

June 18th

Grace Darling and the Fine Art of Saving Lives at Sea.

Dr James Taylor recounted the life of Grace Darling (1815–1842) before and after the defining event of her short life. The daughter of a lighthouse keeper on the Farne Islands off the coast of Northumberland, her life changed forever on the night of September 7, 1838.

During a raging storm, the steamer SS Forfarshire struck the rocky reef of Big Harcar. Spotting survivors clinging to the rocks in the early dawn, twenty-two-year-old Grace and her father, William, decided to navigate an open wooden rowing boat through treacherous seas. Battling huge waves

and gale-force winds, they successfully rescued nine stranded passengers and crew members, caring for them at the Longstone Lighthouse until the storm subsided.

Her courage instantly captured the public imagination. Grace became

an unprecedented Victorian media phenomenon, receiving a commendation from Queen Victoria, monetary awards, and hundreds of fan letters. Her legendary status expanded rapidly across art and popular media; dramatic oil paintings depicted her battling towering waves. Her father was essentially “airbrushed out” of the narrative, with only Grace's image being shown.



William Wordsworth wrote verses in her honour, and her likeness appeared on everything from collector plates to soaps. Though she

died of tuberculosis at just twenty-six, her brave rescue endures as a symbol of selflessness.



July 6th.

Visit to Dorchester Abbey.



This visit was well attended and we were divided into two groups with guides. We were given an excellent tour of this beautiful building which dates from 635. It still retains a part of an earlier Saxon cathedral. It was an important Bishopric and in the 870s its diocese extended from the Thames to the Humber.

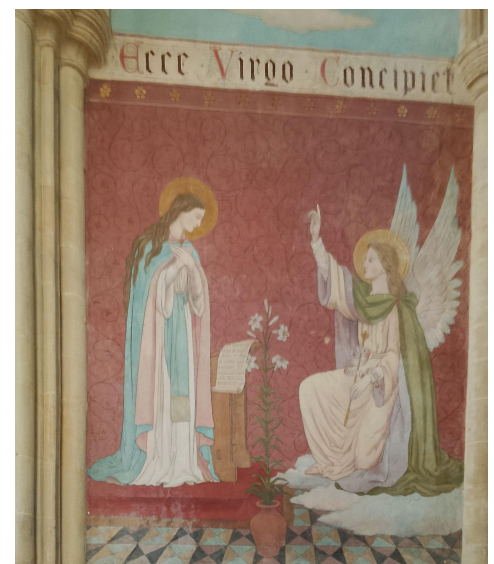
The Abbey is graced with mediaeval stained glass windows, partly restored with glass found on site in the 19th century. There are also mediaeval and Victorian wall paintings.

The Cloister Gallery displays salvaged medieval stonework and sarcophagi telling the history of the monastery.



The nearby museum provided further insight into the Abbey and the history of the local area.

The excellent visit was concluded with tea and cake served in the nave.



June 10th.

Annual Summer Social.

We rounded off our year with the Summer Social.

This year we heard from Matthew Lee and Kerry Forkner about the **"Stitch in Time"** Project being undertaken at North Leigh Roman Villa with financial support from TASWOX. We were able to see the progress of the embroidery and to learn about how to become involved. Matthew also explained the history of the villa both in Roman times and more recently.

Our cancelled visit to the villa has now been re-scheduled for **September 9th**. Details and booking available in mid-August.



An excellent afternoon tea followed with plenty of sandwiches with tasty home made cakes and scones. The big question being, "cream or jam first?". Many thanks to our cake makers and tea servers.



A raffle was held and the proceeds donated to the NLRV. Matthew later sent a very warm thank you letter, parts of which are reproduced below.

Congratulations on arranging the perfect day to hear about embroidery on an historical theme, on the day the Bayeux tapestry returned to Britain.



As I said, we were there to thank all of TASWOX, and particularly the Committee, for your generous support of the embroidery project. So if, with an audience already familiar with North Leigh, we added a little to their knowledge and interest in the site, then the collaboration between our two groups has truly succeeded.

Most importantly Kerry offered a whole extra dimension of engagement with her introduction to the embroidery.

I had not anticipated TASWOX's generosity extending further to you donating the entire proceeds of the raffle - £141! - to NLRVV. Thank you very much indeed. For a small group like ours this makes a big difference.

We look forward to welcoming TASWOX to the villa itself on 9 September.



Elsewhere...

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

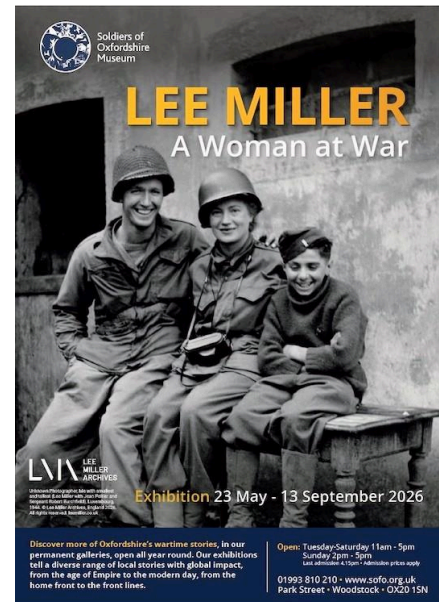
Lee Miller

Our talk next February is **"The Legendary Lee Miller"**. Lee Miller was a war correspondent and photographer for Vogue in WW2. She is currently the subject of an exhibition at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock about her life and wartime experiences.

Ends September 13th. £10 (£8 over sixty) admission to the museum for one year.

At the Ashmolean

The popular **"In Bloom"** exhibition ends on **August 16th.**



Parking Issues

We have been asked by Witney Town Council to point out that Market Square, in front of the Corn Exchange, is **not** a designated parking area, with or without a Blue Badge.

WTC has no ownership over the square and Oxford CC parking wardens could get involved and issue tickets. It was noted that one of our members (unidentified) parked there for the May Film Club.

Our Next Talk

September 17th, 7:30pm. We look forward to our new year with a talk by Barry Venning on **"Picasso's Guernica and the Spanish Civil War"**.

