

The Baldons and Nuneham Courtenay Newsletter



April 2026

FROM REVD CLAIRE WREN

A fresh spring day, perfect for getting away from the crowds. Nothing to spoil the view. A sudden pain in my foot causes me to pause. Leaning on a wooden post that is barely able to take my weight, I gasp as a splinter pierces my palm. I am wobbling on one leg battling to untie my lace. Smooth the sock, shake the shoe. A stone, no bigger than a pea, rolls downhill. I wriggle my toes back into their boot. Instant relief.

There was another perfect day. A man walked up a hill surrounded by a crowd, barely able to take the weight of the wooden beam across his back. A collective intake of breath as nail pierced flesh. Tug of rope, hammering of stake, a precarious cross was secured into place. It is later, three days later, when another stone rolls away. Shake out the garments, smooth out the folds. There is nothing here but hope.

As I was reflecting on the huge stone that was moved on Easter morning, I considered how the smallest of stones inside my shoe can have a massive impact on my comfort and my ability to move forward. It is almost ridiculous to compare the two events. One occurs frequently and is in no way newsworthy; the other is a unique occurrence around which the whole of history pivots. If the removal of a tiny pebble from a shoe can provide such relief from pain and allow us to progress, how much more should the removal of The Stone move us.

My favourite Easter hymn is this one by Edmond Budry:

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won. The next time you shake a pebble from your shoe, think of the God who loved the world so much he went through the pain of death to bring us all into his wonderful light.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Items for the May 2026 newsletter
by 16th April please

Any villager is welcome to send items for publication in the newsletter. Please send copy to Natasha Eliot: tashaandjames@btopenworld.com. Alternatively, I can be contacted on 343478 or at Baldon House East, Marsh Baldon. For advertising queries, please contact Leanna Maggs on: leanna.maggs@gmail.com or on 01865 340 521

Hold The Date!!

Fun on The Green,
Marsh Baldon

Picnic and Games

on

Saturday, 11th July from 2pm

Live Bands, Welcome Drink

Watch out for more information nearer the time

**Our vicar is Rev'd Vicky Burton who can be contacted at
revvickyburton@gmail.com / 07712 336540**

You can also contact the Dorchester Team Office on 01865 340007
or at admin@dorchester-abbey.org.uk

Our safeguarding officer is Sara McDouall: saramcdouall@gmail.com

Cover Photo: Apple Blossom – Natasha Eliot 2025

BALDONS PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Important reminder for dog owners: New Police powers now in force

Keep dogs on a lead whenever passing through fields with livestock, even if none are immediately visible, to avoid both legal action and tragic consequences for the sheep.

Although most local dog owners are responsible, there have been several reports of dogs off lead and potentially worrying sheep that are grazing in the fields around the Baldons. This has long been a criminal offence, but the Law has just been strengthened. New powers to tackle dog attacks on livestock, including unlimited fines, came into force on 18th March this year. These give police stronger tools to protect farmers during the lambing season.

Under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025, police now have enhanced powers to seize and detain dogs suspected of attacking livestock, while the previous £1,000 cap on fines for livestock worrying offences has been removed.

It is a criminal offence for a dog to chase, attack, or cause stress to sheep (livestock). Dogs must be kept on a lead around livestock, or under strict control. Violations could now result in unlimited fines, potential prison sentences, and increased police powers to seize dogs.

- **Definition of Livestock:** Includes sheep, cattle, goats, pigs, horses, and, as of 2026, camelids like llamas and alpacas.
- **Legal Obligation:** [The Countryside Code](#) states: "On Open Access land and at the coast, you must put your dog on a lead around livestock. These are legal requirements."
- **"Worrying" Defined:** This includes attacking, chasing, barking at, or causing distress to sheep, which can cause abortions, injury, or death.
- **Farmer Rights:** Farmers have a legal right to shoot dogs threatening their livestock if they cannot catch them, or if the dog is attacking.
- **Impact:** Even if a dog does not physically touch a sheep, causing it to run or panic is a criminal offence.

Proposed housing development on Land south of Grenoble Road

As you may be aware, the SODC local plan allocated a strategic development site at Land south of Grenoble Road for c3000 homes. Savills and GummerLeathes on behalf of South Oxfordshire Science Village Limited (SOSVL), intend to submit an outline planning application to SODC seeking planning consent for this residential-led mixed use community. Prior to the submission the developers have requested a scoping opinion from the planning authority, to agree the scope and level of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) that will be undertaken.

The site and development has the potential to impact the Baldons in several ways. The Parish Council has responded to the consultation with our observations and recommendations for inclusion of specific assessments of issues that will impact our villages. If you would like to see a copy of our response, please email clerk@baldonspc.org. We are in contact with GummerLeathes and will update on developments as we learn more.

Posts on the Green at Marsh Baldon School

Following discussions with the school and after tracking the increasing damage caused by the amount of traffic at drop off and pick up times at the school, we have installed several posts to the edge of the green to protect it from further erosion. Impact will be monitored over the next few months. The posts will not interrupt normal use of the highway.

Planned flood alleviation works

The Parish Council have been successful in obtaining an offer for grant funding from Oxfordshire County Council to be used to reinstate and improve ditches and culverts on and around the Green in Marsh Baldon, and on the avenue in Toot Baldon. The objective is to address existing flooding issues and prevent future ones. Timings of the works will be advised. Our thanks to Andy Speight for his hard work and persistence with OCC.

Toot Baldon mains sewerage plans. 1st stage pumping stations

Well, it would appear that the project is still alive! Although we cannot be sure of an implementation date, we have had an update from Thames Water as follows:

“At the moment, the project is currently with our contractor, who is carrying out ground penetration radar (GPR) surveys. These surveys are an essential step, as they help TW understand the subsurface conditions and inform next stages. Alongside this, they are reviewing the recommendations in the ecological report, which will play a key role in determining the final design.”

We expect to have more information in a couple of weeks, once both the surveys and the ecological assessments are completed. At this stage, I’m unable to provide any specific dates for the next steps, but we’ll make sure to keep you updated as soon as we have further clarity.”

We wait with bated breath!

Gully and drain clearance and maintenance works

We are still awaiting advice from OCC highways as to when the works that were started in February will be completed and the rest of the gulleys in the Baldons will be cleared.

Village Gates

Repair work to the gate on Baldon Lane has been started. It will also get a fresh coat of paint. The gate will be operational should we ever need to use it. Thank you to Anton Williams for his work on this.

The new gate to replace the existing one at Parsonage Farm, which is beyond repair, will be delivered and installed in the next few weeks.

Baldons village website

We have agreed scope of work with a new website provider and work is underway on building it. We estimate having a working site sometime mid-April or before if all goes smoothly. Until the new site is available, we will post meeting minutes and agendas via Baldons info and any other important updates also.

We wish you a very happy Easter.

Future Parish Council meeting dates 2025.

11th May 2026

13th July 2026

14th September 2026

9th November 2026

All meetings to be held at the village hall and start at 7.30pm.



Wednesday 8th April 2026 - 7.30pm Marsh Baldon Village Hall, OX44 9LL

This month's Filling Station will be with speaker Helen Azer.

Coffee/tea and cake from 7.30pm, worship at 7.45pm, a talk at 8.15pm, finish 9.15/9.30pm. You are welcome to come and go at any point in the evening.

The South Oxfordshire Filling Station is one of a network of Filling Stations nationwide (www.thefillingstation.org.uk), where Christians gather once a month to enjoy friendship, to build faith and meet with God. It is not a new church denomination; anyone of any denomination, any faith or no faith is welcome. Come and see!

If you are interested contact Catherine Mason (01865 343503, mob. 07879 626828) or Tom Hunnings (07778 104806).

NUNEHAM COURTENAY PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Have your say on the future of this parish

South Oxfordshire District Council is holding a first stage consultation on the future of this parish council. The consultation closes on Thursday 9th April. The parish council told the district council that Nuneham Courtenay can no longer support a parish council of its own as its changed demography means this small community cannot find enough residents to fill the five places that are the minimum size of any parish council.

The district council thinks the future lies in combining this parish with a neighbouring parish, such as Marsh Baldon or Toot Baldon or even Clifton Hampden, Radley or Sandford. But the parish council thinks a Nuneham Courtenay Parish Meeting might be a better option: a small parish elects one resident each year to chair the parish meetings where residents can vote to spend their Council Tax element on maintaining their parish's treasures, like the Village Hall and the Playing Field in this case.

If Nuneham Courtenay were put in with another existing parish council, would residents still have a voice? Would the new parish council be willing to spend money in Nuneham Courtenay? Let SODC know what you think is best – and why.

Don't worry if you're a Baldons reader. You too can take part and give your views: Nuneham Courtenay? We'd love to have them. Or, of course, Nuneham Courtenay? Over our dead bodies!

The web address for the consultation is here:
<https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/legal-and-democratic/communitygovernance/consultation/intro/>

The district council will draw up a proposal after considering the views expressed in the consultation and will then hold another consultation, this time on its own proposal.

Planning Inspector issues judgement on subdividing plots on main road

A legal precedent has been set by a Planning Inspector's refusal of an appeal by the owners of 3 and 4 Nuneham Courtenay against SODC refusing them permission to subdivide their plot and turn outbuildings at the rear into a separate dwelling.

The owners may not have got what they wanted, but in a way they've done everyone a service by getting a legally binding decision on this issue. The Planning Inspector said the proposal "would erode the linear form of the village, by shortening the depth of the now conjoined plot, which would be highly discordant to the original estate plan for the village, with particular regard to the

planned pairs of cottages. It would therefore harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the setting of the Listed Building.”

Do you want Nuneham Courtenay to be swallowed up by the City of Oxford?

The government’s consultation on three rival proposals to reduce the number of major councils in Oxfordshire closes on Sunday 26th March.

If you see this in time, you can have your say by going to the government’s online consultation, signing one of the petitions or sending your views direct to Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government – the man who tried to cancel many of the May local elections, but was taken to court by Reform UK.

The parish council discussed the three options at its March meeting and the first thing the Council decided was that they believed it was not in the interests of the people of this parish to be swallowed up by Oxford City Council’s Greater Oxford proposal. This land grab would take in this parish and even Berinsfield, yet still create a council that even the government says would be far too small to run efficiently the services for which a top-tier council is responsible such as highways and social care.

Does not it often feel as if Oxford City Council can’t look at a green field without visualising an estate of houses? Is it any wonder most of the rural parishes it has its eyes on are horrified at the thought of becoming part of Greater Oxford? As for the other two options, the parish council felt the proposal for South Oxfordshire, Vale of White and West Berkshire to form a new Ridgeway Council was better than Oxfordshire County Council’s plan to become an enormous unitary authority.

Annual Parish Meeting

The annual meeting open to all parishioners will take place on Thursday 14th April at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Everyone is very welcome. Refreshments will be available and it’s a chance to meet your neighbours and talk about things you want to see done in the parish. I hope to see you there.

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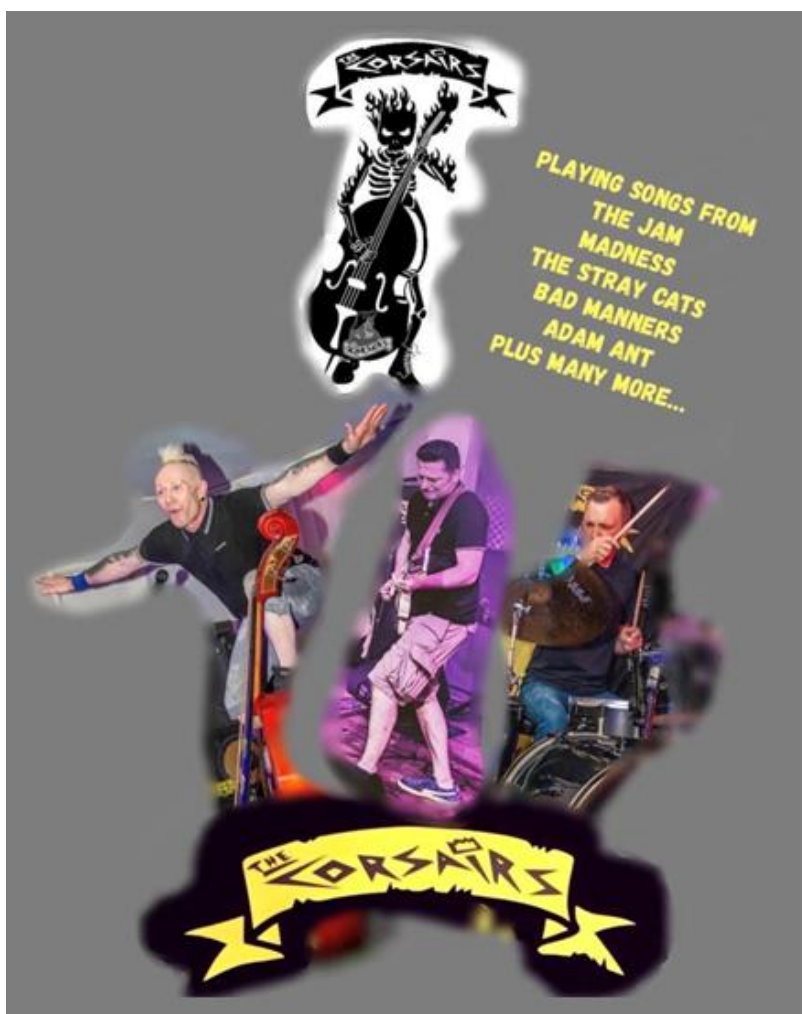
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NUNEHAM COURTENAY VILLAGE HALL NEWS



The village hall will host the Corsairs for a rocking evening on the 17th of April.

Doors open at 7pm. Refreshments and drinks available to purchase.

Tickets £5 on the night. Or buy your ticket in advance for £2 as it is subsidized by the connected communities grant.

Stop by the Old School House to put your name on the door.

Raise the Curtain:
Featuring Abby and Friends

A CONCERT CELEBRATING THE SHOWS AND SONGS OF MY LIFE IN AID OF SARCOMA UK

All proceeds will go to

Supporting

Sarcoma UK
The voice & will issue cancer charity

Abby Joy is a young performer and choreographer who has spent much of her time growing up performing around the Thames Valley. She and her friends have done many rehearsals in Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall. You are invited to Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall on the 11th of April to watch a snippet of their

rehearsal for Abby's final performance. This will very much be a work in progress for the final show. You are welcome to come to the hall at 6:30 to watch the last half hour of rehearsal in exchange for a donation to Sarcoma UK.

Book Club

Book Clubs meet once a month. Contact Arooj at nunehamcourtenay.villagehall@gmail.com for further details.

Yoga

Yoga continues most Monday evenings at 7:30ish. Contact Jenny or just rock up if you want to join in. Just £3 a session (all money goes to the village hall).

Book the hall

The village hall is available to book. Contact nunehamcourtenay.villagehall@gmail.com for more information

And to come....

Friday 15th May Quiz night. June date to be confirmed for the vintage tea party.

NUNEHAM COURTENAY SPORTS AND PLAYING FIELD NEWS

Thank you to our local councilor Sam Casey-Rerhaye for awarding us a grant of £2000. Taken with our other fundraising efforts and grants we hope to buy another piece of equipment this year! We are still investigating having the donated equipment moved from Horspath and installed. David Clibbon has offered the loan of some of the equipment that we need and a general builder has agreed to give a quote for taking the equipment out and moving it to Nuneham. Exciting times!

You can continue to donate via the QR code:



DORCHESTER ABBEY EVENTS

Good Friday 3rd April 7pm

THE LOST MUSIC OF AUSCHWITZ

First half – Music composed in Auschwitz

Second half – Träumerei (Dreaming) from the 1838 piano cycle Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood) is a deeply sentimental and introspective composition, the gentle melody evoking a mood of quiet contemplation, nostalgia, and the bittersweet warmth of a childhood memory.

Metamorphosen (1845) is an elegiac, extended-movement work for 23 solo strings, that serves as a lament for the destruction of German culture and a mourning of the Nazi regime's defeat.

From Jewish Life is a 1924 set of three pieces by Ernest Bloch, a Swiss-American composer whose work was deeply influenced by his Jewish heritage.

www.osj.org.uk Tickets £17.50- £30

Dorchester Festival 1st -10th May 2026

We look forward to welcoming you to Dorchester Festival! 60 amazing events over 10 days with everything from big names (Kings Singers, Jay Rayner, John Rutter, Brian Bilston) to workshops (cooking, silver, art, weaving) and kids events (lego, science, entertainment, art) and much more! We have an abseiling MP, vicars walking on custard, a scarecrow trail, mad hatters tea party and a 65 piece orchestra playing Abba. The week wraps up with a 2 day food and gift fair and live music on the outside cloister stage. All raising money for Dorchester Abbey and local charity Be Free Young Carers. Look at the website for more information:

Box office 0333 666 3366 www.dorchesterfestival.com

<https://dorchesterfestival.com/>

Friday 1st May

Scarecrow Trail – Historical figures (to 10th May)

Drawn to Imperfection – Festival Art Exhibition by Dave Nevard (to 10th May)

Hallidays Community Art Installation with Emma Coleman-Jones and David Harber (to 10th May)

6.30pm – The Festival Bash

Saturday 2nd May

9.30am – Family Dog Show

11am to 5pm – Local Artists exhibition (weekends & BH Mon)

11am – Community Art Exhibition Opening

12noon – Grand Opening and Tower Abseil

1pm – Cygnets Art School (age 5-13) – Spring

2pm – Amici della Voce

3pm – Cygnets Art School (age 5-13) – Anime

4pm – Dr Xa Sturgis CBE – Magic, Art and Illusion

7.30pm – Brian Bilston – How to lay an egg with a horse inside

8pm – Open Mic

9pm – Full Moon watching & ancient tree walk

Sunday 3rd May

4.30am – Dawn Chorus Walk (followed by breakfast)

10.30am – Sunday All Age Praise Party

12.30 to 4.30pm – Tentertainment!

1pm – Silver Clay Jewellery Workshop

2.30pm – Violin & Piano Recital

Jeremy Boughton & Sharon Warnes

5pm – Duck Race

6pm – Crime Writer Simon Mason in conversation with Robin Jones

7.30pm – The Kings Singers

Bank Holiday Monday 4th May

10am – Willow Weaving Workshop

11am – Festival Charity Fun Run

12noon to 4pm – Science mad!

1pm – Science show – Amazing Air!

2pm – Vicar Custard Walk

2.30pm – Science Show – Space and Time

3.30pm – La Boheme in the Manor House Garden

7.30pm – Folk Night – Steve Knightley & Rusty Shackle

Tuesday 5th May

7.30pm – Jazz Supper with Cate Cody

Wednesday 6th May

7.30pm – Jazz up the 80s with the Jay Rayner Sextet

Thursday 7th May

9am to 12noon – Reflections on *Drawn to Imperfection*

6pm – Rokas Valuntonis – Pianist

7.30pm – Comedy Night

Friday 8th May

12noon – Music for Autistim

7.30pm – Liza Pulman Sings Streisand

7.30pm – Pour my Bluff

Saturday 9th May

10am to 5pm – Food & Gift Fair

10am-2.30pm – Latte Art

Masterclasses & Professional Throwdown

10am – Quintessential

10am – Pet Portraits with Personality art workshop

10.30am – Imma Bakery Sourdough Demo

2pm – Dorchester Houses and History Walk

2pm – Curry Masterclass – Secrets of the Best Dorchester Curry

2pm, 3.15pm, 4.30pm – Mad Hatters Tea Party

7.30pm Symphonic Abba – The Thames Valley Festival Orchestra

8pm Birdsong Walk – Evensong

Sunday 10th May

10am – Scandi Baking Workshop

10am – Gardener's Corner for Families

10.30am – Festival Service with Revd Dr Malcolm Guite

10.30am – Basque cookery demo with Nick Galer

11.30 – Head Gardener's Planting Masterclass

12noon to 5pm – Food & Gift Fair

2pm – Lego Masterbuilders Club

2pm- Revd Dr Malcolm Guite – Poet

7.30pm – Illuminated Big Band Night –

BBC Elstree Concert Band & Oxford

Collutorium Singers – Shall We Dance?

Sunday 31st May

10am – John Rutter Come & Sing

Dorchester Festival Programme

For full details: <https://dorchesterfestival.com>



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Happy Spring from The Maple Tree!



We have a session every morning for families from Wheatley, the surrounding villages and beyond!

A great place to grow

Mondays: Messy Monday at 10:00-11:30am and Twins' Club at 2:00-4:00pm

Tuesdays: Smart Start at 9:30-11:30am

Wednesdays: Maple Babies at 9:30am-12:00pm

Thursdays: Time to Rhyme at 9:30-11:30am and
The Maple Tree at Forest Hill Village Hall from 10:30am-12:00pm

Fridays: Little Learners at 10:00-11:30am

Saturdays: Family Fun at 10:00-11:30am on April 18th, May 16th and June 20th

We will be open every morning that is not a Public Holiday during the Easter holiday – please check our website or social media for details.

Here is an additional date for your diary;

16th May – a fundraiser Jazz Concert at St. Mary's Church, Wheatley – details will also be on our website and social media.

The sun is shining, so it is not too early to think about the summer holidays! Did you know that The Maple Tree is open year-round? Watch out for our Ready for School sessions, as well as our outreach sessions in local village halls.

Wish List:

- Volunteers for our Wednesday morning Maple Babies from 9:30-12:00 and for our Friday Morning Little Learners from 10:00-11:30.
- A trustee or two or three – someone who cares about children having the best start in life, and/or someone who is willing to take on The Maple Tree finances or fundraising.

We are here to help if you need advice or support: 01865 236700.

Email: info@mapletree.org.uk

Website: www.mapletree.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley

Instagram: @themapletreecentre

Laura Spencer

The Maple Tree Centre Manager

CHURCH SERVICES FOR APRIL 2026

29 th March	10.30am	Palm Sunday Walk from Marsh to Toot	
31 st March	7.00pm	Toot Baldon	Tenebrae
2 nd April	7.30pm	Dorchester	Maundy Thursday Eucharist
3 rd April	10.00am	Dorchester	Family friendly Good Friday
	2.00pm	Dorchester	Last Hour at the Cross
4 th April	6.00pm	Stadhampton	BBQ and Easter Vigil
5 th April	10.30am	Marsh Baldon	Easter Service
12 th April	4.00pm	Toot Baldon	Evensong
19 th April	9.30am	Toot Baldon	Holy Communion
26 th April	11.00am	Marsh Baldon	Holy Communion

CHURCH FLOWERS

Date	Marsh	Toot
LENT		NO FLOWERS
5 th & 12 th April	If you would like to help decorate our churches for Easter, please speak to Veronica (Marsh) or Jane (Toot)	
19 th & 26 th April	Alison Lyall	Jenny & Jane

OTHER CHURCH DUTIES

Date	Sidesduty	Reader 1	Reader 2	Intercessions
5 th April	Claerwen	Ian	Sara	Natasha
12 th April	Sara	Catherine	John	-
19 th April	John & Catherine	Claerwen	Natasha	Veronica
26 th April	Natasha	Veronica	Ian	John