

Oxford Centre of the National Trust

Final Message, 30 April 2026

Final closure of the Oxford Centre

The inevitable but sad decision was taken at the AGM on 17 March to close the Oxford Centre of the National Trust at the end of April 2026 as there were insufficient volunteers coming forward to take on active roles within the Committee – most crucially the post of Treasurer.

We were fortunate that Dr Nick Brown, OCNT President, was able to attend and chair the AGM and he observed that, though this was a sad and poignant occasion, there was still much to cherish and celebrate over the 57 years of the existence of the Centre and a summary of his words, as well as the other business of the meeting, can be found in the AGM minutes attached (pp. 3–4). It was particularly encouraging to hear that over the years the Oxford Centre, through its various activities, had been able to contribute more than £312,000 to the work of local National Trust properties.

At the AGM Felicity, our Treasurer, presented the accounts for 2025. She has now had the opportunity to finalise the accounts from January to the end of April 2026 and to close the bank account. Our Constitution states that ‘Any assets remaining after the payment of any proper debts and liabilities shall promptly be given to the National Trust’ and we can now confirm a sum of £7,853.92 has been handed over to the Trust with the wish that it be used to fund various projects at local Trust properties. A copy of the final accounts can be found on p. 5 and the wish list for the division of funds on p. 6.

As the bank account no longer exists, **may we remind those members who have been paying their OCNT subscription by standing order to cancel the standing order** to stop any future attempts by your bank to make a payment into the OCNT. Please note that we cannot cancel your standing order for you. You will need to do this yourself by contacting your bank, or, if you have online banking, you should be able to do this yourself online.

Please be assured that all electronic membership records held by the Committee will be deleted and any paper records will be destroyed so none of your personal details will be retained or passed on to others.

We are aware that the closure of the Centre is a disappointment to many of our members who have enjoyed the talks, visits and holidays arranged over the years – and this was demonstrated by the popularity of our final well-attended visit to Salisbury on 14 April. For those of you who would like to continue enjoying talks and visits, while at the same time supporting the National Trust, on the next page (p. 2) you will find details of alternative local supporter groups who arrange such activities. One or two of us have already joined the Abingdon group so you will also see some familiar faces if you decide to do the same.

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your support for the Oxford Centre over the years and to wish you all well for the future.

From the Committee

Alternative Local National Trust Supporter Groups

While the Oxford Centre is closing there are a number of other local supporter groups in the area organising similar activities which some of you may like to consider joining depending on where you live in the county. In Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire there are groups, for example, in **Abingdon, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Newbury, Reading and Wycombe** and a full list can be found at the following website: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/oxfordshire-buckinghamshire-berkshire/supporter-groups-in-oxfordshire-buckinghamshire-and-berkshire>

For members living to the north west of Oxford, there is the **North Cotswold Association**, which holds its talks in Broadwell, near Stow-on-the-Wold, and for those living to the south west the **Upper Thames and Ridgeway National Trust Association** (UTRNTA - <https://www.utrnta.co.uk/>), which holds its meetings in Cirencester, Lechlade and Highworth, might be of interest.

Abingdon and District National Trust Association and its Chair, Ruth Weinburg, in particular would welcome anyone from the Oxford Centre who would like to join them. Their talks are held once a month in the Autumn/Winter on a Tuesday afternoon at 2.30 pm and the venue, the Abingdon United Football and Social Clubhouse, Northcourt Road, has plenty of free parking and is on a regular bus route from Oxford (X2 and X3, alighting at the Boundary House stop).

The Abingdon Association also arranges visits, and destinations in 2026 include: Hinton Ampner & Winchester, Charlecote Park & Chipping Norton, Buscot Park & Coleshill, and Mottisfont & Andover. In addition they organise holidays and earlier this year they arranged a very successful visit to Trust properties in Norfolk.

Further information about the Abingdon group and how to join can be found on their website: <https://abingdonnatrust.chessck.co.uk/> or email: membership@abingdonnt.org.uk

Future Visits? – a message from Carol

As you will see above, Abingdon and District National Trust Association arrange day trips and have a lovely programme arranged for this summer. At the moment there are just two pick-up points, Hales Meadow Car Park and Stratton Way, both in Abingdon, but, having spoken with the Abingdon Association, if there is enough demand, they may be willing to introduce additional pick-up points e.g. Redbridge P&R and Plastow's Depot in Wheatley from where the coach departs and which can be reached from Oxford using the 400 and 46 bus services. In addition, I'm going to see if there is another local organisation, e.g. Oxford u3a, which would be interested in me arranging coach trips on their behalf.

As OCNT closes, everyone's contact details will be deleted from our membership database and elsewhere, so if you would like me to keep in touch to let you know if I make any progress on arranging coach trips, please email me at carol.smith1591@outlook.com

If you don't have email, then please phone/leave a message with your name and phone number on 01865 769277.

**Minutes of the OCNT Annual General Meeting
held on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 at 10.45am
at Magdalen College Auditorium**

Past Chair, Rupert McNeile, opened the meeting, welcomed and thanked everyone attending, including the OCNT President, **Dr Nick Brown**, who chaired the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** 3 apologies received; 32 Members attended.
2. **The Minutes of the 18 March 2025 AGM**, as circulated with the February 2026 Newsletter, **were accepted**. Approved en bloc.
3. **Matters Arising:** None were raised.
4. **President's Report for 2025:**

Dr Nick Brown proposed that while this meeting, the last AGM for the Oxford Centre of the National Trust, was a sad and poignant occasion, there was still much to cherish and celebrate. Over its 57 years of existence the Centre had brought people together in friendship; offering the chance to explore National Trust properties together through hugely enjoyable outings and fascinating talks. The OCNT had also supported the work of the National Trust, and particularly in our local area, contributing more than £312,000 to properties for their work. This had all been made possible by the work of generations of Executive Committee Members, many of whom have worked behind the scenes, but were nonetheless vital to the continuing functioning and smooth running of the OCNT. The President thanked the Executive Committee, past and present, for their commitment and work, and also the Members for their loyalty and enthusiasm. While the end of the OCNT is sad, the friendships and memories will endure.

5. **Chair's Report for 2025:**

In the absence of an elected Chair, this report was given by past Chair, **Rupert McNeile**. Rupert reiterated the President's comments about the hard work of the Executive Committee and thanked them all for their efforts.

Rupert noted the work and leadership of four Members who had been key to the Oxford Centre:

- **Betty Fathers**, who had served on the Executive Committee for 22 years. Betty had been made a Life Member of the OCNT at the 2025 AGM and was thanked for her enormous contribution to the Centre.
- **Peggy Howarth**, past Chair and mentor to Rupert
- **Joan Howse**, who, very sadly, has passed away, and
- **Philip James**, who has, very sadly, also now passed away.

6. **Honorary Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year 1 January–31 December 2025:**

As Honorary Treasurer, **Felicity Peacock** reminded Members that the objectives of OCNT include promoting social activities to make NT membership more enjoyable, and to generate surpluses from these activities, so that funds can be donated to local National Trust properties.

Activities 2025: Information about OCNT activities in 2025 was displayed on screen. Felicity noted that the popularity of the lectures seemed to be waning. The numbers attending the lectures had dropped over the course of the past year, and they no longer broke even after the cost of hiring the auditorium and speaker fees had been taken into account. The lectures team was thanked for organising the six lectures for the 2025–26 series.

Three visits had been organised in 2025 and two had attracted sufficient numbers to be viable; the trip to Kenwood House in September having a full coach, which had contributed a healthy surplus for the Centre. The events and bookings teams were thanked for all their work organising the visits in 2025, and the forthcoming visit to Salisbury in April.

There was a surplus from the activities of £894.89 in 2025 (£1,629 in 2024).

Finances 2025: Information about OCNT finances for the 2025 financial year (1 January–31 December 2025) was displayed on screen. Felicity noted that the figures were sometimes skewed by income being received at the end of one financial year and expenditure taking place early in the next for events (e.g. for the lunch at Browns in January 2025 and at the Cosy Club in January 2026).

There was a surplus before donations of £3,453.66 in 2025 (£332.74 in 2024). The bank balance was £7,017.23 as at 31 December 2025 (£9,221.57 at 31 December 2024), after donations totalling £6,000 had been made to local NT properties at Basildon Park, Chastleton, Coleshill, Greys Court and Nuffield Place (details of which had been reported in the February 2026 Newsletter).

With the closure of the OCNT Oxford Centre on 30 April 2026, all remaining funds would be returned to the National Trust, as stipulated in the OCNT Constitution. It was planned to support local properties with the funds remaining.

The Honorary Treasurer thanked the Honorary Auditor, Guy Rogers, for his auditing of the accounts and signing of the Balance Sheet. The Honorary Auditor was also thanked by the President. It was noted that in due course he would audit the final accounts for the Centre, to cover the period 1 January–30 April 2026.

7. Appointment of Officers to hold office from 1 March 2026 until the Closure of the Oxford Centre on 30 April 2026:

The President and all Members of the Executive Committee had agreed to continue standing until 30 April 2026, to oversee the closure of the OCNT:

The President – Dr Nick Brown (2014–2026)

Chair and Vice-Chair – both positions remain vacant

Honorary Treasurer – Felicity Peacock (2012–retires 2026)

Honorary Secretary – David Hodges (2024–2026)

Membership Secretary – Louise Hodges (2023–retires 2026)

Newsletter Editor – Margaret Lipscomb (2019–retires 2026)

Visits and Events – Carol Smith (additional service 2025–2026)

Bookings Secretary – Rupert McNeile (2008–2026)

Lectures Organisers – Liz Humphreys (2025–2026) and **Margo Boore** (2025–2026).

8. Election of Honorary Auditor for the financial year until 30 April 2026:

Guy Rogers – Proposer Felicity Peacock. Unanimously approved.

9. Resolution to Close the OCNT:

It was **“RESOLVED that, given the lack of candidates for key Executive Committee positions to run the OCNT fully and effectively, the OCNT shall close completely from 30 April 2026 and that the current Executive Committee shall continue in role until the OCNT has closed.”** This was agreed by an overwhelming majority, with no-one against, and greatly exceeded the two-thirds majority of OCNT Members present at the AGM required by the Constitution.

10. Any Other Business:

Gifts for Executive Committee Members – the President and the current Executive Committee Members were each presented with a gift token and the thanks of the OCNT.

The meeting closed at 11.10am and was immediately followed by the lecture ‘Collections and Conservation at Basildon Park, Greys Court and Nuffield Place’ by Josh Watkins, Collections and House Manager at Basildon Park, Greys Court and Nuffield Place.

David Hodges
Honorary Secretary

OXFORD CENTRE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

Balance sheet as at 30 April 2026

Audited

Bank Balance 1 January 2026 **£7,017.23**

	£	
	2026	
<u>INCOME</u>		
Subscriptions – 2026	1,900.00	
Donations	65.00	
Cash box	25.00	
 <u>Contributions from Activities</u>		
Excursions	302.00	
Lectures at Magdalen Auditorium	-741.64	
Social events: Jan 26 lunch	-£124.00	(£252 prepaid 2025)
	<u>1,426.36</u>	A
 <u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
<u>Centre Running Costs</u>		
Newsletters (print & post x3)	239.67	
Website / publicity	85.00	
Cheques from 2025 presented 2026	30.00	
200 Club 2025 prizes	35.00	
Retirement gifts	200.00	
	<u>589.67</u>	B
 A - B	 £836.69	
 SURPLUS BEFORE DONATIONS	 <u>£836.69</u>	 £836.69
Plus bank balance at start of year		<u>£7,017.23</u>
Final Balance in the OCNT Account at Barclays		<u>£7,853.92</u>
 DONATIONS made to National Trust*	 £7,853.92	
transferring balance in the bank account to close the account		
 <u>BANK BALANCE ON 30.4.2026</u>		 £0.00

I have compared the Income and Expenditure Account and the Bank Statements for the period 1 January to 30 April 2026 with the records, and confirm that the accounts are in accordance with them.

Signed



Guy B Rogers

30 April 2026

*Donations to National Trust Properties
see over the page for details of projects

Greys Court	£1,500
Basildon Park	£1,400
Nuffield Place	£1,500
Cliveden	£1,600
Hughenden	£1,853.92
TOTAL	£7,853.92

Prepared by the retiring Treasurer, Felicity Peacock

We have donated our final funds to the following local National Trust properties towards projects which they recently listed

Greys Court – Conservation of sculptures and benches

‘The Collections Team are looking to conserve some of the sculptures and benches commissioned by Lady Brunner that reside in the gardens. This will allow the original statues to rest indoors protecting the location’s history, particularly during extreme weather.’

Estimated cost, including potential repairs, maintenance and storage, £5,000

OCNT donation: £1,500

Basildon Park – Blackboards and A frames

‘Clear and friendly signage is an important part of each visitor’s experience. Quality A frames allow us to share important information with our visitors to help them to get the most from their visit.’

Estimated cost, £1,000

OCNT donation: £1,000

ALSO Basildon Park – Lockable display cabinet

‘As part of our project to uplift the Second Hand Bookshops in Thames Valley, we wish to display our collectable, rare and high value books in a lockable display cabinet.’

Estimated cost, £400

OCNT donation: £400

Hughenden Manor – Garden seating

‘We have lots of lovely places to sit in the walled garden and around the parterre, but a lot of our benches are very worn and have been repaired many times. We are looking for funding to commission and replace our benches to ensure we can continue to offer lots of lovely places to pause and enjoy the gardens.’

Cost: up to £2,000 per bench

OCNT donation: £1,853.92

Nuffield Place – Clock restoration

‘Two of our clocks need restoration to get them going again. Our 8-day mahogany longcase clock made by William Bullock of Bath, on display in the hallway, and our Easel clock encased in a wooden frame located in the single guest bedroom. As Lord Nuffield loved repairing clocks, it would be wonderful to have these working again.’

Estimated cost, £1,500

OCNT donation: £1,500

Cliveden – covers for Baboons in the Long Garden

‘Dating back to circa 712 BC–332 BC these 2 precious pieces of granite sculpture need to be protected from the harsh winter climate. William Waldorf Astor found them in Rome in 1898, and believed them to be Egyptian of great antiquity. We would like to purchase a bespoke winter cover from Cliveden Conservation Workshop Ltd.’

Each cover will cost in the region of £800. Total ask £1,600

OCNT donation: £1,600