

HISTORY IN THE VALE – Newsletter 2

Events taking place 1st December 2024 – 30th April 2025

Here is all the information we (at Vale & Downland Museum) have received from local history societies, village museums and archivists.

We continue to plan production of two editions per year of this Newsletter – hoping for a bigger response next time! Deadline will be Saturday 15th April 2025 for lists of events taking place 1/5/25 – 31/10/25

Grove Garden and Local History Club

The **2025** programme does not start until Wednesday February 26th at Grove Village Hall, Main Street 7.45 for 8.00pm. It will be about the archaeological dig that discovered Roman artefacts at Monks Farm, Grove. The speaker will be the lead archaeologist Dr Francesca Giarelli.

We then have a talk entitled 'Wonders of the Botanical World' on Wednesday 26th March, to be given by Matthew Biggs, an author, gardener, BBC TV and radio presenter. He will be signing books. This will also be at Grove Village Hall, Main Street, 7.45 for 8.00pm.

Then in April on the 23rd, usual venue and times, there will be a talk on 'Stories Behind the Names on the Abingdon War Memorial' by Dick Richards.

All talks cost £2.50 for members, £5 for non-members. The exception is the Matthew Biggs talk which will cost £5 for members and £7.50 for non-members.

Refreshments are provided free of charge.

Harwell Parish History Group

Our meetings are held on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm in the Cherry Hall at the front section of Harwell Village Hall. Cost is £3 for non-members, payable on the door; free to members (subscription cost £12 p.a.)

Our next meetings are:

Wed 12th Mar 2025 at 19.30

History of the GWR Abingdon branch by Ivan Cadge

Wed 16th Apr 2025 at 19.30

History of MG cars by Richard Martin (hopefully with some examples in the adjacent car park)

All talks usually last 1 hour & cost £3 currently for non members.

We do not hold meetings in June, July or Aug but do issue a mini mag on relevant anniversaries / subjects to our members.

NB Pat Cooke (patacookeevergreen@gmail.com) would welcome information from other readers about good speakers to invite.

Oxford Family History Society

All OFHS meetings take place on a Monday evening. Some are online (Zoom) only and open, free to members of the Society. The others take place in Exeter Hall, Kidlington and simultaneously streamed online.

Monday 9th December

Open Evening – online for all members & non-members -7.15 – 9.00

Monday 13th January

Sources, Evidence & Proof for Family Historians - Phil Isherwood 7:15 - 9:30.
Online

Monday 27th January

Putting your Ancestors on the Map: Finding the Locations of Family Photographs - Dr Nicholas Dixon - 7:15 - 9:30. Online

Monday 10th February

Genetic Hide-and-Seek: Exploring Missing Ancestor Mysteries Using DNA - Dr Sophie Kay - 7:15 - 9:30. Online

Monday 24th February

Ask the advisor - members evening - 7:15 - 9:00. Online

Monday 10th March

“A tough but full-blooded area”: the Parish of St Thomas the Martyr, West Oxford - Liz Woolley - 7:15 - 9:30. Online

Monday 24th March

‘My Average Ancestor’ - Ian Waller - 7:15 - 9:30. Online

Monday 14th April

Out and about - in the name of Family History - Jackie Depelle - 7:15 - 9:30.
Online

Monday 28th April

Solving Brickwalls - members evening - 7:15 - 9:00. Online

Details of all OFHS talks and meetings can be found
at www.ofhs.uk/events/category/events

Oxfordshire Local History Association

The Oxfordshire Local History Association (OLHA) gives small grants to deserving projects. See <https://olha.org.uk/small-grants/> for details.

OLHA's website has details of talks throughout the modern county of Oxfordshire at <https://olha.org.uk/events/talks-and-meetings/>

Royal Army Chaplains' Museum



The Royal Army Chaplains' Museum, Faringdon Road, Shrivenham SN6 8EU tells the story of British Army chaplaincy from earliest times to the present day, with the help of archive material and historical relics from several centuries. Its collection is dedicated to the work of Army Chaplains throughout history in peacetime, under fire, and in captivity.

Admission is free and opening times are Monday to Friday, 1330 – 1700 or by prior arrangement.

Visitors to the museum will be able to:

- See how clergy have accompanied the Army in times of war and peace.
- Hear how padres have guided and cared for the troops.
- Explore how, during difficult times, soldiers have wrestled with religion and belief.
- Remember and reflect on the biggest issues of life in the military.

The museum seeks to promote public understanding of the place and value of religion and belief in the military and to play a full part in Shrivenham life by hosting visitors to both the Defence Academy and the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre. Although an Army Museum, it portrays Faith in the Forces for all branches of the military.

- [07917 790916](tel:07917790916)
- racm1796@gmail.com
- royalarmychaplainsmuseum.business.site

Uffington Museum

Will as usual be closed over the winter. Look out next time for details of the exhibition planned for spring & summer 2025.

Vale & Downland Museum, Wantage

The Wilts and Berks Canal - Afternoon Talk

Wednesday 4th December 2024 1:30PM, £7.50 per person.

The Wilts and Berks Canal was built in the early 1800s between the Kennet and Avon Canal at Semington, south of Melksham, to the Thames at Abingdon, primarily to take coal from the coalfield around Radstock, south of Bath, eastwards. There were short branches off towards Faringdon and to Wantage. In the 1810s, it was joined by the North Wilts Canal which ran from the Thames and Severn Canal at Latton, near Cricklade, to north of Swindon with the aim of bringing coal and wood south from the Forest of Dean. The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust is aiming to restore these Canals along their whole lengths. John, a past Secretary to the Trust's Swindon Branch for 15 years, will give a brief history of the Canal, pictorially show what can be seen today and describe plans for the future.

[The Wilts and Berks Canal - Afternoon Talk at Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

THE WANTAGE TRAMWAY - The Story of a Bucolic Road Side Steam Railway

Saturday 14th December 2024 1:30PM, Tickets: £7.50

This new history of the Wantage Tramway, based upon the company archives, once thought lost, explores how the company was formed, tells the stories of some of the people who worked for the tramway, and its working relationship with the Great Western Railway. It also reveals for the first time the true reasons for its closure in 1946 and its relationship with the United States Army.

Join us in launching this book with a presentation by the author and book singing afterwards.

[THE WANTAGE TRAMWAY - The Story of a Bucolic Road Side Steam Railway at Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

Black Wantage - Afternoon Talk

Wednesday 8th January 2025 1:30PM, £7.50 per person.

In the early 19th Century Wantage was known as a 'sink of iniquity' full of drunks, murderers and thieves. But was it really any different from other market towns at that time?

[Black Wantage - Afternoon Talk at Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

Friends of VDM Talk - Port of Wantage 1810 - 1895

Thursday 16th January 2025 7:30PM

Join the Friends of the Vale & Downland Museum and speaker Sem Seabourne for another fascinating talk.

Why would anyone want to bring boats into Wantage and why did they keep doing it for eighty five years. How expensive was it to do that, and what were the reasons? Find out by learning about the days when Wantage became a "port" and the best faggots in Berkshire could be bought at the Jolly Waterman in Wantage.

Tickets:

Members of the Friends £5 each (requires a password)

Visitors £7 each

Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

[Friends of VDM Talk - Port of Wantage at The Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

The Cravens and Ashdown House - Afternoon Talk

Wednesday 5th March 2025 1:30PM, £7.50 per person.

Ashdown House was built by William Craven as a hunting lodge in the 1660s on the Berkshire Downs south of Ashbury, off of what is now the B4000 road between Shrivenham and Lambourne. Join an Ashdown House tour guide for a brief history of the Craven family and what you can see on a tour of the house.

[The Cravens and Ashdown House - Afternoon Talk at Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

Wantage Tales - Afternoon Talk

Wednesday 2nd April 2025 1:30PM, £7.50 per person.

Join local historian Trevor Hancock as he shares tales of people and places from Wantage's past, including anecdotes, images and local connections.

[Wantage Tales - Afternoon Talk at Vale & Downland Museum event tickets from TicketSource](#)

**Next Newsletter – detailing what local societies will be offering 1/5/25 –
31/10/25 – copy deadline: Saturday 19th April**

Giles Dawson, trustee of Vale & Downland Museum

gilesvdawson@gmail.com