

Chairman's Report to North Marston History Club's 2024 AGM

“2023 has been a very productive year for the History Club during which we have maintained our schedule of talks and added to our publications list. The calendar sales in the run-up to Christmas were better than expected and we had sold out by early December. Feedback on this particular calendar, “Transport of Delight”, was very positive. Many thanks to David Bayly who, in addition to keeping our accounts in order, has become an ace calendar creator.

Our links with Chearsley History Society gained momentum and in 2023 both Sue and I gave presentations to their meetings. Our website is clearly a great asset for the Club, and hosts of enquiries, contacts and book orders are routed through this portal. It is always encouraging to hear from people with distant connections to North Marston, sometimes from other continents. We often gain insights, information or additions to our archive through these contacts.

And speaking of archives, some of you will remember that the Club was given a grant of £500 towards the end of 2022 with which to create a digital archive of dozens of antique deeds and land sale contracts. As it turned out, we realised this was not a practical idea and we returned the grant to the Winslow & Neighbouring Villages Community Board, and the documents were catalogued and are now safely housed at the County Record Office where they can be viewed by researchers and historians.

However, I am pleased to confirm we have just been awarded a grant for £2,500 from the same Board as part of our major fund-raising effort to buy a pair of bronze war memorial plaques, as David mentioned in his report. This will be our main project for 2024 and will be the focal point of future village remembrance services. We thank Neil Tuckett for his assistance in this, as well as MADS, The Shop, The Clocklands and Poors Piece Trust and numerous individuals in the village who have contributed to this objective.

This year marks the 14th year of the History Club, and although I remain committed and involved with the Club, my decision to step down as the Chairman will provide opportunities for the club to develop in different ways. I am sure we can rely on your continued support which has always been strong and encouraging.

My new role, with its focus on providing technical and creative support to the club, makes good use of my strengths and interests and complements the range of skills and responsibilities inherent within the Executive Committee that you have just voted for.

As ever I can't end this, my final Chairman's Report, without acknowledging the huge part played by the Exec Committee, or EC as we know it, in keeping the show on the road. This also includes the little band of distributors who make sure our leaflets and Newsletters get posted through letter boxes around the village. Thankyou all for your help on this 14-year journey."

John Spargo