



OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION (OLHA)

**BENSON: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HISTORY OF AN OXFORDSHIRE VILLAGE**

STUDY DAY and AGM

Saturday 7 June 2025

Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson OX10 6LZ

- 9:30am**      **Registration and refreshments**
- 10:00am**    **Welcome and introduction** by Christopher Fance, Chair of OLHA
- 10:05am**    **Early Medieval Benson: An Anglo-Saxon Royal Estate Centre**  
Anglo-Saxon Benson was an important royal estate centre whose territory stretched across the Chilterns to Henley, and which in 1086 remained the most valuable royal estate in Oxfordshire. **Simon Townley** will look at Benson’s emergence in its regional context, and at the changes which saw it decline into a large (though still thriving) village by the later Middle Ages.
- 11:00am**    **Refreshments**
- 11:20am**    **The Viking-Age World of the Watlington Hoard**  
Discovered in 2015 and now displayed in the *England 400-1600* gallery at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the hoard is an exceptional find of 9th-century silver jewellery, coins and ingots. It was buried at the end of the 870s, and can be related to the defeat of the Viking Great Army by the forces of Alfred the Great at the Battle of Edington in 878. **John Naylor** will explore the hoard’s contents and what they tell us about Viking activity in southern England, and suggest how it might have ended up in a field a short ride from Benson.
- 12:15pm**    **OLHA AGM**
- 12:30pm**    **Catherine Murray** will introduce the afternoon’s guided walk, and share a series of historic maps of Benson. The Bensington Society’s History Group will display a copy of Richard Davis’s fabulous 1788 map of the open fields and old inclosures of Benson, Berwick and Ewelme, the focus of a current research project.
- 1:00pm**      **Lunch:** there are pubs and cafés in Benson, or packed lunches can be eaten in the Parish Hall.
- 2-3:30pm**   **Guided walk around Benson led by Catherine Murray and Dave Rushton**  
The tour will highlight how Benson’s buildings and layout reflect two very different aspects of village history: the coaching trade that brought prosperity in the 18th and early 19th centuries, with grand inns and fine houses along the High Street and Castle Square; and, in contrast, the growth of a squatter settlement along the Littleworth Waste, whose residents had humbler occupations.

See over for further information about the speakers and guides, and for transport and parking advice.

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If possible, please book and pay on-line at <http://www.olha.org.uk/events/study-days>. Otherwise, send this form with a cheque for £15.40 per person made payable to ‘OLHA’ to: Liz Woolley, 138 Marlborough Road, Oxford OX1 4LS, (01865 242760, [membership@olha.org.uk](mailto:membership@olha.org.uk)). Thank you.

Name(s) .....

Local society if applicable .....

Number of places at £15.40 per person ..... Do you want place(s) on the afternoon guided tour?  Yes  No  
If you would like an acknowledgement by e-mail, please tick this box  and write your e-mail address here:

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## **OUR CONTRIBUTORS**

**Dr Simon Townley** has worked for the Oxfordshire Victoria County History since 1987, becoming County Editor in 1996. During this time he has researched and written histories of nearly thirty Oxfordshire towns and villages.

**Dr John Naylor** is the National Finds Adviser for Early Medieval and Later Coinage (part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme) based at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

**Catherine Murray** and **Dave Rushton** are both members of the Bensington Society's History Group. Catherine is a retired historic buildings specialist with a passion for researching inns and coaching. Dave used to live in the area of Littleworth, and has delved deeply into the census returns to discover its history.

## **TRANSPORT AND PARKING**

The Oxford Bus Company <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/THTR/X40> runs a regular service (River Rapids X40) from Oxford and Reading, stopping at Benson Marina, a short walk from the venue.

There is a car park at the venue.