joining us – we really need you.

Visit Prices

When you look at the Booking Form you may be puzzled about what appears to be anomalies in the cost per person for each visit.

Again, this is because NT properties differ in the way they handle group visits when some of the participants are not members or volunteers of the National Trust.

Wimpole offers a discounted entry fee (in their case £19) to be paid on the day as a single transaction. So, if there are, for example, three non-members in the group, the Visit Leader will collect £19 from each of them and pay it in at the reception desk as a lump sum. The cost for the visit to Wimpole for a non-member is £35 (for the coach hire) paid to OCNT at the time of booking plus £19 in cash, on the day, for the entry fee.

Waddesdon, however, requires the Visit Leader to notify them with the number of non-members in the group, four weeks in advance of the visit. Waddesdon then invoices OCNT at their discounted entry rate for non-members, prior to the visit. OCNT recoups this amount, by adding it to the cost per person stated on the Booking Form, so £28 for coach hire plus £23 entry fee = £51.

The vast majority of you are NT Members or NT Volunteers so you don't really need to be concerned about the prices for non- members.

Plastow's Coaches

On 1st April 2025, after being in business as a family firm for 73 years, Plastow's, the coach company which the Oxford Centre of the NT has used for its day visits and holidays for many years, has been sold to another family-run coach company, Bakers Coaches of Moreton-in-Marsh. Bakers have bought the Wheatley Depot, taken over the fleet of coaches, the existing drivers have transferred to the new company and the Plastow's name will remain, so, hopefully, as passengers, we will not notice much difference.

However, for those of us who have liaised with Barbara Plastow, the change is huge. Barbara has been a joy to work with ... friendly, laid-back, unflappable, extremely hard-working, brilliant at problem-solving and, above all, all done with a sense of humour. She leaves at the end of May, so we sent a card and gift voucher on your behalf with our very best wishes for the future and Barbara has responded:

'I would just like to say a huge thank you to all at the Oxford National Trust society for the lovely card and gift. I can't tell you how lovely it was to receive this, as whilst this new chapter is a good thing for lots of reasons, my heart will always miss the kindness and friendship of all but especially the Oxford Centre of the National Trust, who looked after me in my early years here.'

She will be greatly missed.