www.marchamsociety.org.uk

Marcham SOCIETY

November 2026

Volume 9

Issue 10

THE NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

Monday 23rd November at 7.30 pm

in the Main Hall, Marcham Centre

"Otters" - a talk by Lesley Wright



Our history with otters, how we nearly lost them and how we got them back.

Lesley Wright writes: "I've worked with otters for twenty years, and until recently, I was the Deputy Chair of the Otter Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission – the Red List people."



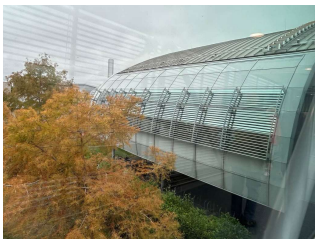


Our visit to Diamond Light Source

A tour of the facility by Dr Katsuaki Inoue



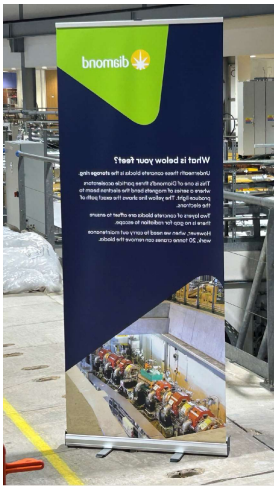




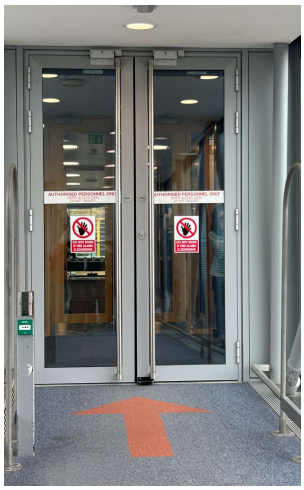




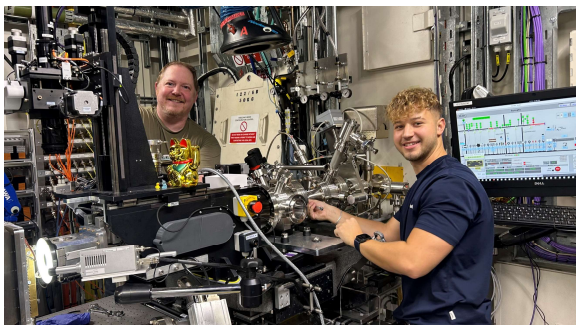
Thank you to Shirley for organising this second visit to Harwell and thank you to Dr Inoue for guiding us round this truly impressive building, patiently explaining and also introducing us to the enthusiastic members of his team.











“A brilliant light for world-changing science”

For centuries, scientists have used microscopes to study things that are too small to see with the naked eye. However, microscopes are limited by the visible light that they use but to study smaller objects like molecules and atoms, scientists need to use the special light generated by the synchrotron which is a huge scientific machine, more than half a kilometre in circumference, (about a third of a mile) designed to produce very intense beams of X-rays, infrared and ultraviolet light.

The machine generates extremely bright light that is directed into laboratories known as beamlines. Scientists use the light to find solutions to humanity’s most critical challenges, from health, food security and biotechnology to energy, climate change and advanced materials.

The October Astronomy Group

Wednesday 14th October at 7.30 pm in the Small Hall, Marcham Centre

"Very Large Telescopes in South Africa"

How South Africa succeeded in hosting the world's largest optical telescope but almost lost the Square Kilometre Array!



The regular round-up of News and Members Matter featured images from our members, including the fleeting aurora images over Marcham from the previous Saturday evening. Thank you to all who sent in images.

The main talk of the evening was from Prof Phil Charles, about his experiences as head of the Southern African Astronomy Observatory. He showed us the HQ of SAAO in Capetown (see photo above), founded as a Royal Observatory in 1820 by the UK (a time of very different politics!).

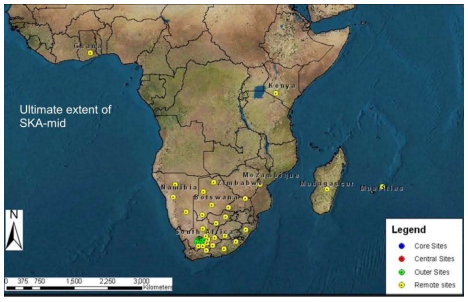
Phil described SALT, the Southern Africa Large Telescope the largest in the southern hemisphere, located at SAAO's Sutherland site, its unique engineering and science features, and the story of its development. He showed discoveries in the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC), for which the telescope was specifically oriented. One of these was the detection of an optical signal from an event involving a collision between two neutron stars for which gravity waves had been detected in other international facilities.

He also described the development, still in progress, of the radio-frequency Square Kilometre Array (SKA) along with a facility in Australia. This will incorporate MeerKat, an array of radio telescopes now in operation in South Africa, which will be connected into a much wider network of ground stations in other south Africa counties. He showed us remarkably high-resolution radio frequency images from MeerKat of parts of the LMC in unprecedented detail.

He finished his talk with a story of how he was nearly dismissed from his post, but was able to defend his position, involving some painfully tortured politics at the highest level. Without his exoneration, the SKA would almost certainly have been lost to South Africa.







PDF copies of slides presented in the meeting are available by following these links on the Astronomy page of the Marcham Society website: https://marchamsociety.org.uk/astronomy.php *Jim Asher*

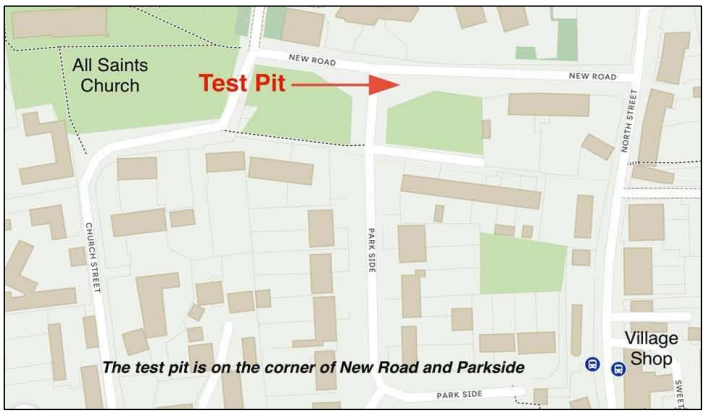
Our next Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday 18th November 2026** at 7:30pm.
The main feature will be a talk by Kevin Langley, "*Where are we really from?*".

Every atom in your body has a cosmic history. This talk explores how astrochemistry and astrobiology are uncovering the chemical pathway from the Big Bang to stars, planets and life itself, and asks one of science's most profound questions: did life originate on Earth, or do its roots extend far beyond our planet into the wider Universe?

The last Archaeological Test Pit of 2026

















On Saturday 24th October, our Archaeologists had to cancel because of Storm Austen and the yellow weather warning. However, on Sunday 25th they dug their metre square test pit exhibiting a wide variety of finds. There was also an area for adults and children to try out metal detecting and digging in their own trench.

If you would like to host a test pit in your garden in 2027 please email:

archaeology@marchamsociety.org.uk

Our October Talk

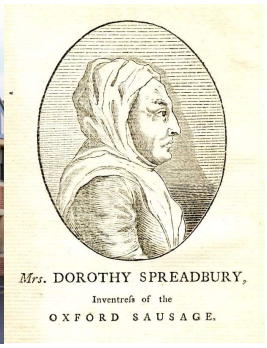
“Beer, Sausages and Marmalade” by Liz Woolley





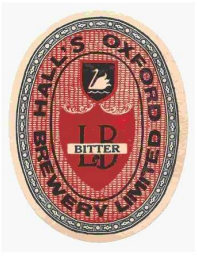

We found out how 19th century Oxford became well-known for its production of beer, sausages and for marmalade in a talk by the local historian, Liz Woolley. Liz explained how these Oxford delicacies went hand-in-hand with the city’s growing importance as a desirable tourist destination including sites such as Morrell’s Lion Brewery, the 250-year old Covered Market and some iconic pubs. We learnt about the city’s long history of malting and brewing, how this important trade contributed to Oxford’s burgeoning industrial economy and how the significant families which controlled these businesses influenced Oxford’s developing economic, social and political life.





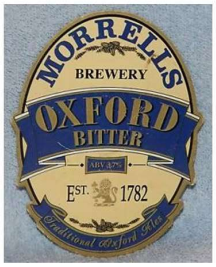














Pictures

Top three photos: The talk in the Marcham Centre with fifty-five people in the audience.

Middle of the page: The Gateway to Lion Brewery, the inventor of the Oxford Sausage and the factory where Frank Cooper’s Oxford Marmalade was made.

On the left: a variety of labels, jars and a cartoon showing an eight rowed by sporty Oxford Sausages!

Future events and dates

November 2026

Thursday 5th: Midweek Walk meeting at 12.30 (contact walks@marchamsociety.org.uk)

Wednesday 18th: Astronomy Meeting 7.30pm in the Small Hall
"Where are we really from?" – by Kevin Langley
Every atom in your body has a cosmic history.

Monday 23rd: The November Talk in Main Hall at 7.30pm
"Otters" - by Lesley Wright
Our history with otters, how we nearly lost them and how we got them back.

December 2026

Thursday 3rd: Midweek Walk meeting at 12.30 (contact walks@marchamsociety.org.uk)

Monday 14th: Christmas Party 6.30pm in All Saints Church, Marcham

Wednesday 16th: Astronomy Christmas Meeting 7.30pm in the Small Hall
"Astrochef: three courses"

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Look out for notices on our Facebook Page or in the latest issue of MAD News



OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Saturday 14th November is OLHA study day in St Helen's Parish Centre, St Helen's Court, Abingdon OX14 5BS

Our ex-Chairman **Peter Steere** will be speaking. The morning session will focus on health history, with speakers including Peter Steere on the work of Dr WTG Woodforde, Abingdon Medical Officer of Health 1873-1908; Ruth Weinberg on improvements made by the borough surveyor George Winship; Dr John Hall and Dr Jane Freebody on 200 years of the Warneford Hospital in Oxford; and archivist Maria Morris on the riches to be found in the Oxfordshire Health Archives.

In the afternoon guided walks will explore aspects of the history of Abingdon – 'Britain's oldest town' – and its people, to include visits to the Little Basement Museum (usually only open on Thursdays) and, weather permitting, the roof of Abingdon County Hall Museum.

For details on this and other bulletins and activities: https://olha.org.uk