

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group



No 102 Spring 2026 Newsletter

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Dates for your diary - evening meetings 2026

WEDNESDAY 11th FEBRUARY 7:45pm

The Life and Music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst and other composers"

Talk by Terry Hiscocks

WEDNESDAY 11th MARCH 7:45pm

AGM and 'Princes to Paupers' - the Hatfield Forest Visitors' Book 1892-1923. By David Simmonds – See P3 for more information

WEDNESDAY 8th APRIL 7:45pm

"Assembly Rooms in Essex and the activities within them during mostly the 18th and some of the 19th centuries" Talk by Thelma Wilson and Olive Baldwin

The Venue for our meetings is at Trinity Methodist Church, 46, Rainsford Road, CM1 2XB (opposite the County Hotel). The Meeting starts at the usual time of 7.45pm

C&D NT SG AGM 2026

AGENDA for the AGM on Wednesday 11th March at 7:45pm

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the last AGM 12th March 2025 & approval
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Chairman's report
- 5 Treasurer's report
- 6 C&G NT SG funding of NT projects
- 7 Election of Chairman
- 8 Election of Committee
- 9 Election of Honorary Examiner of Accounts
- 10 AOB

The paper work associated with the AGM (minutes of last AGM, accounts etc) will be displayed on the screen to save paper

Please regard this notice as giving the official notification of the AGM

The outing dates and places are as follows – see P10 to 13 for more details and the last page for the booking form.

Sunday 3 rd May	Highclere Castle near Newbury
Thursday 11 th June	Alfriston Clergy House and Sheffield Park East Sussex
Saturday 11 th July	Peckover & Octavia Hill Birthplace House, Wisbech
Monday 10 th August	Delapre Abbey and Northampton
Saturday 17 th October	Powell-Cotton Museum & Quex House and Gardens and time in Margate

The Supporter Group annual holiday will be based at Bournemouth between Monday 14th September to the Friday 18th September. See P 14 for more details

Chairman's Report

C&D NT SG enjoyed another fruitful year culminating in the autumn with the very good Harrogate Holiday, visits to Anglesey Abbey in October and the Thames Cruise in November. The 50th anniversary tea party organised by Susan Almond assisted by Jackie Arnot and Pat Tate with Paul Chaplin giving a synopsis of the early days was enjoyed by all. Pat Tate provided historical photographs which were shown on a large screen. Many of the 50 attending members were very appreciative of the event and the Committee efforts. Chelmsford Cathedral Christmas Market tables were organised as usual by Jackie Arnot. Olive and Thelmas' knitted figures/animals sold very well again raising a contribution of £1532. Thanks again to the committee and other helpers for all their input.

Evening meetings were interesting and informative and reasonably attended. Thanks to Paul Chaplin for compiling the rolling screen and the sub-committee for arranging the meetings. All of the above will be more fully reported in other sections of the newsletter.

If you did not visit the National Trust AGM on Saturday 8th November 2025 here is the link: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/annual-general-meeting. Once you are in the virtual meeting you can slide the cursor if you wish to view different sections especially an interview with the Chairman of Solihull Centre explaining the roles of supporter groups, members questions answered by council members and the DGs report. I urge you to spend time looking at this and learn what the NT is doing and some of the reasons behind their actions. Something of interest is that the NT are taking over the running of Ironbridge Gorge Museum from the Spring. Some of you may remember as a group we visited the museum on our holiday in Telford in 2015.

Members may be aware there is another series of the Treasures of the NT being screened on BBC2 and NT properties are often the venue for the BBC Antique Road Shows.

Thanks to all committee members for their various contributions and Keith Otter for maintaining the web site to date. However, he has resigned from this role and we urgently need a replacement please let me know if you can take on this role. **Please email this newsletter to family and friends** to encourage them to join C&D NT SG – see P16 for membership form and enjoy our talks and visits. Please email me with any items for possible enclosure in future newsletters and any suggestions for visits or other ideas.

Chris Bellamy – [you can contact me at Chairman@chelmsfordntgroup.org.uk](mailto:Chairman@chelmsfordntgroup.org.uk)

Talk – 11th March – *From Princes to Paupers – the Hatfield Forest Visitors' Book*

Are you fascinated by looking at old photographs? I, for one, greatly enjoy the way that they provide a window into the past. Similarly, the Hatfield Forest Visitors' Book, (running from 1892 to 1923) provides an interesting glimpse of the late Victorian and Edwardian past. I have been told by conservators that the Book may well be unique within the Trust. There are several visitors' books, for example at Churchill's Chartwell and at Polesdon Lacey, (where Mrs Roland Greville held many parties), which were signed by the rich and famous, but the Hatfield Book includes people from all walks of life. Some names are familiar, for instance Lord Rayleigh of Terling (the Nobel Prize winning scientist), but others are obscure. However, thanks to record offices and the internet, information from old newspapers can be found for some visitors. This helps give an insight into their lives. I will bring my electronic index to the meeting, and you are welcome to look up anyone, perhaps from your family, you think might have visited.

David Simmonds

Chelmsford & District National Trust Supporters Group Half Century Celebration 29th October 2025

How best to celebrate a fiftieth birthday, especially when it is a local society which has reached this milestone?

In the case of the Chelmsford & District National Trust Supporter Group (C&D NT SG) there was no real difficulty in deciding. After discussion it was decided to celebrate C&D NT SG



fiftieth birthday by holding a National Trust style afternoon tea with scones, sandwiches and cake, pretty table clothes and endless pots of tea.

The event took place on Wednesday 29th October 2025 at the Link, Trinity Methodist Church. The Group meets here each month during the winter months, so it felt like home.

Chris Bellamy, current chair, welcomed guests and read out congratulations from long standing previous Chair and founder member centenarian Dennis Hance. Paul Chaplin, founder member,

current Vice Chair, Programme Secretary and Newsletter Editor, delivered a superb outline of the development of the group from its earliest to the present.

He reminded those present of the many excellent speakers who have entertained us during the winter months, the many carefully planned outings to various NT and non-NT properties in each of the summer months and the very enjoyable annual week-long holidays spent exploring NT and other properties in various parts of the country.

Paul also reminded members of the money raised by the group, largely through its stall at the Cathedral Christmas Fair, and of subsequent donations to various NT properties enabling them to purchase items to improve their offering to the visitors.

Latest examples have been money to provide threshold ramps and blinds for the tea room at Lavenham Guildhall, in all, Paul estimated the group have raised at least £100k in their 50 years.

The afternoon was highly successful, enabling members and guests to chat, reminisce on the past history of the group and think about where we go next.

The C&D NT SG meets each month on a Wednesday at Trinity Methodist Church during the winter months. Details can be found on the website at chelmsfordntgroup.org.uk. New members and visitors are always welcome.

Sue Almond

Committee Member

Extracted from The City Times 15Nov to 15Dec 25 edition number 145

Evening Meeting Reports by Shirley Deering

Wednesday 8th October 2025

Evening meetings re-commenced on 8th October, when old friend of the Group, Tony Tuckwell honorary member of the Group, gave an illustrated account of a walk he undertook some years ago on the Capital Ring Path. Covering a total of 78 miles, this London walk starts and finishes at Woolwich, with Richmond being the half-way point and links national foot-paths and green spaces in that area of London, such as parks and commons. Tony covered the distance in eight days but explained that he would cover a planned section each day, then go home and start on the next section the following day – thanks to his Senior Citizen's Rail Travel Card.



This route took him through a huge variety of sites and buildings, from palaces to sewage treatment works, and all within 15 miles of Charing Cross. A large number of the buildings had been designed by the famous architect George Gilbert Scott, who made even buildings meant for quite mundane purposes look like palaces.

Tony told his audience there are a surprising number of green spaces in London and this is partly due to one of the founders of the National Trust, Octavia Hill. In the nineteenth century the rapid growth of London saw many villages and rural areas become London boroughs. Many of these areas contained common land, on which villagers had ancient rights to graze animals, but the new Borough Councils saw this open land as useful for housing development. Octavia Hill became concerned that the poorest people, living in crowded and unhealthy conditions in the most deprived areas of London would have nowhere near home where they could walk in the fresh air, and she successfully campaigned against the enclosure of green spaces, such as Streatham Common. Tony also walked across Wimbledon Common, but didn't meet any Wombles! He also passed a place with rather less delightful connections, Wandsworth Prison, which once housed Ronnie Biggs of 'Great Train Robbery' fame.

Members enjoyed a tour of London from a less usual aspect, a walking tour which took in old churches, historic business premises, world-famous tourist attractions and ancient bridges. Tony also took a look at a more recent addition to the scene, the Thames Flood Relief Barrier which, with its pleasing design, has become a tourist attraction in its own right.

Wednesday 12th November 2025

On the evening of 12th November members enjoyed a date appropriate talk on the story of the Gunpowder Plot, given by old friend and honorary member of the Group, Richard Pusey. Richard looked first at the background to the 1605 plot to blow up, not just the actual building known as the House of Lords, but with it a large proportion of the ruling class. Following the decision some seventy years earlier, by Henry VIII, to split from the church of Rome and declare an independent Church of England there had been growing unrest among the 25% of the population who had remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church. There was serious persecution of Catholics, who were not allowed to hold public office, denied university education and could be heavily fined if records kept at the local Anglican Church proved that

they had not been regularly attending services there. A number of land owners in the midlands came together through sharing their mutual dissatisfaction and began to discuss how they could change things. They decided the best way would be to start at the top and dispose of the Anglican King, James I. Under the mistaken belief that she was being brought up as a Catholic they would then make his daughter, the nine year old Princess Elizabeth, Queen. Discussions on the how and when soon produced the answer that a large explosion would be most effective. As to where, the date for the State Opening of Parliament was approaching, when the King and a large number of Lords and Bishops would be gathered in the House of Lords. Store a large quantity of gunpowder under the building, set light to it, and the monarch and most of the Establishment would be disposed of instantly.

Richard then looked at how this enterprise was planned. We don't know too much about Guy Fawkes, but he seems to have had some military experience so was chosen as the explosives expert. Guy is sometimes known as Guido, which seems to indicate a Spanish connection, but exactly what is not known. He calculated 36 barrels of gunpowder would be needed. This would need to be ferried up the Thames by night to the undercroft of the House of Lords.



Richard Pusey demonstrating the hangman's slip knot on Chris Bellamy!

Incredibly this exercise aroused no suspicion. The State Opening of Parliament was scheduled for 5th November 1605, and Guy was to have the honour of lighting the fuse to set off the explosion. However, one of the conspirators was concerned that a good friend of his would be killed and sent him an anonymous letter with an oblique warning to stay away from the State opening. The recipient could not make sense of it and showed it to two others, who also couldn't understand it. At the last minute a search was made under the House of Lords and Guy was caught with the match in his hand.

Some of the plotters escaped, but not all. Richard concluded his talk with some gruesome details of the horrific torture and agonising death inflicted on them. A very good way of putting off anyone thinking of celebrating Bonfire Night!

Wednesday 10th December 2025

On the 10th December members enjoyed a meeting which was both unusual and delightful. Speaker Lynn Creasey, a professional Harp player, accompanied by her Harp, told us about the history of the instrument, and charmed us with musical interludes.

The history of the harp goes back at least 4,000 years and the instrument is known all over the world in places as far apart as Egypt and Wales. The original design is based on the curving shape of the bow, as in bow and arrow. The first harps were quite small and could be carried on the player's back. Harps featured largely in warfare, they would be played before soldiers went into battle, using melodies of a patriotic and stirring nature, to rouse the men's determination to defeat the foe that threatened their homeland.

As the centuries passed, the harp developed into a much larger and heavier instrument. About 1800 the pedal harp was invented, which aims to imitate a piano, with a pedal for each note of an octave. Lynn said that people are often surprised to discover how heavy the floor-standing harp is, and its curving, flowing shape means there is very little to get hold of when

lifting and carrying it. She has a trolley for transporting her instrument but stairs are a challenge. She explained that the frame is hollow at the back to give access for changing strings. The strings themselves would have been made of catgut, later nylon was used but most of the strings are now carbon fibre. Originally the harp would have been played with only one hand with the other hand to hold the instrument. The introduction of the floor-standing pedal harp meant both hands could be used, giving the harp greater versatility as a musical instrument.



Throughout her presentation Lynn played many examples of both classical and traditional music. She began with what she called a 'warm-up' for her fingers. Flying Through the Air from The Snowman – one of only five pieces she can play by memory. Later she delighted her audience with a medley of four pieces, one for each country of the UK:- The Minstrel Boy (Ireland), All Through The Night (Wales), Greensleeves (England) and Ye Banks and Braes O Bonnie Doon for Scotland. Altogether a delightful evening of gentle, soothing music that was the perfect antidote to the hectic whirl of Christmas preparations.

Winter at Hatfield Forest

Over winter, when trees are dormant and birds are not nesting, coppicing is carried out at Hatfield Forest by the Coppice Volunteers (or CopVols for short). This practice goes back millennia (perhaps around 10,000 years) and produces the woodlands for which the Forest is famous. Coppicing gives, for example, wood for burning, fences, gardening, and wattle for buildings. Today, there is less demand for these products, but coppicing still takes place as it is the best woodland management practice to increase biodiversity in a woodland. Not only does it create a multi-aged structure within the woodland, which in turn supports a wider range of species, but it also enables sunlight to hit the Forest floor supercharges ground flora, reinvigorating seeds which may have lain dormant for decades. It is perhaps better known as *cut and come again* and is an early example of a renewal product.

Another forest product over the winter is various cuts of venison, which can be purchased from the Estate Office. Wood for wood burners can also be brought. For both products, it is advisable to phone first on 01279 870678 to check availability.

After a break of a couple of years, a full Ecological Monitoring Survey was carried out late last year. The resulting report runs to over 180 pages and is a wonderful description of the richness of the Forest and a great testament to the depth of knowledge and enthusiasm of the many volunteers and staff who devote their time to this work. To read the Report, go to the *Hatfield Forest* page on the National Trust website, then the *About Hatfield Forest* page, where it can be found by scrolling down. Over the coming months there will be a number of events at the Forest.

Theatre productions include:

Shakespeare's *Othello* on Tuesday 23 June

Pinocchio on Friday 10 July

The Tales of Peter Rabbit on Thursday 6 August

The Three Musketeers on Saturday 5 September

Further details of these and other events will be available on the Forest website <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/essex-bedfordshire-hertfordshire/hatfield-forest/events> when dates have been finalised.

I will again be leading **Houblons and Hornbeams** guided walks. These are named after the family that owned the Forest from 1729 until 1923 and the tree for which Hatfield is best known. Provisional dates are Thursday 21 May, Tuesday 23 June, Monday 13 July, Thursday 10 September. Please ask me for further details.

David Simmonds

February 2026

Reports of the Autumn Outings

Anglesey Abbey Visit 18th October 2025

Fifty years ago, Chelmsford and District NT Centre visited Hadstock Church, Anglesey Abbey, then Cambridge Botanical Gardens all for £1:50. – this is before the M11 opened – construction had started and the full 55miles was opened in Feb 1980. We did visit as a group in 1988 and 2000 with Osbourne coaches and then Hedingham Coaches. On this occasion it was a single visit as we are all much older with one or two exceptions!

Today we left Chelmsford at 9:30am and travelled on the M11 and A14 and arrived on time at 11am. After being given a map and having the tickets scanned we went our different ways. I did a quick tour of the Abbey then joined others for lunch before have a more serious visit to the Abbey. Lord Fairhaven was a very wealthy man and was able to buy paintings and objects to furnish his home. Currently there is an exhibition of some of his clothes – he was a smart dresser and had a very large wardrobe of fine tailoring!

In the library was a 'sketch' in oils of the old Waterloo Bridge. (This sketch was the precursor to the finished painting). There is a link - the timber for the shelving in the library came from the elm piles of the old bridge. Another surprise in the library is members of the Royal Family have signed their names with a diamond tipped pen on the glass of the bay window.

Timber panelling in some of the rooms has come from other stately homes when they were being decommissioned. There are fine paintings throughout the abbey. Below is a summary of the more recent history of the Abbey copied from the NT website.

'Lord Fairhaven was born in 1896 in Massachusetts to British civil engineer Urban Hanlon Broughton and his wife, Cara Leland Rogers – the daughter of oil tycoon Henry Huttleston Rogers. He grew up in the United States before the family returned to Britain in 1912. Along with his younger brother Henry, Lord Fairhaven bought Anglesey Abbey in 1926. The pair agreed that the first one of them to get married would sell his share to the other, so Henry sold his share when he wed in 1932. Lord Fairhaven remained at Anglesey Abbey until his death in 1966, when management of the building was taken over by the National Trust.'

You leave via the dining room – in the form of an undercroft – then into the pantry and a suite of kitchens. I noticed the main cooking stove was made by Esse (which is similar to an Aga) and the only one I have seen.



Paul Chaplin

After leaving the Abbey after a quick cup of tea it was time to spend time in the grounds and garden. Autumn is a wonderful time to visit the grounds of a grand house with all the autumn tints and this autumn is particularly good. We made our way round to the Dahlia border which was still flourishing and an amazing sight. We could not resist a quick look at the water mill and explain to my companions how a water mill works! All too soon it was time to board the coach and return home to Chelmsford after a very enjoyable day out.

Visit to London on 22nd November 2025

On a rather gloomy wet day we set off from outside the Civic Centre in Chelmsford for our Christmas visit to London, our first stop being in Greenwich where we were dropped off by the Cutty Sark and had two hours to explore the area at will.

After a light lunch we headed for the Greenwich Maritime Museum for a quick visit. On the ground floor we were able to view Fredrick, Prince of Wales, 63 ft long British State barge with its ornate carvings gilded with 24 carat gold leaf, built in 1832 and used by successive monarchs until 1849.



On the first floor was an exhibition showing the construction of the Royal Research Ship (RRS) *Sir David Attenborough* and detailing the research work carried out in the Antarctic and Arctic oceans by its many scientists. In the middle of the ship is a moon pool 4m x 4m square where the scientists can lower their instruments and autonomous vehicles into the ocean providing scientists with state-of-the-art facilities to research the oceans, seabed, ice and atmosphere.

At 3.30 it was time to head towards the Cutty Sark where we met up with the rest of our party and blue badge guide. By this time it was getting dark and raining. We boarded the boat which was to take us up river to Tower bridge. The captain of the boat gave us an excellent commentary on river life and pointed out sites of interest including the many waterfront taverns during our journey,

On arrival at Tower Bridge we disembarked and boarded our coach waiting to take us round the Christmas lights. We headed up to Trafalgar Square and then proceeded to St James and Regent Street where we were met with the world-famous Spirit of Christmas lights soaring above the road for a distance of one mile. All the shop windows were brightly decorated and the pavements full of shoppers and people taking photographs. Progress was slow due to the amount of traffic so our guide had plenty of time to point out various streets of interest leading off Regent Street, including Carnaby Street and most notable of course Oxford Street with its

glistening Christmas stars. We then proceeded down Bond Street with its iconic overhead displays inspired by the Crown Jewels and the shops with their lavish Christmas displays. After our tour we headed to Fulham for our fish and chip supper where the Kennedy staff were waiting to welcome us and very efficiently served our food. Our visit over we then headed back to Chelmsford after a very pleasant day despite the rain.

Report by Ann Notman

A floral Dilemma

Sometimes it's best to let people keep their illusions.

"Good morning Mavis. Not that it is a good morning. I've never known a winter so cold and the days are so dull and dreary, it hardly gets light at all. But I must say that the sight of your front window really lifted my spirits".

"My front window?"

"Oh, not the window itself, of course, I meant the small vase of bright yellow flowers on the inside window sill."

"Oh! I'm afraid they aren't real flowers"

"Doesn't matter. Artificial flowers these days are so much better than they were years ago. The makers take so much more trouble over them now, they are really detailed and with realistic colours. Not like those plastic monstrosities with garish colours we used to get in the past"

"Yes, I agree, artificial flowers these days are far superior to the early ones that were available years ago, but I'm not entirely happy with that particular arrangement. It really doesn't fit in where it is, I'm planning to remove it."

"Oh, please don't take it away, it really brightens the whole street".

"Well, perhaps I'll find something to replace it. Bye for now."

Mavis sighed as she hurried on her way. Now she would have to buy a bunch of yellow flowers and put them in a small vase on her front window sill to replace the can of spray polish with a bright yellow duster draped over it which she had forgotten she'd left there.

Story by Shirley Deering

Chelmsford u3a outings

Thursday 23rd April 2026 – Hampton Court in conjunction with the Garden Group.

Friday 29th May 2026 – A trip to Tenterden in Kent and the preserved railway.

Monday 29th, or Tuesday 30th June 2026 Hastings

Further outings are planned

Please contact Lesley Wood for details lesleywood54@yahoo.com

The Friends of Chelmsford Museum

Annual lecture is on **Friday 20th March** at 7:30pm in the Cramphorn (Studio) Theatre

Topic: **The Historic Landscape of the Chelmer Valley** by Nigel Broewn. Tickets £11.50 from Theatre Box Office 01245 606505

This year's outings

Sunday 3rd May

Highclere Castle is a Grade I listed country house built in 1679 and then largely renovated in the 1840's. The Park was designed by Capability Brown in the 18th century, with the whole estate covering 5,000 acres. Lord and Lady Carnarvon live at Highclere, but retreated to their cottage during the filming of the programme 'Downton Abbey'. Visitors are able to see the

drawing, dining and bedrooms where the filming took place, all beautifully furnished and decorated, enabling us to visualise a very different life-style that most of us are unlikely to experience for ourselves. Staff employed today are a head butler, 3 under butlers, housekeepers and maintenance staff, gardeners, a farm manager and other workers. It costs £1 million + per year to run, so the £1 million per hour of filming brought much needed funds for the up-keep of the estate. There is a connection to Tutankhamun, with an extensive exhibition about the discovery of the tomb with all its amazing artifacts.

Estimated cost including deposit = £62

Thursday 11th June

Alfriston Clergy House (NT) is a Grade II* listed building which was built as a residence for the parish priest, and was the first building saved for the nation by the National Trust. The plan of this early 15th century Wealden hall-house was simplicity itself: a central communal hall open to the rafters, flanked to the east by the priest's rooms, comprising a living room, and a bedroom with lavatory (garderobe) attached. At the opposite end of the house were 2 floors of humbler service rooms where food would have been prepared and stored, with the servants sleeping above.

The timber framed building was built predominately of young oaks which we now know, from dendrochronology work, were felled between 1399 and 1407. After the Dissolution by Henry VIII in 1537 the house was granted to Oliver Cromwell, later passing to Anne of Cleves. Eventually it was bought as a restoration project in 1896 by the newly formed NT for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty.

Sheffield Park Gardens (NT) Water has always been a key element of the landscape at Sheffield Park and the lakes have become an iconic feature, which is much enjoyed by visitors. Their hand-dug, clay lined construction creates dramatic reflections of the carefully planned planting that surrounds them. There is a vast collection of trees and shrubs planted to create vistas that enhance the feeling of scale and grandeur of the property. The garden has been awarded a Grade I listing and holds the National Collection of Ghent Azaleas. Of the 14,500 trees planted in the grounds there are over 80 Champion Trees. This status is awarded for girth and height. If you walk down Big Tree Walk you will see the Giants of the garden, including the Giant Redwood. Sheffield Wood has a mosaic of different habitats, conifer and broadleaf woods, open rides and glades, all of which are vital for wildlife. There are many insects, including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. There are buzzards, owls, woodpeckers, chiffchaffs, treecreepers and goldcrests. There are also many different kinds of fungi. **Don't pick or touch any of them!**

Estimated cost including deposit =£33

Saturday 11th July

Peckover House (NT) belonged to the Peckover family who were wealthy Quakers with a love of travel, their wealth deriving from banking. Having started a grocer's business in 1777 in Wisbech, Jonathan Peckover was very respected for his moral principles and began holding customer's money for safekeeping, which became the town's first official Bank called the Wisbech and Lincolnshire Bank, which thrived under his management until 1893. In 1896 Peckover's Bank was amalgamated with 19 others into Barclays Bank.

Known for their philanthropy, the Peckover's campaigned for the abolition of slavery and improvement in education. They were prolific amateur and professional artists, travelling

widely around the continent. Alexandrina, daughter of Lord Alexander Peckover, was an adventurer and sportswoman who climbed the Alps. She gave the house and its estate to the NT in 1948.

The house is a quintessential example of a Georgian home. Some of the original Banking Hall remains, and the huge-doored brick vault, that once held gold and silver coinage, has survived and is little changed. In 1998 the NT reconstructed the Library following the original design. The Dining Room is light and airy with reproduction Chippendale chairs and a Victorian Bracket clock which remains on display. In the garden there are herbaceous borders, a rose garden, an orangery and a croquet lawn.

Wisbech is a picturesque market town commonly known as the Capital of the Fens. This attractive and historic market town is renowned for its elegant Georgian architecture. The tidal river Nene, spanned by two bridges, runs through the centre of the town. **Octavia Hill's Birthplace House** was built in Wisbech in about 1740 on the south bank. It is a Grade II* listed building and very important as a building of outstanding architectural and historical interest. Octavia's parents, James and Caroline Hill undertook the social activities on which their daughter's life work was based. In 1994 the Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust purchased part of the house, opening as a museum, run by volunteers. There are several rooms covering Octavia's childhood and teenage years.

Estimated cost including deposit = £33

Monday 10th August

Delapré Abbey: This visit will include guided tours, plus a one course meal. From its founding as a Cluniac nunnery in 1145 to its transformation into a grand Georgian estate, the tour will take you through 900 years of drama, devotion, and reinvention. Learn how the Abbey played host to Queen Eleanor's funeral vigil, witnessed the Battle of Northampton, and survived Henry VIII's dissolution as a private residence. Hear about the Tate family (gunpowder plot investigators and political reformers) and the Bouveries, whose scandals, racehorses, and royal connections shaped the estate's legacy. You will explore the house's evolving architecture, from Tudor kitchens to Victorian libraries, and hear how the Abbey was saved from demolition by the formidable Joan Wake, becoming the vibrant heritage site it is today. Led by volunteer historian guides, the tour is full of stories, surprises, and lovely places to enjoy.

Estimated cost including deposit, tours & lunch = £64

Saturday 17th October

Powell-Cotton Museum is famous for the natural history dioramas, featuring animals from tiny tortoises to enormous elephants. The collections include thousands of objects of fine and decorative arts, archaeological finds, photographs and documents.

Quex house seen today is a fairly modern renovation of the 1816 design by Thomas Hardwick (commissioned by John Powell), which the Powell-Cottons then made into a comfortable family home. Today half the house is under the ownership of the Powell-Cotton trust, established in 1926, with half remaining in private ownership.

The Gardens are home to some of the oldest natural woodlands in Thanet. They were originally laid out in the 15th century when the first manor house was built, but were extensively remodelled throughout the 19th century. The present design contains strong Regency, Victorian

and Edwardian influences. They were designed to be viewed from the main withdrawing room on the first floor, from where the lawns radiated around a central vista, ending in the far distance with the Gun Tower, one of three follies in the grounds. The established parkland contains numerous ornamental specimen trees and a sunken fountain garden. There are formal beds and borders, ponds and statues. Hidden behind the high old brick wall was a Victorian walled garden which is being restored. If we have time we may visit one or more of the towns on the peninsular.

Estimated cost including deposit = £40

*Thanks to **Pat Tate** for her research and write up of each place we plan to visit*

Outing Conditions: Please read the following conditions carefully.

Booking Lists will open on a first-come, first-served basis after the posting/sending out via e-mail of this newsletter.

Please send the following to Paul Chaplin, 11 Mace Walk, Chelmsford, CM1 2GE:

- a stamped addressed envelope for **each** outing or send the deposit(s) plus the cost of second-class stamp(s)[currently 87p each] per outing by bank transfer
- Complete and return the form on the last page by post or by e-mail
- a cheque payable to 'Chelmsford & District National Trust No 2 A/C' to cover the **deposit of £5.00 per person for each outing (One cheque for all outings please) or bank transfer** for banking details see booking form.

At the time of going to press we have not been on all the recce's. Prices may change slightly if we spot an opportunity, we think you shouldn't miss! Prices quoted are for a senior citizen rate including hire of coach, drivers' tip, entrance fee(s) and at this stage, the deposit. **Coaches leave from outside the Civic Theatre, Fairfield Road, CM1 1JG, usually at 8:30am.** To check your place, please e-mail or telephone Paul on 07711 461033. Refunds of deposits will normally only be made if we cannot offer you a place. For later cancellations, deposits will be refunded only if we can fill the place. Refunds of pre-paid tickets can only be made if we are able to fill the place. All refunds will be paid **at the end of the season** in order to minimise the number of transactions needed. **Normally £5.00 or less will not be refunded.** Booking slips will be sent out about three to four weeks before the date of the outing. Everyone else will be on the Reserve List and will be contacted in turn, either to be offered a place or be informed that there will not be room.

Remember:

- To put the dates in your diary, especially the time of departure
- To put the details in a safe place
- That the wearing of seat belts is now compulsory in this country
- Some locations have uneven surfaces
- It is better to wear 'sensible' shoes for comfort and to avoid damaging floors
- Don't be afraid to ask about use of lifts and wheelchairs/buggies

We undertake only to make arrangements for the visits – and we cannot take responsibility for any mishap or loss connected with them. If you wish to see the cover provided by the National Trust's insurance policies, please e-mail Paul Chaplin. **Please note: Non NT members are not covered by the Trust's insurance policy and are responsible for their own insurance cover.** All trips will be on luxury coaches, usually with a toilet on board.

We hope you enjoy this year's selection.
 (Please complete the booking form on the last page)

Supporter Group Holiday – Based at Bournemouth From Monday 14th to Friday 18th September

The indicative itinerary is below

Monday	Travel to Bournemouth with a visit to Kingston Lacy
Tuesday	Hardy's House & Dorchester
Wednesday	Corfe Castle & Weymouth Railway
Thursday	Tour of Weymouth and Portland Bay
Friday	Return to Chelmsford with a visit to The Vyne near Basingstoke

Please see booking form on last page to request an information pack. Each pack will be numbered in order of request and will be issued on a first come basis. We will need a **minimum of thirty people** for the holiday to run. **The cost of the holiday is £630 per person and single room supplement will be about £120.** The cost of the holiday includes the entrance fees to all the places we visit. We will be staying very close to the town centre. After carrying out a recce the itinerary may change slightly. Kings Coaches are no longer handling the insurance as this was becoming an administrative burden. It is up to you to make your own arrangements. The itinerary is indicative and will be developed further if we have sufficient numbers.

Suggestion:

If you are unable to print the booking form off either
 a) e-mail me with the information requested on the form or
 b) fill it in clearly and photograph with mobile phone and send it via e-mail or
 c) fill it in and send the paper copy to me.
 My email address is on the form

Visit our web site WWW.ChelmsfordNTgroup.org.uk for up-to-date information on evening lectures and outings.

Data Protection Act 2018.

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group will hold essential details (name, address, telephone number and e-mail) for newsletter distribution, outings and membership. **No information is transmitted to any third party.** If you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter and Outings information, please let Colin Jay know by letter or email.

Outing(s) Booking Form for 2026

First Name	
Surname	
Address	
E-mail address*	
Telephone Number*	
My travelling companion(s) is/are:	
My NT membership number(s) is/are:	
* If you can include your e-mail address and mobile phone number we can keep you informed on numbers, your placing on the list and any alternative arrangements that may be made.	



		No of people	Deposit Sub Total £
I/we should like the following places:			
Sunday 3 rd May	Highclere Castle near Newbury		
Thursday 11 th June	Alfriston Clergy House and Sheffield Park East Sussex		
Saturday 11 th July	Peckover & Octavia Hill Birthplace House Wisbech		
Monday 10 th August	Delapre Abbey and Northampton		
Saturday 17 th October	Powell-Cotton Museum & Quex House and Gardens and time in Margate		
In lieu of SAE please add 87p for a stamp for each outing booked			
Total sum			£
I have sent my deposit (including stamp and envelope costs) by internet banking using my first initial and name as reference to Chelmsford & District National Trust No2 A/C. Sort code 30-91-85 and a/c no 01516711.			

Please send me details and booking form for the NT Holiday based on Bournemouth	
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If not paying by internet banking please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope for EACH day outing and also one cheque to cover the deposits of £5.00 per person, per outing. Please make cheque payable to: 'Chelmsford & District National Trust no2 A/C'

Please return this form to:

Paul Chaplin, 11 Mace Walk, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2GE Email: paulchaplin@talktalk.net

I would like to suggest we have a coach outing for season 2026 to:

I/we would like a C&D NT SG holiday in the following location

Signed _____

Any ideas or suggestions please e-mail Paul at paulchaplin@talktalk.net

IF YOU PAY BY STANDING ORDER, PLEASE IGNORE THE FORM BELOW



Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group

MEMBERSHIP - NEW / RENEWAL SPRING 2026

Ref: CJ

Dear Member,

Your Membership for the year April 2026 to March 2027 is now due. To renew or join as a new member, please return this letter to the address below, together with the sum of £5 per individual Member or £9 for 2 people at the same address. I/We wish to renew/join my/our Centre membership for the year 2026-2027 & enclose £

Signed.....

Address

.....

Tel.Post Code

E-Mail.....

My/our National Trust Membership No. is/are:

In future if you wish to pay your subscription by standing order, please place a tick within the brackets [] and I will send you the appropriate form. (Should you not wish to renew, simply return this letter)

Yours sincerely,

Colin Jay
Membership Secretary

Please make cheques payable to 'NT Chelmsford & District Membership A/C', and return to:

4 Brooklands Walk, Chelmsford CM2 9BH

Tel. (01245) 350955

E-mail: colinjay68@gmail.com

Bank details: 'NT Chelmsford & District Membership Account'

Sort code: 20 – 19 – 95 Account Number: 70767174 Reference: Your initials & name