



May
2026
Volume 9
Issue 5

Two May talks for Members' Evening

Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 2026
at 7.30 for 7.45pm Main Hall, Marcham Centre



"Smocks and Smocking: rural craft or local industry?"

by Sally Kingsley

Practical yet decorative, farmworkers' smocks were once a common sight. This talk will explore the history of smocks and smocking, used by men as protective workwear - and for Sunday best! Along the way we will consider the clothing industry in Abingdon which in the 19th century employed upwards of 2000 workers and view a remarkable smock made in Radley for the 1851 Great Exhibition.



"The History of Rycote Chapel"

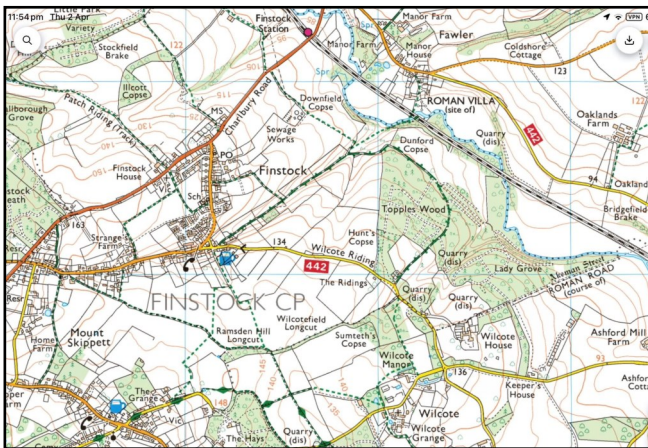
by Ricky Smith

Richard and Sybil Quartermayne, lord and lady of the manor of Rycote, founded Saint Michael's chapel in 1449. The chapel is both a Grade I listed and scheduled monument. It is a Perpendicular Gothic building with a chancel, nave and west tower and it retains original 15th-century wooden fittings including pews, stalls and a screen. Ricky is a volunteer guide on behalf of the family and Historic England. She will explain some of its interesting architectural features and tell of various royal visitors in its colourful past.



Finstock

Think of a quintessential English Inn,
and The Plough ticks all the boxes



Thank you to Eric and Sheila Dunford for organising this Midweek Walk to Finstock. For more information about the next walk contact: walks@marchamsociety.org.uk





Thank you to Shirley Eccles
for organising this visit.

For more information about
The Combe Mill:
<https://www.combemill.co.uk/>





The Astronomy Meeting held on Wednesday 15th April

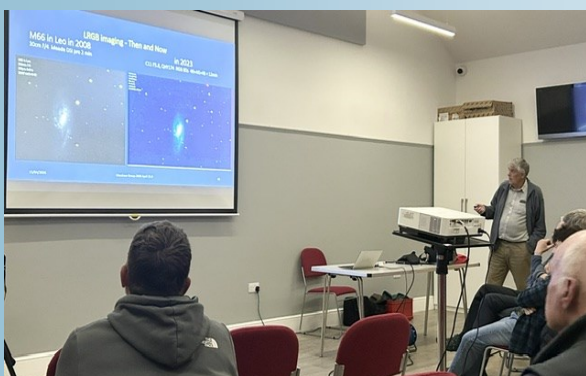
Thank you to all who came to our April meeting yesterday evening – starting in daylight this time (after the clock change). After the regular round-up of News (including selected NASA images from the Artemis II mission) and Members Matter, the main feature was the talk by Tim Haymes about his observatory in Steeple Aston and some of the observation work he has done with it.



Tim started by with how he had got into astronomy and showed us how he had (post-Covid) built an observatory in his garden at Steeple Aston and his choice of equipment for it.

Tim is a member of the British Astronomical Association and Assistant Director of the BAA Asteroids and Remote Planets section. He described his main observing interest, which is in the measurement of the sizes of asteroids, using a star occultation technique.

Stars are effectively point sources of light; if an asteroid passes in front of a star, the star disappears (occultation). With prior knowledge of the track of a known asteroid, the length of the occultation, measured precisely in a video recording, provides a direct measurement of the length of the asteroid along its track. If this same measurement is made in different places, you can derive information also about the lateral dimension of the asteroid. The BAA logs these measurements, which is a key source of data about asteroid sizes.



Tim showed two examples, with video clips showing stars disappearing briefly and re-appearing shortly afterwards as the asteroid passed by. In one example, an asteroid measured as 14km long led to an occultation lasting 4.6 seconds, while fast-moving and/or smaller asteroids may lead to an occultation of only a fraction of a second.

He also showed us a comet, Mission 29P, which had an outburst, suddenly brightening from magnitude 17.4 to 14.4 (a factor of about 16) in late 2025, which he had recorded. He finished his talk with some images he has captured of other comets and galaxies, including comet 2023/A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS, which we saw for ourselves at the MAG members meeting in October 2024. Many thanks to Tim for his story about getting into astronomy and for amazing us with the precision of his observations.

Jim Asher

Copies of all the 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 13th May** at 7:30pm



“The Wildlife of Radley Lakes”

A talk by David Guyoncourt

on Monday 27th April 2026

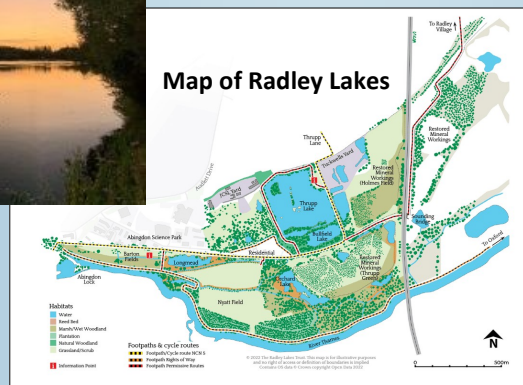


Radley Lakes is a floodplain area beside the Thames which over time has evolved into a wide variety of habitats. For many centuries it consisted mainly of pasture with few trees. Then gravel was quarried and the pits became lakes. Subsequently at the end of the 20th century many of the pits were filled with ash from Didcot Power Station and these soon became a new unique habitat.



The site was allowed to rewild and a variety of terrestrial and aquatic habitats evolved. David Guyoncourt has surveyed the flora and fauna of the Radley Lakes area since 1974 for county and national organisations.

With the threat to Radley Lakes in the 1990s David became a founder member of Save Radley Lakes and is now a Trustee of the Radley Lakes Trust. David’s talk also described some of the flora and fauna which inhabit this splendid wildlife area.



Thank you David for an information packed talk.

David answering questions.

May 2026

Wednesday 6th: Wallingford Hydraulic Research Establishment 10.30am

Thursday 7th: The Midweek Walk -12.30 pm at the White Hart, Dorchester-on-Thames, OX10 7HN (For more information contact: walks@marchamsociety.org.uk)

Saturday 9th: The Big Marcham Weekend on Anson Field (See below)

Wednesday 13th: Astronomy Meeting at 7.30 in the Small Hall, Marcham Centre After a round-up of news, “Challenges, Triumphs and Disasters” by Eric Dunford

Bank Holiday Monday 25th: “Members’ Evening” - two short talks at 7.45 in the Main Hall, Marcham Centre (See the front page)



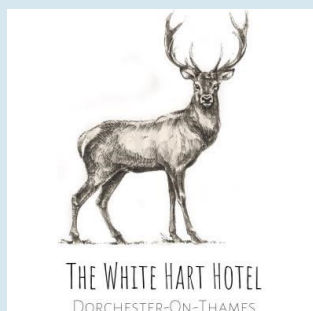
Look out also for links, photos and reminders on the Marcham Society Facebook



**The Big
Marcham
Weekend**

Visit our Marcham Society stands on the Anson field at the Big Marcham Weekend

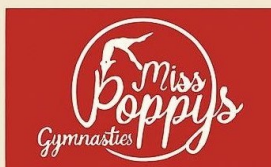
Thursday 7th May - the next Midweek Walk



THE WHITE HART HOTEL
DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES

walks@marchamsociety.org.uk

DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT
SATURDAY 9TH MAY
THE MARCHAM CENTRE • FROM 12 NOON



Fred
in the **Shed**



Amanda Alder
DANCE ACADEMY



PUB vs. MARCHAM
CENTRE TUG OF WAR

FOLLOWED BY THE RAFFLE