

## Introduction

This newsletter is the first for 2026 and produced to coincide with the opening of the museum. We will be producing an autumn newsletter following the closure of the museum and the start of the 2026/27 series of monthly talks.

## History Society News

**Malcolm Storry** – sadly Malcolm passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and a memorial service was held for him in the Methodist Church on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Many of you would have known Malcolm, as he had served for many years as a volunteer at the Museum, a trustee and, latterly, Chairman of the CN Local History Society. Declining health forced Malcolm to resign as Chairman but he continued to contribute to our activities by remaining on the committee and as a trustee of the charity. Malcolm will be sorely missed.

**AGM** – we held our AGM on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The following decisions were made: -

- The 2025 Annual Report and Accounts were received and accepted. The annual subscription stays at £15.
- The current committee & trustees were re-elected unanimously. Bill Dixon was proposed, seconded and unanimously elected as a committee member and trustee of the LHS.
- The committee is now **Chairman:** Martin Jarratt; **Curator:** Pauline Watkins; **Secretary:** Jan Cliffe; **Treasurer:** John Graves and **committee members/trustees:** Kate Bartholomew, Bill Dixon, Angie Gaydon and Janis Paxton.



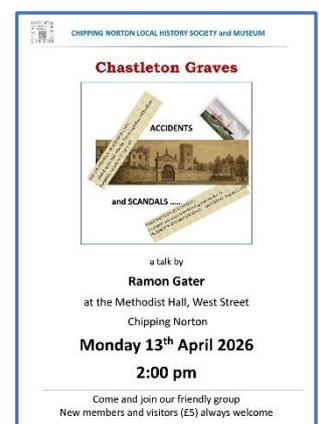
**Council grant** – we are delighted that the Chipping Norton Town Council has awarded us ‘core funding’ status with a £3,500 grant per annum for this year. This money will be used to pay an element of our running costs and also part fund our plans to make the artefacts held in the museum better understood and more easily accessible to people of the town. We will update displays in the museum and revamp our web site to reach those unable to visit the museum.

**History Society Talks** – every year between September and May we arrange eight monthly talks on topics of local history. The 2025/26 season has been very well received and attendances are averaging over 35 people comprising members and visitors.

There are two talks remaining this season:

On 13<sup>th</sup> April the subject is “Chastelton Graves” by Ramon Gater and the final talk on 11<sup>th</sup> May is “The Rollright Stones” by George Lambrick.

The 2026/27 season of talks begins in September 2026.



## Museum News



2026 is the **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the foundation of the CN Local History Museum in March 1986. We are marking this special event by holding an Open Day at the Museum **Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2026** where everybody is invited to join us for drinks and refreshments.

On Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> March the museum re-opens for the new season and will be open between the hours of 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm daily except Sunday.

We are looking for more **volunteers to serve in the Museum**. No previous experience is required and full instruction will be given on the very few processes and procedures involved.

If you're thinking of volunteering please pop along to the museum or get in touch by contacting either Pauline Watkins ([paulinewatkins58@icloud.com](mailto:paulinewatkins58@icloud.com)) or Janice Cliffe ([janicemcliffe@gmail.com](mailto:janicemcliffe@gmail.com)).

**Window displays** – these always prove popular to visitors to the Town and have been ongoing throughout the winter. The most recent one is pictured here and features the Museum's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The displays will be changed on a regular basis to feature topical issues.

**If anyone has any artefacts that they would like to donate to the Museum to be used as part of the window display and displays in the Museum then these will be gratefully received.**

Please contact Pauline Watkins ([paulinewatkins58@icloud.com](mailto:paulinewatkins58@icloud.com))



**Museum External Wall Sign** – the museum sign on the wall of the building above the entrance to the Museum and the floor stand have been replaced. The picture to the right shows these new signs in situ. Inchmere Event Design Ltd of Banbury have provided and fitted these new signs. Their managing director, Alastair Goodall, has very kindly done this work free-of-charge as a donation to the Museum.



**Romano-British Settlement in Chipping Norton** – we have commissioned an artist to provide an artistic impression of what the settlement could have looked like in its heyday. The artwork will be of an A2 sized picture for display in the Museum and, through digitisation, a variety of images will be available to be used outside the Museum and posted on-line on our website. This work will be available to view in the Museum in a month or so.

**Digital Resources** – we have added on-line access and search facilities to the Chipping Norton parish registers, Bliss memorial inscriptions, probate transcriptions and burial records to facilitate the family history research of both members and visitors.

**Chippy Baseball** – we have reported before on the history of the Town’s Baseball Club and the “Louisville Slugger” baseball bat, which you can see on display in the Museum. This was presented to the club in 1926 by the visiting New York Giants team. 1926 was also the year that Chippy were the ‘unofficial’ British champions. In 2026 the British Baseball Hall of Fame hope to retrospectively recognise the CN Baseball Club as champions and thus cement the Club’s historic fame; we’ll keep you posted on progress.

**Geographical Information System (GIS)** – the development of the Society’s GIS has continued. The scope of the information on the archaeological finds has been extended to include the parishes surrounding Chipping Norton. These ‘archaeological finds’ are those recorded in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the British Museum’s “Portable Antiquities Scheme” (PAS) and finds from CHARG’s fieldwalking activity. The detail of the finds held in both the HER and the PAS is directly available in the GIS. In the case of the PAS data, images (if available) are also able to be displayed within the GIS. {NB These descriptions and images are also available to view using a separate access method.} The latest version of the GIS is installed on the Museum’s computer system for use by members and museum visitors alike. This version now has sufficient data to support basic ‘desk-based’ archaeology. If anyone is interested in following this up, please contact John Graves via e-mail on [chippingnortonmuseum1@gmail.com](mailto:chippingnortonmuseum1@gmail.com).

Further development of the Museum’s website will complement the Museum’s displays and artefacts to bring them to a wider audience in Chippy and further afield.

## **New Exhibits/Collections/Acquisitions in the Museum**

**New acquisitions** – over the winter we received a number of new donations spanning a wide range of objects, for example, from a six-foot pit saw to a 1971 Crown & Cushion menu signed by Keith Moon (of The Who fame). A significant donation received was the war-time items and documents belonging to Father Frank Hull (the last Jesuit priest in Chipping Norton) who served in the Royal Marines and accepted the formal surrender of the U-boats in Kiel Canal (North Germany) in 1945. These documents and details of his military career will be carefully curated and displayed in 2026.

**Family History** – we are again providing access to the “Ancestry” application for family history research, together with all the local records that we hold. We have also added files on publicans and pubs in Chippy.

**Photographic and Video archive** – we have continued scanning and indexing our loose photographs which will be added to the on-line archive and, thus, readily accessible to view on the Museum’s computer. We have also transferred a significant proportion of our video collection to the .mp4 format to simplify their display as part of our digital archive. A schedule and description of all video files is also provided.

**Sound archive** – we have further improved the indexing and availability of our sound recordings. These recordings include “Radio Chipping Norton” broadcasts, as well as talks by local people on their life and tales of Chippy in the past.

**Archaeology collection** – we have expanded the display of our collection of archaeology artefacts to complement the display of the details of the Roman-British settlement. Recent fieldwalking by CHARG

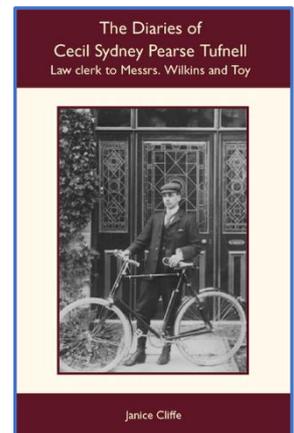
members has added to the archaeological finds held by the Museum. Significant finds have been added to the British Museum’s “Portable Antiquities Scheme” (PAS) database.

We have refreshed our direct access to the PAS database to include these and other items added to the PAS in 2025, so that museum visitors can see the archaeologist’s description of the finds and enlarged images of the Museum’s archaeological collection.

### New Museum Publication

The latest addition to the books available for sale is Jan Cliffe’s *“The Diaries of Cecil Sydney Pearse Tufnell”*. The original two volumes of the diaries were donated to Chipping Norton Museum by a member of the Tufnell family. Cecil began keeping a diary in 1894 during his schooldays in Ramsgate and continued until 1901 when he qualified as a solicitor after spending 4 years as a law clerk with Messrs Wilkins & Toy in Chipping Norton. This book mentions many local people and is lavishly illustrated with photographs, many taken by Cecil himself, showing the lifestyle of a young man at the turn of the 19/20<sup>th</sup> century.

Book sales continue to be a significant part of our fund-raising sales in the Museum and so new titles are always welcome to complement the ‘old favourites’!



### Forthcoming Events

#### Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – The Chipping Norton Town Festival

As our contribution to the festival, we will open the Museum to visitors free of charge. Museum Trustees will be on hand to welcome visitors. Details of the festival are available at <https://chippyfest.co.uk/>

#### Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2026 – “Thomas Brassey Railway Engineer”

The Chipping Norton Railway Society are hosting a talk on Thomas Brassey who was famous as a railway engineer building railways throughout the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He was the father of Albert Brassey MP for Banbury who lived at Heythrop House and was a major local dignitary.

#### Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2026 – “Finds” Day

Dr Ed Caswell will again be our resident expert on hand in the museum to identify any objects brought in by visitors. He records any finds of significance in the PAS database, which then allows us to add them to our map of local finds. The picture shows Ed at a previous year’s event that attracted a large number of people with some significant finds to be added to the PAS database.

