



# Newsletter

## The Annual Lecture by Chris Brotherton

### "I never thought it would end up like this!"

Chris is well known in Marcham for building the new Marcham Centre. His lecture revealed his background and challenging projects he has led as Land Director of Thomas Homes.

He claims a heritage from two Brotherton ancestor industrialists with strong philanthropic ethics and another (Hugh Shaw) decorated VC for bravery in 1865. The former is an essential part of what Thomas Homes does in communities and the latter to tackle challenging developments.

With a business degree and a year off travelling the world, Chris started in surveying and estate management, and then had an opportunity to start work with Hugh Thomas in 1999 and together they created 'Thomas Homes' in 2003. Thomas Homes specialises in the challenging development of sites with old buildings and heritage projects.

He described, in detail, three of their many projects:

- 1) the Catacombs Centre, Littlegate Street in Oxford.
- 2) the Old Railway Quarter in Churchward, Swindon.
- 3) the Fair Mile Hospital buildings and surrounding site in Cholsey.

Chris summed up by saying that when he set out in life, "*I never thought it would end up like this!*"

Chris thanked the community in Marcham for their support and making it easier than projects in some other villages he could name! His talk kept a Zoom audience of over 50 enthralled. Thank you, Chris, for entertaining and informing us!

**Jim Asher**

*For a more detailed report with pictures, please visit:  
[www.marchamsociety.org.uk](http://www.marchamsociety.org.uk)*

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Chris Brotherton,  
Thomas Holmes Ltd

### MarSoc Mid-Week Walks

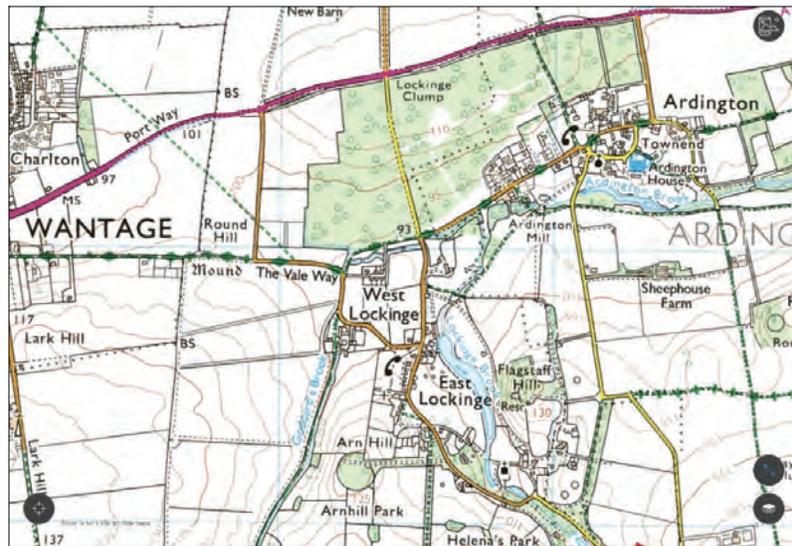
Eric and Sheila Dunford felt able to recommence the mid-week walks in a limited and Covid safe way in mid-December just before the Winter Solstice.

We hope that the regular monthly walks will begin again as soon as possible.

Phone Eric Dunford on 391439 or John Guast on 391420 for details.

We will give notice of any future walks in our regular emails as well.

The Marcham Society walkers were in evidence again in mid-December when the Covid regulations allowed. Eric and Sheila led a small group of walkers to the Millenium Sundial in Ardington Woods and then, from there, through the village itself, over to Lockinge and back to the car park.



Photographs from the Walk from Ardington to Lockinge



## Lockdown Hoe Dance

Stepping lightly, do-se-do, down the village street we go,  
Glad to be alive and well, of 2020 there's a tale to tell;  
Step to the right, 2 metres now, step to the left, and bow, smile, bow.  
Avoid your partner, friend or mate; a jogger comes past - get inside your gate!  
"Good morning sir", you beam and shout; "The weather's good. Glad to be out!"  
A family approach too near, the children skip along at the rear;  
Do I go left or do I go right? I fall in the hedge and it's not a pretty sight!  
Step to the right, 2 metres now, step to the left, and bow, smile bow;  
Forward back and allemande, there's my neighbour, well I'll be darned!

Circle left and corner right; promenade - no need to fight;  
Lady's chain outside the door - Post Office now - no more than four!  
Queue to the right and honour your friend - will this madness ever end?  
Head lady sanitise - come in now; keep your distance, make a vow!  
Star by the right, and round you go; Square your set and do-se-do;  
Touch me not, oh touch me not - you don't want what I fear I've got!  
Stepping lightly, do-se-do, along Mill Lane we gaily go;  
Wave your stick, don't look askance;  
Doing the lockdown - hoe dance!

*Christine Whild*

## Jean Creasy's Santons

Just before Christmas, some people asked where those little Santon figurines in the Mill Road crib came from – I'll tell you.....

Once upon a time Jean and Donald Creasy had dear French friends who lived in the Gard Department of France, among the Cevenol mountains.

At Christmas, Anne and Michel, and nearly every other church family would construct their nativity scene - much as we bring out our decorations. But it was a static scene on a table or shelf, constructed with cardboard or twigs, little branches, moss, pebbles, shells and the cave for the Holy Family.

This would all be peopled with simple clay or wooden figurines, Santons, about 4 or 5 cm high. Some families, however, had more impressive, precious heirlooms, 30 cm tall, beautifully clothed and stored carefully from year to year. We read or heard about Provençal hamlets and villages which had turned this crib preparation into a Fête and a play with the local population taking part, all coming to worship and bringing gifts.

Over the years, we kept our eyes open in French charity shops, craft centres, studios and bought (or haggled!) our way to a collection of Santons.

They were on show down Mill Road this year. Did you see them?  
How many did you see? What were they bringing?

Look next Christmas!

*Jean Creasy*



**'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that lovely things soon would be there;**

The villagers nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of Shop bought sweets danced in their heads;  
Simon in his 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,  
When on Sheepstead Road there arose such a clatter,  
We sprang from the couch to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,  
When what to our eyes should come suddenly flitting  
But a lovely old bier, and the MarSoc Committee!

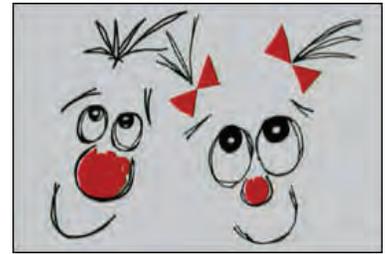
So cheerful the driver, so lively and quick,  
We knew in a moment it must be Eric.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;  
*"Now, Shirley! Now, Sheila! Now, Malvin and John!  
On, Sheila and Rosemary! Time to move on!  
Go down Orchard Way and the alleys so small  
And take a right turn by the new Village Hall."*

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,  
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,  
With a bier full of treats, and the Newsletter too.  
And then, in a twinkling, we heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As we checked the talks program it was just like a dream,  
Down the chimney came leaping the whole MarSoc Team!

They put potsherds on tables, and bones on the shelf,  
And I laughed when I saw it, in spite of myself;  
With a wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Eric gave us to know we had nothing to dread;  
They spoke not a word, but went straight to their work,  
unloading the archive; then turned with a jerk,  
Simon poured them some wine, and with shiny red noses,  
They gave thanks, then away up the chimney they rose;  
Eric sprang to his bier, to his team gave a whistle,  
And down the A415 flew like the down of a thistle.  
But I heard them call out, ere they drove out of sight,

**Happy Christmas To All, And To All A Good-night!**

*by Elaine Steere*



### **The Christmas Party 2020**

As we could not meet in person, there was a 'Zoom Party' and here is the introductory poem that was written by Elaine Steere and read out by Jim Asher.

This was followed by a quiz prepared by Malvin Drakely. There were also picture questions based on the events of 2020.

To add to the good humour members wore festive Christmas hats!

*Here is the bier referred to in the poem!*



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.

This year Chris Brotherton gave our annual lecture, talking about his career and giving his experiences of the building trade (see the article on the front page).

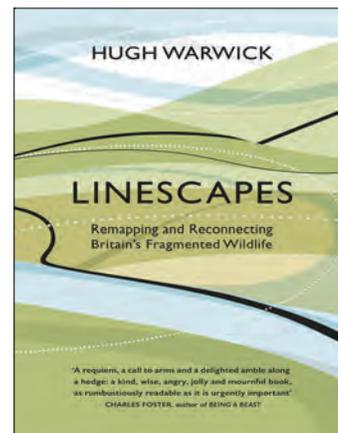
As you can see from the lectures we have planned, we have moved away slightly from the purely local in some cases, but we think that we have secured a pleasing programme of wide interest.

## *Dates for the Diary*

### **Monday 22 February**

Hugh Warwick : *Linescapes : Remapping and Reconnecting Britain's Fragmented Wildlife.*

Rob Macfarlane :  
"Glorious, political, passionate, perceptive"



### **Monday 8 March** AGM on Zoom

### **Monday 22 March**

Marie-Louise Kerr : *Oxfordshire on Canvas : How artists have captured our local area and been influenced by it.*

### **Monday 26 April**

Tim Healey : *Pagans and Puritans : May Day celebrations*

### **Monday 24 May**

Ed Peveler from Chilterns AoNB : *'Beacons of the Past, LiDAR, and woodland archaeology in South Oxfordshire'*

### **Monday 28 June**

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.*

### **Monday 26 July** BBQ (if Covid regulations allow)

Information about the programme of talks is available on the society's website and on Facebook. Reminders and Zoom links will also be sent to members by email. All these events are at 7.30 pm unless otherwise notified.

**[www.marchamsociety.org.uk](http://www.marchamsociety.org.uk)**

**[www.facebook.com/marchamsociety](https://www.facebook.com/marchamsociety)**