



Marlow National Trust Association

A voluntary association of National Trust members and volunteers

NEWSLETTER No. 220

January 2025

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

A Happy New Year to all our members! We hope a good many of you will join us for the new programme of meetings and outings the committees have arranged in the next few months. Evening meetings are held in Liston Hall; doors open at 7.30pm for an 8pm start, with refreshments in the interval.

Wed 15th Jan Tales of the Unexpected Alan Copeland

An insight into a rather different collection of the surprising items we find around us, from the early days of motoring, to the war years, heroes, churches, horror stories and a quest for the source of the River Thames.

Thurs 16th Jan New Year Walk Julia Stacey & Penny Clarry

Tues 18th Feb Outing to Oxford & the Ashmolean Julia Stacey

Wed 19th Feb AGM and National Trust Speaker Steven Williams

After the official business of the AGM, Steven Williams, site manager at Nuffield Place, will give us an update on recent developments and future plans for the property and the work that has been going on at Greys Court.

Wed 19th March English Seaside Piers Ian Waller

For the Victorians, the seaside pier and promenade was a place to dress up and enjoy the sea air. The history of these seaside structures is full of interest, even though many no longer exist or have been modernised.

Wed 26th March Outing to St Albans & Verulamium Museum John Pearce

Wed 16th April Ukrainian & Russian Painting 1860-1960 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 24th April Outing to Buscot & Coleshill Estate (NT) Julia Stacey

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

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Alison Pearce E-mail:

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From Our Chairman

A very Happy New Year to you all for 2025 and a farewell to 2024, which saw us mark our 40th anniversary (in style, I hope!) as a National Trust Association/NT Supporter Group. During the year, we've had a great variety of outings and speakers and two wonderful holidays - to Slovenia and North Wales - thanks to our three organising committees. These committees have again been busy putting together an interesting programme for this coming year, comprising monthly speakers, monthly outings and two holidays (South Devon and Bulgaria) which have already been publicised. The speakers, outings and events for the next four months are listed in this Newsletter and the full year's programme will be published in a calendar card available at the AGM.

So, to the AGM, which will be held on Wednesday, 19th February 2025. Several of our long-serving stalwarts are stepping down from the Executive Committee - Sue Glyn-Woods, who has done 40 years of service in one capacity or another, including Chairman; Tricia Smith, as leader of the Speaker's committee, who has done a terrific job in organising our speakers over the last ten years or more, along with Mary Edwards, who has been an active member for the past 40 years, has contributed hugely to providing good, interesting speakers and will be retiring this year. Our editor-in-chief is also looking for some respite, having put the Newsletter together for the past six years.

We now need to fill some of our roles. Jean Frost will take over as Speaker's leader temporarily and I'm happy to say that Pauline Wyllie has agreed to join the Speaker's sub-committee. But we are now looking for more recruits to join one of our committees: Speakers, outings and holidays, to keep us vibrant and operational.

After the business of the AGM, Steven Williams (site manager at Nuffield Place) will be giving us an update, mainly on Nuffield Place, but will also include Greys Court.

Before we get to the AGM, for our first Speaker's meeting of the year, Alan Copeland will be returning on 15th January with a sequel to the talk on 'Chilterns Curiosities' he gave us last July. 'Tales of the Unexpected' is the intriguing title of his talk this time. The next day, 16th January, we will have our New Year Walk, organised by Penny Clarry and Julia Stacey, starting from Wheeler End. This is a great social occasion, as most people stay for lunch, after some healthy exercise, at the pub from where we start and finish the walk. More details about these and other events can be found in this Newsletter.

Please also note that the annual membership subs (now £12) are due for 2025. The registration form is at the end of this Newsletter.

So, let's step boldly into 2025 and enjoy and contribute to all that we (the MNTA) and the National Trust can offer.

John P. Smith, MNTA Chairman

MARLOW NATIONAL TRUST ASSOCIATION

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 40th Annual General Meeting of the Marlow National Trust Association will be held at Liston Hall on Wednesday, 19th February 2025 at 8pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. To accept and approve the minutes of the AGM held on Wednesday, 21st February 2024
3. To receive the report of the Hon. Treasurer and to adopt the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2024 and the Balance Sheet at that date
4. To receive the report of the Hon. Secretary
5. To receive the Chairman's Report
6. To announce the allocation of Association funds to specific National Trust projects
7. To re-elect the Chairman (See note 1)
8. To re-elect the Hon. Treasurer (See note 2)
9. To re-elect the Hon. Secretary (See note 3)
10. To re-elect the Membership Secretary (See note 4)
11. To re-elect members of the Executive Committee (See note 5)
12. To appoint an Independent Examiner
13. Any Other Business

Nominations for Officers and Committee Members, duly proposed and seconded, are invited. They should be sent to the Secretary, Alison Pearce, by 31st January 2025. A nomination form is included in this Newsletter.

Note 1. John Smith has offered himself for re-election as Chairman.

Note 2. Roger Smith has offered himself for re-election as Hon. Treasurer.

Note 3. Alison Pearce has offered herself for re-election as Hon. Secretary.

Note 4. Tim Dennis has offered himself for re-election as Membership Secretary.

Note 5. The remaining members of the Executive Committee (i.e. Jean Frost, Tricia Smith, Penny Clarry, Jenny Annett, Kristian Perry and Angie Magee) duly proposed and seconded, have agreed to continue and put themselves forward for re-election.

If any member wishes to comment - please send in writing to the Secretary by 31st January.

The AGM will be followed by a talk from Steven Williams, Site Manager at Nuffield Place.

MARLOW NATIONAL TRUST ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 39th Annual General Meeting Held at Liston Hall on Wednesday, 21st February 2024.

1. **Apologies** received from:
Ian Pike, Alison Rae and Penny Clarry.

John Smith welcomed everybody to the 39th Annual General Meeting.
2. **Minutes of 2023 AGM** held on 15th February 2023 were received. Proposed by Michael Fines-Allin and accepted by all.
3. **THE Hon. TREASURER'S REPORT**
Adoption of the Statement of Accounts and balance sheet proposed by Angie Magee and seconded by Michael Fines-Allin and accepted by all.
4. **THE Hon. SECRETARY'S REPORT**
Proposed by John Smith. This was received and accepted and is available on request from the Secretary.
5. **THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**
This was received and accepted and is available on request from the Secretary. John Smith was unanimously thanked for his hard work as Chair.
6. **ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES**
The allocation of funds was decided as follows: £1,000 to Coastal Paths - Neptune. The remaining £3,000 to be divided equally between three local properties: Cliveden, Hughenden and Greys Court.
£3,000 was retained for extra-curricular studies and further promotion and awareness of the National Trust. Sponsored school project at Waddesdon is up and running. Proposed by John Smith and seconded by Sheila Stephens. This was accepted by all.
- 7/8/9/10/11. The Executive Committee have agreed to continue for another year. Proposed by Julia Stacey and seconded by Mary Edwards.
Alison Pearce and Jenny Annett have offered themselves for election to the Executive Committee. Proposed by Sue Glyn-Woods and seconded by Leslie Davies. Accepted by all.
12. **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**
Roger Dye has agreed to continue for a further year.
This was proposed by Geoff Edwards and seconded by Jill Smith.
13. **PROPOSALS**
A proposal was made to raise subs next year to £12 per member for 2025, if this is considered necessary. Proposed by John Smith and seconded by Liz Courtney. Passed unanimously.
14. **AOB** - None
At 20.43 the business meeting ended. John Smith introduced the speaker, Louise Walker, General Manager at Hughenden Manor.

MNTA Christmas Social Evening

Christmas jumpers and sparkly sweaters were much in vogue at the MNTA's annual Christmas Social on Wednesday, 11th December, when around 50 members gathered in Liston Hall for an evening of seasonal festivities.

Food Inspirations, the catering company run by Nick and Clare Wood, were back by popular demand and treated us to a traditional roast turkey dinner with all the trimmings, a selection of vegetables and a choice of puddings. They also set the tables, decorating them with crackers and floral arrangements and provided a team of efficient young waiting staff to serve and clear it all away.



MNTA Chairman, John Smith, was the master of ceremonies. Father Christmas (in the shape of our talented Treasurer, Roger Smith) also dropped in to wish us all a Merry Christmas and conduct the carol singing. There were two humorous readings by Jenny Annett and Sue Glyn-Woods, some fun quizzes to test 'the little grey cells' and a raffle with lots of lovely prizes to be won. The evening concluded with a sing-along of familiar carols and Christmas songs.

Our grateful thanks go to John and Tricia Smith, who organised the event and the many committee members who gave them a hand, to ensure that a good time was had by everyone.

Kristian Perry

Speaker's Evening - 'My Life as Butler to Royals & Stars'

For our Speaker's Evening on Wednesday, 16th October, we were invited into the star-studded world of Royal Butler, William French. Dressed immaculately in his butler attire, he held his audience spell-bound, sharing his unique perspective on the inner workings of the Royal family and of high-profile celebrities, notably Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

Perhaps surprisingly, William began his career as a trainee chef and steward in the Royal Navy, subsequently serving as a gunner on *HMS Battleaxe*, witnessing the horrors of the Falklands conflict.

Seizing the opportunity to join the crew of the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, he travelled the world with his employers, collecting many treasured experiences. He demonstrated the modified RN rating's uniform worn by the non-commissioned members of the crew and explained that all staff were required to wear rubber-soled plimsolls at all times, when on board, to minimise any noise disturbance. He said it was an enormous privilege to encounter numerous heads of state who were being entertained on the Royal Yacht and he revealed that her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, had a particularly soft spot for President Reagan of the USA. Their mutual love of horses was doubtless the reason.

Back at the Palace, he was appointed the Queen's Breakfast Steward. His duties, however, were not restricted to serving the Royal cornflakes. The first time he attended at a State Banquet his apprehension did not go unnoticed; the following morning, he came to appreciate Her Majesty's concern for her staff when she sympathised with his initial nervousness.

William's presentation was accompanied by an impressive display of medals, which he has received for his services, and also by many photographs, spanning several decades. One of these was an informal shot of a wind-blown Princess Diana, taken by himself, with her agreement, on board *Britannia*.

After the tea break, he took questions from the audience, at the end of which there was warm applause in appreciation of his talk. Our thanks go to William French for an evening which was informative, entertaining and fascinating.

Jenny Annett

Grand Opening of the Japanese Water Garden at Cliveden

The General Manager at NT Cliveden, Robert Miles, recently invited the Chairmen and other Committee Members of the NT's local supporter groups to view the newly-restored Japanese Water Garden.



A little while ago, it was necessary to inspect the condition of the Japanese ponds. The base of the ponds was found to be full of cracks and holes and the fountains and plants needed attention. The ponds were in a sorry state, so all the old layers of concrete, soil and lining had to be removed and replaced - a long and messy job!

Many of the surrounding plants also needed attention, as did the Japanese Pagoda and the golden bells, which were all cleaned (MNTA had contributed to buying the bells). The gardening team at Cliveden, led by Head Gardener, Anthony Mason, has done a great job in carrying out the work and our thanks go to them.

With the water refilled and the fountains checked that they were spraying properly, it all looked splendid against the autumnal foliage and will look even better once the plants regrow in Spring - and well worth a visit!

We then proceeded to the Long Garden, which was looking very tired at the end of the season. There are now plans afoot for a fresh style of planting, with flower beds, not vegetables and a new, wider, pathway of smooth, slip-proof York stone that will be suitable for two wheelchairs to pass each other.

We were then all invited into the fairly new Conservatory for tea, coffee and delicious cakes, made on site and a chance to catch up with other supporter groups.

Tricia Smith

Speaker's Evening - Vikings: Raiders or Traders?

On Wednesday, 20th November, a hardy crowd of 72 members braved a bitterly cold evening to hear Dr Jill Eyers of Chiltern Archaeology reveal some truths about the Vikings. Were they as bad as they're made out to be?

Archaeologist Dr Eyres found her evidence in Runic writing and graffiti, on coins and in burial mounds. The oral tradition of the Sagas, which came later, was often exaggerated.

The Viking era lasted from 750 AD to c1100 and, far from being one race, these seafarers (the word 'Vik' means 'sea-people') came from Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and even Russia. Their boats were superb, as evidenced by the replica of the Oseberg Ship in Oslo's Viking Ship Museum.

Initially, they came peaceably to trade their surplus produce but, having glimpsed the riches of monasteries like Lindisfarne, they turned to pillaging and robbery. In AD 789, a raiding party murdered the bailiff of Portland Harbour, who was attempting to collect the landing fees. Their subsequent campaign of violence lasted for more than three centuries.

Some Vikings settled in Orkney and Shetland, from where they carried out raids, but others brought their families and followers to set up trading centres. Their routes stretched across Europe, to the tip of Italy and as far east as Istanbul. Their cargoes included fish, grain, leather, wool, honey, beeswax, wine, silver, copper, amber and silk. The Russians also took captives to barter and for slaves.

York, Dublin and London were major Viking settlements, as was Oxford, at a time when the River Cherwell was navigable. Vikings seeking refuge from local resistance hid in the Chiltern beech-woods, later setting up villages with place-names like Skirmett ('the shire meeting place'), Fingest ('clearing of trees by burning') and Frieth ('scruffy wood').

After 799 AD, the Viking Chief Rollo gained possession of Normandy ('Land of the Norsemen') in a treaty with the King of France, which led to further raids. But in the late 9th Century, King Alfred negotiated a peace, by ceding land to the Danes, which they ruled under 'Danelaw'.

Warm thanks go to Dr Eyers for an enlightening look at our Viking ancestors who, we concluded, were both raiders **and** traders, after all.

Kristian Perry

Outing to Oxford & Ashmolean Museum - Tuesday, 18th February 2025

Come with us for a leisurely day in Oxford; visit the Ashmolean Museum and perhaps have time, too, for some retail therapy! There is a FREE exhibition at the museum - the third in *The Ashmolean NOW* series, where contemporary artists are invited to create new work inspired by the Ashmolean's historical collections. The London-based artist, Bettina von Zwehl's time at the museum served to create a unique photographic *Wunderkammer* installation that moves between portraiture, silhouetted fragments, still life, monumental and miniature elements, as well as non-art objects and specimens from the natural history collections.

The coach will use the drop-off/pick-up point opposite the museum and the visit will be yours to decide.

Cost: £16 pp

Depart: 9.30am: Spinfield Lane
 9.35am: Liston Road car park
 9.40am: The Britannia, Bobmore Lane - bus shelter

Arrive back: 4pm approx.

Contact: Julia Stacey -

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY TUESDAY, 28th JANUARY 2025.

New Year Walk - Thursday, 16th January 2025

Can we tempt you to join us? This year, there is a downhill start to our walk, which just might be the occasion for a piece of Kendal mint cake! We are recommending walking poles and stout footwear, as the path is uneven at times and we would like to say **no mud...** but, as with any winter weather in this area... impossible! Please come prepared, as it could be muddy.

We will be setting off from **The Chequers Inn, Bullocks Farm Lane, Wheeler End, Lane End HP14 3NH** at **10.30am** and the walk will start at **10.45am**, once we have taken your lunch order. Parking is along the kerbside.

Please let us know if you would like to book a place on the walk by 10th JANUARY 2025.

Email:

If you can't join us for the walk, please join us for lunch at 12.30pm and please **let us know if you require a pre-ordered meal.**

Contact: **Penny Clarry**

Outing to Warwick & Stoneleigh Abbey - Thursday, 17th October

In the safe hands of our driver, Cliff and ably led by Michael Fines-Allin, 36 MNTA members set off by coach for Warwick, where we arrived in about an hour. With three hours of free time, what to choose between the famous Castle, three museums, three parks, a church and the well-known Lord Leycester Hospital and perhaps fit in a bite to eat?



Most enjoyed visiting the Hospital, a 14th and 15th Century timber-framed group of buildings, beautifully restored after a fire, originally a meeting-place for Guilds. The Hospital was bought in 1540 by Robert Dudley, the alleged lover of Queen Elizabeth I (who made him Earl of Leycester) and founded as a hospice for retired/injured members of the Armed Forces, some of whom we saw sitting outside sunning themselves.

After a quick lunch, we rejoined our coach for the short drive to Stoneleigh Abbey, where we were delayed by an obstructive workman loading machinery on to a lorry, blocking our path - he would move when he was good and ready!

A short walk from the car park, we met our guide, Paul, who specialises in groups and is also a part-time actor. We could hear every word of his quick-fire delivery, which was very knowledgeable and full of humour. We learned of the Cistercian monks who founded the original Abbey, which was 'dissolved' by Henry VIII in the mid 16th Century, following which the estate became home to the Leigh family from 1561 to 1990.

The Leighs built their first home on the foundations of the Abbey but, in the early 18th Century, a new, palatial, four-storey West Wing was built in the Baroque style, featuring the remarkable Saloon, rated one of the great interiors of Georgian England; all complemented by gardens sloping down to the River Avon.



We also learned of two notable visitors. When the Rev. Thomas Leigh inherited in 1806, he went to view his new home with his cousin Cassandra Austen and her daughter Jane, who was inspired by her visit to create Sotherton Court in her novel *Mansfield Park*. The second visitor was Queen Victoria (along with an unwell Prince Albert) who remarked that the ceiling of the Saloon should have been gilded! She also stole a teapot which now sits in a cabinet in Osborne House.

Following his talk, Paul directed us to an oblong-shaped room, where we were treated to a scrumptious cream tea, after which we had time to explore the other wings of the house and the gardens before Cliff transported us back to Marlow. All in all, it was a most enjoyable day, thanks to Michael Fines-Allin who expertly led our trip.

Nick Roy

Outing to St Albans & Verulamium Museum Wednesday, 26th March 2025

We start the day at your leisure in St Albans, with time to wander around the city centre. The Cathedral (free to enter) is well worth a visit. It dates from Saxon times and claims to be the oldest place of continuous Christian worship in England. The central area of the city has many old buildings. On the day we visit, the Charter Market will take place - voted the best large outdoor market in Britain. The City Museum and Gallery (free to enter) has an intriguing restored old courtroom, used as café seating and public toilets.

Rejoining our coach for a journey of only one mile will bring us to Verulamium Museum - the museum of everyday life in Roman Britain. This has several impressive Roman mosaics, moved here from the excavations in the surrounding park. It also has Roman wall panels and quite a selection of items of daily life. The museum has a gift shop and toilets. Some 150 metres away is a pleasant, small café. A further 250 metres away, in its own building, is the well-worth-visiting Hypocaust/Mosaic.

Cost: £26 pp

Depart: 9.15am: Spinfield Lane - bus stop
9.20am: Liston Road car park (by LIDL main entrance)
9.25am: The Britannia, Bobmore Lane - bus shelter

Arrive back: 5.30pm approx, following a 4pm departure.

Contact: John Pearce -

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY WEDNESDAY, 5th March 2025.

Outing to Hampton Court Palace - Wednesday, 6th November

On a bright November day, 34 MNTA members set off by coach for Hampton Court and, for some reason, the roads seemed empty of traffic. We thus arrived well before the appointed time to meet our guide for the day, Sarah Slater, who had, of course, given a talk to us some months earlier.

Sarah arrived and suggested we adjourn for a morning coffee in the Tiltyard Cafe. We then split into two groups, for morning and afternoon tours. Sarah took the morning



group to begin their tour, leaving the afternoon group to wander as they wished. Jill and I took a stroll through the walled vegetable and rose gardens, which were very extensive and full of volunteers planting many tulip and daffodil bulbs. The 'magic garden' was, however, out of bounds for adults (shame!). We then walked through the palace to the Great Fountain Garden, which is set out in a formal manner with many shaped and ancient yew trees. We decided against the Maze, as it's complicated and not easy to get out of (believe me, I've been

there). After visiting the real tennis courts (in use) we returned to the Tiltyard for lunch and then joined our group to meet up with Sarah for the afternoon tour.

Sarah is a great guide and splendid company. First, we went into Henry VIII's kitchens - very large and impressive, like the rest of the palace. The palace housed many servants, most of whom worked for bed and board only. At the height of the Tudors' reign there were many hundreds. Hampton was Henry's favourite palace and England was ruled from there; that is, after he took it from Cardinal Wolsey. We walked through many rooms: Henry's apartments, including the Great Hall, the Great Watching Chamber and the Council Chamber. There were some magnificent ceilings, tapestries and paintings on show. It's all amazingly large but, there again, it is a Royal Palace.



Sarah overran her allotted two-hour tour but said, 'C'mon we've got a lot more to see,' so we continued for another 30 minutes. If you've not been there, I suggest you go soon, especially if you've been watching *Wolf Hall*.

Roger Smith

**Outing to Buscot & Coleshill Estate (NT) –
Thursday, 24th April 2025**

This is an opportunity to visit the 7,500-acre NT countryside estate on the western border of Oxfordshire, which includes the unspoilt villages of Buscot and Coleshill. We will be based at Home Farm in Coleshill, where we will have a guided tour of the Heritage and Rural Skill Centre and then be taken on a volunteer-led walk to see some of the nature recovery projects on the estate. There will be a room set aside for us to change into suitable footwear, so come prepared for country walking and weather!

There is an independent café for refreshments on site or bring a packed lunch. We will be using a smaller coach and may have to be dropped off near the car park for a short walk into the village.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR NATIONAL TRUST MEMBERSHIP CARDS.

Cost: £28 pp

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

Arrive back: 5pm approx.

Contact: Julia Stacey

BOOKING APPLICATIONS MUST BE IN BY THURSDAY, 3rd APRIL 2025.

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 11th to 15th May and the Autumn holiday to Bulgaria, from 20th to 27th 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, such as Coleton Fishacre (home of the D'Oyly Carte family), Georgian Killerton and Knightshayes (all NT).

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.

For full details of these holidays and a booking form, please contact Simply Groups.

A warm welcome to our new members who have joined MNTA since July:

Mavis & Arthur Beauchamp
 Caroline Sherwood-Roberts
 Ann Baptist
 Sue Broad
 Jill Brownjohn
 Louise Clapton
 Caroline & Michael Clarke
 Tulip & Martin Darling
 Catherine Day
 Olwen & David Elliott
 Michael Hardy
 Julia & Paul Hick
 Praveen Hungin
 Alison Jackson
 Geraldine & Alan Jones
 George Lawrence
 Angela Mellish
 Eleanor & David Nunnen
 Sylvia Pendleton
 Jon Perry
 Deirdre Philpott
 Gay Sargent
 Sue Saunders Miller
 Valerie Sheppard
 Claire Symons

Christina & Peter Titus

