

The graphic features the Uffington Museum logo on the left, which includes a white horse silhouette above a house icon and the text 'UFFINGTON MUSEUM VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE'. To the right, two dark grey banners announce talks: 'Talk Coleshill – Nerve Centre of the British Resistance' on 6th April and 'Talk Myths, Monuments & Memory' on 4th May. Below these, a yellow banner with fireworks on either side reads '2026 LAUNCH PARTY – 4th APRIL'. At the bottom, a dark grey banner with fireworks reads 'New Exhibition MYTHS, MONUMENTS & MEMORY'. The text 'FRIENDS OF' is at the top left, 'NEWSLetter' is in the center, and 'SPRING 2026' is below it. A list of contents and the editor's name are at the bottom left.

FRIENDS OF

UFFINGTON MUSEUM
VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE

Talk
Coleshill – Nerve
Centre of the British
Resistance
6th April

Talk
Myths, Monuments
& Memory
4th May

2026 LAUNCH PARTY – 4th APRIL

New Exhibition
MYTHS, MONUMENTS & MEMORY

NEWSLetter
SPRING 2026

In this issue -

- Interview with local novelist Nicola Cornick
- WWII memorial appeal for memories
- Meet the Friends – Alvin Blackie

Edited by Caroline Grundy

One Friend to Another...



Jo Coad

Mergers and Monuments

Thank you to all the Friends who attended the AGM on 24th February. With the proposal to merge the Friends committee and the Trustee committees it was especially good to have a good attendance. Five Friends also sent their apologies.

Details of the proposal to merge the two committees were sent to all Friends and some pertinent questions were raised at the AGM. The proposal was then passed unanimously so now work must commence with the help of the Charity Commission to unite the workings of both committees. A steering committee will oversee this procedure as soon as possible. The Parish Council, who are responsible for the museum building, have agreed for one councillor, (four previously) to be a Trustee on the new amalgamated committee.

The new season is upon us and the Museum resumes opening on Easter Saturday 4th April 2pm to 5pm weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays. Thank you to all the Friends who give up their weekends to man the rota. This year the weekly reminders will be sent by Caroline, for which I am very grateful. I hope you all have lots of visitors and can enjoy your time spent in our own little treasure. Please take the opportunity to browse through one of the blue folders below the White Horse Exhibition. These folders contain historical documents and happenings of events during your lifetime, the history for the next generation.

I look forward to seeing you at this year's Exhibition Launch **Monuments, Myths and Memory**. Drop in anytime between 12 noon and 2pm.

Happy Easter

Curator's Report



Karen
Pilcher

A Successful Year

The 2025 exhibition celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birth of Jane Austen. If we include the talks and our of hour's visitors, we welcomed 1,339 adults and children between April and February, a slight increase on the previous year. Lady Ann Craven has kindly gifted photos and papers which will be added to the collection of Craven items we already hold and we continue to receive donations from far and wide.

The school visited 3 times to celebrate Founders Day, White Horse week and Victorian Day and the Beavers helped with the new exhibition with their own display on book covers.

A highlight must be the Regency Tea Party that was organised in October and that raised over £150 towards running the museum. I am very grateful to all the Friends and volunteers who made cakes, sandwiches and scones and to Timeless Tea Party based in Uffington who provided the lovely crockery and cutlery at a reduced rate. We were featured in the Oxford Mail and front page of the Wantage Herald and received very positive feedback on the event.

We have been very fortunate to attract two active volunteers, Mark who is keeping the website updated and filming the talks, and Caroline who has taken over organising the talks and communications – including the newsletter. Jane as deputy curator and her daughter Lauren are busy researching and creating this year's exhibition.

We continue to attend the monthly Farmers Market, with thanks to Gillian Ward for manning the stall and also at the White Horse Show both days with Jo, Caroline, Jane and myself. Only last week Jo and Caroline pounded the streets of Uffington delivering flyers to attract more people to join as Friends and we already have three new applications.

As always, I am very grateful to Jo and Steve who have continued with support on Thursday mornings, to John Henville and Mike Gosnell who are always on hand to help with the many jobs that are needed and to Alvin who looks at research requests. This coming year we are looking to train deputies for some of the key activities that are currently completed by one person – a succession plan and contingency in case of need. None is time critical and can be completed in your own time, with the benefit of full training from the current incumbent. If you feel you could spare a few hours please let me know. Finally, my thanks must go to all the rota volunteers who give up their free time on a Saturday or a Sunday. Without your support we would be unable to open and share out 'little gem' with the public.

2026 Exhibition – Myths, Monument & Memory

It's finally time to come and enjoy this year's exhibition on 4th April. Step into a landscape of myth and legend and discover the story of ancient sites, their reuse and enduring significance. Experience the 9th-century poem 'Deor' recited in Old English and learn about the myths and meaning that have been woven into the Uffington White Horse landscape across the centuries.

Lauren and Jane Golding have curated 'Myths, Monuments and Memory', exploring the myths and legends woven into the Uffington White Horse landscape — from St George and the Dragon to the story of Weland the Smith. It highlights how this landscape and its monuments have carried significance from prehistory to the present day. It aims to show how reuse in the landscape has conveyed meaning over the centuries, how beliefs have endured, and how personal, family, and community events continue to enrich its story.

There's still time to contribute to the exhibition. You may already have seen these flyers from Lauren, and we'll continue to collect your memories throughout the year.



What's been happening?

Rota

Friends who have volunteered to be on the rota – welcoming visitors to the museum – will have received the new rota compiled by Verity. Remember to check that you can make the date as soon as possible, and to arrange to swap either by using the **Museum Rota WhatsApp Group** or contacting volunteers directly, and informing Verity of any changes veritycavanagh@gmail.com. Contact Verity to be added to WhatsApp.

Verity and Caroline are organising a rota get-together for later in the year to say thank you and for a chance to meet other volunteers and share experiences. We will communicate dates and times once arranged.



Spring Clean

Thank you to the brave souls who came to help with the Museum Spring Clean on the 3rd March. The hard work was worth it, and we're now sparkling and spider-free for our Easter opening!

Talks at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall

<https://www.uffingtonmuseum.co.uk/talks.html>

Uncovering Oxfordshire's Dinosaur Highway

This was our first talk of the year and we were thrilled to welcome Dr Duncan Murdock from the Oxford's Natural History Museum, who gave his first-hand account of the discovery of hundreds of dinosaur footprints in Oxfordshire. His talk was hugely enjoyable and, with our highest attendance ever – 78 people – it raised a healthy £220 in ticket sales.

Black Wantage

Local historian Sem Seaborne took us back to Wantage in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to show us what happens when local businesses go bust, the country is at war with France and the 'local' police forces are as far away as Abingdon and Reading. The combination of deprivation, lack of law enforcement and a weak church presence, combined with an influx of canal workers with money to burn, led to drunkenness (in 44 pubs!), animal baiting and theft. Sem had done a huge amount of research to prove Wantage's descent from one of England's most prosperous towns to one of its worst (and back again!).

A shout out to Mark Woodman who records our talks - in his own time - so we can all enjoy them on our website.

You can see our programme of upcoming talks and recordings of past events on our website <https://www.uffingtonmuseum.co.uk/talks.html>



Upcoming Events

Museum Launch Party

4th April 12 – 2pm, Uffington Museum

Myths, Monuments and Memories

Join us for this season's opening, and for an early preview of this year's exhibition. **Wine and nibbles included!**

A refreshing change!

Karen and the team have updated all of our regular exhibition panels, making them cleaner and brighter. Come to the launch and see them for yourselves!

Talk: Coleshill – Nerve Centre of the British Resistance

6th April, 7:30pm at Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall



We're excited to welcome Gilian Cane to tell us about the brave volunteers trained to sabotage a German invasion during World War II.

Coleshill House in the Oxfordshire countryside served as the top-secret General Headquarters (GHQ) for the Auxiliary Units, often called "Churchill's Secret Army," during World War II. As the nerve centre of British resistance, this secluded estate trained roughly 3,000–3,500 volunteers in guerrilla warfare, sabotage, and assassination to combat a potential German invasion from behind enemy lines. This retelling includes a cast of characters ranging from 13-year-old schoolchildren, saboteurs bristling with explosives to the terrifying village postmistress!

Talk: Myths, Monuments and Memory

4th May, 7:30pm at Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall

This talk from Lauren Golding accompanies our 2026 exhibition.

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2026

18th & 19th April at Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall

Every year the Friends of the Ridgeway hosts the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, showcasing beautiful works of art inspired by the Ridgeway. This year's theme is 'Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway'. It's well worth a visit to support our local artists!

<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2026/>

Nicola Cornick – meet our local author and Friend!



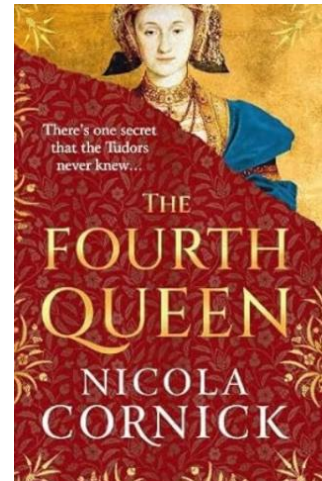
Uffington Museum was delighted when Nicola Cornick, well-known writer and local historian, agreed to spend a cold Monday morning in the museum answering our questions!

Becoming a successful author

Nicola first came to the local area about 25 years ago to work at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham as Deputy Registrar. She started writing and, after about five years, her novels had become so successful she was able to give up educational admin to become a full-time writer of historical fiction.

Nicola trained as an historian, and much of her fiction has been inspired by our history and legends. ‘My fiction is set locally. My first book, House of Shadows, was inspired by my work at Ashdown House and tells the story of William, 1st Earl of Craven and Elizabeth the Winter Queen. I’ve written a further seven books all with connections to places in the Vale or nearby, that draw on the history of the area.’

Her latest historical fiction book is called the Fourth Queen. It tells the story of Anne of Cleves, Henry VIII’s fourth wife, and is set in and around Wantage and White Horse Hill. It will be published by Boldwood books on 9th May and will of course be available online - and from the [Wantage Bookshop](#) where she is the Saturday bookseller!



Volunteering at Ashdown House

Nicola has been a volunteer guide at [Ashdown House](#) for over twenty years and, in that time, she has developed her knowledge and love for all things Ashdown. ‘I show visitors around the property and tell them about its history. My latest writing project is a non-fiction history of Ashdown House and the Craven family who lived there for 350 years. It’s called The House of Craven, and I hope it will be published next spring.’



She is having great fun researching the book, particularly uncovering the stories and connections between local families. One of her favourite characters is the clever and charming Lord Bolingbroke, prime minister for Queen Anne. He rented Ashdown House when he wanted somewhere isolated and quiet where he could indulge in his two favourite activities, hunting and Jacobite plotting. You’ll

have to read the book to find out what happened next!

Friend of Uffington Museum

‘First and foremost, I love our local landscapes, history and heritage in the Vale, so I think having a museum here at Uffington is brilliant.’

Nicola has been a Friend of the museum for a number of years, and very much enjoys the Friends programme of talks and events. She has done lots of research for both her fiction and non-fiction writing in the museum’s historical collections so for her it’s a ‘wonderful resource’. She hopes to be able to continue to be able to contribute to the life of the museum in different ways.

‘Last year I helped put together the exhibition on Jane Austen and her connections in the Vale of the White Horse. Co-curating an exhibition was a new experience for me and I loved it – it was fascinating.’

Recently, Nicola has worked with curators Karen and Jane to bring some of the Craven family papers into the museum’s collection. They were previously held privately and so had never been seen before. ‘They are so interesting; they cover a period of 400 years and range from correspondence relating to Lord Craven’s time at the court of the Winter Queen in the 1640s to arrangements for a ball at Ashdown House in the Victorian period! It was a great privilege to be able to arrange for them to be stored here at the Museum so that they can be conserved properly but are also available to the public.’

Many thanks Nicola! We can’t wait to read *The Fourth Queen* and *The House of Craven*, and we’re looking forward to our continuing collaboration.

To explore Nicola’s writing subscribe to The Word Wenches newsletter

<https://wordwenches.com/author/nicola-cornick/>

To hear more about Nicola’s thoughts on Ashdown House, subscribe to her blog

<https://ashdownhouse.blogspot.com/>

And of course you can find all her novels online and at the Wantage Bookshop.



Can you help?

Uffington-Woolstone-Baulking War Memorial Project

Do you know who our World War II memorial heroes were?

Tony Honeyman



About a year ago I started a project to research and commemorate the men and women who died in World War II from the villages along the foot of the Berkshire Downs, from Childrey to Wanborough and including Uffington, Woolstone, Baulking, Shrivenham and Bourton.

Several villages have already researched their dead from World War I but few have for the second World War. My objective is to find out who there are - to tell their stories, recall their military service and how they died.

I want to make them more than just a name inscribed in stone.

My aim is to produce a small book and hold an exhibition in the village hall. I have already done this for the Ashbury War Memorial and it meant a lot to me and the families to share their stories and images.

I have been making good progress – and thank you Karen, Uffington Museum Curator, for showing me the museum archives - but it would be wonderful if anyone can share:

Stories – are you or your family related to them or do you know them?

Pictures – do you have pictures of them in service or civilian life?

The same people appear on different memorials, and in different forms – one person may be recorded as Albert, Bert or Alfred, Fred, Frederick. If you're unsure don't let that hold you back!

I am uncovering some wonderful stories. Who would have thought that the daughter of a soldier born in the workhouse at Stratton St. Mary, who died defusing a bomb in Kent during the Battle of Britain, would go on to marry into the Rothschild family!

Please contact tonyhoneyman@btinternet.com



Meet the Friends

Each issue we'll invite you to meet one of our volunteers – this month we're delighted to introduce Alvin Blackie

What do you do for Uffington Museum?

Throughout the year the museum receives many enquiries from people looking for information or connections associated with Uffington and its past. My role is to find related pictures, articles or memories by delving into our digital archive, created by Stephen who you met in the last issue, and sending them on to the enquirer. Most requests come from individuals, many looking for ancestors, but we also get requests from other museums and local historians.



I started this activity after meeting Karen, having just moved into the area about seven years ago. At the time Karen was dealing with the administration for the museum as well as undertaking the research. Given the amount of work involved I think she was quite happy when I volunteered to take on the research role! I thought it was also an ideal way to get to know more about the history and activities of the local area.

Why do you volunteer?

The museum contains a wealth of information and an essential part of its remit, in terms of museum accreditation, is to provide wide access to this facility. This includes responding to remote enquiries to access the archive.

In undertaking this work I hope to fulfil this requirement while at the same time, on a personal level, I enjoy being able to thoroughly explore the details contained in old maps, historical records, school registers, censuses, church records and newspaper articles, as well as the traditional reference texts, to discover more about the local area and its past.

I also get a lot of satisfaction from linking what is otherwise a disparate set of items held in the museum, to provide a greater insight into a given situation or circumstance.

What goals would you like to achieve for the museum in the next 12 months?

As part of the proposed succession planning, I'd enjoy showing another volunteer what is involved in this role so that they might be able to help sometime in the future.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

I'm forever pleasantly surprised by the positive feedback from people about the information they have received, and how useful it has been to them.

Contact Us

We're looking forward to welcoming everyone back to the museum at Easter when we reopen. In the meantime, for anything museum related please email our curator Karen at **uffingtonmuseum@gmail.com**

And Finally....

To all our Friends, thank you for continuing to support us Our leaflet campaign last month attracted two new lifetime members – thank you!

