



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society

www.AAAHS.org.uk

NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 2017



Outings 2017

Programme 2017-8 + reports, articles, book reviews ...





AAAHS Newsletter—Autumn 2017

In this Issue — *click to go there!*

2017-18 lecture programme and events to mark our 50th anniversary

The Chairman considers History and Natural History

Reports from the **Treasurer** and the **Membership Secretary**, and from the **Local History Group** and on the **websites**

A special article from the **Webmaster** for those who are still not familiar with the AAAHS website

Recent books: **Hilary Clare** reviews Mark Spurrell (ed): *Wood's Radley College Diary (1855-1861)*, and **Judy White** on Peter Francopan's *The Silk Roads - A new History of the World*.

The 2017 outings: described: **Andrew Steele** on Sunningwell; **Wendy Robbins** on Somerville College; **Paul Smith** on Abingdon School

Francesca Zawadzki exposes the mystery of John Badcock, and **Bob Frampton** tells us about dog racing in Abingdon in 1930.

And the **Editor** says goodbye!

Also meetings of **other societies** and miscellaneous events.

The Committee for 2016-7 — who does what?

Chairman/town planning: Bob Evans

Secretary/Newsletter: Manfred Brod (retires at the 2017 AGM)

Treasurer: Francesca Zawadzki

Membership: Hubert Zawadzki

Local History: John Foreman

Digging: Jeff Wallis

Lectures: Jeff Wallis and John Foreman

Outings: Elizabeth Drury

Publicity: John Foreman

Posters: Wendy Robbins

Archives: Jackie Smith

Member without portfolio: Bob Frampton

Functions without Committee membership

Refreshments at meetings: Angela McCleery

Webmaster: Mary Haynes

Note that Committee members normally serve either three or six years. New Committee members will be elected at the AGM on 21 September. Nominations will be welcome.

Contact committee members through the website, or email to info@aaahs.org.uk



What is happening in 2017-8?

The regular programme of lectures ...

All meetings are at the Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, and start at 7.45 pm

21 September :	AGM followed by Jackie Smith: <i>The Development of Albert Park</i>
19 October:	Michael Heaney: <i>Percy Manning, the extraordinary antiquary of Oxfordshire (with a bit of Berkshire)</i>
16 November:	Mike Hurst: <i>Tracks to Trenches. Ambulances and Military Transport Trains in WW1</i>
7 December:	Tim Healey: <i>A 17th Century Christmas</i>
18 January:	Hubert Zawadzki: <i>The Land of the White Eagle: the Story of Poland</i>
15 February:	Various Presenters: <i>Old images of Abingdon and what they show</i>
15 March:	Bryan Brown: <i>John Henry Brookes</i>
19 April:	The Lambrick Lecture: Manfred Brod: <i>Abingdon from monastic estate to borough</i>
17 May:	Jonathan Healey: <i>The People's Politics in Tudor England</i>
21 June:	<i>50 years of AAAHS. A social celebration</i>

For fuller information, including synopses and details of the presenters, go to

<http://www.aaahs.org.uk/current-activities/current-programme>

... and the celebration of our 50th anniversary

This will start with our regular meeting on **21 June**. It will be a special occasion, and all members, past members and supporters will be invited to take part.

30 June will be **Abingdon History Day**. We will have an all-day programme of talks covering the range of Abingdon history, from prehistoric times to the present with a close look also at the impending future. It will be at the Northcourt Centre. Speakers who have agreed to take part are John Blair, David Clark, George Lambrick, Jackie Smith and Roger Thomas.

And there will be an **exhibition at the Abingdon Museum** showing our work over the last fifty years in developing and disseminating knowledge of Abingdon's past. It will run from **3 July to 23 September 2018**.

As well as other events and activities still to be decided. Keep looking at the website for the latest information.

Many willing hands will be needed to make these functions a success. Please come forward and volunteer — you don't need to wait to be asked!



Report from the Chair

What follows is (like last time) a reflection rather than a report. The other weekend I attended a celebration dinner for the fiftieth anniversary of our sister society, the Abingdon Naturalists. A year older than we are, and rather larger, they run a very full programme of talks and outings, promoting interest in the world of nature and wildlife, as well as managing their own reserve at Barton Fields. You might think ‘sister’ was hardly the *mot juste*: there is not much overlap in membership between us and the AbNats these days. Yet historically our own concerns and those of ‘naturalists’ – students of natural *history* – were definitely sibling pursuits.

That’s clear if we consider the fruits of the mid-19th-century vogue for local societies, typically organized on a county basis, to pursue a range of aspects of the environment in their given district: antiquities, buildings, landscape, wildlife, and more. Taking over from the individual topographers (or chorographers, to use the earlier term) of old, bodies – initially dominated by country gentlemen and clergy – were founded with such names as the Archaeological and Natural History Societies of Somerset and Wiltshire. The latter, established in Devizes, was set up to ‘cultivate and collect information on archaeology and natural history in their various branches and to form a library and museum illustrating the history, natural, civic and ecclesiastic, of the county’. More quaintly the Woolhope Naturalists’ Field Club (for Herefordshire, in case you were wondering!) embraced ‘archaeology, buildings, geology, history, nature, and people’. It still does; and most of these institutions continue under the same names through to the present, even if the Cotteswold Naturalists’ Field Club, once a major force in the Gloucestershire countryside, has downsized to a grouping for students of geology.

Oxfordshire was, as might be expected, an early participant in these developments. Its quirk was to spawn an *Architectural* and Historical Society, which grew out of an initiative – mainly among members of the University – ‘for promoting the study of Gothic Architecture’. A separate archaeological body came into being, but the two have merged in more recent times. Berkshire acquired its Archaeological Society a little later, in 1871, much about the time when neighbouring counties gained a Northants Natural History Society and Field Club, and Archaeological Societies for Birmingham and Warwickshire and for Bristol and Gloucestershire respectively.

‘Archaeology’ provided the stimulus, and became a holding concept, for much of this local activity. That was perhaps because the guild of historians and their stores of written records always had a stronger central organizational base. However, it’s important to grasp, when contemplating this terminology, that back in the 19th century the word archaeology actually still often meant what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls ‘the systematic description or study of antiquities’. We can find a good example of this in one of the most eminent of those early Victorian foundations, the all-Wales body which in English styled itself Cambrian Archaeological Association, whereas its Welsh title (Cymdeithas Hynafiaethau Cymru) connotes a society of antiquarians whose purpose was defined as ‘to examine, preserve and illustrate the ancient monuments and remains of the history, language, manners, customs, arts and industries of Wales and the Marches and to ed-



ucate the public in such matters’.

Hereabouts the study of natural history seems always to have been separately managed, initially by the venerable Ashmolean Society of Oxford – a learned body that investigated a number of sciences – and much more recently by the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists’ (now renamed Wildlife) Trust, BBOWT, established, like its partners in other counties, from the 1950s onward. More generally, the old bond between archaeology – in its fuller sense – and natural history may have withered in institutional terms by the time AbNats and AAAHS came on the scene; but it’s now flourishing within history as a professional discipline. The world’s ever worsening environmental plight spurs more and more research on humankind’s relation to nature in the past. At the same time more specialist interplay between historians and ecologists is yielding work on the no less vital story of conservation movements and the development of notions of sustainability. Some of this relates closely to our own local landscapes: just think of the pioneering and highly influential writings of WG Hoskins, from the history side, and of Oliver Rackham, from the ecological. BBOWT has just submitted a large grant application for a collaborative project on the landscape history of the Upper Thames. It would be encouraging if, in these years of their respective semi-centennial commemorations, AAAHS and AbNats could grow together a little more.

Bob Evans

AAAHS Treasurer’s Report July 2017

This time last year the state of the Society’s finances was giving us some cause for concern; rising costs and a falling membership were making it increasingly difficult to make ends meet and we were considering our options. This year, I’m pleased to say, the picture looks more positive, and although, yes, we would love to have more members, and yes, we’re being very cautious about how we spend our money, the picture is looking brighter.

As always our main recurring expenses are: the hire of the Northcourt Centre for our monthly meetings and the Pendarvis Room at 35 Ock Street for the Local History Group sessions (total £369); speakers’ fees and expenses for the lecture programme (£344); insurance, including for excavation activities (£308); and subscriptions to other bodies and organisations (£194).

Membership numbers show a very small increase compared with 2015-16, as do the numbers of visitors attending the monthly lectures, and these two have brought in a combined total of £1018 this year, which is more than enough to cover the hire of premises and the cost of speakers. Book sales continue to provide a valuable source of income, totalling £323 this year. And tours and outings have been tremendously successful, bringing in £256. Thanks are due here to a number of people, but particularly Judy White and Elizabeth Drury.

So we’re doing rather better than breaking even, and although we’ve been lucky this year in that there have been no major one-off items of expenditure, we’ve avoided putting up membership fees or curtailing aspects of our activities. Our deposit account remains untouched at just over £3000 ready for contingencies, not just a rainy day but perhaps part of it at least to help fund the



exciting events planned for our 50th anniversary in 2018.

But suggestions for increasing our income are always welcome. Last year my predecessor floated the idea of writing and publishing a new book about Abingdon. How about it?

The audited accounts for 2016-17 will be available at the AGM.

Francesca Zawadzki (Treasurer)

Membership Secretary's Report

As readers of the Treasurer's Report will have gathered, I am pleased to report that the Society's membership has increased a little compared to last year. At the end of the summer season the numbers were as follows:

Family: 18 (ie. nine families)
Individual: 24
Concessionary: 35
Complimentary: 5

There were four fewer family members this year but the number of individual members rose by seven and the number of concessionary members by five.

We very much hope that all members will want to continue to enjoy the Society's activities and will re-join for the year 2017-18. Some have already done so, while those who have signed Standing Order arrangements will of course have their membership automatically continued. Perhaps members might like to encourage some of their friends to join.

Subscriptions, due in September, can either be posted to me at the address shown on the form or brought to the AGM. Forms can be printed off from the AAAHS website. If anyone is unable to print out a form, there will be spare copies at the AGM.

Hubert Zawadzki (Membership Secretary)



The Local History Group

Our most recent meeting of the Local History Group took place at 35 Ock Street on 30 May. We had a disappointingly small turnout that must be partly due to me not having much to say in our advance publicity. It is a job to get everyone excited about what will happen when I do not know! We do not have a featured speaker but shorter informal presentations from AAAHS members about their own research. This generally means that I do not get much warning of what will happen, but I am not going to be critical as I am grateful they do come along and make the evenings as interesting as they are.

First we had a review by Hilary Clare of the recently published diary of William Wood. He had been a Fellow at Radley College in the mid 1800s. At that time there was a high turn-over of teaching staff and school morale was at a low ebb. Hilary categorises the book as a dry read with not much humour coming from the page. In fact Wood described events that were sometimes strange or puzzling though without explanation. One for the historian of the Public School system. William Wood's Diary 1855-1861, ed. by Mark Spurrell, is available from Oxfordshire Record Society, and an extended review by Hilary is in this issue of the Newsletter.

Manfred Brod, one of our regular contributors, spoke about the Stonehouse family of Radley. George Stonehouse's money mostly didn't come from his service to the Crown but from a second marriage to a daughter of a very rich London merchant. And the story that his son William plotted against King James I is based on misreading a document in the Berks Record Office. This was from research done for our Abingdon Buildings and People site. As ever, thoroughly researched and lucid.

Bob Frampton is producing another book, hardly news as he puts us all to shame with the quantity of his output. This one is different as it is a bit of a scrapbook of various things he has come across in research for his other books, but was not relevant to them. It also contains stories that he felt were not suitable for general consumption. Only a few copies will be printed. Bob told us some of these varied and sometime scurrilous stories, and I think we were all entertained.

Jessica Brod brought along a book that had been presented to our society. It was done by the Taylor family and is about their involvement and history of the Lion Hotel on the High Street, Abingdon. The book, mostly of family photographs and pictures related to the business, gives an insight into a once prosperous business that has gone.

I had done a bit more work on the Turner view of Abingdon from the Swift Ditch. The previous month I had shown how I established that the view (if there were no trees in the way) was from the lock at the southern end of the ditch. This meeting I did a reconstruction of what the engraving would look like if the view had been from the northern lock. I also pondered about why both the Borough bridge or St Helen's bridge was not shown in its correct place. There followed a spirited discussion about if any of this was relevant to the real world. The point was put that the better the artist, the less the view was likely to be like reality. I am still of a different opinion!



Our next meeting will be on 17 October 2017 at 35 Ock Street. Whatever we will have I am sure it will be of interest, so do come along.

John Foreman

Contact me at local@aaahs.org

The Abingdon Buildings and People website

There have been four new uploads since the last issue of the newsletter: a short and a long article on John Creemer Clark, nineteenth century industrialist, local politician and benefactor; and shorts on Albert Lock, monumental mason of the early twentieth century, and on William Knollys, Earl of Banbury, a national politician and local magnate in the sixteenth and seventeenth. We now have 166 articles in total, on 131 different topics. Several more submissions are in a late stage of the approval process, and by the time you read this we may have uploaded an important pair of articles on the Stonhouse family of Radley which include contributions from members of the Radley History Club.

Look for these articles on <http://www.abingdon.gov.uk/partners/history>.

Jessica Brod

The AAAHS Website

Members who attended the open evening in June will be interested to know that the text of Viola Crowe's talk on the Viney family and business is now available on the Recollections section of the AAAHS website <http://www.aaahs.org.uk/archive/reports-and-reviews-3>.

This section is expanding, as we receive entries from past and present residents of Abingdon or from the families of those who are deceased. Another recent upload has been a part of the memoirs of Henry Lock who was born in 1876 and wrote them in 1956. He tells of his childhood in and around Abingdon and of his first job in the City of London when he left school at 14. He wrote very well, and it's compelling reading.

These articles differ from those on the ABP website in that they are neither refereed for factual accuracy nor edited for style. They represent the authentic voices of the authors, and are valuable for that reason.

If you have any reminiscences of Abingdon past, whether of your own or of some member of your family, that you are willing to publish in this way, just get in touch!

Manfred Brod



How to find your way round the AAAHS Website

All Societies do basically the same things. Their members have meetings, outings and practical activities and they sometimes do research. They read books and occasionally write them. The Society will be run by a committee, whose contact details need to be made available. From time to time a long-suffering editor produces a Newsletter.

In order to advertise themselves in the local area and beyond, to make sure members are aware of what is happening and hopefully to attract future members, these days they need a website.

When you visit the AAAHS website, what you initially see is the **Home** Page: as well as a short piece about the AAAHS and what it does: this page also gives details of the next AAAHS talk and the next Local History Group meeting. Of course it would be possible to put the entire contents of the website on the Home Page, but then it would just take too long to scroll through and find what you wanted. So the information on the website has to be structured in some way. This is done by using the Menu Bar across the top and these menus themselves sometimes need to be sub-divided.



Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society



This is the Menu Bar

Most of the Menu headings are self-explanatory. All the Newsletters are put together under **Newsletters**, the **Gallery** contains old photographs of Abingdon, **News** contains items of temporary interest. **Contact** tells you how to contact the Committee and **Links** indicates sources where you can find more information about the local area in the form of websites, related societies and books. **Book Reviews**, a sub-menu of links, is what you might expect - the reviews of books relevant to the activities of the AAAHS.

The other two headings, **Research Archive** and **Current Activities** have a number of sub-menus.

The **Research Archive**, whose basic page gives the context of the AAAHS on-line Research Archive, has a drop-down menu.

The first item **Index to Archives** is an index in PDF form to items published in AAAHS newsletters.



And this is a drop-down menu



The remaining drop-down menu items give a subject list, which links to articles published in the newsletter. The indexing terms used are: **Archaeological Research, Buildings, People, Local History Research, The ‘Lost Abbey’ Project** (on Abingdon Abbey), **Recollections** and the **Millennium Timeline**. The final subject heading **Other Research** covers the odds and ends that just don’t fit into any of the previous categories and where there aren’t enough articles to warrant a main heading. At present these are the **Birch Family Wills, Culinary** (which contains some interesting eighteenth century recipes), **Survey** and **Websites**, which is where this article will appear when it is published in this newsletter.

One of the most interesting of these sections is **Recollections**, which is constantly being added to: the latest item being Viola Crowe’s recollections of the Viney family. It is very significant to permanently capture these fascinating remembrances of Abingdon’s past, to be read for information and pleasure.

The **Current Activities** menu tab explains the AAAHS main activities and the drop down menu includes the **Lecture Programme**, probably one of the most useful areas. The **Archaeology** sub-menu covers the Digs and **Shrieve Cottages** is a further subdivision.

Local History covers the activities of John Foreman’s dynamic Local History Group, with a report on the latest meeting.

Outings gives details of the current years’ visits to places of local interest: It has a sub-menu, **Outings Reports**, which links to the reports of previous Outings published in the AAAHS Newsletters.

The AAAHS website has a useful search option (where the magnifying glass is - on the top right of every page) so if you really can’t find what you’re looking for by using the menu tabs then you can always try a word search. The search is made across the entire website. ‘Birch’, for example, will find those Birch Family Wills, but remember that this search tool is intolerant of spelling mistakes and takes things literally, so accuracy is vital.

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The Search Box is at the top right, with magnifying glass

find what they want, using either the menus or the search facility. It has been useful for me to write, because in writing it I realised that the structure wasn’t very clear or logical in places, so I had to change it!

Mary Haynes



Book Reviews

Mark Spurrell (ed): *Wood's Radley College Diary (1855-1861)*, Oxfordshire Record Society Volume 70, 2016. ISBN 978-0-902509-83-2

At the time of this diary William Wood was both sub-warden of Radley College (founded in 1847) and a fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. His attention was divided between the two worlds, apparently without conflict, with Radley getting a good deal more of it than the College.

It may as well be said at once that he was not one of the world's great diarists. His record of his daily life is bald, pedestrian, and quite without humour. But it is nevertheless a valuable resource for (primarily) the early years of Radley College, for sidelights on the life of the University and on the Church of England. Who would have expected that the most perplexing question facing a young clergyman (Wood was 26 when his diary opens) in these middle years of the 19th century would be whether or not to grow a beard? That Wood himself triumphed in this respect is clear from the photographs in (and on the front cover of) this volume, and throughout the diary he religiously recorded sightings of beards on his clerical brethren. Church practices get no such attention.

The volume is, as usual with this series, meticulously produced, with a clear font, and footnotes where they belong. The text is taken from a typescript copy of the diary made under the auspices of Wood's daughter for Radley when the centenary history of the College was being written. The original manuscript has disappeared, and it is not known how much of it was omitted from the typescript. The present editor has, rightly, indicated where cuts are known to have been made, but it has not been possible to see where others occur. He has corrected obvious typing errors, retaining Wood's own spelling (e.g. 'shew' for modern 'show') and has sensibly expanded initials wherever possible to identify the persons referred to. He has added notes on Radley fellows and boys, and on some of Wood's Oxford friends and acquaintances. The editor is an Old Radleian and his special knowledge and interest has informed his work.

But – and it is unfortunately a big But – he has not given us a considerable amount of material which would have added to the value of this edition.

Although details of Wood's early life and family have been given in the Introduction (pp. xliv-xlix), Mr Spurrell has failed to carry the story on beyond the end of the diary on 7 January 1861. He does tell us that Wood married Emma Moorsom on 23 July 1862, and mentions (with very little detail) that he became Warden of Radley (1866-70), rather unsuccessfully. Appendix 2 gives us selections from a later diary, September 1861 – November 1863. But we are not (so far as I can see) even told the date of Wood's death (28 October 1919) nor anything of his life after Radley – and there was nearly 50 years of it. Is it not of interest that he served as priest-in-charge of Prestwood, Bucks, between 1864 and 1866, between his sub-wardenship and wardenship of Radley, and that he went on to be vicar of Cropredy from 1870-1898, also rural dean of Dedding-



ton 1881-98, and as Diocesan Inspector [of schools] for the diocese from 1877-88? And that he went on to Monks Risborough (1898-1901) and finally to Rotherfield Greys, Henley-on-Thames, from 1901 until his death at the age of ninety? One is left to wonder whether a section of the Introduction has inadvertently dropped out.

An equally serious fault is that the Index (divided into Names and Subjects, the latter including Places) is selective, with no obvious indication that this is so. Those connected to the College are included, but there are many names to be found in the text which are not in the Index. What, for instance, is the point of telling us in the Introduction (p. lviii) that ‘A great number of other people appear in the *Diary*, chiefly on social occasions. Those who appear frequently include: [list]’, but then not placing these names in the Index? Without reading the *Diary* cover to cover we cannot find when or how Wood came across them, as none of them appears to be in the Index. This is irritating, and detracts from the volume’s value.

Very properly, we are given considerable information about William Sewell, the charismatic but maverick Founder and third Warden, and about how close he came to wrecking his foundation. There is no space here to discuss Sewell, who is amply chronicled in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and elsewhere, but this unhappy story, as chronicled by Wood, is probably the most valuable aspect of the *Diary*, and is well dealt with.

Those unfamiliar with the 19th century may be astonished at the quantity of beatings administered to the boys at Radley, and even more so at the amount of kissing and embracing which went on between boys and masters, quite unselfconsciously recorded by Wood. The beatings were probably no more than was normal in any school; the caresses – quite possibly no more than expressions of affection – may have been the product of the then ethos of the school, where Sewell deliberately encouraged close pastoral relationships between the Fellows – as the senior masters were called – and their pupils. But their occurrence is none the less surprising to a modern eye.

The minutiae of life at Radley will be of interest chiefly to Old Radleians, but the history of Radley’s early years (despite the deficiencies noted above) is significant in the context of the Oxford movement and of the development of the great public schools, and for giving us access to Wood’s diary. Mr Spurrell and the Oxfordshire Record Society are to be congratulated.

Hilary Clare

Peter Francopan, *The Silk Roads - A new History of the World*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. ISBN 9781408839973

Peter Francopan, the author of this Sunday Times bestseller, is Senior Research Fellow at Worcester College, Oxford, and Director of the Centre for Byzantine Research at Oxford University.



As a child, Peter was fascinated by a large map of the world, whose every detail he memorised – capital cities, rivers, oceans, mountains and deserts. As a teenager, he became aware that our Europe-focused teaching of history and geography ignored huge swathes of the world. As his horizons widened, he learnt Russian and classical Arabic, and came to realise that the middle east, Persia and Mesopotamia were once the very centre and indeed the birthplace of civilisation, housing great cities nearly 5,000 years ago, with vibrant cultures and trading routes spanning regions from China to Europe.

Not only did these routes transport goods of all kinds; they were also the means by which ideas and the world's great religions – Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and later Islam - were spread.

Little-known environmental disasters helped to change world history. We read of severe climate change in the second half of the fourth century, causing severe famine in China and waves of migrants from the steppes culminating in the sacking of Rome; and in 541 Bubonic plague first swept through the ancient world killing off whole cities, from Egypt and Constantinople through Persian Mesopotamia as far as China. The equally devastating recurrence of the plague in the 14th century is seen as an engine for social change which actually brought huge benefits to the West.

The author sees the [silk] roads as a metaphor for each phase of world history as he traces the rise and fall of successive civilizations through wars, trade, politics and natural disasters, to create a story that is a masterpiece of scholarship, and yet a highly readable and detailed account of how our world has been shaped and developed. It will appeal to historians, archaeologists, geographers, economists, linguists – in fact anyone with an interest in the past.

As the author states in his acknowledgements, his book spans centuries, continents and cultures. It is a real eye-opener and a hugely satisfying read.

Judy White

Editor's Notes

Articles should be limited to a maximum of about a thousand words but may of course be shorter. They may be edited for content, but views and opinions in published articles are those of the contributors rather than the Society itself.

The Newsletter is sent electronically to members at the time of publication when it is also posted on the website. It is no longer available in print. Copy deadline for the next issue is end-January 2018.

Manfred Brod



Outings 2017

Sunningwell Village, 22 May

The evening began by meeting at the car park of the village hall opposite the church with Boars Hill behind. Fortunately the trek up and down was not to be part of the tour. The group walked down to the one street of the village while Bob Evans, our host, gave a brief history of the village from earliest times.

The earliest reference to the village is via Sunna, an Anglo-Saxon name of c8th century and Sunna being the name of the chieftain of his people. The name is possibly related to Sonning and other similar place names, Hence Sunna's Well.

Sunningwell was mentioned also in 9th century documents but these may have been embellished by monks in later years to reinforce their claim to the land.



Assembly at the car park

The village was isolated from Abingdon for centuries and hence the character of the village has not changed that much. Houses have been rebuilt but with little actual expansion. It was owned by the Baskervilles who were not known as 'good' landowners. History does not record if they kept any hounds in the village.

We arrived at the cricket pitch on the way to the CofE primary school grounds – more of which below. The land which now holds the cricket pitch was donated to the village in 1915 by Mrs Whittington-Green in memory of her

son, with the caveat that only cricket was to be played there. There is in fact still a strong village team playing matches in the Oxfordshire Cricket Association league.

The Shrieve Cottage dig

We then went to the area in the grounds behind the school, which was established in 1973 and built when the old school (further up the village) became the school of art. The land in question was purchased by the Friends of Sunningwell School to provide an area of non-classroom, environmental learning.

The site houses the remains of Shrieve Cottage(s) which was demolished in the 1940s but which dates back to Tudor times.



There is an ongoing dig on the site undertaken by enthusiastic amateurs, both adults and children, which has uncovered a wealth of early-mid twentieth century domestic items.

These range from glass bottles to pieces of ceramics (possibly plates or saucers) to relatively large chunks of metal including bicycle parts. These items are displayed both in the school and Abingdon library.

Interestingly there is evidence of much local brickworks usage but some bricks were from Stourbridge, as indicated by the impressions in the clay. These were the more structurally sound bricks for load bearing purposes or for use in the bread ovens, evidence for which has been uncovered beside the main chimney breast. The evidence also shows there were two bread ovens, built over time, one on the other.



It's a really big dig!

Further information can be found on the village school website at:

<http://www.sunningwell.oxon.sch.uk/the-spinney/>

From the school, we walked along to the village green. Before around 1999 this was Church owned glebe land although not being used as such by the church. Since that date the area has had village green status and the plan is to return much of the area to a wildflower meadow. There is a footpath across the Green from the village road to Abingdon.

And so to the church along with its ancient original church-yard and suitably ancient yew tree. The oldest readable headstones date back some 200 years.



A seven-sided entrance

The church itself (St Leonards) is c13th century with a unique seven-sided second entrance construction on its west end. This is a part classical (with ionic columns) part medieval construction said to have been given by John Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury in c 1550. Jewel had been rector of the church.

There are unusual poppy head flowers carved at the ends of each of the 23 pews. Carved by local craftsmen they are however un-dateable and un-attributable. There are also unique and potentially valuable floor tiles in the chancel showing scenes from the Book of Revelation. These were laid during the late Victorian restoration of the church. Along with the monument to Samuel Fell, rector,



who died two days after the execution of Charles I, and the stained glass east window, the church is a very interesting asset to the village.



The carved pew finials, and some of the tiling in the chancel



Triumphant after the climb

The highlight of the tour was a climb to the top of the tower, which has a peal of six bells. This 15thC structure stands on the site of a previous tower where, a couple of centuries earlier, Francis Bacon, the early Oxford scientist, is said to have carried out his astronomical observations.

The tour ended at the local pub, The Flowing Well, which of course is where all the best AAAHS tours should finish – the local pub that is, not necessarily the Flowing Well. Thanks to Elizabeth for organising it and Bob for leading it so well.

Andrew Steele



Somerville College, Oxford, 21 June

Truly an afternoon/evening to remember, an enchanting midsummer day in Oxford visiting an historic college, and its delightful grounds. Such a cool green oasis amid the hustle and bustle of a university city in term time.

We met at the porter's lodge at 4.30pm, where Dr Anne Manuel, college librarian, Archivist and Head of Information was waiting to show us round.

The grounds were delightful. There is a calm atmosphere in such places... students reading under trees (cramming for exams no doubt) and gently strolling to and fro, book in hand. Oxford is known for the city's libraries, museums, bookshops, and TV associated locations, however behind college gates there lay a history of learning as old as the city itself. I never cease to be amazed by Oxford college libraries (visited on open days) and complementary to the Bodleian, Sackler and others. The library at Somerville was no exception. It is particularly comprehensive because in the college's early years women were not allowed to use the Bodleian. The refectory was like something from a Harry Potter film, and one expected to see Inspector Morse appear any moment.



Students hard at work



Mrs T looking supercilious

Somerville was founded in 1879, one of the two first women's colleges in Oxford. It was named after Mary Somerville, one of the great polymaths of Victorian England and one of the few of them who were women. Somerville taught maths to Ada Lovelace, who went on to work with Charles Babbage on computers; she wrote numerous books on a wide range of scientific subjects, and was a talented painter. A very competent self-portrait by her hangs in a hallway. And, on that subject, Somerville differs from most Oxford colleges in that the portraits on the walls are mostly of females, some of them still happily alive.

Somerville has educated more than its share of people who went on to do great things. On the day we were there, Shirley Williams was being honoured at the Sheldonian; both she and her mother, the author Vera Brittain, were Somervillians. So, on the far side of the political spectrum, was Margaret Thatcher whose portrait bust, placed on a rather high shelf in a seminar room, looked superciliously down as we listened to Dr Ma-



manuel's explanations. The list could be longer: the author Dorothy Sayers, the scientist Dorothy Hodgkin, the Indian politician Indira Gandhi all studied there. Until quite recently, Somerville was among the top Oxford colleges for intellectual accomplishment. The reason is that women students then had to be on average just a little better than the men. Now with all colleges taking both men and women this is no longer so, and it has declined to somewhere about the middle of the league table.

Thank you Elizabeth for organising such a memorable visit. And thanks to Dr Manuel, for her explanations and for ensuring we were provided with much-needed chilled water on an unusually hot day.

Wendy Robbins

Abingdon School, 4 July

We were shown round by Sarah Wearne, the School archivist and Alison Lester of the alumni organisation. It proved to be a fascinating evening where we saw and learned many and varied things concerning the school's long history and its present facilities and functioning. This account focusses on points that I personally found most interesting. Others may have different memories.

In the picture gallery that leads to the chapel there is a petition to Oliver Cromwell (see www.abingdon.org.uk/63objects) object 8.

The petition requests the dismissal of the headmaster and two of the four signatures belong to former pupils. The main complaint was that the Revd Anthony Huish, headmaster 1625 – 1654, was neglecting the School. As a result the pupils were not being properly taught and so were losing out on the 'very considerable additional advantages' they could get from a university education.

In 1643 Huish had become the curate of St Nicolas church and this led to his neglect of the School. He had supported the King in the Civil War and was maintaining Anglican forms of worship in a town where the puritans now held sway.

Huish was dismissed on 26 October 1653 and told to vacate the school premises by Lady Day – 25 March – 1654. He initially refused but later he departed.

The Chamberlain's accounts for Abingdon show that Huish was paid up to Lady Day 1654. He remained at St Nicolas until June 1655 but after this he disappears from the record – except that in September 1662, after the restoration of the monarchy, Abingdon Corporation paid him the £13 6s 8d they owed him in arrears.

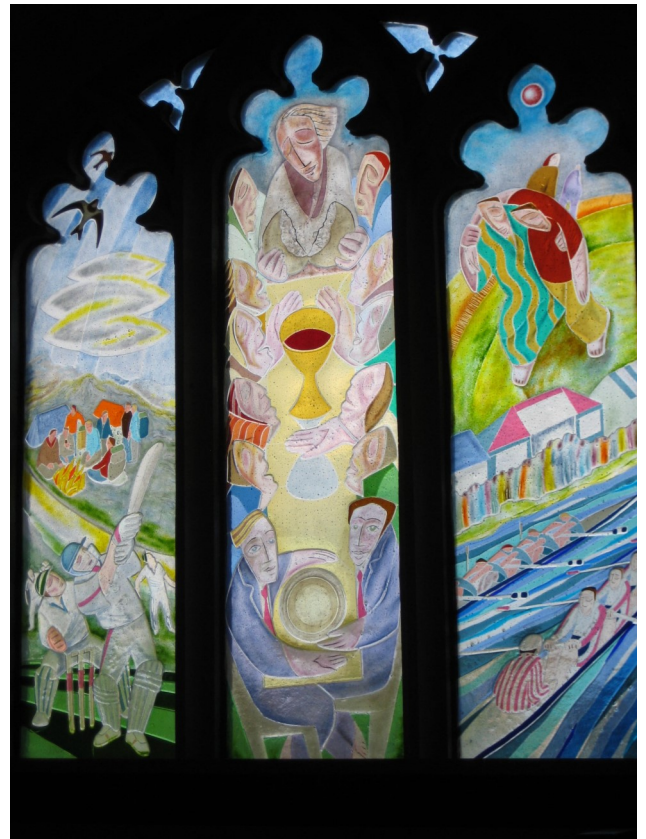
The School bought the petition in 1998 from a dealer who had recently acquired it in America.



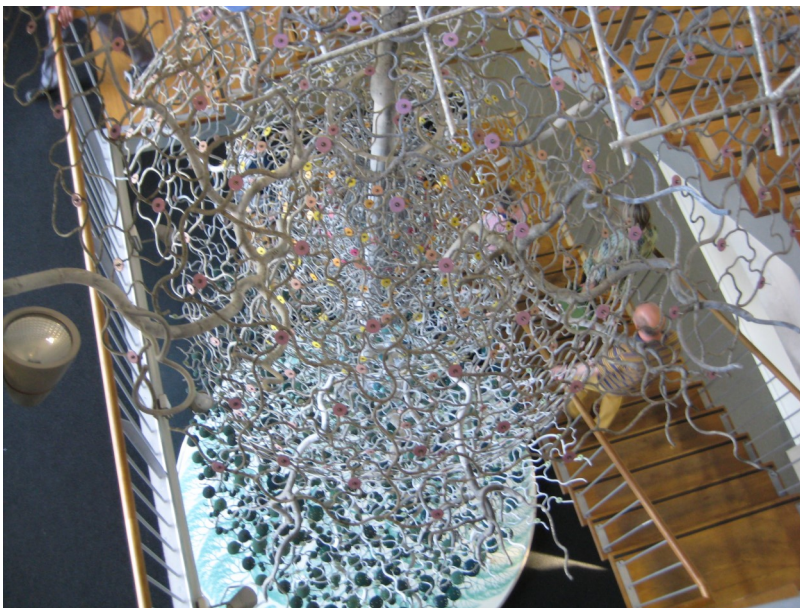
The chapel has some unusual stained glass windows and three of them are about each term. The first window was installed in 2004 and dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Richard Harris. However, the scheme to replace all the Chapel windows was not finalised until 2012 when a fund-raising campaign allowed the completion of the project. Made of fused glass and dedicated by the Bishop of Oxford the Rt. Rev. John Pritchard on 27 April 2012, the windows were designed by Nicholas Mynheer, an Oxfordshire artist, to match the seasons of the church with the academic year. They were made by Daedelian Glass in Lancashire.

In the Armed Services window, the Spitfire and destroyer are reminders of past wars, whilst the twenty-first century soldier represents more modern conflicts.

The Michaelmas window shows the baby Jesus in swaddling clothes watched by shepherds and serenaded by an angelic orchestra. In the bottom of the window, the 1st XV play rugby on Waste Court Field.



The Trinity window



Nuclear fusion is upstairs

Three Kings and the Crucifixion are in the Lent window. Boys study, run cross country, and play chess.

The Trinity window shows the Lord's supper at its centre. On the left, a member of the 1st XI hits a cricket ball into the top of the right-hand window, passing two martlets on the way. These birds, heraldic swallows, symbolise Abingdon's Benedictine Abbey to which the School owes its origins. On the right is the Friends of Abingdon School Boat Club race.

Looking back to the distant past, when John Roysse endowed his school for 63 scholars in 1563 he decreed that it was to be known as the Free School of



the Holy Trinity. It never was, but 340 years later, on Trinity Sunday 1903, Abingdon's new School Chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity by the Rt. Rev. John Mitchinson, and a hundred years after this the Trinity window was commissioned to mark the centenary.

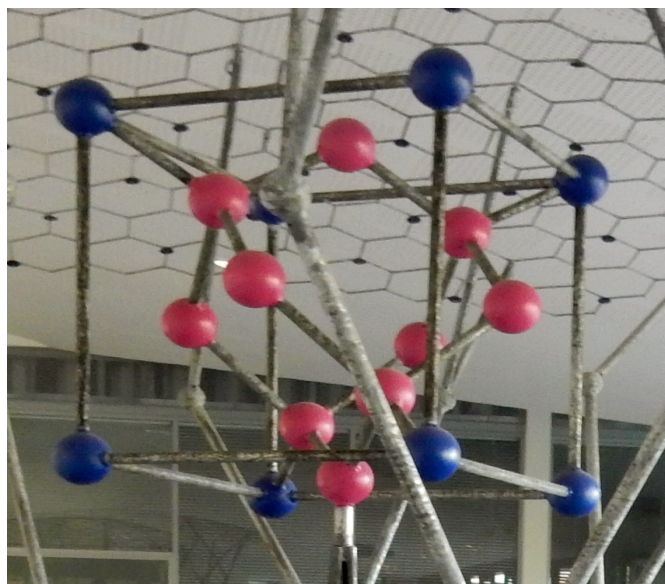


Morpheus the Chameleon

fusion in a tokamak, and chemistry with the crystal structure of diamond. The sculpture is three stories high and each part corresponds to one floor of the building. We were also introduced to Morpheus the Chameleon who proved very popular with our group.

After that we went to the sports centre opened by Kate Hoey MP in 2008. This is open to Abingdon sports clubs in general. Here we saw the fitness centre, Squash Courts, Hospitality suite/bar, and finally the Boat House training room overlooking the 8-lane swimming pool, and we left passing the Studio where Karate was in progress.

A short walk around the grounds past Waste Court (now sadly renamed Austin House) and then we returned to the Charles Ward Room where Sarah gave us a fascinating talk about the long history of the school with some time for questions after.



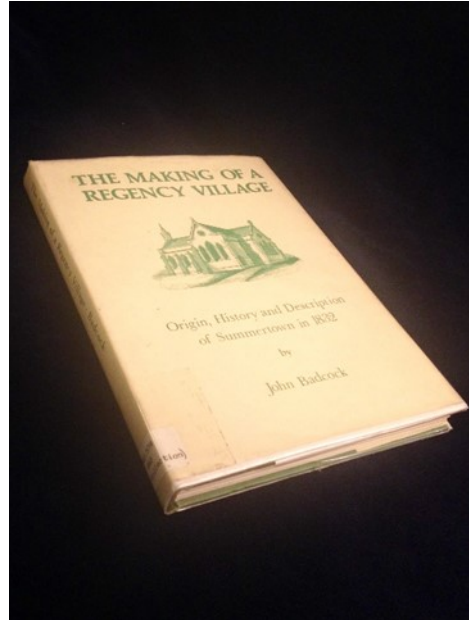
Face-centred cubic

Paul Smith



Feature Articles

The Mystery of John Badcock



John Badcock (1775 – 1841), local historian and chronicler, wrote about Summer-town and Watlington. Is there a missing manuscript about the ten years he lived in Abingdon?

Lists don't often make for an exciting read. An exception is John Badcock's *Origin, History and Description of Summer-Town*, written in 1832 as an aide-memoire for the first vicar of the new church. It's a treasure trove for social and local historians, not only for the detailed description of an early suburb but also for its pithy and sometimes devastatingly blunt pen-portraits of the parishioners. It's perhaps just as well that the manuscript lay virtually undisturbed in the parish chest for a century and a half, because if his neighbours had had an inkling of what he was writing about them Badcock might have had a brick through his window, or a libel suit or two to add to his many woes. The complete text was published in 1983 in a limited edition under the title *The Making of a Regency Village*, edited by Christopher Hicks and with an introduction and epilogue by Ruth Fasnacht.

But if he was forthcoming about his neighbours John Badcock was extremely reticent about himself. His twentieth-century editors made strenuous efforts to find out more about him, but never got very far. Here is what they discovered. Badcock lived in Watlington until about 1820, when he moved to Abingdon. In 1830 he left Abingdon for Summertown, where in his own words "he knew no-one, and was alike unknown". What was he doing in these places?

His time in Watlington, where he was a tanner by profession, and a churchwarden, is well-



documented. He was married to Anne Carter in Shipton-on-Cherwell in 1802, and they had five children baptized in Watlington. The two eldest, both boys, died in infancy, leaving Emily Anne, born in 1808, Alfred Joseph in 1812, and Arthur William in 1814. While living there Badcock wrote a history of Watlington, the manuscript of which is in the Bodleian Library.

But the decade Badcock spent in Abingdon is shrouded in mystery. Why did Badcock move here? Hicks and Fasnacht thought perhaps it was for the education of his two surviving sons, and Arthur William at least must have attended Abingdon School for a time, as later on he was a Tesdale Scholar at Pembroke College, Oxford, graduating in 1833. But Badcock himself seems to have left little trace. The only evidence of this lost decade was two items in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*:

Saturday 26 May 1827

“On Sunday last died, at Abingdon, after a long illness, which she bore with Christian patience and resignation, Anne, wife of Mr John Badcock. Her many excellent qualities, urbanity of manners, and charitable disposition, endeared her to her family and friends.”

Then the following year:

Saturday 8 March 1828

“Abingdon. On Sunday last, the day on which he completed his sixteenth year, died Alfred Joseph, eldest son of Mr John Badcock, of East St Helen's-Street.”

There was no other trace of his residence here, no involvement with the church, and most puzzling of all no record to be found of any burial of Anne, or Alfred, or indeed Emily Anne, who must also have died sometime before 1830, in any of the Abingdon registers, or in the Watlington registers, or anywhere in the locality.

By 1832 Badcock was living in Summertown, churchwarden again, but in humble circumstances: “The little nut-shell, indeed, which I occupy, is, properly, only the half of a House...[with] an indifferent kitchen, hardly commodious enough for my tall slim old servant-maid, Lizzie Bartlett, and her various articles for daily use...It suits me very well and the situation is particularly desirable to me near a dutiful and promising son, pursuing his studies at University, the only child Divine Providence has now left me in this world.”

Of course digitised records and searchable databases make it so much easier now to piece together people's stories. John Badcock's emerges as one of a fortune made and lost, and of personal tragedy. We now know he was born in 1775 in Ashbury, Berkshire, the sixth child of Joseph Badcock, farmer, and his wife Elizabeth. By the 1780s the family were in the Watlington area. In due course John and his brother inherited Joseph's substantial property in Watlington; they were doing well.

But disaster struck John in 1825 when he was declared bankrupt. The bankruptcy was reported extensively in the press, as was the consequent sale of his property, including the house and land in Watlington. The case dragged on until 1829 when his creditors were finally paid off. Could it be



that his time in Abingdon was partly spent in the debtors' wing of the Old Gaol? No wonder that he was glad of anonymity in Summertown.

But further tragedy awaited; *Jackson's Oxford Journal* again:

Saturday 13 February 1836

"On Saturday last died, at his father's residence at Summer Town, in the twenty-second year of his age, after a long and suffering illness, occasioned by the rupture of a blood vessel and frequently repeated haemorrhage, which unfortunately terminated in consumption, Arthur William Badcock, B.A. and Scholar of Pembroke College in this University. In this last bereavement the surviving parent will have followed to the grave his family of five promising children, and their much-respected, beloved, and tenderly affectionate mother."

An online search reveals that Anne, Emily and Alfred were buried in Fairford, Gloucestershire. We don't know why. Arthur was also buried there in 1836. John himself moved to Fairford soon afterwards, and the 1841 census finds him living in a cottage, within sight of the church, and still cared for by the faithful Lizzie. He died later the same year; the cause of death was "decline".

Badcock wrote about Watlington and Summertown; did he write about Abingdon too? We shall probably never know, but how wonderful it would be to find a manuscript in a dusty old box under the floorboards somewhere in East St Helen's Street!

Francesca Zawadzki

Did you think the book picture at the top of this article was skew? It's not! Check with a ruler to convince yourself!

The Editor

The Abingdon Dog Races, 1930

Few people who live in Abingdon today are aware that in the 1930s, the town contained a dog racing track. The 1930s was a time when the sport enjoyed great national popularity - nationally there were around one hundred and twenty six formally regulated tracks whereas today there are only twenty five. Abingdon's was not affiliated to the Greyhound Racing Association and was known informally as a 'flapping' (i.e. unregulated) track.

In the August of that year, a Mr G Sandells of Bridge Street took the initiative and gathered support for such a venue. At Norman Avenue which at that time contained only ten houses and was mainly farmland, he rented a field and set up a dog racing track. On Thursday evening of 15th August two hundred people attended. The course had a mechanical lure, a stuffed rabbit for whippets and a hare for greyhounds, according to which breed of dog was racing. The lure was pulled along by use of a stationary car with its rear wheels raised. Some tracks used a motor-cycle. The 'hare' or 'rabbit' was pulled along a rail which ran one hundred and fifty yards from start to finish.



Racing took place on Thursdays and Saturdays.

There were at this inaugural event, five breeds: greyhounds, lurchers, whippets, terriers (rough and smooth haired). There were separate races for each breed and raced in heats of three. There were 40 entrants. The even lasted around 1 ½ hours.

After the races a Colonel K.G. Walker presented prizes and said that ‘he hoped to see an even greater attendance and possibly a longer, 2-hour, event’.

The entrance money for the first two sessions was given to the Warren Hospital - £4.3s.2d.

As a result of these successful meetings, members decided on the 4th of September in the Assembly Rooms, to form the Abingdon and District Dog Racing Association. It had nineteen members and officers were elected. Colonel Walker was elected President, Chairman was Mr Sandells, Honorary Secretary was Mr P.Sykes. There was a Treasurer and there were six other committee members. The Mayor was asked to be vice-president. A challenge cup was presented to the Association by Mr Sandells.

One of the first pieces of business of the committee, on the 8th of September, was to consider a new field for the races. This was urgent because they had only temporary use of the present site. They decided to rent a field owned by a Mr J.L.West and again it was close to Norman Avenue. Its name then was Gallow’s Field, known earlier on the St Helen’s Tithe Map as ‘Gallows Piece’. It was bounded by Radley Road and Oxford Road, and was accessed through Norman Avenue. This is probably why reports in the North Berks Herald describe it as being ‘in Norman Avenue’. Since 1961 it has been built over and is known now as Galley Field.

The field at this time was, according to local memory, largely fruit trees and rough grass, and was played upon by local children.

There were now twenty seven paid-up and eighteen prospective members.

Usually around one hundred to two hundred people attended, and races took place between August and October, on a Thursday evening at five pm and a Saturday afternoon. A sure sign of their popularity was that soon on the turf accountants – ‘bookies’ – began to practise their trade at the track. In addition, the Herald would have sent a reporter, and these articles appear in the Herald within days of the races.

Then suddenly the races disappear from the news. After 1930, the races are not mentioned again, and what cannot be ascertained is whether they ended altogether or were simply not reported. There is local anecdotal information that the races may have moved to Wootton Road, but there is absolutely nothing again in the local press to confirm or to deny this. The search goes on...

Here is a typical ‘Herald’ race report of the time, dated 19th September 1930:



YESTERDAY'S MEETING ON THE NEW COURSE

The third meeting of the Abingdon and District Dog Racing Association took place yesterday on the new course. The events were very keenly contested and the new course is admirable for the sport.

There was a good attendance and an outstanding feature was the presence of a bookmaker. The judge was Captain Cornhill.

The results were:

Greyhounds: Heat 1.. 1st Botley Prince 2. Spring Heat 2: 1st.., Jim 2. Sleepy Lad Heat 3: 1. Max 2. Early Queen Final: Botley Prince.

Whippets: 1. Deadheat between Mich and Brindle 2. Gykp

Terriers: Heat 1. Cabby 2 Bogey Heat 2: Peter 2. Nell. Final: Peter beat Cabby

Lurchers: Cabby beat Jim.

Bob Frampton

Bibliography

North Berks Herald January 1930 – December 1936

The Newsletter—a valediction

I am now nearing the end of my six-year stint on the AAAHS Committee, and, among other things, will be handing over the editorship of the Newsletter.

My aim has been to transform the Newsletter from a relatively unambitious black/white publication to something approaching the format of a glossy magazine. I wanted it to be a sort of house organ for the Society, where members could not only read what the Committee had planned for them but also write what was on their mind about local history and archaeology, publish research that was not suitable for the more academic journals, and review newly published books for the benefit of those whose reading lists must be selective. Above all, I wanted the Newsletter to be regarded by members as one of the advantages of their membership and by non-members as an additional incentive to join. How far I have succeeded I leave to others to judge.

So, the best of luck to my successor, whoever he or she turns out to be, and whatever new and different ideas he or she brings to the job!

Manfred Brod



Abingdon Heritage Open Days

9-10 September 2017

Many properties will be open, and there will be walks, talks and exhibitions.

Keep an eye on

<http://www.abingdonheritage.co.uk/>

for full information.

Dates for Your Diary

Abingdon Museum Friends

St Helen's Church Centre, 7 for 7.30 pm

- 7 Sept: James Mather – 'Treasures Beneath Our Feet and the Watlington Hoard'
- 5 Oct: Dr Hubert Zawadzki – 'Invasion, Deportation and Survival: A Polish Woman's Epic Wartime Story 1939-1945'
- 2 Nov: Ruth Weinberg – 'Uzbekistan – the hub of Central Asia'
- 7 Dec: Liz Woolley – 'Leisure and Entertainment in Victorian and Edwardian Oxford'
- 1 Feb: Jackie Smith – 'The Bridges and Causeway at Abingdon and Culham'
- 8 Mar: Mark Davies – 'The Joneses of Jesus: Oxford's Welsh Connections'
- 5 Apr: AGM – Alan Copeland – 'Curiosities in the Chilterns Part One'

Marcham Society

All Saints' Church, 7.45 pm

- 12 Sept: AGM & Members' evening
- 10 Oct: Liz Woolley – Oxfordshire and the Spanish Civil War
- 14 Nov: Bob Frampton – Made in Abingdon - Echoes from the shop floor
- 12 Dec: Xmas Social
- 9 Jan: Simon Blackmore—Working in South-West France, where armies once marched through ...
- 13 Feb: Olivia Robinson—Church leisure in the 19th century
- 13 Mar: George Candelin—Ringing birds
- 10 April: Geoffrey Tyack—Architecture of the Radcliffe Camera
- 8 May: William Wintle—The Iron Age and Romano-British landscape of the Vale of the White Horse

Radley History Club

Radley CE Primary School, 7 for 7.30 pm

- 11 Sept: Peter Neal – MG Cars in Abingdon
- 9 Oct: Joanna Matthews – Capability Brown in Oxfordshire

13 Nov: Tim Healey – Drovers Roads in Oxfordshire and Beyond

- 12 Dec: Christmas Dinner at The Bowyer Arms, Radley
- 8 Jan: Tim Jordan – Cotswold Stone Barns
- 12 Feb: Katherine Bradley – Votes for Women in Oxfordshire
- 12 Mar: Jackie Smith – The Medieval Bridges at Abingdon and Culham
- 10 Apr, 6.00 pm: Club visit to the grounds of Radley College to see the work of Capability Brown
- 14 May : Liz Woolley 'Oxford's Base and Brickish Skirt' – the Development of Oxford's Suburbs 1850–1914
- 11 Jun: Rod Ellis – The Life of Edward Brookes VC of Oakley and Oxford
- 9 Jul: Hubert Zawadzki – Invasion, Deportation and Survival: A Polish Woman's Epic Wartime Story 1939–1945

Sutton Courtenay Local History Society

All Saints Church, 7.30 pm

- 26 Sept : Ken Welsh — Prehistoric, Roman & Saxon Discoveries at Bridge Farm, Sutton Courtenay:
- 14 Nov : Martin Way —The Golden Age of Stage Coaching: Martin Way
- 23 Jan: Simon Wenham —Morris' Motopolis: the Motor Works and Transformation of Oxford:
- 13 Mar: Mark Davies—James Sadler of Oxford; the First English Aeronaut:
- May (date to be arranged): Focus on Sutton Courtenay: Pictures that tell a Story: Members evening

Wallingford Hist and Arch Soc

St Mary's Church, 7.45 for 8.00 pm

- 13 Sept: Rachel Pettit-Smith: "A history of Pettits of Wallingford"
- 11 Oct: Graham Twemlow: 'Art & Design in the Chilterns'
- 8 Nov: David Carless and Lindsey Bedford: 'Blewbury - A Saxon surprise in a test pit and a Roman religious site on the Downs'