



Marcham

SOCIETY

February
2026
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Issue 2

The February Talk

“Those other village voices, the birds that share our gardens with us”

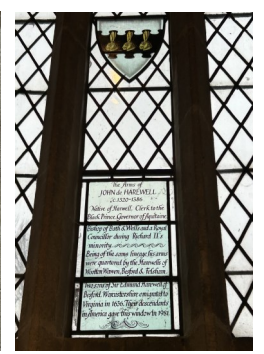
A talk by Barry Hudson and Andrew Mann

Monday 23rd February 2026 at 7.30 for 7.45pm
Main Hall, Marcham Centre



Barry Hudson, Secretary of the Oxford Ornithological Society, is a retired farmer. He spent much of his farming life locally and developed a special affection for farmland birds. He is author of '*Birding in the Bush*'.

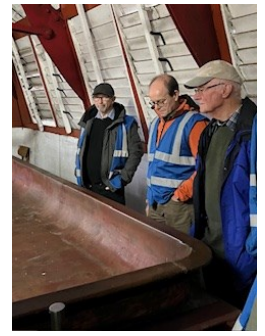
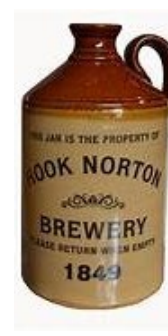
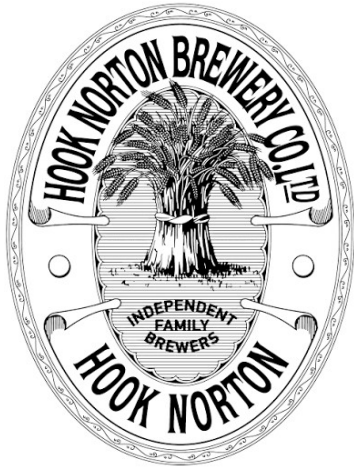
Barry Hudson and Andrew Mann, the copy editor and Publicity Secretary of the OOS, now take their presentations out to groups to promote the cause of birding locally. Their talk is engaging, educational and challenging.



On **Thursday 8th January**, the first walk of 2026 met at the White Hart, High Street, Harwell, OX11 0EH where we had a convivial lunch in the warm before setting out in light rain.

Because of the wet weather this was a short walk exploring Harwell, a village with a fine historic church and many other very interesting buildings.

For future walks, please contact: walks@marchamsociety.org.uk

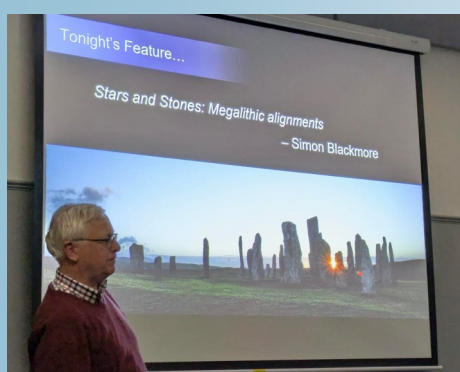


Thank you to Shirley Eccles for organising this visit.
For more information about the **Hook Norton Brewery**: <https://www.hooky.co.uk/>



The Astronomy Meeting held on Wednesday 21st January

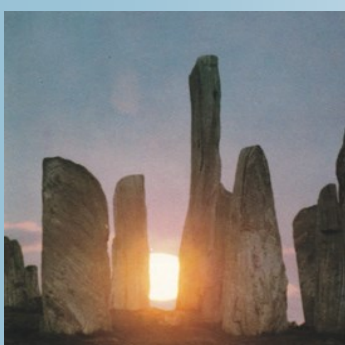
After the regular round-up of News and Members' matter, the main feature was the talk 'Stars and Stones: Megalithic Alignments' by Simon Blackmore.



Simon described five different categories of standing stones, from single stones to stone circles (plus a rare few wood henges) with copious examples from across Britain, Ireland and continental Europe.

He also showed directional and astronomical alignments, including solar solstices and equinoxes, moonrises, moonsets and tracking the 19-year lunar metonic cycle, attributed to arrangements of stones.

Simon discussed the challenges of understanding them and various researches into, and opinions of, their purpose. They are likely to have served as seasonal calendars to support farming and, in some cases, may have been complex astronomical measurement tools. Simon indicated clearly that our ancient ancestors had a much more sophisticated level of understanding and capability than they have been credited with in the recent past.



This area of archaeology has raised more questions than answers and Simon's talk stimulated a crop of questions from the appreciative audience. Many thanks, Simon!

Jim Asher

Copies of slides presented in the meeting are available by following the links on the Astronomy page of the Marcham Society website.

The next Astronomy meeting is on **Wednesday 18th February** at 7:30pm featuring "*Three Stories about Planet Saturn*" – short talks about its mythology, our knowledge of this iconic planet from Earth-based observations, and what more we have discovered from space missions.



The Annual Lecture

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Monday 26th January



“Bugs, Drugs and Goats – how not to plan a career”

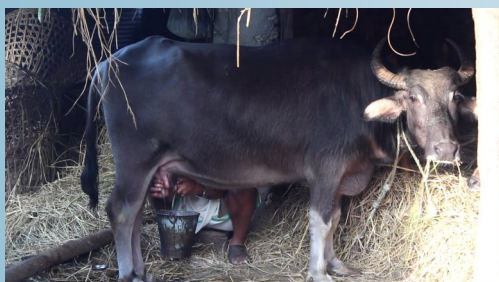
by Caroline Manders

The Annual Lecture was given by Caroline Manders in the Marcham Centre on Monday evening. An interesting and very well attended talk! Caroline spoke about her career and how she came to work as an Associate Professor of Animal Science in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development at Reading University.



After her talk, there were many questions from the audience especially about the use of antibiotics to protect livestock in different parts of the world.

She explained how her research has helped goats in Nepal, beef cattle in Brazil, dairy cows in Bangladesh, cattle and poultry in Fiji and young chicks in UK.



February 2026

Thursday 5th: The Midweek Walk - The Old Swan, Minster Mills, OX29 0RN 12.30 pm
(email: walks@marchamsociety.org.uk)

Thursday 12th: Visit to Welford Park Estate on the banks of the River Lambourn 11am
(see the information below)

Wednesday 18th: Astronomy Meeting at 7.30 in the Small Hall, Marcham Centre
After a round-up of News and Members' Matter, *"Three stories about Planet Saturn"*

Monday 23rd: *"Those other village voices, the birds that share our gardens with us"*
A talk by Andrew Mann and Barry Hudson at 7.45 in the Main Hall, Marcham Centre
(see the front page)



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



Visit to Welford Park Estate on the banks of the River Lambourn Thursday 12th February 2026 at 11am



If you would like to come
please email :
shirley.marsoc@gmail.com

Cost: £11 for Members
£15 for non-members



Welford Park is steeped in history. Once the site of a monastery in the care of the monks of Abingdon until the dissolution in 1536, then turned deer-hunting lodge of Henry VIII; Welford Park was rebuilt as a family home around 1652 and passed down through generations of the same family to be owned now by James Puxley who lives there with his family today.

The snowdrop trail wanders through the woods and beside the River and could take up to an hour or more. Most pathways are flat and gritted and dogs are welcome on leads. However, before the trail, we would suggest exploring the unusual round-towered, Grade 2 listed St Gregory's Church, built on the foundations of a Norman church and standing just behind the house. A light lunch is served in the heated marquee nearby from noon and please note that your ticket price includes a tea or coffee.