



**Chairman's Report  
May 2026**



The Wychwood Local History Society is going from strength to strength with nine talks covering items as diverse as Trench Humour; A history of what the English have eaten; Fairford Church; Witney New Mill and Thomas Fairfax the Parliamentary General.

We started this year's programme in June 2025 with the Oxford Waits (pictured) who gave a performance of songs, stories and music from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (in Milton Village Hall). In January 2026 Gillian Cane gave an excellent talk on the Mitford Sisters to a packed village hall of WLHS members and guests, with history on our doorstep when Sir Oswald Mosley (pictured) with his wife Diana Mitford at The Shaven Crown, Shipton under Wychwood, whilst under house arrest in 1943.



**Archive:** It is now four years since the History Society found a permanent home for its Archives in an office in Groves Yard. The archive sub-committee continues to work on cataloguing the contents of the archive and this is substantially complete, apart from the photographic holdings which are the subject of a particular focus in 2026. New material continues to be donated to the archive on a regular basis! Alongside the "paper" archive the team have now established a digital archive containing digitised copies of some of the paper archives, especially the photographs. However, the digital archive also contains much additional material that is "born digital", such as new research material and digital photographs. The digital archive is stored in a structured system of folders and can be easily searched. A particularly

useful addition to the digital archive this year has been an (almost) complete set of The Wychwood Magazine dating back to 1981.

**Website:** Our website continues to hold the digitised versions of the society's publications as well as a selection of our oral history recordings. David Betterton continues to maintain the website in its current form, now in its 7th year. The WLHS is in the process of taking on the resources and objectives of the Ascott Martyrs Trust, to continue to raise awareness of this important episode in our history. We now publish around 1500 images from our photo archive, and we continue to feature new research by the archive team and others, as well

**Library Exhibitions:** The organisation of the Archive has enabled the Society to compile the regular small exhibitions of historic photographs in the Wychwood library. We aim to hold 5 of these exhibitions each year, running for 2 months at a time. A selection of some of this year's exhibitions are on view on the display boards at the back of the hall.

**Enquiries:** We continue to answer an increasing number of user enquiries both in the UK and internationally. Many are requests for copies of photographs that we hold, and queries about family history. Other queries have included a historian based in New Zealand with an interest in our work on the Cospatrick commemorations, and a descendant - in Australia - of Cecil White. This enquiry resulted in the re-discovery of an album of historic photographs of Ascott. The story of Cecil White and his photographs is available on our website, compiled by Carol Anderson.

**Mini-Newsletter:** We have taken the initiative this year of producing a regular short newsletter to publicise WLHS activities. This newsletter summarizes archive work, website updates, the library exhibitions and our monthly talks programme. We publish these newsletters on the Shipton and Milton Parish Council websites. We also publicise our activities in the Ascott Grapevine, and through local Facebook groups.

**Membership.** This continues to grow with new members joining and supplemented with guests at our meetings. I hope with the new programme attached you will find something of interest to you for the coming year. Janet Wiltshire is our treasurer who keeps us on track.

**Committee.** I would like to thank all members of the committee for their diligent work in the past year for helping to make the Wychwoods Local History Society stronger in all areas.

Roger Watts

Chairman & Meeting Secretary

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