



Marlow National Trust Association

A voluntary association of National Trust members and volunteers

NEWSLETTER No. 221

April 2025

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Now the evenings are lighter we hope even more of our members will join us for the talks and outings carefully arranged by our committees. The evening meetings in Liston Hall start at 8.00pm (doors open at 7.30) as usual, with refreshments and time to socialise in the interval at 8.45.

Wed 16 Apr Ukrainian and Russian Painting Gabriel Chanan

Russian and Ukrainian art were intermingled for 250 years. Now, Ukraine is trying to protect its art to reclaim its heritage. Gabriel will introduce us to painters little-known in the West and others who became key figures in modernism.

Thurs 24 Apr Buscot & Coleshill Estate (NT) Julia Stacey

Sun 11 May Holiday to Dartmouth and South Devon Penny Clarry

Wed 21 May Samuel Pepys Andrew Davies

Diarist, Civil Servant, MP. Prisoner in the Tower and Survivor of the Plague and the Great Fire of London in 1666. Andrew Davies will explore Pepys' life and times.

Wed 28 May British Motor Museum Michael Fines-Allin

Wed 18 June A Grandmother's Legacy Jenny Mallin

Jenny's Great-Aunt Constance was a woman of high social status, the wife of a British Official, born in 1898. This talk will be an account of her life in Burma: the opulence of life in Rangoon in the 1930s and the dangerous trek in 1942 with thousands of civilians to escape the invading Japanese.

Tues 24 June Lamport Hall Penny Clarry

Wed 16 July Wildlife on your Doorstep Tom Way

Tom is a professional wildlife photographer; he will talk about the fantastic wildlife on our very own doorsteps.

Wed 30 July Ightham Mote (NT) John Pearce

The Newsletter of the Marlow National Trust Association is edited by:

Jean Frost
Alison Pearce

From Our Chairman

Our Winter programme closes, and we now move into our Spring and early Summer programme. We have had many entertaining talks and interesting outings over the last three months, and there are certainly more to come as stated in this Newsletter under 'Forthcoming Events'.

Our AGM proved to be a very interesting meeting, besides our business agenda we had a very informative and lively talk from Steven Williams, Site Manager from Nuffield Place, about his property and about Lord Nuffield (William Morris the car magnate). He also stated that according to NT records we (the MNTA) had donated £173,000 to the NT since 1987. Now we are going to add another £9,000 this year. Therefore, a terrific achievement from all our members!

At the AGM I made my usual appeal for new committee members and I am very pleased to say that Pauline Wyllie has joined our Speakers Committee, and Mary Green has volunteered to help Jenny Annett organise the teas at our meetings. Nevertheless, we still need an extra person for each of our sub-committees – Speakers, Outings and Holidays. As I said at the New Members Evening, we are a very successful organisation because we have strong committees, and we would like to continue in the same way. I think the more one is involved, the more one benefits from the organisation.

The New Members Evening, which was held on Friday 14 March, was as usual, a very convivial affair.

You may or may not know that the National Trust's new 10-year strategy is entitled 'People and Nature Thriving'. This aims to improve and restore our natural surroundings; to make nature and culture more available to more people; to engage more with people, particularly the young, in order for them to experience and appreciate their natural surroundings. I have summarised a much fuller text, so I hope Hilary McGrady forgives my interpretation, but we await to see what the practicalities of this might be.

This newsletter is being put together by our new editor-in-chief, Jean Frost, who has contributed enormously to our newsletters in the past. She is very ably assisted by our secretary and computer expert Alison Pearce. I am sure I don't need to wish them luck as I know they will provide us with a well-presented chronicle.

John P. Smith, MNTA Chairman

Speaker after AGM: Nuffield House - Steven Williams

In the care of the National Trust since 2012, Nuffield Place was the home of William Morris and his wife for thirty years before Lord Nuffield's death in 1963. An unassuming man who had made his fortune developing what became the British Motor Company, he was ennobled in 1938 and went on to amass a fortune, enabling him, over his lifetime to donate today's equivalent of £800 million. His philanthropy continues to benefit a wide-ranging field of activities.

Following on from a lively AGM, we were told by Steven Williams, the current Site Manager at Nuffield Place, that visitors are sometimes surprised at the modest size and style of the house. The less well-informed have been known to be disappointed by the absence of willow-patterned wallpaper and other evidence of the British Arts and Crafts Movement – the work of the 'other' William Morris.

But he assured us that there is now much to see including the conservation work on Lady Nuffield's curtains and the restoration of the four-acre garden to how it would have looked in the 1950s when she was 'gardener-in-chief', working alongside three full-time gardeners. Motor enthusiasts will be interested to see 'BUD', the classic Wolesley Eight,



owned by Lady Nuffield and the only road-worthy historic car in the entirety of the National Trust's collection. It will be back on display from 5 March and it is hoped that funds provided by the Marlow NT Association will go towards necessary maintenance costs.

Grey's Court and Basildon Park are in the same managed group of NT properties and he was able to outline what developments are taking place at both sites. We could conclude that all three properties are in good hands as our Speaker's commitment and enthusiasm were clearly evident and heartfelt thanks were expressed by his audience.

Jenny Annett

New Members' Evening

On Friday 14 March there was a social event in the Garden Room of Liston Hall to meet new members of the Marlow National Trust Association.

After introductions, drinks and nibbles our chairman, John Smith, gave a brief talk on the



aims and objectives of our association and our various activities. Some of the committee members described how we organise the holidays, outings and speakers over the year. John then gave a short video show of our group holiday to Slovenia last April.

It was a very pleasant way to meet each other; our great thanks go to all the members who organised the event, especially John Smith, Tim and Ann Dennis.

A warm welcome to our new MNTA members.

Raymond Balkwell
 Tony Dunnings
 Catherine Day
 Mary Godfrey
 Penny Hill
 Teresa Illman
 Stephen Illman
 Alan Jones
 Geraldine Jones
 Teresa Lear
 Eleanor Nunnen

Jon Perry
 Margaret Shelley
 Caroline Sherwood-Roberts
 Mavis Shipton
 Janet Spill
 David Stone
 Kathy Thomson
 Clement Virgo
 Susan Virgo
 Maureen Warner
 Ayala Wilkinson
 Barbara Williams

Outing to The British Motor Museum - Wednesday 28 May 2025

The coach will take us directly to The British Motor Museum at Gaydon in Warwickshire, a journey of just over an hour. The Museum displays only British makes of cars but of all eras, giving you a great chance to reminisce about cars you remember from different times in your life, from the most exotic to the everyday.

You will join a group (of 12 people at maximum) for a guided tour of all the vehicles on display taking about 45 minutes with plenty of time to ask any questions you wish.

After the group tours you will have about an hour and a quarter to spend in the Museum café/restaurant to select from a good range of both hot and cold food and drinks.

A second 45 minute guided tour (this time by a volunteer guide, again in a group of 12 at maximum) will take you around a different building that holds a display of the whole history of the Jaguar/Daimler family of cars.

Additionally there is a variety of British cars on display either in the process of restoration or just in storage so that the Museum can vary the display in the main Museum

The Museum also has a shop covering all things motoring related to British cars.

Cost. £38 pp

Depart. 9.15am: Spinfield Lane
 9.20am: Liston Road, Carpark
 9.25am: The Britannia, Bobmore Lane - bus shelter

Arrive back. Approximately 17.30

Contact:

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY THURSDAY 8 MAY 2025

Speaker's Evening – English Seaside Piers

On Wednesday 19 March Ian Waller came to our meeting to talk about The Piers of the Realm; a reminder of the achievements of Victorian engineers and entrepreneurs.

At the turn of the last century almost 100 piers existed, now fewer than half remain. The heyday of pier building was in the 1840s following the Industrial Revolution, the building of railways and the new affluence of working class people which led to the demand for seaside holidays for all.

Prior to the Victorian era only the very wealthy upper classes would visit the seaside, primarily for health reasons: sea water was regarded as a cure. The growth of the rail network gave public access to seaside towns which in turn led to the demand for entertainment and the building of promenades, and by way of extension, piers which enabled people to stroll out over the water. Soon theatres were added; amusements such as Punch and Judy shows; 'What the Butler Saw' machines; minstrels, carousels and cheap 'finger food'.

Piers had existed much earlier. The first recorded was in Cromer in 1391, but these were purely functional; a means of access for deep-draught ships. The peak of pier popularity was in the 1920s when many resorts had 2 or even 3 piers. By the 1970s the decline had set in and now only about forty four remain – many of these in private hands. They are too expensive to maintain.

Ian's talk was interesting and highly informative, well-illustrated with slides: quite a social history of recent times. It was a topic that many of us have not given much thought to, although we do like to be by the seaside, and probably have fond memories of childhood seaside holidays.

Jean Frost

New Year Walk

Here we go, here we go - and off we went! What a noisy, happy, chattering crowd departed 10.45 promptly from The Chequers Pub at Wheeler End on the 16 January - a



rather grey, damp day, but no rain. Everyone had given their choice for lunch, the list duly pushed through the Pub door, and all we had to do was get up an appetite.

Mud there was a plenty, but everyone stayed upright, and halfway round the Kendal Mint Cake was much appreciated. Once

back inside there was a lovely atmosphere of camaraderie, good food and much frivolity. Many thanks to Penny and Julia for yet another good new year walk.

Outing to Oxford and The Ashmolean – 18 February 2025

This was a leisurely visit to Oxford; some of us headed off into the city while others went straight into the Ashmolean and found that there was a guided “taster” tour of the galleries starting at 11am. Just time for a quick coffee before joining a staff member who took the group to see a few of the guides favourite items in the various collections. An excellent introduction to the museum especially for a first-time visitor.

Others pondered their way around the Bettina Von Zwehl Exhibition after watching a short video interview with the artist. Large abstract prints lined the gallery walls which Bettina had been inspired to create during her research into the Museum’s original items. In the centre of the gallery were two “thought provoking” 3D creations; one of which was a model theatre with the backcloth hung upside down. As I crouched down to look through the crystal ball that sat on a small round table between two empty chairs at the front of the stage; I realised that you sometimes have to change one’s position to view life the correct way up!

A relaxing day, that caught some of us enjoying a few minutes sitting in the Ashmolean courtyard soaking up some Spring sunshine before it was time to wend our way homeward.

Many thanks go to Julia Stacey for organising this interesting outing.

MNTA Holidays 2025

The MNTA holidays in 2025 are proving to be very popular and are now fully booked, with waiting lists for both the Spring holiday to South Devon, from 11 to 15 May and the Autumn holiday to Bulgaria, from 20 to 27 September.

The Spring holiday is based at the Dartmouth Golf & Spa Hotel for four nights and will include visits to Greenway (home of Agatha Christie), Powderham Castle, cruises on the Rivers Dart and Exe, plus other places of interest.

Our autumn holiday to Bulgaria for eight days (seven nights) includes three nights in the capital, Sofia and four nights in the historic city of Plovdiv. The itinerary combines a mix of guided tours and visits to explore the history and culture of Bulgaria, staying in top-class hotels.

Outing to Lamport Hall, Northamptonshire - Tuesday 24 June 2025

Why not join me for a special treat - a visit to Lamport Hall, Northamptonshire, developed from a Tudor manor house and full of outstanding furniture, books, china and paintings collected by the Isham family who lived at Lamport for 400 years until Sir Gyles, the 12th Baronet, died in 1976. In his will he bequeathed the Hall and contents to the Lamport Hall Preservation Trust in order to carry on the lengthy restoration programme.

Come and be overwhelmed by the grandeur of this amazing place. It has been a family home, a country club, a British and Czech army base and an Italian prisoner of war camp. The gardens were laid out by Mary, Lady Isham in the 1820s but her son Sir Charles' pride and joy was the remarkable rockery (24 feet high - built to enable him to see it from his bedroom window!) which is full of tiny crevices and caves and populated with the first-ever garden gnomes. When he died, his daughters shot them with an air rifle and only one survived which can now be seen inside the Hall!

The price is inclusive of coffee upon arrival and lunch.

Cost: £45 pp (including a light set lunch)

Depart: 8:45am: Spinfield Lane
8:50am: Liston Road Carpark
8:55am: The Britannia, Bobmore Lane - bus shelter

Arrive back: 6:30pm approx.

Contact: Penny Clarry

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2025

Speaker's Evening – Tales of the Unexpected

For our first meeting of 2025 on Wednesday 15 January we were delighted to welcome back Alan Copeland who gave us a very entertaining talk last July on "Chiltern Curiosities".

As before Alan had plenty of picture slides and sound effects to illustrate his talk. This time he ranged over the whole country to show us a surprising selection of curiosities from the early days of motoring, the war years, heroes, churches, even the quest for the source of the River Thames (still uncertain).

Alan's selection of items ranged from amusing to tragic, mundane to utterly bizarre. One that sticks in my mind is the bed-bug church in Kingsclere. The story goes that King John stayed at the village inn after a hard day's hunting. The inn was unprepared and very dirty so the King was badly bitten by bed-bugs and fleas. He was so irate that he commanded that the village should display bed-bug signs to warn travellers. To this day the weathervane on the church is in the shape of a bed-bug.



Another memorable item is the story of the Black Dog of Bungay. All the villagers were in the church one Sunday when there was a violent thunderclap and a huge black dog burst into the church and killed all the villagers. The town hall still displays murals of a black dog.

Alan's other curiosities are too numerous to mention here but it was certainly a highly entertaining talk. Alan is a very clear and fluent speaker with many jokes to tell. It was a lesson to all of us to be more observant as we travel around. Our thanks go to Alan Copeland for a lively evening.

Jean Frost

Outing to St Albans and Verulamium Museum – 26 March 2025

A warm and sunny March day saw 48 MNTA members travel to St Albans.

The first stop was the centre of St Albans where we were greeted by the colourful Wednesday market. Several MNTA members made a beeline to the café at the Museum



and Gallery where they marvelled at the preserved courtroom which serves as café seating. Others visited the Abbey to view the longest nave in England (85 meters) medieval wall paintings and the shrine of Saint Alban. St Albans city centre is very nice: if it had a riverside and a pretty suspension bridge, it would be as nice as Marlow! The many cafes served welcoming coffees and

lunches, allowing for a good spot of people-watching before a visit to the market and many shops. After lunching, we got on the coach again in the city centre, joined by several new purchases such as jumpers and even plants!

It was a trip of just 10 minutes to the Verulamium museum - a few members walked this.

Verulamium was a major Roman settlement, and much excavation was done in the park here in the first half of the 20th century, resulting in a trove of interesting relics. At the museum we watched an interesting video explaining the roman history of St Albans and enjoyed a look at the many exhibits of everyday life in Roman Britain. Most notable amongst these were the impressively preserved mosaics and wall panels from villas.



Many of us also walked the few hundred metres to see "The Hypocaust", where the mosaic floor of a roman villa plus its underfloor heating system have been left undisturbed and well preserved. This mosaic contains around 220,000 tesserae cut from natural stone

A café served well tasty refreshments and a good cup of tea before we climbed back aboard the coach and Darren drove us back to Marlow. Many thanks to John Pearce for organising his first MNTA outing.

Outing to NT House Ightham Mote, Sevenoaks – Wednesday 30 July

Ightham Mote is an “outstanding” 14th century half-timbered moated manor house. The NT has owned it since 1985.

The coach will drop us off in the NT car park: we can expect to be there soon after 11am.

Most of us will want to have a wander around the 14 acres of gardens, which are said to be “at their best in the summer months”. The gardens include an enclosed garden, hidden garden, formal garden and also lakes, water features, orchard and woodland.

The house itself offers brief (free) introductory talks most days, which we hope to be able to join. Some of the highlights are: the medieval Great Hall; the Tudor ceiling in the chapel; a Jacobean fireplace and some hand-coloured Chinese wallpaper. There is also a chance of an introductory tour of the gardens.

There is a relatively new visitor centre, with the usual shop, etc. and two separate second-hand bookshops. The main café is called the Mote café, which has indoor and outdoor seating.

The paths around the property are mostly firm but surfaced with pea shingle. There are also walking surfaces of irregular flagstones and cobbles with a steep slope to access the house, but a buggy service is offered from the bus to the house and return.

Cost: £23.50 per person

Depart: 9.15 am: Bus stop at bottom of Spinfield Lane
9.20 am: Liston Road, Carpark
9.25 am: The Britannia, Bobmore Lane - bus shelter

Arrive Back: 5:00pm - 5:45pm (subject to M25 traffic!)

Contact: John Pearce

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY FRIDAY 27 JUNE 2025