

*The
Marcham
Society*

**FEBRUARY 2023
Volume 6, Issue 2**

Newsletter

A tour of Kingston Bagpuize House followed by tea and cake!

Monday 20th February 2023 at 2pm

This time last year we were fortunate to have a tour of the grounds of Kingston Bagpuize House to see the wonderful snowdrops. This year with kind permission of Virginia Grant, we are offered a tour of the interior of this magnificent house itself.

After a brief ownership by Lord Ebury, the house was sold in 1939 to Miss Grace Charlotte Raphael and on her death in 1976, it was bequeathed to her only niece, Jean, Lady Grant, widow of Sir

Francis Grant, 12th Bt. of Monymusk, in Aberdeenshire. Leaving Scotland in 1979, she lived here with her second husband, the late Lord Tweedsmuir, until 1995 when she gave the house and gardens to Francis, her second son. Today, following Francis' premature death in 2003, it remains the home of his wife and children.



After the welcome and introduction, guides will be on hand to explain the history of the house and you will be given notes explaining about the ground floor rooms. Groups will also be taken upstairs to see the two bedrooms where items linked to Miss Raphael are displayed.

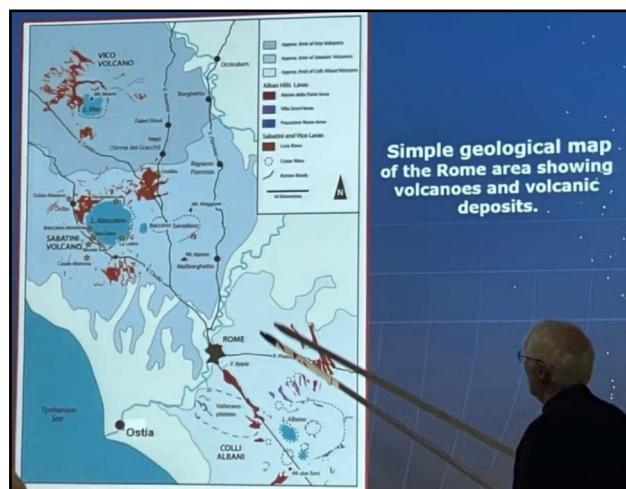
Tea and cakes are included in the fee and will be served in the Scullery after the tour.

If you would like to join our tour please email: shirley.marsoc@gmail.com

Photographs and reminders are also published in MAD News and on our Facebook page

THE ANNUAL LECTURE IN THE MARCHAM CENTRE

Michael Worthing did a PhD in Geology at the University of London based on field work in Arctic Norway. He subsequently worked as an academic in Uganda, Papua New Guinea, Oman and Australia. His final job was as a field geologist with the Geological Survey of Tasmania. On return to the UK he was an Honorary Researcher at the University of Kent where he used his geological skills to assist archaeologists in sourcing rock materials in Rome, Pompeii and Tuscany. He now lives in Marcham.



Simple geological map of the Rome area showing volcanoes and volcanic deposits.

The title of his talk was: *“Sourcing second century lava paving stones from Trajan’s Markets in Rome, funded by plunder from the Dacian Wars.”*

Mike explained that in the early second century the Roman Emperor Trajan invaded Dacia. This invasion took place in two waves, the first in 101-102 AD and the second in 105-106 AD. Under their formidable leader Decebalus the Dacians put up stout resistance but were eventually defeated, plundered and subjugated and Dacia became a province of the Roman Empire.

Huge amounts of plunder including gold and silver were taken back to Rome and with it Trajan funded a massive building programme to create a new Forum and Market. His Forum was the last and most magnificent of the Roman Fora. One ancient writer said *“It is a construction unique under the heavens”*. Another that *“it beggared description and never again to be imitated by mortal men”*.

Over 300,000 cubic meters of soil and rock removed from Quirinal Hill. Construction began about 105 ad and it was inaugurated in 112 ad. The market shops were built on a multi-level structure accessed by roads such as *Via Biberatica* which zig-zagged up the hill. These Markets are now regarded as the world’s first shopping mall. Trajan’s Column nearby was inaugurated in 113 ad – another monument to his power and prestige.

The area and roads around these monuments were paved with lava paving stones and the final part of the talk described the use of geochemistry in sourcing these lavas to a local volcano and their transport from source to building site.

SLIDES FROM THE ANNUAL LECTURE



Alongside Right:
A reconstruction of Trajan's Forum in Rome

Below Left:
The 'Hemicircle' of his Multistorey Market

Below Right:
The paving of 'Via Biberatica', the road that zigzagged up through the different floors.



The Mid-Week Walk from East Hagbourne

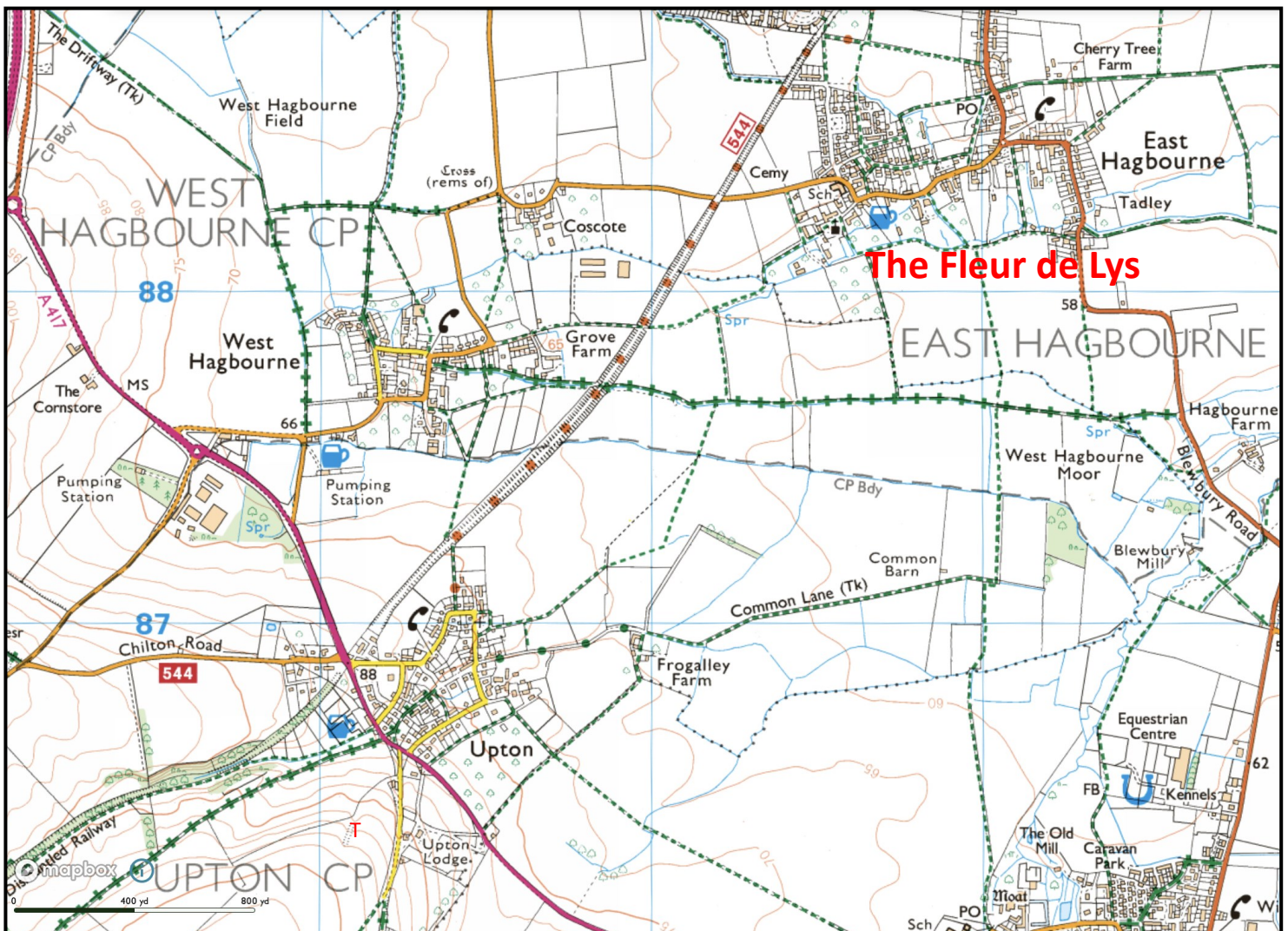
Eric and Sheila Dunford organised another enjoyable midweek walk on **Thursday 12th January**. Our group of over a dozen met for lunch at the *Fleur de Lys*, East Hagbourne, OX11 9LN.

From the pub, glad that it was no longer raining, we visited St Andrew's Church parts of which date back to the 12th century or even earlier; an interesting but later addition was its tower. We then headed cross country towards Upton negotiating some muddy lanes without too many embarrassing slips, slides or falls!

Upton Parish Church is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, it is smaller but it too dates from the eleventh or twelfth centuries. From Upton we joined the Sustrans route of the disused railway line that had once joined Didcot and Southampton. Walking towards Didcot, high on the embankment, we had views of Blewburton Hill and in the far distance the Clumps at Dorchester on Thames. As we arrived back at the Fleur de Lys the rain started and we were grateful of Eric's well-timed itinerary and good luck at avoiding bad weather!

(See the map below for the location, with thanks to the Ordnance Survey).

The next Midweek Walk is planned for **Thursday 9th February 2023**
Please email Eric in advance for further information: e.dunford@btinternet.com



SOME PHOTOS FROM THE MID-WEEK WALK



Phil outside the Fleur de Lys...



...to visit Saint Andrew's Church.



Slightly damp under foot...



...but drier at St Mary's, Upton.



The sun shone for the group photo!



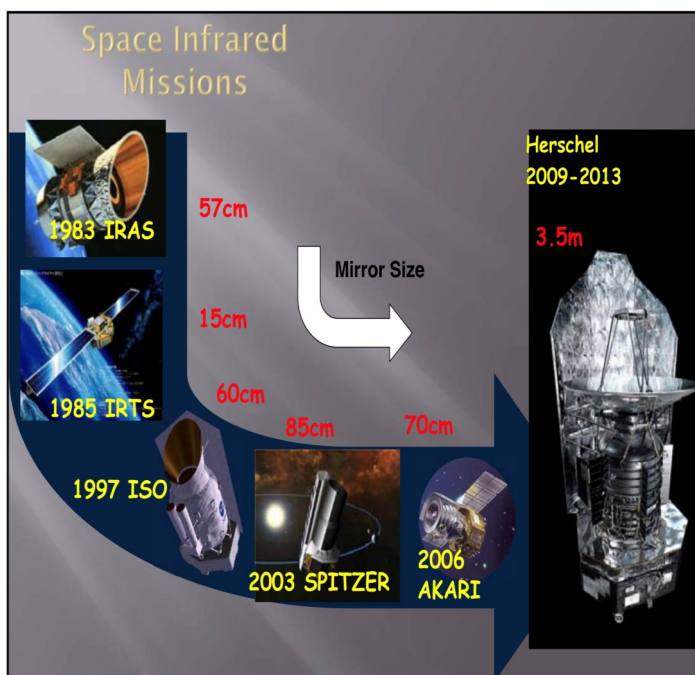
The return - the Clumps in the distance.

A link to more photographs from this midweek walk is available on request. Just email!

THE MARCHAM SOCIETY ASTRONOMY GROUP

We had a very good turnout for the ‘MAG’ meeting yesterday evening with a record number of 25 people. The cloudy skies prevented us seeing anything outdoors, but we had a good indoor meeting, with the usual *Recent Sightings* and *Things to Look Out For* in the coming weeks, followed by a great talk by Eric Dunford on Astronomy from Space.

The main focus of Eric’s talk was the Infra-red (IR) telescope missions he had been involved with in his career at the Rutherford Appleton Lab: IRAS (launched in 1983) and ISO (Infra-Red Space Observatory, launched in 1997), along with the Herschel Telescope, 2009-2013.



He explained the need to have telescopes in space because the Earth’s atmosphere blocks most of the electromagnetic spectrum, except for visible light and only limited parts of the IR wavelengths. He emphasised the massive development of technology over the past 40 years which had advanced our knowledge by leaps and bounds.

One of the points that he highlighted was the chance discovery, using IRAS, of the first evidence for an exo-planet – orbiting the relatively nearby star Vega. His talk was illustrated with archive photos of the missions and with some of the stunning images from Hubble and James Webb Telescopes.

In the picture above on the right, taken in the 1980s, can you spot Eric when he was working with his IRAS team?

The next meeting will be at 7pm on **Thursday 23rd February** including a talk by Simon Blackmore on “*The Mythology of the Constellations*”.

THE CROWN, PACKHORSE LANE

The Future of 'THE CROWN'

The Crown is a grade II listed building, a pub of historic and cultural interest. It has been put up for sale for £425,000 by its owners, Admiral Taverns, making it a possible target for property developers looking for a quick profit.



A steering group will be applying to make the pub an 'Asset of Community Value'. An Asset of Community Value (ACV) is a building or land that is an asset of community value where its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could well do so in the future.

If this ACV is approved by the planning authority, Vale of White Horse District Council, the pub would then be on the asset list, protecting it from being sold, changed or developed for a limited time. This will give the steering group valuable time to consult with those in the village, gather opinions and support and then form an alternative business plan.

As advertised in MAD News, a meeting was held at the Marcham Centre on Friday 20th January to discuss the future of the Crown and there was a clear presentation made by Neil Rowe, Mark Harvie and Trevor Hill.

It was a very well-attended meeting and the Marcham Society Committee feels the steering committee should have our firm support. Over forty of our members have written to express their agreement and we will await the outcome with interest.

FUTURE DATES AND EVENTS

Publicity below from MAD News.

Information is also published on Facebook, on the website and updates are also sent to members by email.

www.marchamsociety.org.uk



*The
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Monday 27th February
7.15 for 7.45pm
Main Hall
Marcham Centre

The Wildlife of the Rare Fens and Salt Spring of the Marcham Area *Judith Webb*

The Marcham area is blessed with a number of very important wildlife sites: rare and ancient alkaline fen wetlands, salt spring areas, dry sandy heathy soils and old sandpits. This talk will explore the amazing biodiversity present in the wetlands and will discuss how it all relates to geology, historical human occupation and land-use management. It will also consider the threats to wildlife survival with Climate Change, the needs of agriculture and growing development pressures in the area.



Small red damselfly



Cothill Fen



Marsh helleborine orchid

Judy Webb is a local ecologist who has long had a fascination with the rare plants and animals of this area and has carried out study and research particularly on the fen areas at Cothill, with a focus on rare plants and rare insects of the site.

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, 9th February 12.30pm - **Marcham Society Midweek Walk** – contact e.dunford@btinternet.com
- Thursday, 23rd February 7pm - **Marcham Society Astronomy Group, Small Hall @ Marcham Centre** – contact jim.asher@btinternet.com. This month there will be a talk on 'The Mythology of Constellations' by Simon Blackmore
- Monday 27th February 7.15pm Marcham Centre Main Hall **Judith Webb** – Wildlife of Marcham – see above

For more information contact membership@marchamsociety.org.uk

www.marchamsociety.org.uk

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

Programme 2022-23

Unless otherwise notified, meetings will be held at 7.45 pm in the Main Hall of the Marcham Centre

Monday 20th February 2023

Tour of Kingston Bagpuize House at 2pm
(see details on Page One)

Thursday 23rd February 2023

Astronomy Group, at 7pm
(see details on Page Seven)

Monday 27th February 2023

'The Wildlife of the Rare Fens and Salt Spring of the Marcham Area' by Judith Webb
(see details on this page on the left)

Thursday 16th March 2023

Astronomy Group, at 7pm

Saturday 25th March 2023 (All day)

Berkshire Local History Association
Conference in the Marcham Centre
All Marcham Society members welcome

Monday 27th March 2023

'The Blue Plaques in the Vale'
by Robert Evans

Monday 17th April 2023

Visit to Cothill House at 2.30pm

Monday 24th April 2023

MEMBERS' EVENING
(Details to be announced)

Wednesday 17th May 2023

Tour of Garford Village by Mike Greig, at 2pm

Monday 22nd May 2023

'Chimney Meadows—floodplain restoration'
by Lisa Lane

Monday 26th June 2023

'The Two William Morrises of Oxfordshire'
by Marie-Louise Kerr

Wednesday 5th July 2023

Visit to Aston Pottery, at 11am

Saturday 15th July 2023

SUMMER BARBECUE
(Evening: details to be announced)