



Marcham

SOCIETY

November
2025
Volume 8
Issue 11

Our next talk in November

“God’s Acre: writing history from the graveyard”

a talk by Robert Evans



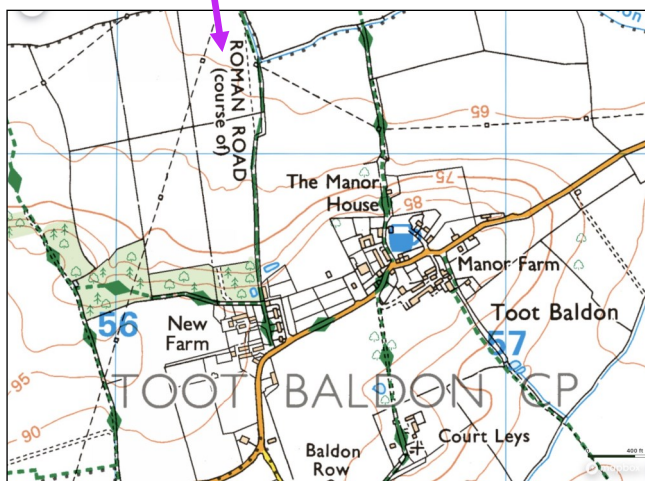
**Monday 24th November, 7.15 for 7.45pm
in the main hall of Marcham Centre**



Marcham Society would like to extend a big thank you to everyone in the village who came to the **Marcham Uncovered** Exhibition to celebrate its 30th year. There were over 500 visitors who enjoyed a walk through the fascinating history of the village in well prepared information panels, pictures and ancient objects, as well as the modern world of telescopes and VR. And a thank you too, to all the experts as well as the organisers who made it such a success.

What a great village... past, present and future!

Photos are available in MAD News and in the Special Edition newsletter :
<https://marchamsociety.org.uk/pdf/newsletters/2025Vol8No10.pdf>



Thank you to Martin Whild for organising this outing and leading us on another interesting walk .

The Astronomy Meeting on Wednesday 15th October

Following the round-up of News and Members Matter images over the last month, the main feature of the meeting was the talk by Patrick Wallace on *'Close Encounters of the Telescope Kind'*.

Patrick's talk was a fascinating set of anecdotes from his life, starting from early influences, school days when he made his own telescope, including hand grinding the mirror, and an astronomy degree course at UCL, which he scraped through because it was mainly astrophysics which was not his main interest. He accidentally arrived in a career in computing with EMI, and another accident led to him to a computing job at the 3.9m Anglo-Australian Telescope in New South Wales, developing pointing software for the telescope. This was so successful that software based on his work has been used to point many telescopes elsewhere, including the new Vera C. Rubin Observatory opened this year.



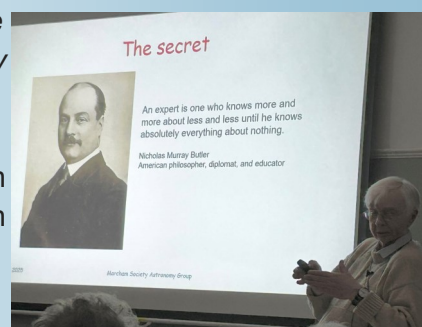
His talk was peppered with stories of famous people he has met, observatories he has worked at and some of his many adventures on the way, including what happens if you drive a car in Australia that doesn't have 'Roo-bars'!

My take-away line from the talk was his quote from the American philosopher, Nicholas Murray Butler that:

"An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing."

Patrick claimed that he had become such an expert, although his talk demonstrated otherwise and showed his skill as an entertainer.

Jim Asher



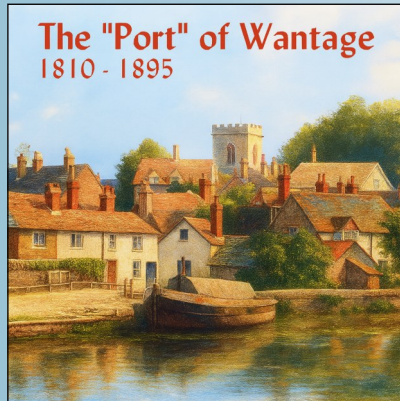
The next meeting is on **Wednesday 19th November** at 7:30pm featuring a talk by Dr Duvet from ESA Harwell, on *"Argonaut: Europe's Lunar Lander Programme"*



“The Port of Wantage” by Sem Seaborne

Monday 27th October 2025

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Why would anyone want to bring boats into Wantage and continue doing it for 85 years? This talk was the story of why it was vital, the difficulties in achieving it and the impact it had on life in Wantage, including some outcomes that were unintentional.

We discovered the effect that canal ‘visitors’ had in the days when the best faggots in Berkshire could be found at the Jolly Waterman on Wantage Wharf.

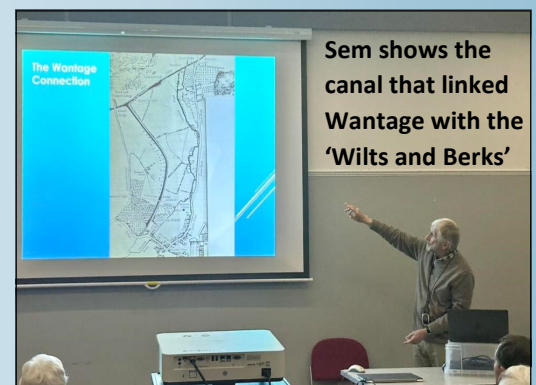
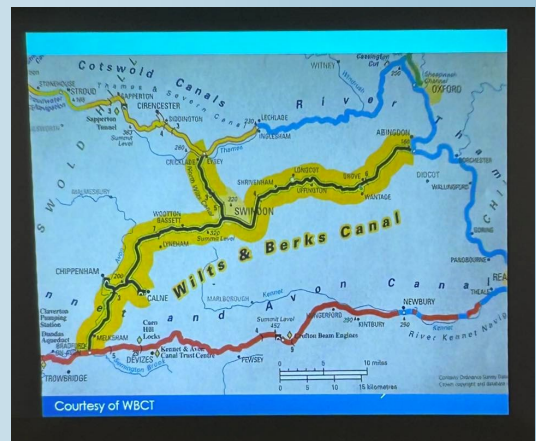
The talk was given by Dr. Sem Seaborne - a volunteer at the Vale & Downland Museum in Wantage. He spoke enthusiastically about the history of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal, explaining how 19th century Wantage as a thriving market town was at that time more important than Swindon.

Gradually the canal gave way to the railways but Sem showed us that there were still vestiges of the original canal to be seen around Wantage. He then finished by quoting a 1938 poem by Reginald Arkell:-

The old canal from bank to bank,
Is filled with weeds and rushes rank;
And down this lane of living green,
March memories of what has been.

The painted barges came from town,
And busy life flowed up and down;
But there is nothing left to show,
Where those old barges used to go.

Progress is always marching on,
The old canal is dead and gone,
But still we seem to hear it say,
“I too was progress, yesterday”



Sem shows the canal that linked Wantage with the ‘Wilts and Berks’

The 2025-26 programme

Unless otherwise announced, talks will take place in the Main Hall at the Marcham Centre. Doors open at 7.15 for 7.45pm start.

November

- Thursday 6th:** Midweek Walk 12.30
- Wednesday 12th:** Botley War Graves Cemetery guided tour 2pm
- Wednesday 19th:** Astronomy Meeting 7.30 Small Hall, Marcham Centre
"Argonaut: Europe's lunar lander programme"
by Dr Ludovic Duvet
- Monday 24th:** *"God's acre: writing village history from the graveyard"*
by Robert Evans

December

- Thursday 4th:** Midweek Walk 12.30
- Monday 8th:** Christmas Party in All Saints Church
- Wednesday 17th:** Astronomy Meeting 7.30 Small Hall, Marcham Centre
A Christmas debate: *"How does Santa navigate?"*

Look out also for links, photos and reminders on the Marcham Society Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/marchamsociety>



Guided tour of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Botley

Wednesday 12th November 2025 at 2pm - contact: shirley.marsoc@gmail.com

