

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR AGM

JANUARY 20th 2026

2025 was a quieter year for History Club in that we undertook no major projects as we have done in most previous years. Our membership was very healthy with over eighty members and the new card payment service we introduced has now begun to function well.

We continued our programme of bi-monthly talks which included *Cornelius Holland; the Granborough King Killer; Bomber Command: the People; The Black Death in Winslow; Home Fires and Havens*; and (back by popular request) *The Story of the Royal Bucks Hospital*.

Our annual calendar continues to be very popular and back in the summer of 2025 we decided on the 2026 title of *Our Village Communities Through the Years*. Once again it was virtually sold out by Christmas and our thanks are due again to David Bayly for putting it all together and grappling with the internet to get it produced in time.

Our thanks to John Spargo who, although stepping down as chairman last year, continues to make huge contributions to the club in so many ways, monitoring the steady stream of enquiries which come through our website, promoting the club on social media, and of course doing his own historical research, the result of which we shall be seeing shortly in his film *Operation Pilgrim*. John has written a booklet to accompany the film which is available to buy here this evening. I know he is also currently investigating the site of the old Saxon churchyard here in North Marston which suggests that there was a church here in the early 800s, three hundred years before a stone church was first built.. John also gave the school pupils from Years 3 and 4 a tour of the village this year looking at old sites such as the shops and businesses. John had to undergo a major operation this year and we are really pleased to see him back to full health.

We are very grateful for the continuing support we receive from people in both this village and beyond, and are always pleased to receive donations of old interesting artefacts related to North Marston. Recently Neil Tuckett presented us with a first edition of *The North Marston Magazine* from 1870 which is now on display in our cabinet.

This year we have a full programme of talks lined up and these will benefit considerably from the new sound-proofing system which has been installed in the Wesley Centre.

David and I would like to thank the Committee for all their hard work and support throughout the year as well as the band of distributors who deliver our newsletters throughout the village. We are delighted to welcome Clive Dobbs as a new member of the Committee who will be taking on the role of Assistant Researcher. In 2025 David and I were voted in as joint-chairs (along with our respective roles of treasurer and secretary) and I'm sure he will agree that this has worked well.

To end, we'd like to thank all of our members who continue to support us and help to keep the History Club going.