



**OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
(OLHA)
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT THE UPPER CHAMBER THAME TOWN HALL, THAME
SATURDAY 16 MAY 2026**

The AGM was preceded by three well-received talks by Dr Kathryn Davies (The Elizabethan wall paintings from 34 Upper High Street, Thame), Stephen Barker (Oxfordshire in the Civil War, 1642-5, through a Thame lens) and Dr Hannah Little (Oxfordshire History Centre update)

ATTENDANCE

The following officers and committee members were present: Christopher Fance (Chairman); Mike Hopkins (Secretary); Liz Woolley (Treasurer, Membership secretary and E-bulletin editor); Carol Anderson (Study day organizer); Vanessa Moir (Journal editor) and Malcom Graham (Committee member).

Another 35 OLHA members attended (out of 52 people attending the study day overall).

The Chairman, Christopher Fance, opened the AGM and thanked people for their attendance.

1. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Kathy Davies and Simon Townley (Vice-Chairman)

2. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE 2025 AGM HELD AT BENSON VILLAGE HALL, 7 JUNE 2025

The minutes of the 2025 AGM held in Benson Village Hall on 7 June 2025 had been distributed in advance. No corrections were received. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Mike Hopkins and seconded by Chris Bowler; passed unanimously and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Katherine Bradley asked of the Chairman, why the term “Chairman” is used as opposed to what she felt as a more appropriate “Chair”. The Chairman replied that his preference for the title is “Chairman”, but that may be reviewed at some time following his retirement from the position. A brief discussion took place. The Secretary undertook to ensure that the matter be minuted.

4. OFFICERS’ REPORTS FOR 2025/26

The following officers’ reports (circulated in advance) were put to the meeting and unanimously accepted. (Proposed by Jill Hind, Seconded by Mark Davies.)

4a. Chairman

The Oxfordshire Local History Association, known as OLHA, exists for all those interested in the history of Oxfordshire. It aims to foster and promote the study and publication of local history. It acts as an umbrella organisation for local history groups in the county.

Among its activities, it campaigns to preserve and improve services for Oxfordshire local historians and normally holds regular liaison meetings with the management of the Oxfordshire History Centre, the Bodleian Library and occasional *ad hoc* meetings with local government officials. In the last year, there have been three meetings with the archivists at the Oxfordshire History Centre and two meetings with the Bodleian.

OLHA's programme of small financial grants has seen more applications. In the last year there were two. Local societies in need of finance for special projects are urged to consider applying. OLHA also continues to make regular donations to help fund the Oxfordshire volumes of the Victoria County History and to provide funds for items of equipment for the Oxfordshire History Centre. We were fortunate in the last year to have received two donations. One donor wishes to be anonymous. The donation of £1000 was generous. This is specifically to be used for small grants. The other was smaller, arising because of the dissolution of a local history society.

The AGM in May 2025 was held in Benson. It was preceded by two talks on the theme *Benson: highlights from the history of an Oxfordshire village*. The autumn study day was held in Banbury and entitled *Banbury: a town and its people*, with three talks in the morning. Both events had guided tours in the afternoon. The committee is extremely grateful for the success of these events and for the hard work put in by Carol Anderson to ensure this.

Liz Woolley has continued to compile the very popular monthly e-bulletin of news and events relevant to local historians. Producing such an excellent e-bulletin each month clearly takes up a good deal of time and effort. She does this at the same time as carrying out her roles as treasurer, membership secretary and website manager.

Our journal editor Vanessa Moir produced her third journal in the latter part of 2025. She has built on her experience of previous years. Vanessa is now working on the next edition to be published in the autumn of 2026. OLHA intends to keep to a regular yearly publication, which was lost in the years before she became editor. I would like to thank Vanessa for a very worthwhile edition. She is now seeking short, lively pieces of up to 1,000 words for a new vignettes section: self-contained stories that shine a light on a single primary source. These might be curious finds, overlooked details, or small moments that open a window onto Oxfordshire's past.

Mike Hopkins has proved a very welcome addition to the committee. He has become Norma Aubertin-Potter's successor as Secretary. He volunteered at last year's AGM. The committee always welcomes new members who help to bring fresh ideas.

Having mentioned four committee members by name, I would like to thank everyone on the committee for their support and sage advice.

One final remark, I will be stepping down as Chairman at next year's AGM, having served seven years in the post.

Christopher Fance, 30 April 2026 (chair@olha.org.uk)

4b. Treasurer

The financial year 2025/26 ended on 31 March 2026. The accounts are summarised overleaf and have been examined and signed off by the external examiner Andrew Churchill Stone of Mercer Lewin Ltd, Chartered Accountants, New Barclay House, 234 Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0HP. The key points are:

- During the financial year, expenditure (£8,727) exceeded income (£8,208) by £519 but the Association is still in a healthy position financially with £1,321 in the bank at year-end.
- Subscription income (£4,403) was slightly higher than in 2024/25 due to an increase in the number of members.
- A gift aid claim on subscriptions and donations received during 2025/26 resulted in income of £491, slightly higher than last year, due partly to an increase in the number of members, and partly to a mailing requesting those members who had not already signed up to gift aid to do so.
- Donations received (£1,576) included those from regular annual donors plus two large one-off donations. The first of these was of £412 from the Wootton, Dry Sandford & District History Society, one of our society members. The society closed in May 2025 and gave its remaining funds to OLHA, for the benefit of other Oxfordshire local history societies and groups. The second large donation was of £1,000 from an Oxfordshire-based foundation, again in support of local history activities in the county. We are grateful to both groups for their generous contributions.
- Study day income amounted to £1,724, comprising fees from the study days held in Benson in June and Banbury in October.
- Printing and mailing of the annual journal (Vol 13) cost less than last year (£3,121 compared to £3,433). Overall, the cost of printing and posting the journal was £7.07 per copy, down from £7.41 last year.
- An additional amount of £36 was spent on postage of other items (for example notices of study days to members who are not on e-mail). We also spent £130 on stationery (mainly envelopes); last year we were still using up stationery purchased the year before.
- Our usual annual donation of £1,000 was made to the Oxfordshire Victoria County History Trust, plus a donation of £2,000 to the Oxfordshire History Centre (£1,000 of which was the donation due last year, postponed at the centre's request. A grant of £500 was made to the Steeple Aston Village Archive (SAVA) under our small grants scheme, to help improve public access to SAVA's on-line catalogue of c. 3,000 items. We gave a donation of £240 to the Bensington Society following their hosting of the study day in June 2025.
- Study day costs (£943) were slightly higher than last year, but were still easily covered by study day income (£1,724).
- Bank charges on our HSBC account (£31) were lower than last year due to a change in policy on charging by the bank.
- Miscellaneous expenditure of £671 included our annual subscription to the British Association for Local History (£90); website hosting, domain name renewal and SSL certificate renewal (£153 in total); paying the accountants for examining the accounts (£180); and design and production of a roll-up OLHA banner for use at study days and other events (£249, a one-off cost).

Liz Woolley, 20 April 2026 (membership@olha.org.uk)

**OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS
2025/26**

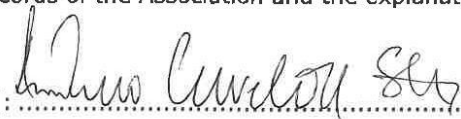
RECEIPTS IN 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	2025/26 (£)	2024/25 (£)
Subscriptions	4,403.43	3,967.71
Gift Aid claim	490.68	472.95
Donations	1,575.89	2,082.32
Study day fees	1,724.45	1041.72
COIF interest	13.17	15.29
Totals	8,207.62	7,579.99

PAYMENTS OUT 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	2025/26 (£)	2024/25 (£)
Subscriptions refunds	54.55	0.00
Journal printing and mailing	3121.06	3,433.37
Postage	35.70	30.60
Stationery	130.05	0.00
Donations and grants	3,740.00	2,000.00
Study days costs	943.12	899.90
Bank charges	30.60	64.00
Misc (incl accountant's fees; website costs; IT assistance; BALH annual sub)	671.77	452.99
Totals	8,726.85	6,880.86

BALANCE SHEET			
<u>Cash at bank on 1 April 2025 (£)</u>		<u>Cash at bank on 31 March 2026 (£)</u>	
HSBC current account	1,515.84	HSBC current account	983.44
COIF deposit fund	323.92	COIF deposit fund	337.09
plus receipts in	8,207.62	plus payments out	8,726.85
Total	10,047.38	Total	10,047.38

ACCUMULATED FUNDS (£)	
Balance at banks (HSBC & COIF) 1 April 2025	1,839.76
Receipts in	8,207.62
Payments out	8,726.85
Total accumulated	-519.23
Balance at banks (HSBC & COIF) 31 March 2026	1,320.53

This statement of the receipts and payments of the Oxfordshire Local History Association for the year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 is in accordance with books and records of the Association and the explanations given to me.

Signed:  Date: 8 May 2026
Andrew Churchill Stone FCA DChA, Mercer Lewin, Chartered Accountants

4c. Membership secretary

At the end of the 2025/26 financial year we had 283 individual members, 87 societies, 7 journal-only, and 15 complimentary (total 392). We estimate that on average Oxfordshire local history societies have a membership of c. 40, so OLHA represents about 3,500 Oxfordshire local historians.

Overall membership has grown by 6% since last year. We were pleased to welcome 40 new members during 2025/26, including the Brackley History Society, South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group, Faringdon Historical Society, and Oxfordshire Record Society.

Liz Woolley, 20 April 2026 (membership@olha.org.uk)

4d. Journal editor

My third issue of the journal was published in December 2025. 474 copies were printed and an initial 385 were sent out. We used the same printer as last year, Short Run Press in Devon, which worked well and allowed us to print in colour. I managed to compile the issue earlier than in previous years; last year the proof was signed off on the 28th of November, while this year it was the 30th of October. I also learnt lessons from previous issues about doing more proof reading before submitting the files to the printer, which meant that we avoided being charged extra for proof corrections. The copies took around four and a half weeks to be printed (compared to two and a half weeks last year), so they missed the day that we had planned to package them on, and hence they were still sent out in December. We will aim to send this year's issue out earlier in the autumn. Postage was slightly less than last year, although this appears to be because of inconsistencies with the Post Office's weighing machine, as the issue was around ten pages longer. We were able to use the same envelopes as last year. We also sent PDF copies to members overseas, as international postage has become so expensive.

Packaging the copies of the journal, putting addresses and stamps on them and taking them to be posted is quite a big job, although with three people involved it can be done in around half a day. So far it has been done by committee members, but it would be great if other OLHA members were able to help on the day. This could be as simple as providing a lift in a car to take the packaged copies to the Post Office. I would also welcome help with the administration of book reviews, including arranging for review copies to be sent to reviewers.

The following articles have been received and are planned to be included in this year (2026)'s issue:

- Ellie Reid: Women local historians who recorded and wrote about Oxfordshire rural history in the late nineteenth century up to the beginning of WW2.
- Stephen Rudgard: Analysis of the men and women labourers and the role of the harvest bonus in West Hendred.
- Kate Richenburg: A planning application with a story (a short article).
- Julie Godson: A stake through the heart: changing attitudes to suicide in Oxfordshire from the 1750s to the 1850s.
- Various book reviews.

In recent issues, I have authored brief articles focusing on specific manuscripts, each focused on a single topic. This is quite a lot of work for me and for the last two issues it has been the last piece to be completed. I am therefore inviting others to submit short articles on any topic

for the next issue. I also need a local historian to be interviewed for the *On the Spot* feature. Any suggestions would be welcome!

Vanessa Moir, 30 April 2026 (journal@ohla.org.uk)

4e. Study day organiser

The 2025 spring study day on the theme *Benson: highlights from its history*, was held on 7 June 2025 in Benson Parish Hall. A programme of talks preceded the AGM. Contributors included Simon Townley, who examined Benson's origins as an important royal estate and explained some of the changes that saw a decline in its fortunes through the later medieval period. John Naylor spoke about the Watlington Hoard, and how its burial at the end of the 870s related to the defeat of the Viking Great Army by King Alfred. An exhibition by the Bensington Society History Group showed the results of their recent work and included a copy of Davis' 1788 map detailing the area before enclosure.

Members of the Bensington Society History Group provided afternoon guided walks. Catherine Murray explored the evidence for the prosperity brought to the village in the 18th century by the growth of the coaching trade. David Rushton shared a wealth of fascinating information about the early inhabitants of Littleworth. A third group enjoyed a guided exploration of St Helen's church. OLHA was very grateful to volunteers from the Bensington Society for their support in planning and delivering the day, and for their help in serving refreshments to a packed gathering.

The 2025 autumn study day took as its theme *Banbury: A town and its people* and was held at Banbury Museum on 18 October 2025. Verna Wass opened the morning with a talk focusing on individual Banbury people, the detail of whose lives reflected the experiences of the wider community in the 19th and 20th centuries. Barrie Trinder drew upon a lifetime of researching the history of Banbury to provide a masterly review of the town and its manufacturers between 1800 and 1931. Aided by contemporary photographs and surviving maps and plans, Dale Johnson explained how Banbury's First World War munitions factory filling site, now scheduled in recognition of its national and international significance, was constructed and operated to meet the needs of this complex and dangerous activity.

In perfect warm autumn sunshine Steve Kilsby led an afternoon walk around the town, providing fascinating insights into the surviving evidence for Banbury's long and colourful history. A second walk focused on Banbury's canal and its industrial past, brought vividly to life by Stephen Wass. A third group enjoyed a visit to Banbury Museum guided by its director Simon Townsend. Participants also joined Verna Wass, to take a closer look at Banbury History Society's archive. Thanks are due to Banbury Museum and the Banbury History Society for their help in developing and delivering the day.

Study days are organised for the benefit of our members, although non-members are welcome to join us. The study day organiser would very much welcome suggestions for themes (which do not have to be geographically based) and speakers, as well as venues. We particularly appreciate the help and support we receive from members of local history societies in developing and running the study days.

Carol Anderson, 29 April 2026 (studydays@olha.org.uk)

4f. E-bulletin editor

The e-bulletin was sent to members and to other subscribers on the first day of every month throughout the year. At year-end (March 2026) it was being sent to 666 recipients (compared to 630 the same time last year), including our 87 society members, many of whom forward it to their own members. Feedback on the e-bulletin has been positive, and the rate of opening is consistently between 60% and 65%.

The editor welcomes items of news and notices of forthcoming events; text and images can be sent to membership@olha.org.uk by the 25th of the month prior to publication.

Liz Woolley, 20 April 2026 (membership@olha.org.uk).

5: ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMAN, OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR 2026/27

All the current Officers and Committee have expressed a willingness to continue in place, and were proposed and seconded as follows at the OLHA committee meeting held on 16 March 2026:

The following people have agreed to stand for re-election, for year 2026/27:

- Christopher Fance (Chairman): nominated by Carol Anderson, seconded by Mike Hopkins.
- Simon Townley (Vice chairman): nominated by Carol Anderson, seconded by Liz Woolley.
- Mike Hopkins (Secretary): nominated by Malcolm Graham, seconded by Carol Anderson.
- Liz Woolley (Treasurer and Membership secretary): nominated by Christopher Fance, seconded by Mike Hopkins.
- Vanessa Moir (Journal editor): nominated by Liz Woolley, seconded by Mike Hopkins.
- Carol Anderson (Study day organiser): nominated by Liz Woolley, seconded by Mike Hopkins.
- Malcolm Graham (committee member): nominated by Mike Hopkins, seconded by Liz Woolley.
- Kathy Davies (committee member): nominated by Christopher Fance, seconded by Malcolm Graham.

The committee's re-election was proposed by Nigel Swietalski and seconded by Ian Bennett; no objections were raised, and those listed were duly re-elected.

6. ELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

It was proposed that Oxford-based accountants [Mercer Lewin](#), who have examined OLHA's accounts since 2019, should be employed to do so again in 2027. Proposed: Christopher Fance Seconded Linda Mustill; duly accepted.

7. OLHA'S COMPLIANCE WITH GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

The notice detailing OLHA's compliance with GDPR regulations is reviewed annually by the committee and updated as necessary. The Chairman reported that the committee had reviewed the current policy in March 2026, and that no alterations seemed necessary; no questions or objections were raised.

8. CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

Of which due notice (as set out in the Association's Constitution) has been given in advance to the Chairman (chair@olha.org.uk). None raised.

9. EMERGENCY MOTIONS (AT THE MEETING'S DISCRETION)

None raised.

Before the meeting was closed Ruth Waddle offered her thanks to the officers of OHLA for what she considered must be a considerable effort in ensuring that the activities of the Association are transacted. The Chairman thanked the member for her comments.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm.