

VALLEY NEWS

No 285 : JUNE 2026

News & Views from the Cherwell Valley



May-Day festivities abounded over the Heyfords, with events at Lower and Upper Heyford that weekend. The weather was kinder to Upper Heyford on the Sunday and hundreds of people arrived in search of fairground rides, refreshments and other traditional May Day activities. See the report on page 26 for more details.

Reader's photo suggestions would be welcome for the cover. valleynewseditorial@outlook.com

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The Valley News Team

Ian Lough Scott has now stepped down after 46 years of editing Valley News. Neill Brodey of Somerton is the person to contact if you have an article to submit or suggestions for improving the magazine.

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Community

Despite the doom and gloom on a national and international level, the last couple of months have shown that there is indeed a sense of community in our villages. Turnout at a couple of the Annual Parish Council Meetings was well up on last year. There are many developments to discuss, but external threats are often the catalyst for community cohesion.

The following pages are full of reports on Rogation walks, May Day celebrations and Social Club events that bring people together. At the Upper Heyford May Day Fun Day, we spent 2½ hours simply chatting with old friends and new acquaintances as we worked our way around the field.

There are a few frustrations, from the sheer volume of rubbish collected by the annual litter pick, to the theft of a tin of paint from a bench that was being refurbished in the cemetery, but recent positive activities, led by parish councils and talented volunteers, gives us hope..

For example, one of the most significant issues facing our community is the alarmingly high levels of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (collectively known as PFAS) watercourses reported close to the old airbase. A bi-monthly publication will almost always be out of date in such a fast moving situation and so the following paragraphs highlight the power of local community, rather than report specific details.

The presence of PFAS in our lives is not new. For over 70 years we have benefited from their use in non-stick cookware, fabric treatments for furniture & outdoor clothing, and a host of other useful applications, including fire-fighting. The risks of these chemicals have been known for 50 years, but only in the last 5-10 years have governments started to regulate their use and disposal. That sets the scene for our situation. The existence of Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) at USAF Upper Heyford was known about but it is unclear what actions if any, were in place to assess and resolve the potential hazards.

The Richborough development proposal at the top end of Camp Road, adjacent to Gallos Brook, seems to have ignited the spark. Whilst a few local residents understood the wider consequences, for many of us,

this started as just another reason to protest against the planned development. The timing was fortuitous. In February 2026 the UK Government launched [PFAS Plan: building a safer future together](#) which recognises the risks of historic behaviours.

In this regard, it has been due to a few highly committed individuals that we are making progress.

- They created a collective of passionate, interested individuals and built a website to collate and focus information.
- They started a petition calling for development to be paused on land contaminated by PFAS until the situation can be properly assessed and appropriate actions agreed. <https://c.org/KYs6wTspYw>
- They have spearheaded pressure to bring the local MP, Calum Miller, into the campaign.
- They held an open meeting in Upper Heyford Village Hall last month, where residents heard from scientists with PFAS experience.
- They commissioned their own tests, adjacent to the proposed development. The cost is being crowd-funded via [Gofundme](#) and the test results are available on the website <http://gallosbrook.wordpress.com/> The results show exceptionally high levels of PFOS, thousands of times higher than the UK standard for inland surface waters.
- The challenge for any campaign is to balance the enormity of the potential risk, with the likelihood of the hazard causing harm. We should not panic, but we should pushing for more widespread testing and expert interpretation of the results.
- A follow-up public meeting is now booked for **Friday 12th June at 7.30 pm in Upper Heyford Village Hall**. If you have questions for the experts, or for the campaign, please email gallosbrook@gmail.com

This effort will have significant consequences for our community and for other communities in the UK who face the challenge of historic pollution. We cannot predict the outcome as we go to press in May 2026, but we must acknowledge the efforts of those who work to protect us and improve the health of our community.

To them - I thank you.

Ascension – our risen Lord

One of the things I love at this time of year is how, in the weeks following Easter, we have readings set that keep reminding us of the resurrection of Jesus which we first celebrate on Easter Day.

This regular, liturgical repetition – which we also enjoy around Jesus's birth after Christmas – of the same points, again and again, helps us to live, as it were, alongside the first apostles, experiencing in a symbolic way, but a way that speaks powerfully to us, the transition they went through, from being completely at a loss, to meeting their Risen Lord. Meeting their Risen Lord and learning from him that God has conquered sin and death with love and God's own everlasting life.

We meet Jesus Christ for ourselves once again in the ways in which we celebrate Easter, embracing for ourselves this astonishing and overwhelming revelation, totally unexpected and so hard to take in. But when accepted, the basis for a new way of life, now and always.

In this beautiful place the breaking out of new life on trees that looked dead only weeks ago – leaves and especially blossom – helps us in our celebration and in knowing our Risen Lord for ourselves, who has come from God and gone to God, and in going to God has shared his joy with us and taken us with him. (That, after all, is what celebration of the Ascension of Jesus is saying.)

This year I am especially enjoying the hawthorn blossom across the Benefice, which the artist David Hockney says is "like champagne poured all over everything": it is so celebratory, as are the horse chestnuts in flower.

I want to thank you for the welcome you have been giving me in the last few weeks. It is such a happy time to be getting to know the different parishes and Heyford Park for myself – with celebration in the Churches and in the countryside around, and with new life in the fields as well.

I am looking forward to doing what I can to further the work of God in this place, and alongside each and all of you.

With love and prayers,
Rev. Rob



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SERVICES IN THE CHERWELL VALLEY BENEFICE

	Ardley St Mary's	Fritwell St Olave's	Lower Heyford & Caulcott St Mary's	Somerton St James	Souldern Annon to the BVM	Upper Heyford St Mary's
7 June	9.30am 1662 HC		11am 1662 HC	6pm Evensong	10.30am Wild Worship	9:30 Family Communion
14-Jun	9.30am Family Communion	8.30am 1662 HC	11am MP	9.30am Sunday Club	11am Sung Communion	
21-Jun	9.30 MP	9:30am Communion 10:30am Wild Worship	11.00 Family Worship	11am Matins/HC		
28-Jun	9.30am Family Service	6pm Evensong	11am MP	9.30am Family Service with Communion	10.30am Family Church with optional Communion	9.30am 1662 HC
05-Jul	9.30am 1662 HC		11am 1662 HC	6pm Evensong	10.30am Wild Worship	9:30 Family Communion
12-Jul	9.30am Family Communion	8.30am 1662 HC	11am MP	9.30am Sunday Club	11am Sung Communion	
19-Jul	9.30 MP	10:30am Wild Worship	11.00 Family Worship	11am Matins/HC		
26-Jul	9.30am Family Service	6pm Evensong	11am Family Communion	9.30am Family Service with Communion	10.30am Family Church with optional Communion	9.30am 1662 HC

Week day services

10:00 Mid-week Communion at The Chapel, Heyford Park

Please check for venue during exam season

09:30 Morning Prayer at St Mary's Lower Heyford

Please check for dates



Mobility, balance, strength

Monday 09.00-10.00 Steeple Aston village hall
mixed ability

Monday 19:30 - 20:30 King George's Field Hall
foundation-intermediate Lower Heyford

Friday 11:00 - 12:00 Somerton village hall
foundation - improver

Friday 12.15 - 13.00 Somerton village hall
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Elements of surprise, Part 1

‘Everything we see around us is made of elements, Nature’s building blocks. Our own bodies contain about 30 of them, some in abundance, some in trace amounts but nevertheless vital to our health, and some that are positively harmful. The Earth is made up of around 90 elements and again some are abundant, such as the silicon and oxygen of rocks and soils, while some are exceedingly rare – yet even these can be part of our everyday life.’

The above is the opening of the jacket description of John Emsley’s book, *Nature’s Building Blocks: an A-Z guide to the elements*, published in 2001. One reader, Oliver Sacks, loved it. Oliver Sacks (1933-2015) was a neurologist and writer. His best-known works, *Awakenings*, 1973 (made into a film with the same title, 1990, starring Robert De Niro and Robin Williams) and *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, 1985, are descriptions of neurological disorders told in the form of narrative ‘clinical tales’. Here is Oliver Sacks after reading John Emsley’s *Nature’s Building Blocks*:

‘...a marvel – encyclopaedic in scope, but so full of enthusiasm, so engagingly written, that one can open it at any point and read for sheer delight. While everything which one might expect and hope for is here – the history and mineralogy and manufacture of each element, its economic roles and uses, its place in the environment, our foods, our bodies – there is, in addition, an “element of surprise” for each element – an idiosyncratic piece of information, sometimes comic, sometimes terrifying, but always startling and novel. I have read and possess many books on the Elements, but it is Dr Emsley’s new book which will now sit next to me on my desk.’

Here now, for *Valley News* readers are some of the ‘elements of surprise’ from John Emsley’s book.

Copper - Cu

In 1847, E Harless discovered that the blood of the octopus was blue. The same is true of some other creatures, such as snails, spiders and oysters. The reason is that these creatures rely on a blue copper compound to carry oxygen around the body, whereas most other animals rely on the deep red iron compound haemoglobin. In blue-blooded creatures the copper atom is at the centre of a

molecule called haemocyanin, which does the job equally well.

1 H Hydrogen																	2 He Helium														
3 Li Lithium	4 Be Beryllium											5 B Boron	6 C Carbon	7 N Nitrogen	8 O Oxygen	9 F Fluorine	10 Ne Neon														
11 Na Sodium	12 Mg Magnesium											13 Al Aluminium	14 Si Silicon	15 P Phosphorus	16 S Sulphur	17 Cl Chlorine	18 Ar Argon														
19 K Potassium	20 Ca Calcium	21 Sc Scandium	22 Ti Titanium	23 V Vanadium	24 Cr Chromium	25 Mn Manganese	26 Fe Iron	27 Co Cobalt	28 Ni Nickel	29 Cu Copper	30 Zn Zinc	31 Ga Gallium	32 Ge Germanium	33 As Arsenic	34 Se Selenium	35 Br Bromine	36 Kr Krypton														
37 Rb Rubidium	38 Sr Strontium	39 Y Yttrium	40 Zr Zirconium	41 Nb Niobium	42 Mo Molybdenum	43 Tc Technetium	44 Ru Ruthenium	45 Rh Rhodium	46 Pd Palladium	47 Ag Silver	48 Cd Cadmium	49 In Indium	50 Sn Tin	51 Sb Antimony	52 Te Tellurium	53 I Iodine	54 Xe Xenon														
55 Cs Caesium	56 Ba Barium	57 La Lanthanum	58 Ce Cerium	59 Pr Praseodymium	60 Nd Neodymium	61 Pm Promethium	62 Sm Samarium	63 Eu Europium	64 Gd Gadolinium	65 Tb Terbium	66 Dy Dysprosium	67 Ho Holmium	68 Er Erbium	69 Tm Thulium	70 Yb Ytterbium	71 Lu Lutetium	72 Hf Hafnium	73 Ta Tantalum	74 W Tungsten	75 Re Rhenium	76 Os Osmium	77 Ir Iridium	78 Pt Platinum	79 Au Gold	80 Hg Mercury	81 Tl Thallium	82 Pb Lead	83 Bi Bismuth	84 Po Polonium	85 At Astatine	86 Rn Radon
87 Fr Francium	88 Ra Radium	89 Ac Actinium	90 Th Thorium	91 Pa Protactinium	92 U Uranium	93 Np Neptunium	94 Pu Plutonium	95 Am Americium	96 Cm Curium	97 Bk Berkelium	98 Cf Californium	99 Es Einsteinium	100 Fm Fermium	101 Md Mendelevium	102 No Nobelium	103 Lr Lawrencium	104 Rf Rutherfordium	105 Db Dubnium	106 Sg Seaborgium	107 Bh Bohrium	108 Hs Hassium	109 Mt Meitnerium	110 Ds Darmstadtium	111 Rg Roentgenium	112 Cn Copernicium	113 Nh Nihonium	114 Fl Flerovium	115 Mc Moscovium	116 Lv Livermorium	117 Ts Tennessine	118 Og Oganesson

58 Ce Cerium	59 Pr Praseodymium	60 Nd Neodymium	61 Pm Promethium	62 Sm Samarium	63 Eu Europium	64 Gd Gadolinium	65 Tb Terbium	66 Dy Dysprosium	67 Ho Holmium	68 Er Erbium	69 Tm Thulium	70 Yb Ytterbium	71 Lu Lutetium
90 Th Thorium	91 Pa Protactinium	92 U Uranium	93 Np Neptunium	94 Pu Plutonium	95 Am Americium	96 Cm Curium	97 Bk Berkelium	98 Cf Californium	99 Es Einsteinium	100 Fm Fermium	101 Md Mendelevium	102 No Nobelium	103 Lr Lawrencium

Nitrogen - N

Not all explosives are used to destroy and kill: sodium azide (a sodium atom bonded to three nitrogens) is used to save lives. This is the explosive in airbags that protect passengers in cars when they crash. There is around 200 grams of it in each bag. If the impact is above 10 miles per hour, this will register in a sensor in the electronic control unit which inflates the airbag within 25 thousandths of a second. The explosion is ignited by an electrical impulse which generates a temperature of 300 degrees C. Sodium azide is a white crystalline powder consisting of positive sodium ions and negative azide ions, which are three nitrogen atoms bonded together in a line. The stability of the azide group depends on the metal it is associated with. For example, lead azide is easily exploded by shock and was once used as a detonator, but sodium azide is safe until detonated.

Silicon - Si

Professor Henry Reid, at Canniesburn Hospital, Glasgow, discovered the remarkable power of silicones to reduce scarring in badly burned patients. Applying a dressing coated with silicone gel to badly burned skin speeds up the body’s ability to replace scar tissue with new skin, and the process of healing then takes weeks instead of years. The effect of the silicone gel is to increase the water content of the affected skin and so to aid its regeneration.

There will be more elements of surprise from John Emsley’s book in the next Valley News.

Michael Rodgers

A Taste of... Spring and early Summer

A Taste of...Modern British Cuisine.



Asparagus in May is always something to relish. Lucky the diners therefore at another "Taste of..." event on May 8th in Lower Heyford.

The talented chef, Sonya Brooke-Little, seamlessly supported by her family team of Heidi, Milo and Merlin, delighted us with a flavoursome menu of early summer ingredients, topped off with strawberry arctic roll and honeycomb.

It was warm enough to have a pre-dinner drink outside before sitting down to eat in the KGF hall twinkling with fairy lights and decorations.

Thank you to all involved and to those who attended.

Tei, Mary and Gilli

A Taste of Olive Oil and a one-pot Italian supper

Friday 3 July 7pm for 7.30pm Tickets: tbc

Guiseppe's artisanal extra virgin olive oil is produced in the Belice Valley in Sicily and made from the Nocellara cultivar, arguably one of the world's finest varieties. The tasting will be followed by a one course supper prepared by our favourite Italian chef Mariella Bliss.

Lower Heyford and Caulcott tabletop sale

Sunday 19 July 11am - 2pm

This is a great opportunity for you to have a clear-out and make money from things you no longer use. There will be a map of participants. Sue Brown will be selling her delicious breads and pastries and we are planning a light lunch in KGF. For more details contact the email below.

A Village Talks ... about its history

Friday 24th July 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

This is a pay what you'd like event

There are several villagers who have lived here for decades, some for over 70 years. What has changed in the village since the 2nd world war? How was life lived then? Was there a baker, coffin or candlestick maker? What has Corpus Christ's influence meant to the village? Ian Willox leads a conversational evening about then and now.

If you wish to be the first to know about these events email lowerheyfordevents@gmail.com to get on our mailing list.

Tei, Mary & Gilli

Lower Heyford Bowls Club

Summer Season 2026

Lower Heyford Bowls Club would like to invite everyone to come and enjoy this outdoor sport for all ages, families and locals. The club needs more players and members for the up-and-coming summer season and would welcome more people to help keep this good local club running. We have been open for 100 years so far.

The club will open at 6pm on all Wednesdays up to the end of September.

The club provide woods for practice or for any competitions entered and we are happy to give free coaching if required.

We provide a bar for drinks and snacks on practice nights and a selection food buffet for team match nights. Cash or card payment are both accepted.

We already have 8 matches booked in for the new season, home and away with local bowls clubs and we hold an in-house singles competition.

Cost for full membership is £45 for the season which includes membership to Bowls Oxfordshire and Bowls England

There is a £3 Green Fee for each practice session and for match nights home or away.

Come and join a great mix group of local villagers and families who enjoy a roll out.

Laurie Fray - An appreciation

(12th July 1944 - 31st March 2026)

I will always consider myself truly fortunate to have known Laurie for so many years.

Fortunate because, although in his high-pressure professional life he was a world apart from me and although I could never have matched his seemingly inexhaustible polymathic talents, thankfully Laurie unwaveringly enjoyed a quintessential charismatic social life.



Someone who is endowed with such a life is typically characterised by high emotional intelligence, a genuine curiosity about others, and an exceptional ability to make people feel seen, valued and understood. Rather than being superior or patronising, that person blends empathetic engagement with an innate humility to create an enduring trust.

Such was Laurie's impact upon me, and I believe on many fellow Heyfordians, that I never felt less than blessed when he so selflessly shared his precious time with me. Simply put, it was always an absolute joy to spend time in his company.

But, perhaps almost inevitably, my thoughts turned to trying to divine the source of that inner peace which enabled Laurie to treat people so well & so inclusively. However, that said, it did not take me long to realise that the answer was right in front of me. Of course, everything which flowed from Laurie to enrich the lives of so many others derived from his passionate & life-long love of music.

It was the range & depth of his musical influences which, I fondly believe, enabled him to smoothly

tune into the personal rhythm of the diverse lives of each of his friends - and thereby engender a mutually harmonious relationship.

As I wrote these words I wondered if I was waxing too lyrical, and overdoing my personal perception of Laurie as some kind of musically-inspired guru. However, seeking online reassurance, I encountered a philosophical tract titled "The Rhythm of Life: How Music Mirrors Our Journey" so much of which, for me at least, characterises Laurie to a tee.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/rhythm-life-how-music-mirrors-our-journey-chethan-raj-tim6c>

His funeral service, beautifully enhanced as it was by his own music, was very moving. But, although I tried to put such a romantic notion out of mind, as I listened with eyes closed to his haunting rendition of Al Jolson's Avalon, I could not resist the thought that what Laurie would have got a real buzz out of was a full-blown jazz funeral procession through the streets of his spiritual home of New Orleans.

Peter John

St Marys - Lower Heyford



The Rogation walk and community event on May 10th was an enjoyable celebration. Starting at St Mary's church, about 60 walkers of all ages (and some dogs) either tramped across the parish to Aves ditch and Caulcott to the eastern boundary of the parish or followed the towpath down the western side.

Walking gave an opportunity for conversation & meeting new neighbours, followed by homemade soup and a ploughman's lunch back at the church.

Four brief stops for reflections and short prayers gave us the chance to think about our roots in nature and the movement of the seasons, our roots in the history beneath our feet and our roots in the homes, the houses, and the friendships to be found in Lower Heyford & Caulcott. Thanks to the British Pilgrim Trust for their support this year.

Mavis Bishop - A poetic tribute

30th September 1939 – 4th January 2026

Lower Heyford lost one of its long-standing residents earlier this year. Mavis, and her husband Ernie, moved to Lower Heyford in 1960 and lived in the same house on Freehold Street for 45 years.

Mavis worked at the now disappeared Three Horseshoes pub in Upper Heyford and formed longstanding friendships with people stationed at the air force base. She and Ernie would visit them later in the States. It is perhaps this connection that gave rise to their love of Country and Western music. Mavis and Ernie were involved in the allotments for many years and Mavis dealt with the subscriptions. After Ernie's death in 2017 Mavis lived quietly and enjoyed her garden. She was quick to laugh, fiercely independent and, as one friend put it, had a stubborn streak a mile wide.

Mavis had no children of her own but had a close bond with her great niece Becky, who wrote this poem for Mavis, which was read at the funeral.

By blood you were my aunty,
In my heart you were my mum.
You were always there to guide me
Through all the things I've done.
So many phone calls,
Morning, noon and night.
Any time I worried
You'd always put things right.
I loved you so much Mavis,
When I think of you, I cry.
But I know you are still with me
Though you're way up in the sky.
As I say goodbye today
And with Ernie you can rest,
Please know how loved and missed you are,
And that you were the best.



Mavis is buried with Ernie at St Mary's Church.

Lower Heyford Parish Council



Thank you to all who helped with the annual litter pick. The variety of items collected was amazing.



Some good news! After years of negotiating and waiting, the SSEN electrical switch system has been completed. Hopefully this will ensure we don't have regular, lengthy power outages which require back-up generators around the village. The system went live at the end of April and at time of writing the old power supplies and poles across the village have been taken down. This also means that KGF carpark now has more space.

A further positive note is that the application to have Heyford Park nominated as a site for a new town development was unsuccessful. Meanwhile we and many others continue to voice and register our objections to further building out from the base. It is encouraging that there are so many voices being raised in support of this special rural valley.

PFAS

Several parishioners attended a very informative talk at Upper Heyford regarding the forever chemicals, known as PFAS and PFOA, that have been found in very high concentrations in Gallos Brook, which runs down from the base through Caulcott. This is a serious issue which will involve further testing and pressure until we have a better understanding of the

scale of the problem. Our MP Calum Miller will be taking this to Parliament and has already written to the Environment Agency, MoD, Dept of Education and Cherwell District Council; we are most pleased to have his support. Local action groups will continue to raise this serious matter's profile, so watch out for further details as they emerge. Contact gallosbrook@gmail.com for further information and support:

In a similar vein we will shortly be registering our objection to the Oxford rail freight terminal at Ardley - OxSRFI. This is a strategic project decided by government. Its impact would be highly significant in terms of transport disruption and scale of development.

Work continues in Caulcott to obtain funding for improved culverts through the village and under the main road. Water levels and flooding have increased as Heyford Park grows and it is a complicated multi agency process to establish the problem, responsibilities and remedies. The parish council is currently working hard to have the question of From your elected representative ground water flooding correctly acknowledged and recorded.

We have updated the village emergency plan which is now on our website. Hopefully it will never be needed but it's good to know it's there. If you have any concerns around vulnerability in an emergency then please reach out via any of the councillors, the clerk or a neighbour. We still have an incomplete list of village contacts so if you are happy to join this list please do contact the council – mailto:parishclerk.lhpc@gmail.com

So much of the council's work is spent contacting, chasing and re-chasing those in District and Oxfordshire councils who carry out work for us. Potholes are just one example! We have recently established how much S106 money (funds given to communities by developers) we are due, how we are able to use it and when it will be actioned. Our S106 fund is specifically for transport so we are looking to enhance our speed and traffic monitoring systems and replace the very dilapidated village gates. This has been one of our most frustrating issues and has been ongoing for over 5 years; but we are hopeful that we are getting closer to seeing some of the benefits. In light of the recent accident at the

Freehold Street / Station Road crossroads we have urgently requested a further site meeting to discuss the safety of this junction and why the agreed 20mph speed limit has not yet been reinstated. We have also requested that additional safety measures are considered. This is one of the most regulated aspects of council life. We would encourage any concerned residents to contact their district and county councillors regarding this issue.

jean.conway@cherwell-dc.gov.uk ,
grace.conway-murray@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,
nigel.simpson@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,
Will.Boucher-Giles@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Finally we are delighted to welcome Lower Heyford resident Mark Potton to the parish council.

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Coarse Gardening No 131

I said in my last piece that it's unwise to predict and then I went ahead and did just that - and I was right for once: it has been a truly phenomenal spring and early summer. I cannot recall one like it. There is little doubt that this is due to global warming and the long, hot, dry summer last year, which ripened (or terrified) plants into prodigious production. Everyone's cherry blossom, lilac, clematis, wisteria and laburnum were laden, positively dripping with flowers. Laburnum, by the way, is escaping from gardens and taking off in the wild. It produces quantities of fertile seed, but used to be restricted to difficult places, like Cheddar Gorge, because rabbits found the seedlings delicious and ate them before they could ever get going. However, now there are very few rabbits and you can see 'wild' laburnum on the way to Bicester, just before the motorway bridge.

A couple of examples of this profusion from my garden: the Princess Tree, *Paulownia tomentosa*, has been covered in hundreds of bunches of its huge purple-blue foxglove flowers.



It has never really flowered much before, the buds always being nipped off by a late frost.

And *Gladiolus communis* subspecies *byzantinus* is really performing at last. This is that small, vividly magenta wild gladiolus which is native to countries around the Med. If you've been on holiday to Greece or Italy or Turkey you may well have seen it growing as a weed in the olive groves. I managed to source the real thing some years ago and bought a dozen corms and they have increased into several clumps; those growing in the rough grass near the back door usually manage three or four flowers, but this year the nearer one has twenty one flowering spikes and the further one fourteen. The clump which appears happiest is growing on poor, gravelly soil next to the railings around our carpark and is sporting twenty four spikes. You can see it if you stroll down Allens Lane.



Speaking of weeds - I have some beauties. There's a patch at the bottom of the garden inside the field gate which I cleared as a site for runner beans and sweet peas. Over winter the weeds moved in and in early May it was a glory of dusky pink red champions, yellow greater celandines (which are related to poppies, not the little springtime celandines) and gentian-blue flowered alkanet, that coarse, hairy relation of borage. There's self-sown purple honesty nearby, too. The whole area looks like something carefully contrived by a Chelsea Flower Show gold medal specialist in wildflower gardening. I love it. And I can't take any credit. I'm most reluctant to spoil it by putting in a bean tripod or two

This sort of thing seems to be going on in everyone's garden and in the countryside. As you drive around on the rutted, potholed cart tracks which serve as country roads in this part of Oxfordshire, you can't help noticing the richness, the abundance, the sheer exuberance of the hedgerows heavily covered in hawthorn blossom, the glossiness of every leaf, chestnut trees covered in 'candles'. It is a truly extraordinary year. The potholes are doing really well, too. I could give you a guided tour of my favourite ones, especially those between Upper Heyford and Hopcroft Holt. I have known them so long that they are like old and valued friends, who I have watched from the early days of their infancy grow and prosper despite the traffic, including huge lorries, swerving lethally into the opposite lane to avoid them. Some, but not all, have been bracketed with white lines, but none at the time of writing has been filled in, of course. Perhaps those vindictive little gods of the B-roads will see that it's done before you get to read this, just to prove me wrong. (Our dear friend Mary will say that I'm ranting again. She's right. I am. I'll bet you do, too.)

As I write, the roses are beginning to come out. The wild Himalayan rose in our front yard, now twelve feet tall and six wide, is covered in its crimson, single, floppy flowers, which will keep coming until Christmas. Shame it has no scent. The 'Patio Roses', which I discovered last year and have planted in the mixed borders, are covered in buds. I expect something spectacular from them - and from the roses on cottage walls around the village. I'll risk it and predict - it'll be a fantastic rose year. So much to look forward to!

Enjoy it.

Roger Burt.

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Following the government's proposed 'new towns' list, Heyford Park was not taken forward; however, whilst the government seemed to favour larger developments, constructive criticism and positive feedback were taken from the reports. Despite this setback, the company confirmed plans to submit revised planning proposals in early summer, with hopes of reaching committee consideration later in the year.

Concerns regarding delays affecting Chilgrove Drive have been regularly voiced in monthly meetings, with the most recent update being that work had been slowed by environmental restrictions linked to protected species, including great crested newts, badgers and nesting owls. Revised licences and mitigation work with Natural England were still ongoing. There remains frustration that these delays could significantly prolong heavy traffic on Camp Road associated with the expanding car processing facility. While earlier expectations suggested that the disruption would last around six months, revised timelines now indicate traffic pressures could last longer once works commence (with no fixed date provided at this time).

The meeting also addressed growing public concern surrounding potential PFAS and PFOS contamination connected to the former airbase. There are allegations that "forever chemicals" linked to historic firefighting foam use by the US military had been detected in nearby watercourses at levels significantly above recommended drinking water limits. Dorchester Living acknowledged the issue with a public statement and confirmed that further environmental testing was underway. The company stressed that the contamination was a historic legacy matter rather than the result of current activities and highlighted extensive remediation work already completed under Environment Agency oversight. Councillors have voiced that clear communication with residents would be essential while investigations continued.

An update from Savills was presented regarding the outline planning permission being sought for 475 dwellings and related to the land to the South and West of Camp Road. (Cherwell District Council's Planning Portal: reference 25/03343/OUT) Regarding an historic local footpath, they have confirmed that a long-established public footpath near Portway would remain despite proposed housing developments, noting that public rights of way are legally difficult to remove and that any diversion would need to remain convenient for users.

Meetings continue regarding the Ardley section of the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, transport links, Puy du Fou historical park plans (Cherwell District Council's Planning Portal: reference 25/02232/OUT), infrastructure, and local bus routes as county, district and parish councillors endeavour to do the best for the residents.

The annual meeting held on Wednesday, 6 May 2026, offered residents a detailed overview of the parish council's activities over the past year, alongside updates on several major developments affecting the area.

Throughout the year, the parish council continued to engage regularly with Puy du Fou, attending meetings to provide residents with monthly updates on progress and ongoing discussions. Representatives from Savills, acting on behalf of landowners connected to the proposed developments west and south of Camp Road at Richborough, were also invited to monthly meetings. This allowed residents to raise concerns directly and receive information about plans for the site.

Community engagement remained a priority, with HPPC organising an Open Day in October 2025. Infrastructure and safety issues featured prominently during the year. Concerns were repeatedly raised over faulty lampposts, with councillors pressing Dorchester Living to address lighting failures to improve safety for both residents and visitors. The council also successfully pushed for the relocation of a bus stop away from a zebra crossing considered unsafe, with the stop now moved outside the Heritage Centre. Several local organisations benefited from parish donations during the year, namely the Maker's Shed, the Veterans, the local children's group to help fund

educational toys and insurance costs, the Pantry to cover the cost of a replacement fridge and a contribution towards the Silver Band booked for Remembrance Sunday commemorations.

Councillors confirmed that the parish precept would not increase for another year.

The council also retained membership with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and began a new subscription with Breakthrough Communications to improve community engagement.

We currently have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor; if you would like more information, please contact our Clerk.

Date of our next monthly meeting, which follows our annual meeting, is Wednesday, 17th June 2026 at 7.15 pm in the Community Centre, Brice Road. Our meetings are open, and members of the public are welcome.

Councillors

Councillor Steve Cook: (Chair)

Email: steve.cook@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Catherine Mullineux: (Vice Chair)

Email: cath.mullineux@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Kate Henderson:

Email: kate.henderson@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Alan Harris:

Email: alan.harris@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Sally Freeland:

Email: sally.freeland@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Sofia Tanner:

Email: sofia.tanner@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Brian Moss:

Email: brian.moss@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Parish Clerk: Samatha Williams:

Email: clerk@heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.heyfordpark-pc.gov.uk>

From our elected representatives

Gareth Epps offers the following key updates:

Community Speed Watch

It's great to see a number of parishes expressing interest in reviving CSW, although it's less good to surmise that irresponsible driving is a reason for this. I'm very happy to help parishes work together to share equipment and trained volunteers.

Household Waste Recycling update

It's still too early to understand the effects of the booking system in terms of any impact on fly-tipping and residual waste collection levels. Pending permissions from Network Rail and the Environment Agency, the critical stabilisation work for Redbridge, which is the major reason for this is now likely to start in the autumn for three months. The review of the system will follow this.

Fire & Rescue Service

With consultation responses now largely analysed, the County Council has withdrawn key aspects of the proposed changes to the cover model, including the proposed closures at Woodstock, Eynsham and Henley. Work is now proceeding on developing a programme to accommodate the changes.

School Transport

It is the time of year when issues can arise regarding school transport and the impacts of central Government policy on local councils and communities, which are [to say the least] unhelpful. County policy on this subject has not changed. To date, I have not had any direct representations from residents. Please direct any enquiries to me as the local county councillor, and I can raise them with officers.

"Cllr Gareth Epps" gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Heyford Park Pantry is a project devoted to reducing food waste. Having been open for the better half of a decade now, the Pantry receives deliveries of produce that would otherwise be wasted. Our aim is to distribute this to as many people as we can.

Though we have a number of suppliers and sources of produce, our most important deliveries are provided by SOFEA. SOFEA is a charity based in Didcot, which provides educational and employment opportunities to vulnerable young people who would otherwise be excluded from such opportunities. Their network of community larders - of which we are one - is a major part of their operation; we receive 48 deliveries per year from their warehouse. The Pantry's eligibility for these deliveries is secured by our members who, for a small monthly charge, are entitled to a weekly collection from our premises in Heyford Park.

We are also able to provide a separate, free-of-charge offering to those who most need it in the area. We stock this additional service through collections from other food-waste projects, such as the Oxford Food Hub in Botley, as well as purchasing items ourselves with donations and grants that we gratefully receive. We are also lucky to be supported by several local business, who are able to provide us with fresh items to top-up our weekly deliveries.

This month, we would like to extend a particular thanks to North Aston Farms, who provided us with some of their delicious, quality milk - it's a favourite among our customers, and we appreciate the continued generosity of the team at the North Aston Dairy in providing us with their surplus goods.

Parallel to our regular opening hours (see below), we also continue to host a lunch club - this happens on selected Fridays throughout the year, and the best place to check whether it is running is through our Facebook page. This is another way in which we make use of surplus produce, left over at the end of our usual shifts. We are especially grateful to Steve Cook for his participation in the lunch club; the

preparation he has done over the last couple of months has been invaluable, and it is greatly appreciated.

As we move into the summer months, we look forward to an increase in the variety of our fresh fruits and vegetables in particular. SOFEA provides us with a great variety of both fresh and store cupboard items - and while not always directly tied to the seasons (bananas seem to be ever-plentiful), there is a notable increase in the range of fresh produce offered during the warmer times of the year. If you are considering signing up, paying us a visit is welcome any time of the year - though during the summer is definitely recommended. Our volunteers will be happy to explain what we do, and how the Pantry works.

Our opening hours are 11:00-12:30 on Fridays, and 10:00-12:00 on Saturdays in the Community Centre, Brice Road, Heyford Park.

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Rear Extensions

Rear extensions are a practical way to add value to a home and are generally more cost-effective than moving when factoring in stamp duty, legal fees and moving costs. A ground floor extension can turn a cramped ground floor into modern, open-plan living space, typically a kitchen-diner spilling to the garden, with better daylight and flow, whilst a 2-storey extension can add a bedroom and more. Because extensions add floor area, it targets the factor buyers value most after location, which is size.

Single-storey rear extensions fall under Permitted Development rights, although you will need a Lawful Development Certificate confirming that the proposed extension complies with Permitted Development guidelines. Detached houses can extend up to 4 metres beyond the rear wall under permitted development, while terraced and semi-detached properties are limited to 3 metres. For single storey extensions the limits are increased to 8 metres if a detached house and 6 metres for any other housed, a Prior Approval: Larger Home Extension application is required. The key restrictions include ensuring the extension doesn't exceed 50% of the original property's surrounding land area and maintaining appropriate distances from boundaries. Extensions must not exceed the height of the original roof and should use materials that harmonise with the existing structure. These regulations exist to protect neighbourhood character while enabling reasonable development.

Of course, Building Regulations approval will be required. Structural elements require load-bearing calculations, and foundations and roof structures to comply with Building Regs. Steel beams are often needed to create open spaces. Insulation standards require extensions to achieve high levels of insulation and energy performance, potentially improving the overall property's EPC rating. This not only reduces running costs but enhances market appeal as energy efficiency becomes increasingly important to buyers.

Successful rear extensions require careful consideration for both functionality and aesthetics. The design should harmonise well with the existing property, maintaining proportional relationships and architectural coherence. Consider the orientation for natural light optimisation, particularly for kitchen and dining areas that could benefit from morning and afternoon sunshine. The extension should create a

flowing connection between the existing and the new spaces, without any awkward internal transitions. Open-plan designs combine kitchen, dining, and living areas to create flexible family spaces, with large glazed openings connecting to the garden. Built-in storage solutions, adequate provision for modern technology, electric vehicle charging provision and renewable energy integration help to future-proof the property. Simple single-storey extensions can typically take 8-16 weeks once work begins, while two-storey extensions can take 16-26 weeks.

Build costs are calculated by the square metre, and current guidance from Homebuilding & Renovating suggests £2,200–£2,500/m² (ex VAT) for a straightforward single-storey extension. High-spec projects can run to £3,000+ per m². 2-storey extensions cost per square metre are usually lower because you're spreading the cost of foundations and roof over twice the floor area. However a 2-storey extensions can add twice as much space for 50-70% more cost than a single-storey extension, according to SDL Property Auctions. For design and approvals allow typically 5–15% of the build cost depending on scope and add a 10–12.5% contingency for unexpected costs. The ROI for a rear kitchen-diner extensions can be 10–15% when well executed; more if they enable a superior layout or an extra bedroom in a 2-storey scheme, according to Ideal Home, but can be more in higher-value locations or where the design transforms usability. If you can stretch the budget, a 2-storey extension is the better option, providing addition space and a better return. However before committing check with local estate agents for before/after comparables, then run a calculation of projected sale value – (current value + all-in project cost). If the margin isn't comfortably positive and you're not valuing the lifestyle benefit, then rethink the scope or spec.

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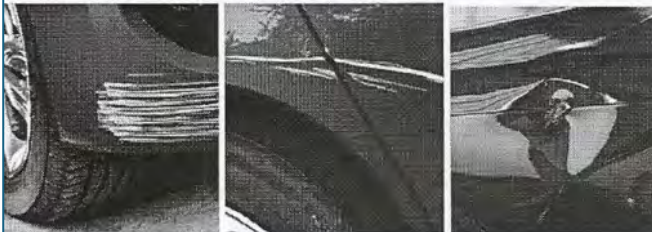
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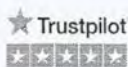
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Musings of a cricket nerd

Some memories of past players

It's that time again! The cricket season is now well under way and we can even be fairly sure that the danger of frost bite during some of the early season games has passed. The four-year cycle of national mourning that nearly always seems to follow an "Ashes" tour down under is now but a distant memory as we turn our cricketing thoughts to the challenges of New Zealand and Pakistan this summer. Familiar questions will be on the lips of all cricket nerds: "what has happened to English cricket?", "will we ever see another victorious Ashes tour?", "who will be the future saviour of our national game - Jacob Bethel, James Rew, Emilio Gay, Ollie Robinson to name but a few possibilities?"

Of course, it's not new: we lost most of the early matches played in Australia, including the very first one in 1877 (by 45 runs), not least because in those days the touring team was highly likely to suffer from high rates of "unavailability" given that the team would likely be away for the better part of 6 months. But things reached a low ebb when the English team lost for the first time on home soil against the Aussies in 1882 at the Oval. A mock obituary in The Sporting Times reported the death of English cricket "In affectionate remembrance of English cricket which died at The Oval, 29 August 1882... The body will be cremated and the Ashes taken to Australia". The English captain at that time Ivo Bligh vowed to reclaim the Ashes at the earliest opportunity, which happened to be the following winter on the 1882-3 tour Down Under. During the trip he was presented with a small terracotta urn containing the cremated remains of a cricket bail representing the "Ashes". Since this was a personal gift he reckoned he was entitled to keep it – just as well because the series was halved 1-1 so the Aussies would have kept it otherwise.



Photo © BBC news

My first exposure to the Ashes magic was in 1961 when I watched the 5th Test at the Oval with my dad. We managed to get Len Hutton's autograph as he passed through the crowds and we were even allowed on the outfield during the lunch and tea breaks – something which wouldn't be allowed today. My hero was Ted Dexter who'd already made a couple of hundreds and a masterly 70 in the doomed run chase at Old Trafford (when Richie Benaud bamboozled the English batsmen by turning it square out of the bowlers' footmarks in the preceding Test to ensure that Australia retained the Ashes). Unfortunately Ted clearly didn't know I was coming to watch him that morning at the Oval and holed out at extra cover before I had even got into the ground, but I did see Raman Subba Row play his last test innings, which was rather nice because I subsequently played a fair amount of club cricket with him in the Surrey Championship. In those days before he became a renowned cricket official he could always be relied on in the middle order and his gently flighted leg breaks and googlies proved just too tempting for many a club batsman.

It was also in Surrey that I crossed swords with a hero of the English game, Bob Willis, when he was playing for Surrey Young cricketers against our school. He was about 20 then – 3 years older than most of us in the school team – and bowled at around 90 mph (about 20 mph faster than anyone we'd ever faced). Our coach did warn me that he was "a bit quick" but I never had the opportunity to adapt to his pace because not only was his first ball quick it was also straight! Fast forward 11 years to 1981 at Headingley and there he was ripping into the Australians as his 8-43 reduced them to 111 all out chasing the modest target of 130 (only made possible by Ian Botham's heroic 149 not out, supported by Graham Dilley's 50 in a magnificent rearguard action). I remember that we felt obliged to suspend a couple of our medical ward rounds to keep up with the action. Willis wasn't the only England opening bowler I had the "pleasure" of facing – Fred Rumsey played for an international invitation side (including Peter May, Colin Cowdrey and MJK Smith) who came to celebrate 100 years of cricket at our school. I lasted a lot longer than against Bob Willis but I had an awful lot more bruises to show for it as well.

Cricket at Middleton Stoney

The “Ashes” is certainly one of the most established sporting contests around, dating back formally to 1882 but cricket has been around a lot longer and its local origins go back well over 200 years. Since at least 1801 cricket has been played in Villiers Park in Middleton Stoney (previously the country estate of the Earls of Jersey until the mid-20th century), hosting a number of touring international teams during that time. The game is still thriving there in the shape of the Middleton Stoney Cricket Club, playing “friendly” timed matches (rather than limited overs stuff) on Sundays throughout the season from mid April to late September, and 20/20 matches each week during the high Summer months of June and July.

I discovered the club in 1983 and have had many years of great cricket, society and fun ever since; teas and a post-match BBQ are key elements of each game. The club prides itself on its family atmosphere with father/son combinations very much a feature of all its most successful teams (and not excluding the possibility of finding the next Nat Sciver either). It is sadly the case that opportunities for getting involved in cricket are declining. So few schools offer it as an option and the number of empty sports fields in the summer (where once would have shouts of “HOWZAT”) is a testament to the popular decline in one of our national sports.

Many players from our parishes over the years have played their cricket at Middleton. The club has always provided a home for players of all abilities wanting to play “friendly matches”, not necessarily wishing to play every week, and who may have the best days either ahead of them or behind them. This season started with the customary pre-season nets at Heyford Park to check that the limbs were still attached and in working order (they were – just!). We then had a short tour of Malta where the opposition had a strong Australian/South African/New Zealand flavour (the return leg of last year’s fixture against the same opponents when they visited Middleton). Notably the skipper eschewed flying and took the overland route in his camper van, enjoying very varied scenery en-route. Two closely fought defeats in Malta were followed by an intra-club practice game before the season got started in earnest with three wins and one defeat to date. The highlight was an unlikely 36 run victory against Deddington after Middleton posted 134, which had looked extremely

unlikely after slumping at one point to 35-7. The game still brings its magic to those who love it – the beer and the BBQ tasted particularly sweet that



week.

One of our local supporters gets to the ground early to make sure he doesn’t miss the action.

The club is always very happy to welcome fellow cricketers from the local area, whether they wish to play only the occasional game or more regularly. Anyone wishing to learn more can visit the club website – <https://middletonstoneycc.co.uk> - and players and social members are most welcome.

Paul Wordsworth



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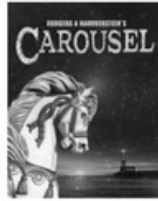
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Thursday

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Chair Yogo 12:20-1.30 £5

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Contact

secretary@heyfordparkcommunityhub.co.uk

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Above — the Village Hall on the playing field
Below — the Reading Room on the Green





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Upper Heyford Parish Council

What a fantastic day we had on Sunday 3rd May at the **May Day Fun Day**, although the sun didn't shine on us all day, the rain held off and it was warm enough to relax and enjoy. The queue for the face painting was never ending, the artists perfecting every child's wish with a smile, rock painting and colouring kits supplied by **Bicester Candles** – amazement by the customers that there was no charge!

Square dancing with a caller was perhaps held a little early in the day – some lubrication may have encouraged more people to join in! Thank you to **Bob from Heyford Hoofers** for coming along, we will definitely have him back for an evening in the Village Hall in the coming months. Seeing the children dance around the Maypole brings back nostalgic memories from yesteryear for people of all ages. Traditional activities like the sack race, egg & spoon race and the tug of war got everyone involved. Graham Wilson brought down his vintage organ for all to enjoy.

Ivy & Axel O'Brien were crowned May King & Queen with incredibly beautiful flower crowns made on the day by '**Flowers Designed by Steve**'. Perrin Hatwell of **Hatwell Amusements** brought along some of his rides, bungee trampolines, bouncy castle slide & the teacups for the little ones.

Villagers Dave & Emma Jones of the **Oxford Bar Company** provided refreshments with their horse box bar and there were yummy pizza's and ice creams. Having been let down last minute by another food vendor, Marie Thornton came up with a solution – hotdog sausages and buns cooked & served by the volunteer tea ladies. Chris Gates landlord of the **Barley Mow** fired up the chip pan and they were ferried across the road to keep us topped up – at no cost to us! Thank you Chris for supporting the village! Delicious cakes were donated by James Champion – we received many compliments.

George Stephenson from **Manor Farm** brought down some farm machinery to display, along with a few historic tractors from the **Bicester Tractor Club** and not forgetting the display of **vintage Mini's** for all to enjoy. A mix of creative local sellers provided a variety of shopping opportunities to the visitors and **Veronica Lough-Scott** deserves a special mention as her plant stall **raised £180 for St Mary's Church**.

The Parish Council would like to thank everyone involved for making this a success, it was a real team effort with volunteers from the village - too many to

name individually! Thank you for all donations to the raffle, and, of course, a big thank you for attending.

A grand total of £850 was raised at this event, this will go into the Village Playground Fund to maintain and improve the 2 children's playgrounds in Upper Heyford. With the expansion of Heyford Park these are being used more and more, therefore the cost of keeping them safe for all to use has increased.

With this being the first May Day event held in the village for over a decade we are overwhelmed by the support it had and by how many people attended. The plans for making **next year's event** even bigger and better are already in place – mark your calendar it will be held on **2 May 2027!**



The **Annual Parish Meeting** took place on the **22nd April**, it was so lovely to see so many of you there – a much-improved attendance on recent years. We heard interesting updates from many village initiatives and we launched the **Community Led Plan** kicking off with an opportunity to get involved by giving thoughts and feedback on various topics using Topic Boards. This is just the start of obtaining input from villagers as to what they want to see from their community.

We will continue to engage with you all over the coming months before launching a complete survey in September. Look out for the **suggestions box** which is in the **Barley Mow** pub. Just pop in any thoughts of what you love about our village as well as where you feel that improvements could be made. You are also welcome to drop these into the **post box** at the **Village Hall** or directly into the post box at the Parish Clerk, Sarah Burrow's house, **Rowley House**, Allens Lane. All and any feedback welcomed.

Make an appointment to chat and have a coffee with Sarah on a **one-to-one** basis in the **Reading Room**. She has times set to be in the Reading Room as follows. Email parishclerk@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

9 th June	10 am – 12 noon
17 th June	6 pm – 8 pm
26 th June	2 pm – 4 pm at the Community Tea
2 nd July	2 pm – 4 pm

Also, as always, please do join us at a Parish Council meeting where there is a public forum.

In other news, we have a brand new, large orange rubbish bin for the playground area at the Village Hall. We would like to thank **Nick & Anna Alcraft** for their refurbishment of the **public footpath sign** by The Green and **David Williamson** for the refurbishment of the Parish Council **noticeboard** by Shop House and also for securing the **flagpole** by the Village Hall.

The village **Spring Clean** in April was a **triumph** but Oxfordshire County Council are late in delivering the promised village gates. The Parish Council continues to chase and is determined that progress will be made soon!

The next Parish Council Meetings are scheduled for 7.15pm in the Reading Room on the 11th June, 9th July, 10th September, 8th October and 12th November. Remember that the first 15 minutes are dedicated to a public forum – so please come along if you have a contribution to make and we look forward to welcoming you.

Please visit www.upperheyfordpc.org.uk for more information and to sign up to receive regular Parish Council news.

Upper Heyford Parish Councillors:

Chair:

Paul Weaver

paul.weaver@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Vice Chair:

Derek Burrows

derek.burrows@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Councillors:

Bryony Johnson

bryony.johnson@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Chris O'Malley

chris.omalley@upperheyford.org.uk

George Stephenson

george.stephenson@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Mark Hiles

mark.hiles@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Clerk:

Sarah Burrows

parishclerk@upperheyfordpc.org.uk

Upper Heyford Community Events

Members of the Upper Heyford Amenities Committee (and honorary members/organisations) are slowly and steadily building a list of regular events, open to all in the village, with the main purpose of bringing the community together. All ages are welcome to attend and enjoy.

While financial contributions are welcome and used within the village for church and social support, the main objective is to provide a broad range of events for villagers. Regular events throughout the year include:

- Bingo (2nd or 3rd Wednesday, monthly) ,
- Afternoon Tea (last Friday, monthly),
- HH Monday morning weekly walks (10-12)
- HH Stay Active (Tuesdays, weekly)

Events are advertised with posters around the village, email and WhatsApp.

We are continually looking for more ideas and we welcome contributions and offers of assistance.



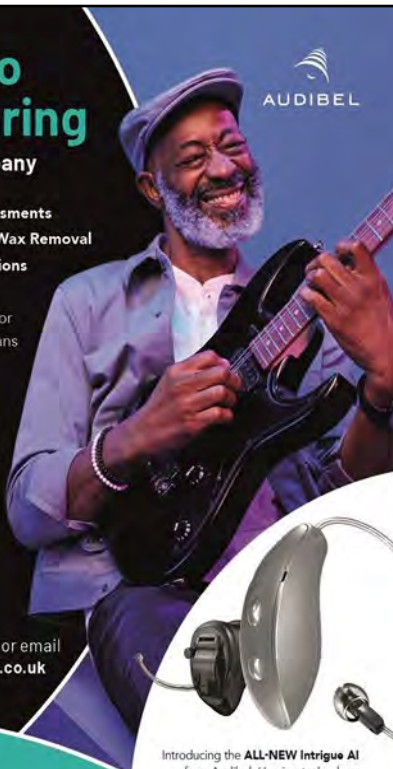
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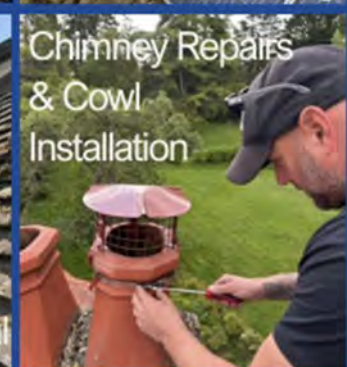
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News from Somerton Parish Council

Welcome to Our New Parish Councillors

We are delighted to welcome Belinda Fawcett and Andrew Hunter to Somerton Parish Council following their co-option to fill our vacant council positions.

Both Belinda and Andrew have been part of the Somerton community for many years and bring with them a wealth of valuable skills, experience, and local knowledge that will greatly complement our existing team of councillors.

We look forward to working with them both as we continue supporting and representing our village community.

Somerton Playground

Local villagers volunteer their time to help maintain our play area, which is leased from Cherwell District Council to us. Over the last few weeks, the willow tunnel has been given new woodchips, and the grass has been mowed ready for play in the summer sun. Councillor Kay Bishop co-ordinates this, with the support of Councillor Neil Clare.

Village Spring-mow and Cleanup

We were so grateful to villagers who turned out in April to help us tidy the village. About 10 bags of rubbish were collected along with some tyres. Councillor Kay Bishop takes the lead on this, with the support of Councillor Neil Clare. As well the spring clean, we have set aside a grass verge, from which we clear the grass-cuttings after each cut. We hope that, with time, wildflowers will flourish and enhance our natural surroundings.

Thanks to all who help with collecting rubbish throughout the year.

Setting good practice standards

As a parish, we are working towards an accreditation awarded by the National Association of Local Councils. The accreditation requires councils to operate to their best ability and to meet standards of good practice. Over the next 12 months Somerton Parish Council is working towards Bronze accreditation to demonstrate- "lawful & standard practice". Councillor Kay Bishop is co-ordinating this effort.

Planning and Highways Update

Councillors David Spencer and Deborah Critchley continue to lead on planning matters for the parish. They also serve as executive members of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Executive, representing Somerton alongside ten other Mid Cherwell villages.

Several planning applications within a three-to-five-mile radius of Somerton, previously objected to by Somerton Parish Council, are now progressing through the appeals process following decisions made by Cherwell District Council (CDC).

At the time of writing, these include:

22/01340/OUT – Tritax Symmetry Warehousing, The appeal hearing is due to commence on 22 September 2026. The Chair of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Forum (MCNPF) has registered to speak at the hearing on behalf of the eleven parishes represented by the Forum.

22/03267/OUT – Albion Warehousing, Baynards Gn. The applicant submitted an appeal to CDC on 16 April 2026.

25/01190/HYBRID – Heyford Park Expansion Although Heyford Park was not selected by the government as a new town applicant, proposals for approximately 9,000 homes at Heyford Park continue to progress through the planning system.

25/03343/OUT – Richborough Development, This application for 475 homes south and west of Camp Road currently has a target decision date of 26 May 2026.

21/04275/OUT – Hawkwell Village Development The proposed development of 3,100 homes northwest of Bicester has a target decision date of 26 June 2026.

25/02232/OUT – Puy du Fou Theme Park, Bucknell The application for the proposed theme park has a target decision date of 29 September 2026.

26/0086/F

A small development of 10 houses in Somerton has been approved, subject to conditions being met.

Somerton Social Club News

National Strategic Infrastructure Project

These projects are determined directly by central government.

On 28 April 2026, the Planning Inspectorate accepted the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange application (25/02512/OxSRFI) for examination as part of the process for granting development consent. A formal statutory process will now begin, including the appointment of an Examining Authority. The Chair of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Forum has registered to take part in this pre-examination phase, which typically lasts around three months. The next phase of the process – the examination phase is expected to last 6 months

Highways

Councillors David Spencer and Deborah Critchley lead on highways matters within the parish.

Since January 2026, 29 potholes have been reported in Somerton. FixMyStreet super user Councillor David Spencer has issued work orders. Twenty-four of the potholes have now repaired by Oxfordshire County Council. The Parish Council are aware there are other potholes around the village that require attention. Please keep reporting issues to FixMyStreet.

Investigations into Somerton's flooding and drainage issues on Water Street are continuing. From 22–24 June 2026, Water Street will be closed while drainage systems are descaled and jet-cleaned.



Payday Fridays

Payday Fridays continue to be a fantastic way to kick off the weekend — whether you fancy a night off from cooking, a delicious takeaway, or simply a relaxing evening catching up with friends and neighbours at the village hall.

We are incredibly grateful for the wonderful support these evenings receive from the community. A huge thank you also goes to all our local caterers who make Payday Fridays possible. We especially appreciate their commitment to Somerton, particularly as Friday evenings can often be their busiest and most profitable nights elsewhere. Thankfully, they love coming to Somerton and serving our community.

Please continue to support these evenings whenever you can, either by eating in or taking away, so we can keep offering these once-a-month mouthwatering treats.

A special thank you to Nandita and Rishi from Heyford Curry Nights, who joined us in April with their fantastic van serving Asian-style and traditional English fish and chips. We look forward to welcoming you back again soon!



Film Night

Thanks to our film lead, Robert Gardener, we've enjoyed a brilliant selection of films over recent months.

On Thursday 25 June 2026 at 7pm, we will be showing *Hamnet* — the acclaimed 2025 historical drama directed by Chloe Zhao.

The film follows William Shakespeare and his wife Agnes as they celebrate the birth of their son, Hamnet. When tragedy strikes and Hamnet dies young,

Shakespeare is inspired to write his timeless masterpiece, *Hamlet*.

Everyone is welcome and entry is free.

Thursday 4 June 2026 – Interactive Pilates Talk

Join us at 7.30pm for an engaging and interactive talk on Pilates with Bryony Afferson-Day.

Bryony runs Pilates sessions every Friday at Somerton Village Hall and her talk promises something for everyone, whatever your fitness level. We're quite sure she'll have us moving — even if only from our seats!

Pilates can help:

- Strengthen core muscles
- Improve posture and spine health
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- Prevent and rehabilitate injuries
- Enhance mental wellbeing
- Increase body awareness

Saturday 6 June 2026 – Village Picnic

Working in partnership with the church and the parish council, we are delighted to host a village picnic in the beautiful church grounds.

While we can't promise the weather, we *can* promise a fantastic afternoon full of fun and a wonderful opportunity to spend time together as a community — come rain or shine!

There will be:

- A Pimms bar
- Cake stall
- Games
- Church safari
- Beer, wine, soft drinks, tea and coffee

So, grab a blanket, pack your picnic and come along for what promises to be a lovely day.

FIFA World Cup on the Big Screen

We'll be showing all the England games on our big screen, with the bar opening 30 minutes before kick-off.

- Wednesday 17 June 2026 – England v Croatia – KO 9pm
- Tuesday 23 June 2026 – England v Ghana – KO 9pm
- Saturday 27 June 2026 – England v Panama – KO 10pm

Come and cheer the team on with friends and neighbours!

Saturday 4 July 2026 – Quiz Night

Quiz Night is back!

Our quiz master returns with another evening guaranteed to challenge and entertain us all. Substantial nibbles will be served and, of course, there will be a prize for the winning team.

Can we really let a Heyford team win again?! Absolutely everyone is welcome — keep an eye out for tickets going on sale soon.

Saturday 19 September 2026

We're planning another special event... but for now, it remains a mystery!

Watch this space for more details.

Saturday 14 November 2026 – Skittles Evening

Our ever-popular skittles evening returns in November — and it always sells out fast.

Time to start practising!

Saturday 12 December 2026 – Christmas Party Night

Join us for our Christmas Party Night featuring live music from local musician Patrick

Foley and his mate Tom.

If there are any songs or tracks, you'd particularly like to hear, do let us know.

Social Club Membership

It's that time of year again when memberships are due for renewal.

Members receive discounts on all ticketed events, and your support helps us meet the ever-increasing costs of running the club, including insurance, film licences and village hall hire.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support Somerton Social Club. We'd love to see you for a drink and a chat. We offer a well-stocked bar at some of the lowest prices around! The bar is open every Thursday from 8.30pm in the Village Hall.

Membership is: £12 per year (April-March) for everyone aged 18 and over.

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St James Church News

In a truly traditional style, St James' marked the beginning of the holy week this year with a "wholesome" Palm Sunday service. The larger than usual congregation had a head count of nearly 50 (excluding our four-legged friends).



Building on the strong interest and success from a similar event late last year, a **jigsaw lino printing workshop**, a fund raiser for St James', took place on Saturday, April 11. A fun-filled morning provided the sizeable group of participants an opportunity to try their creative hands on designing and printing their own jigsaw while supporting our community heritage, all in the delightful company of each other.



To celebrate the arrival of summer as a community and as a token of our appreciation for all your generous support for the Church, we invite you to **Somerton Village Picnic at St James' Churchyard. 6th June from 12 pm to 3 pm.**

Bring a blanket and picnic. There will be

hot and cold, 'hard' and soft drinks, along with delicious home-made sweet treats for purchase. Games and live music will be available to entertain the young and young-at-heart and young.

Somerton Church Bell Ringing

Somerton church bell ringers successfully hosted its first skittles event in March, which was enjoyed by all. Members from Banbury and Bicester branches joined in, and Somerton Social club opened the bar for us to quench our thirst. Revd. Andrew Foran and Chis Adamson won the skittles. We intend to host a similar skittles event next year.

During April and May, we rang at Somerton, Souldern, Fritwell, Launton and Weston-on-the Green for the Bicester branch practice which has six bells excluding the Sanctus bell. Rather cleverly their ringing team have fixed a camera in the belfry so that you can see the bells ringing from the ringing chamber on a large screen. On St Georges Day we rang in Somerton, which also coincided with the 141st anniversary of the church being a member of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers. Then on another Thursday we rang at Fritwell, and noticed bell 2 rope was very low for some reason. We fixed it just in time for the ODG Ringing Day on Monday 4th May, in which Fritwell and Souldern were taking part. The ringing day event is an annual event in which selected church towers take part.

So far this year we have rung for two weddings in the benefice, both in Fritwell. The next wedding we will be ringing for is in June at Somerton, followed by weddings in Souldern and Lower Heyford in August. We have a couple of visiting teams coming to Somerton. The first being a band of bell ringers representing the Ancient Society of College Youths who will attempt a peal at 3pm on 2nd July. The last peal was in 2013, and the previous quarter peal attempt in January this year was unsuccessful. A full peal is ringing continuously for approximately 3 hours; any mistakes will make it unsuccessful. Following this, the RAF Guild of Bellringers plan to ring at Somerton on 18th September, for an hour from 2pm.

We hope you enjoy listening to us. You are most welcome to come along and see us ring or learn the ropes. We practise on Thursday evenings between 7.30 pm - 9.00pm, and ring on some Sundays. If you are interested in joining us, it can be great fun enjoyed by all ages, good exercise and you will be keeping up a long tradition and providing pleasure to all who hear them.

Neil Clare Somerton Tower Captain
CherwellValleyBellRinging@gmail.com

Poetry Corner

Seamus Heaney

One of Ireland's greatest poets, Seamus Heaney (1939 to 2013) left a huge legacy of consistently brilliant poems, as well as plays, translations and letters. Though born in rural Northern Ireland, he considered himself Irish and not British! He lived close to the land but later in life travelled extensively giving lectures and receiving many awards including the Nobel Prize for literature in 1995. His poems reflect his memories but have the power to awaken one's own memories intensely, so vividly he writes. He had a great love of language and sense of humour, but his poetry is serious with often a twist in the tail. I include two early ones from his twenties: one about his father, the other about the tragic death of his four-year-old brother when Seamus was only 13. They both pack a punch but very different ways.

Follower

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hobnailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow round the farm.

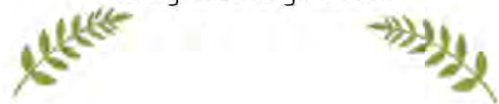
I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.



Flora and Fauna
Summer Holiday Club
Somerton Church

AGES 4-11
ARTS, CRAFTS
COOKING
EXPLORING NATURE
GAMES
AND MUCH MUCH
MORE....

Contact Flora Hunter for more
information:
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floraghunter@gmail.com



Mid-term break.

I sat all morning in the college sick bay
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.
At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch, I met my father crying –
He had always taken funerals in his stride –
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram
When I came in, and I was embarrassed
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble'.
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out here angry tearless sighs.
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the
nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,
He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.
No gaudy scars, The bumper knocked him clear.
A four foot box. A foot for every year.

HEYFORD Station ~ train times ~ on the Oxford Canal Line

From: 17 May 2026 to 12 December 2026

MON-FRI	Didcot Pkway		06:29	07:34	08:34	10:33	12:35	14:34	16:35	17:34	18:30	20:37	22:31		
	Appleford			07:38						17:38		20:41			
17-May	Culham		06:34	07:40	08:39	10:38	12:40	14:40	16:40	17:40	18:35	20:43	22:36		
to	Radley		06:38	07:44	08:43	10:42	12:44	14:44	16:44	17:44	18:39	20:47	22:40		
02-Oct	Oxford		06:46	07:52	08:51	10:50	12:52	14:52	16:52	17:52	18:47	20:55	22:48		
	Oxford	05:20	06:47	07:54	08:53	10:51	12:53	14:52	16:53	17:53	18:57	20:56	22:55		
	Tackley	05:30	06:56	08:03	09:02	11:00	13:04	15:01	17:02	18:02	19:09	21:05	23:06		
	Heyford	05:34	07:00	08:07	09:06	11:04	13:08	15:06	17:06	18:06	19:14	21:09	23:10		
	Kings Sutton	05:43	07:09	08:16	09:15	11:13	13:17	15:14	17:15	18:15	19:22	21:18	23:19		
	Banbury	05:49	07:15	08:21	09:22	11:20	13:26	15:20	17:21	18:21	19:28	21:23	23:25		
MON-FRI	Banbury		06:31	07:28	08:35	09:42	11:33	13:42	15:33	17:33	18:31	19:34	21:40		
	Kings Sutton		06:36	07:33	08:40	09:47	11:38	13:47	15:38	17:38	18:36	19:39	21:45		
17-May	Heyford		06:47	07:41	08:48	09:55	11:46	13:55	15:46	17:47	18:44	19:47	21:53		
to	Tackley		06:52	07:45	08:52	09:59	11:50	13:59	15:50	17:51	18:48	19:51	21:57		
02-Oct	Oxford		07:03	07:57	09:03	10:10	12:03	14:08	16:03	18:03	19:03	20:00	22:06		
	Oxford		07:04	07:58	09:07	10:11	12:06	14:09	16:06	18:06	19:07	20:11	22:07		
	Radley		07:10	08:04	09:13	10:17	12:12	14:15	16:12	18:13	19:13	20:17	22:13		
	Culham		07:14	08:08	09:17	10:21	12:16	14:19	16:16	18:17	19:17	20:21	22:17		
	Appleford					10:24					19:20				
	Didcot Pkway		07:22	08:16	09:25	10:30	12:24	14:27	16:24	18:24	19:26	20:29	22:25		
SAT ONLY	Didcot Pkway		06:09		08:34	10:36	12:35	14:35	16:34		18:03	19:35	21:03		
	Appleford											19:39			
17-May	Culham				08:39	10:41	12:40	14:40	16:39			19:41			
to	Radley				08:43	10:45	12:44	14:44	16:43			19:45			
03-Oct	Oxford		06:21		08:51	10:53	12:52	14:52	16:51		18:16	19:53	21:16		
	Oxford	00:22	06:24		08:54	10:54	12:53	14:53	16:55		18:25	19:55	21:23		
	Tackley	00:33	06:33		09:05	11:03	13:02	15:02	17:04		18:34	20:04	21:32		
	Heyford	00:38	06:37		09:09	11:08	13:07	15:06	17:08		18:39	20:08	21:37		
	Kings Sutton	00:46	06:46		09:18	11:17	13:16	15:15	17:17		18:47	20:17	21:45		
	Banbury	00:53	06:52		09:24	11:23	13:24	15:20	17:25		18:53	20:23	21:52		
SAT ONLY	Banbury		07:25		09:34	11:34	13:34	15:34	17:34		19:00	20:35	22:04		
	Kings Sutton		07:30		09:39	11:39	13:39	15:39	17:39		19:05	20:40	22:09		
17-May	Heyford		07:38		09:41	11:48	13:48	15:48	17:48		19:13	20:48	22:17		
to	Tackley		07:42		09:53	11:53	13:53	15:53	17:53		19:17	20:52	22:21		
03-Oct	Oxford		07:53		10:03	12:02	14:03	16:02	18:02		19:27	21:01	22:31		
	Oxford		08:05		10:07	12:05	14:05	16:05	18:05		19:32	21:05	22:43		
	Radley		08:12		10:13	12:12	14:11	16:12	18:12			21:11	22:50		
	Culham		08:16		10:17	12:16	14:15	16:16	18:16			21:15	22:54		
	Appleford											21:18	22:57		
	Didcot Pkway		08:23		10:25	12:23	14:23	16:23	18:23		19:44	21:24	23:03		
SUN ONLY	Oxford				09:44			14:18		17:17					
17-May	Tackley				09:55			14:28		17:27					
to	Heyford				09:59			14:33		17:32					
27-Sep	Kings Sutton				10:08			14:42		17:42					
only	Banbury				10:16			14:50		17:49					
SUN ONLY	Banbury				10:30			15:00		18:00					
17-May	Kings Sutton				10:35			15:05		18:05					
to	Heyford				10:44			15:16		18:14					
27-Sep	Tackley				10:48			15:20		18:19					
only	Oxford				10:59			15:31		18:31					

NOTE: ** Travelling to or from Tackley from 12 June 2026 **

To allow for the replacement of the footbridge at Tackley platform 2 will be closed from Friday 12 June 2026 until Spring 2027

Trains travelling towards Oxford will not call at Tackley. Customers should use alternative Stagecoach bus services between Tackley and Oxford. Trains towards Banbury will continue to call at Tackley.

Red Rose Travel Service 25 timetable until 29th August 2026

Heyfords to Bicester Monday to Friday

Upper Heyford Camp Road West end (W-bound)	07:01	07:56	09:01	10:01	11:01	12:01	13:01	14:01	15:01	16:01	17:06	18:06	19:06	
Lower Heyford, o/s Kingdom Hall	07:03	07:58	09:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	13:03	14:03	15:03	16:03	17:08	18:08	19:08	
Heyford Park, opp Dacey Drive	06:10	07:08	08:03	09:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	13:08	14:08	15:08	16:08	17:13	18:13	19:13
Heyford Park, adj Free School	06:12	07:10	08:05	09:10	10:10	11:10	12:10	13:10	14:10	15:10	16:10	17:15	18:15	19:15
Middleton Stoney, opp Park Close	06:18	07:16	08:11	09:16	10:16	11:16	12:16	13:16	14:16	15:16	16:16	17:21	18:21	19:21
Bicester Pioneer Square (Stand 4)	06:27	07:25	08:20	09:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	13:25	14:25	15:25	16:25	17:30	18:30	19:30
Bicester Village Station (Main Entrance)	06:32	07:30	08:25	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:35	18:35	19:35

Bicester to Heyfords Monday to Friday

Bicester Village Station (Main Entrance)	06:38	07:33	08:38	09:38	10:38	11:38	12:38	13:38	14:38	15:38	16:43	17:43	18:43	19:43
Bicester Pioneer Square (Stop 8)	06:43	07:38	08:43	09:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	13:43	14:43	15:43	16:48	17:48	18:48	19:48
Middleton Stoney, adj Park Close	06:52	07:47	08:52	09:52	10:52	11:52	12:52	13:52	14:52	15:52	16:57	17:57	18:57	19:57
Heyford Park Village Centre (W-bound)	06:58	07:53	08:58	09:58	10:58	11:58	12:58	13:58	14:58	15:58	17:03	18:03	19:03	20:03
Heyford Park, adj Dacey Drive	07:00	07:55	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:05	18:05	19:05	20:05
Upper Heyford Camp Road West end (W-bound)	07:01	07:56	09:01	10:01	11:01	12:01	13:01	14:01	15:01	16:01	17:06	18:06	19:06	20:06

Heyfords to Bicester Saturdays

Upper Heyford Camp Road West end (W-bound)	07:01	08:01	09:01	10:01	11:01	12:01	13:01	14:01	15:01	16:01	17:01	18:01	19:01
Lower Heyford, o/s Kingdom Hall	07:03	08:03	09:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	13:03	14:03	15:03	16:03	17:03	18:03	19:03
Heyford Park, opp Dacey Drive	07:08	08:08	09:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	13:08	14:08	15:08	16:08	17:08	18:08	19:08
Heyford Park, adj Free School	07:10	08:10	09:10	10:10	11:10	12:10	13:10	14:10	15:10	16:10	17:10	18:10	19:10
Middleton Stoney, opp Park Close	07:16	08:16	09:16	10:16	11:16	12:16	13:16	14:16	15:16	16:16	17:16	18:16	19:16
Bicester Pioneer Square (Stand 4)	07:25	08:25	09:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	13:25	14:25	15:25	16:25	17:25	18:25	19:25
Bicester Village Station (Main Entrance)	07:30	08:30	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	19:30

Bicester to Heyfords Saturdays

Bicester Village Station (Main Entrance)	07:38	08:38	09:38	10:38	11:38	12:38	13:38	14:38	15:38	16:38	17:38	18:38	19:38
Bicester Pioneer Square (Stop 8)	07:43	08:43	09:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	13:43	14:43	15:43	16:43	17:43	18:43	19:43
Middleton Stoney, adj Park Close	07:52	08:52	09:52	10:52	11:52	12:52	13:52	14:52	15:52	16:52	17:52	18:52	19:52
Heyford Park Village Centre (W-bound)	07:58	08:58	09:58	10:58	11:58	12:58	13:58	14:58	15:58	16:58	17:58	18:58	19:58
Heyford Park, adj Dacey Drive	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00
Upper Heyford Camp Road West end (W-bound)	08:01	09:01	10:01	11:01	12:01	13:01	14:01	15:01	16:01	17:01	18:01	19:01	20:01