

The  
Marcham  
Society

# Newsletter

The next Marcham Society Zoom Talk  
is on Monday 28th June 2021 at 7.30 pm

***“The History of the Oxford Botanic  
Garden and Arboretum ”***  
by Mark Davies

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Mark Davies is an Oxford local historian, author, public speaker, guide, and publisher specialising in the history of non-University Oxford.

Oxford University’s Botanic Garden is the oldest in Britain, founded in 1621 and so it is now 400 years old. Mark’s talk is about the History of the Garden and those who have cared for it over the centuries. For example he will tell us about the first keeper who was Jacob Bobart, the ‘German Prince of Plants’, famed both for his horticultural skill and also his eccentricities.

So his talk will be much more about people rather than just about the plants and trees!



Mark Davies



## Review of the last Zoom talk on 24th May 2021

### “Beacons of the Past, LiDAR, and woodland archaeology in South Oxfordshire ” by Dr Ed Peveler

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021, Ed Peveler spoke to us about using LiDAR for archaeological research and his experience in the Chilterns Area of Natural Beauty, LiDAR is a technique for identifying surface markings using a Laser fired from a plane with the reflections recorded and analysed to generate maps. In the Chilterns, LiDAR is of particular use because the area is 20% wooded (twice the English average) – making the usual techniques based on aerial photos or ground surveying or excavation difficult, if not impossible. LiDAR is usually done in winter to make sure that some of the laser actually gets to ground level.

Wooded areas can be much better preserved archaeologically because ploughing (and development) have not overwritten earlier events. Also, the woods can stop landscape erosion. LiDAR is particularly useful where there is ancient woodland (dating back before 1600). The Chilterns AONB has four times the national average of ancient woodland.

Ed was able to show us a large number of types of field features. The features were in periods which ranged from Neolithic times through open landscapes (Roman times) and medieval farmsteads to World War 1 (practice trenches) and World War 2 (Nissen hut bases). Even very modern features like an abandoned dry ski slope or a banger racing field can be seen. On the right is an example from a golf course of LiDAR compared to an aerial photo. Some features, like a ditch can be seen on both. World War 1 trenches can be seen in the LiDAR image (bottom left of LiDAR scan) but are covered by woodland (see the photo underneath).

Once something had been identified on the ground, it became possible to check against photos and (in some cases) to visit and confirm by the normal archaeological surveying processes – validating the LiDAR approach. It is particularly helpful where local groups – who know the ground well - can provide local information and carry out research in locations they know already – thus blending the modern survey results with local knowledge. The plan is to use the data gathered to map, research and protect the underlying archaeology.

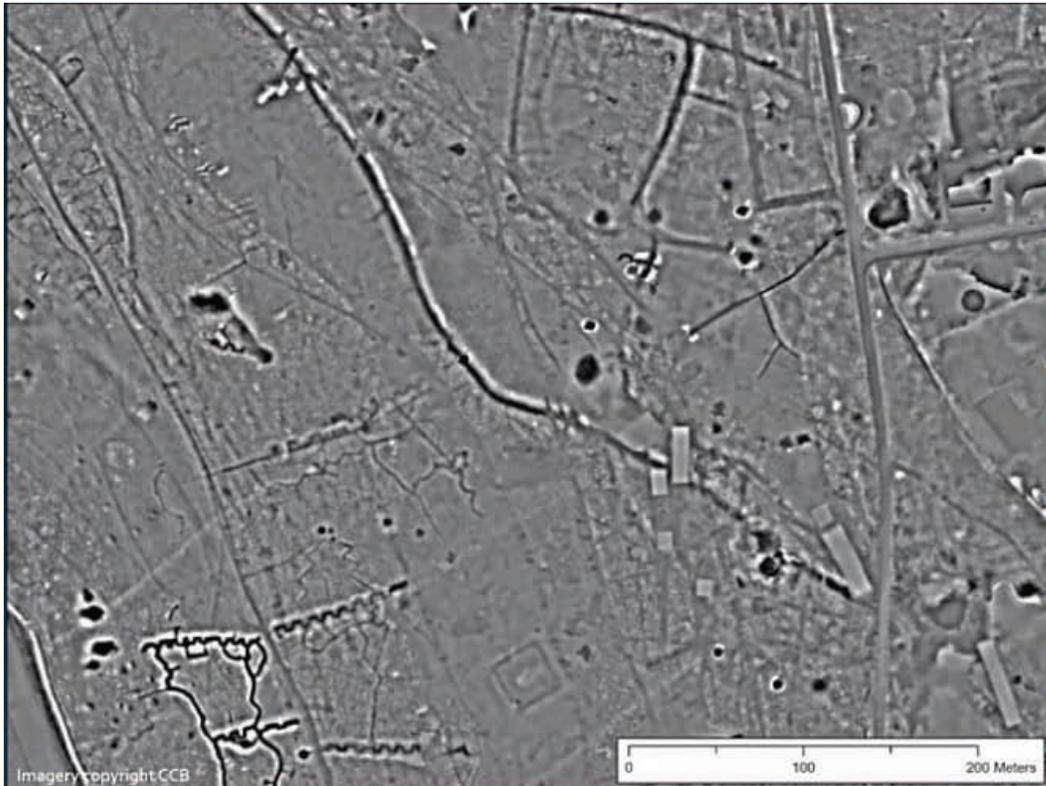
Some of the well-known remains, like Grim’s Ditch or Hillforts, can be easily seen on LiDAR. More excitingly, as LiDAR is more ‘sensitive’ than some other survey techniques, the results show features that cannot be easily spotted by other means – like old ditches which may mark boundaries. By analysing the scan results carefully, these features can be aged to give a ‘history’ of the area.

The survey of the Chilterns AONB was a one-off project funded by the National Lottery. The whole of England is now being surveyed using LiDAR – though with less detail than the survey of the Chilterns AONB. Marcham has already been processed and the results are in the National Library of Scotland web site: <https://maps.nls.uk/>. (Search for LiDAR). If you want to help analyse the Chilterns research, register at <https://chilternsbeacons.org> in order to go on to the portal, see the data, or do tutorials in reading LiDAR.

A fascinating evening that demonstrated clearly how this new technology can help us discover so much more about the past.

*(Review written by Mike Hoath)*

## Two Slides from Ed Peveler's Talk



**BERKHAMSTED GOLF COURSE**  
LiDAR image above; aerial photograph below



## MID-WEEK WALKS

### MarSoc Mid-Week Walks

Eric and Sheila Dunford organised another mid-week walk again in May.

To ensure that the number of walkers complied with the Covid rules, the outings were arranged on two Thursdays and on each occasion the enthusiastic walkers were divided up to comply with the latest regulations.

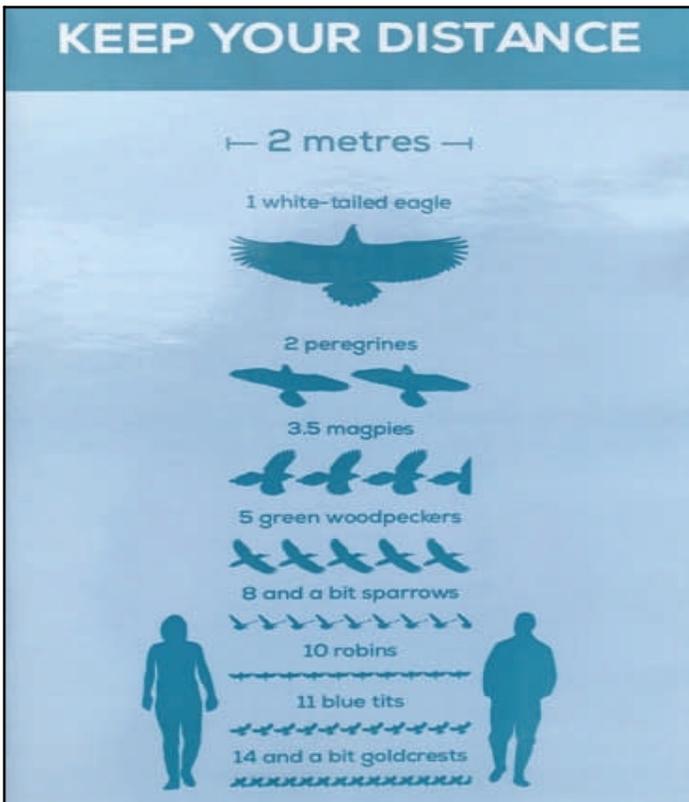
After a delicious lunch in the pub garden at the Abingdon Arms in Beckley, the first walk was a circuit past Beckley Park, to the Otmoor Nature Reserve and back via the Church. It was a little muddy under foot but a very interesting walk with historic features and lots of wild life. The following week the same route was taken but in reverse.

We will give notice of future walks that are planned in our regular emails to members.

*(Our thanks to Ordnance Survey for the map below!)*



## PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE MID-WEEK WALKS



### PICTURES

*(from top left to bottom right)*

1. The first group at the Abingdon Arms
2. The second group about to set off walking
3. Otmoor's comparative Covid guidance!
4. The sign on entering the Reserve
5. Beckley Church

## FUTURE DATES

The Marcham Society was founded with three pillars of investigation in mind:-

**local history,  
archaeology  
and natural history.**

In designing our programme year by year we have strived to keep those three subjects in mind. The exception has been when giving the annual lecture, where a notable villager provides a talk from their own sphere of experience or expertise.

If you have suggestions for future talks and topics for visiting speakers, please contact the Secretary,  
Shirley Eccles:

[shirley.marsoc@gmail.com](mailto:shirley.marsoc@gmail.com)

### *Dates for the Diary*

**Monday 28th June 7.30pm**  
Mark Davies : *The history of the Oxford Botanic Garden, founded in 1621, celebrating 400 years.*

*We may be able to arrange a guided tour of the Botanic Garden following this talk if regulations allow.*

**Saturday 10th July 5pm BBQ**  
(To be held in Di Hutchings' Garden  
More details to follow shortly)

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**Monday 27th September AGM**  
(To be followed by a talk by Jim Asher— details of the 2021-22 programme will be published shortly)

Reminders and Zoom links will also be sent to members by email.

Information about the year's programme, reviews of the talks and past newsletters are also available on the society's website.

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