

The Baldons and Nuneham Courtenay Newsletter



March 2026

FROM REVD EMMA FIRTH

I am writing this on a historic day for the Church of England, having had an exciting last-minute opportunity to attend the Confirmation of Election of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury at St Paul's Cathedral. I am very grateful to Revd Jo Allen, Team Vicar of the Bridge Group, who had the privilege of a speaking role in the service and made it possible for me to be there.

For me, the occasion was both momentous and deeply moving. Like many women of my generation, I first felt called to serve God as a teenager, when women could not even be ordained in the Church of England. To witness this service filled me with gratitude for the many ordained women who have gone before me, whose faithfulness and perseverance have made my own path a little easier.

Recently, I have been reading about liturgical revision for an essay, including the period when the Church of England first came into being in the 16th Century. The separation from Rome, with the Monarch becoming the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, shaped what it means for the Church of England to be the established church. This was a period of political and religious turmoil in England, and we often forget that many people were executed as heretics in that period, including the very first Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer who was burnt at the stake in Oxford. For Archbishop Sarah, there must be a weighty burden, not just because she is the first female to hold that office. In the grandeur of St Paul's, surrounded by the ancient words of history, ceremony and tradition, I found myself reflecting on what it means today for the Church of England to have a visible presence in every community and the everyday realities of ministry in the rural churches of the Dorchester Team.

This was a day of two halves for me and I have reflected that I feel most affirmed in doing God's work through simple acts of service in our parishes: interring ashes; visiting the sick; leading joyful services in care homes; chatting with parishioners on their doorsteps; sharing blueberries with toddlers at Abbey Tots; developing services for children and young people in Stadhampton; supporting couples as they plan their wedding; listening to bereaved families; talking with a churchwarden in the vestry; or anointing the dying in the quiet darkness of the night. These are the holiest moments of ordained ministry in a parish, with God and for God.

As this is published, we're a couple of weeks into the season of Lent: a time of preparation for Easter, marked by penitence and self-examination, often linked with Jesus' time in the wilderness after his baptism. It is a season which invites us to focus on prayer and fasting, turning away from sin and back towards God. In this period, when Archbishop Sarah's enthronement will take place at Canterbury Cathedral just before Easter, I know that my prayers will include thanksgiving for all who have been martyred for their belief; as well as prayers for unity in the worldwide church, echoing words spoken by Jesus:

'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. (John 17:20-22)

As we look ahead to Easter, preparing to celebrate the resurrection, and in light of the appointment of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury, I am reminded that throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus consistently stood alongside those who were marginalised. He gave a voice to the voiceless: the sick, the poor, the outcasts and women. During Lent, we remember the widow who gave her last two coins to the temple; the woman who anointed Jesus with costly perfume before his arrest; Mary wife of Clopas, who stood alongside Mary the mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross; and Mary Magdalene, a devoted disciple who was not only present at the crucifixion but also the first witness to the resurrection. At a time when women's testimony was worthless, her witness reminds us that God chooses the faithful, regardless of gender or circumstance.

EASTER LILIES



As in past years we would like to decorate the churches for Easter with lilies in memory of loved ones who have died.

**If you would like to buy a lily in memory of someone, please let us know. £5.00 a stem
Veronica – vsandilands@btinternet.com**

**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

TEAM VICAR APPOINTMENT

Following a successful interview process on Monday 2nd February, we are delighted to announce the appointment *subject to legalities* of the Revd Lisa Morgan as Team Vicar in the Dorchester Team. Lisa will be living in Warborough Vicarage and will be ministering primarily in the Eastern Cluster. Lisa's licensing service will be in Dorchester Abbey on Thursday 11th June at 7.30pm.

Lisa writes:

I'd like to introduce myself to those that I haven't yet met. My name is Lisa Morgan, and I'm married to Nigel, between us we have 7 children and 8 grandchildren, not forgetting 3 cats! We are both originally from South Wales. I have lived in various places including Somerset and London, but my ministry has so far been in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, and has encompassed both rural and city churches. I was ordained in 2020, a very challenging time as I'm sure you remember, so my ordination service was rather different to most! I love swimming, especially in the sea or a lake, and I'm currently studying for an MA in Ancient Religions, which allows me to indulge my fascination for ancient Egypt. Both Nigel and myself are excited at the thought of a move to Oxfordshire, a county that means a great deal to us. It will mean a return to rural ministry, which we particularly love, and an opportunity to serve in a different part of the UK. We are especially looking forward to sharing our love of Celtic spirituality with you all, but are hoping that things don't get too fraught during the Six nations!

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this appointment process. We look forward to welcoming Lisa to the team, please keep her, and Nigel with her, in your prayers.

ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Items for the April 2026 newsletter
by 16th March 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

**JOIN US IN CELEBRATING
THE HOMECOMING OF THE BALDON ANNUNCIATION**



**ST PETER'S CHURCH, MARSH BALDON
WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2026 AT 8.00PM**

A short time of thanksgiving for the return after conservation of the lovely painting of the Annunciation, studio of Pompeo Batoni, given to Marsh Baldon Church in 1806.

Followed by a convivial gathering and exposition.

Baldons Local History Update



We are continuing to collect, compile and publish more information about the history of the Baldons. It really is never-ending – the more you know, the more you want to know! Since the exhibition and website launch last November, we have added quite a lot of new material to the website. This includes further information from the exhibition, more photographs, biographies, Roman finds, more on WW1, It also includes a series of short historical “vignettes” which John Wright* wrote, one of which is presented below. Please do take a look at the website www.baldonshistory.blogspot.com and if you have any comments or feedback, we’d love to hear from you in person** or via email: baldonshistory@gmail.com.

The Humble Swede, by John Wright

The swede was introduced into Scotland from Sweden in the 18th Century and was regarded as much preferable to the turnip for both animal and human consumption.

Later in that century Sir Christopher Willoughby of Marsh Baldon manor who was famous throughout the county and beyond for his advanced farming methods, decided to grow them himself. He was so successful that he was able to pass round quantities of seeds to all neighbouring farmers with the result that large swathes of swedes were grown throughout the area.

So the next time you have swede with your Sunday roast, just spare a thought that through the foresight of Sir Christopher Willoughby, Baldonians were enjoying the same vegetable 200 years ago.

Acknowledgments Victoria County History

We really would welcome more feedback and involvement from any of you – this doesn’t need to be anything big or grand, just something you think others may find interesting - perhaps a note on what you know about the history of your house, your family’s roots in the village, some historical event that you’ve heard about, maybe some old photographs that you’re willing to share, or you may like to research a topic you are particularly interested in. Just get in touch.

** We’re grateful to Sue and Barbara Wright for allowing us to share this material.*

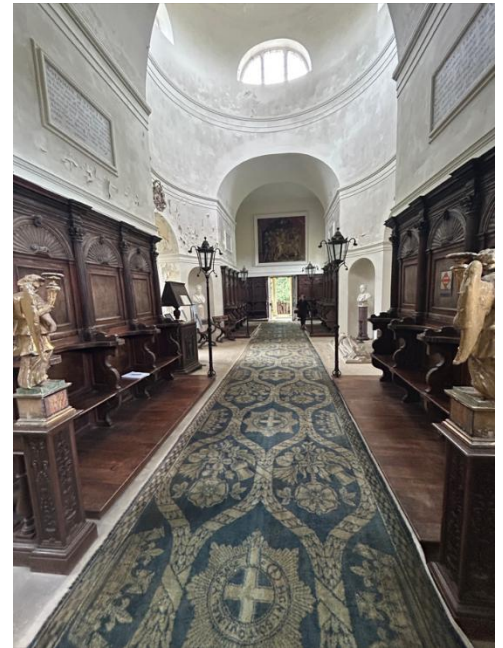
*** The current Baldons History Group are Paul Ardern, John & Ali Barne, Fran Butler, Bruce Don, Alison Porter.*

A NOTE FROM THE PARISH VICAR – ALL SAINTS NUNEHAM COURTENAY

If, like me, you're new to the area, you may be interested to know that we have three church buildings in our parish and all of them are open daily for you to visit: St Peter's Marsh Baldon, St Lawrence, Toot Baldon, and All Saints, in the grounds of Nuneham Park Estate. There are stories and histories to discover and uncover in these villages, and in particular today, I'd like to draw your attention to All Saints. Read Mandy's article below, to find out how to become part of the story. This is a wonderful opportunity to work together as a whole parish to share expertise and resources.

A note from Mandy

All Saints church, in the grounds of the Global Retreat Centre in Nuneham Park, was originally the Harcourt family chapel. While still consecrated, it is now cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT). CCT are seeking funding for and planning structural repairs and refurbishment works to the church. In addition a small group of local residents (Doug Stephenson from GRC, Sally Dyke from Rough Lodge, Professor Malcolm Airs and me, Mandy Rigault) have been liaising with Isobel Milne, the Local Community Officer from the CCT on how to progress other restoration works, which fall outside of the charity's capacity and for which the local community would have to raise the funds.



Of particular note is the need to clean the Coronation Carpet which runs the length of the church and repair / address a water damaged section. This beautiful carpet is part of the rug which ran the length of Westminster Abbey for Edward VII's coronation.

There is also the need to refurbish the historically important bell, which was taken by the Germans in Flanders, recaptured and presented to Viscount Harcourt in 1917. See photo for more details. Why this bell? No further information on it is known, so this might be a good project for someone interested in local history to do some digging and see if they can find out more.



The local group of supporters is currently too small to carry out what is needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Consequently, this is an appeal and a request for

more members to help form a Friends of All Saints group. If you are interested in local history or have particular knowledge/skills in grant applications, event planning or ideas for fundraising events, and could give us a little time, we would love to hear from you. Although we live in three different villages our parishes are close to one another and we often attend each other's community events. This would be wonderful opportunity to work together to help the charity that look after this church.

At present, monies raised from the sale of the new guide to Nuneham Courtenay (which is available in the church), and fund-raising events planned for later in the year will go towards these works. Events planned so far include a talk by Professor Malcolm Airs on the history of Nuneham Courtenay, on 12th June, in Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall, a Latin American classical guitar concert in the church, date to be confirmed, and an exhibition on Nuneham Courtenay, provisionally scheduled for Saturday 12th September, again in the hall.

If you think you could help with fundraising or events or want to find out more please contact Mandy on 07916 160582 or email: mandyrigault@aol.com

WANTED

LOCAL STORAGE FOR FAMILY / HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

SECURE STORAGE REQUIRED FOR 12 MONTHS FOR BALDONS-BASED FAMILY.

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BALDONS PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Gully and drain clearance and maintenance works - Update

Although disruptive, the works to the drains and gullies in the verges and on the road through the Baldons last month were thorough. So much so that the team spent a lot of time in Marsh Baldon and ran out of time to get to Toot! The rain and a breakdown of a machine also meant delays. We have asked OCC highways for an extension to the works so that they can attend to the drains and gullies that were missed. At this time, we cannot be sure when that may be but will update as soon as we can.

Update on Possible Contamination in the ditch across the Green

The sludge in the ditch across the Green has been confirmed by the Environment Agency as being caused by an iron oxidizing bacterium from the ground. We were informed that the bacteria will be more active due to iron-rich water seeping into the ditch from the surrounding heavily waterlogged soils allowing conditions for the iron to become soluble. It's harmless which is good news.

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. We are working on the final details with a contractor to allow funds to be released. Timings of the works will be advised. Our thanks to Andy Speight for his hard work and persistence with OCC.

Annual village Spring Clean and litter pick.

Please come and help spring clean the Village! Meet at the Seven Stars or The Mole inn at 10.30 am on 28th March.



Baldons village website

The village website host platform has gone out of business. Work will commence on building a new site. Until the new site is available, we will post meeting minutes and agendas via Baldons info and any other important updates also.

Future Parish Council meeting dates 2025

9th March 2026

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 11th March 2026 - 7.30pm Marsh Baldon Village Hall, OX44 9LL

This month's Filling Station will be with speaker Simon Baddeley, who will speak on developing the ability to listen to the Holy Spirit, and grow in practising the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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).

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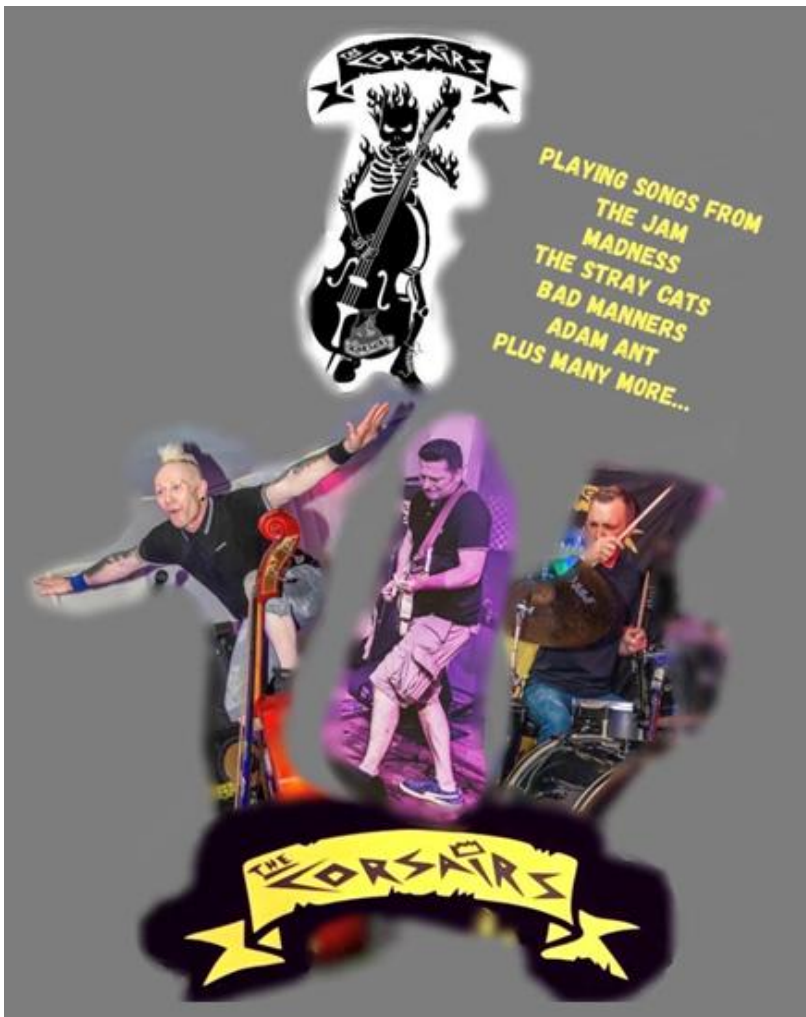
NUNEHAM COURTENAY VILLAGE HALL NEWS

Easter Bingo

Come along and have an Eggsellent chance of winning a prize and having a laugh!
Friday the 20th of March. Eyes down 7:30pm, doors open 7pm!
Come see our new bingo books 😄



Rescheduled for Friday the 17th of April! Get your dancing shoes on!



DORCHESTER ABBEY EVENTS

Saturday 07th March 7:00 pm. Baroque with The Thames Consort

Come and immerse yourself in the vocal and chamber music of the Baroque Period with the Choir of Thames Consort! Handel, Corelli, Schutz, Croce & Bach. Sharon Warnes and Claire Parkin – Violins. Judith Dallosso – ‘Cello. Director and Continuo – Jeremy Boughton. This is a fundraising event for Dorchester Abbey. Tickets £15- £20 on the door or visit www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/select/elvbzmlnmjyo

Saturday 14th March 7:30pm – 9:30pm: Benson Choral Society Spring Concert

Experience with Benson Choral Society one of the most powerful and moving choral works ever written: Johannes Brahms's Ein Deutsches Requiem. We will be performing the original version for Piano duet, created by Brahms himself. Join us for a performance of this timeless masterpiece and Brahms's vision of comfort. Tickets are available online at www.bensonchoralsociety.org.uk
Seats: £20 reserved, £17 unreserved

Saturday 21st March 7pm

ROSALIND VENTRIS PLAYS WALTON, AND RACHMANINOV

Walton's Viola Concerto is a 20th-century masterpiece for the "Cinderella instrument" of the viola, known for its melancholic opening, brisk scherzo, and eloquent epilogue. 'Rach 2' is a long, glorious, and deeply melodic Romantic symphony with soaring melodies, rich orchestral sound, and passionate, brooding atmosphere. Rachmaninov Motets for choir / Walton Viola concerto / Rachmaninov Symphony No 2

Rosalind Ventris viola - Director of Music at the Yehudi Menuhin School in Surrey, John Lubbock conductor, OSJ Voices, Orchestra of St John's
<https://www.osj.org.uk> Tickets £17.50- £30

Saturday 28th March 6:45 pm – 9:45 pm: Rock Choir Live! A Charity Concert for Wallingford Family Centre & Sue Ryder Oxfordshire

Enjoy an uplifting evening of feel-good music with Rock Choir at Dorchester Abbey in support of Wigod Way Wallingford Family Centre and Sue Ryder Palliative Care Hub South Oxfordshire. Your ticket helps local families access vital services and ensures compassionate palliative and bereavement care in our community. Join us for harmony, energy and a night that celebrates music and kindness.

Why Your Ticket Matters: All funds raised will be shared between the Family Centre and Sue Ryder, helping to • provide children and parents with crucial support for families • ensure local families receive compassionate palliative and bereavement care. Tickets £25

www.tickettailor.com/events/wigodwaywallingfordfamilycentre/1957795

FOR FULL EVENT LISTINGS& ALL TICKET LINKS PLEASE VISIT OUR EVENT PAGES www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/whats-on/



The biennial Dorchester-on-Thames Festival is one of Oxfordshire's leading Festivals, taking place over 10 action-packed Spring days, based in and around the stunning location of Dorchester Abbey.

Since 2005 the Festival has regularly attracted over 5,000 people each year, from serious followers of the arts to schools, families and children of all ages and has raised significant profile and £350,000 for Dorchester Abbey and local charities. In 2026 we are partnering with local charity [Be Free Young Carers](#). This wonderful charity enables Oxfordshire Young Carers to achieve their full potential by delivering a far-reaching developmental and emotional support network of people and resources in their daily lives, schools and communities.

Highlights in 2026 include The Kings Singers, Regents Opera, Brian Bilston, the BBC Elstree Concert Band, the now legendary abseil down the abbey's 100ft tower, cookery and art workshops, poetry, comedy, folk and jazz nights, a gift and food fair, dog show, fun run and even a duck race. The Dorchester Festival runs throughout May 2026. For more information please visit: <https://dorchesterfestival.com>



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The Seven Stars at Marsh Baldon

MOTHER'S DAY

Lunch

PLEASE JOIN US

SUNDAY, 15TH MARCH 2026

2 COURSES - £29.95

3 COURSES - £34.95

GLASS OF FIZZ FOR ALL MUMS ON ARRIVAL

01865 343337 - INFO@SEVENSTARSATMB.CO.UK



Seven Stars at Marsh Baldon's

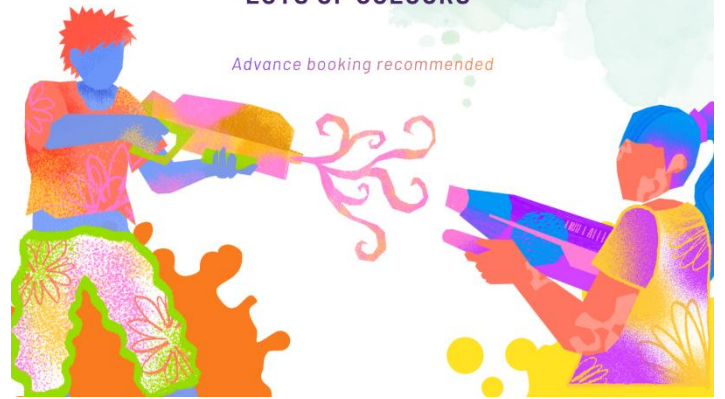
HOLI FEST

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1 pm onwards

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WALLINGFORD MUSEUM OPENS FROM TUESDAY MARCH 3RD 2026

Please look at the website for opening times: www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk

We look forward to another fabulous event with the return of the Saxons to the museum!

“Meet the Anglo-Saxons!” An event for all the family. This is a drop in event running from 11am to 4pm. Saturday 11th April 2026. Please note that normal museum admission fee applies, adults £6 and accompanied children free.

Come and discover more about the day to day lives of the people who lived and worked within the Anglo-Saxon burh of Wallingford. Weaving to writing, wheels to warfare, how would you manage without electricity, plastic materials or modern transport?

The museum offers three intriguing and different exhibitions this year, something for all of the family.

‘Through Wallingford’s Workhouse Door - Explore, Experience, Endure’

This exhibition offers families, especially for those children learning about the Victorians, to discover history on their doorstep!

Visitors are invited to cross the threshold of the Workhouse and discover what life was really like for the men, women, and children who passed through its doors — not by choice, but through necessity.

‘Agatha Christie's Wallingford’

Wallingford Museum will mark the 50th anniversary year of Dame Agatha Christie's death at Winterbrook House, with a special exhibition highlighting aspects of life in Wallingford during her later life.

The final exhibition is **‘Digging for Wallingford - Archaeology at Work’** - discover more about the work of the TWHAS archaeologists.



3.05

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MESSAGE FROM OLLY GLOVER MP

Following the fourth wettest January on record, I am not surprised to have received a flurry of concerns about potholes and flooding from across the constituency. While individual cases are all followed up on, I have also been looking into longer term solutions and funding.

With services such as adult social care experiencing huge levels of demand, and Oxfordshire County Council facing a £24.1 million cut in government funding, I raised the need for additional resources to repair potholes at Prime Minister's Questions. I didn't get much of an answer, but I will continue working with our local councils to secure the funding required to keep our roads, cycle paths, and pavements safe and serviceable.

In Parliament, I also questioned a Home Office minister about the mishandling of a domestic violence case by Thames Valley Police, highlighted the lack of safe cycle routes along the A417 and A338, and spoke about the impact of changes to Indefinite Leave to Remain rules on valued employees in local scientific businesses. I was pleased to present a bill to create a Rail Passengers' Charter, aimed at securing better train services, including high speed Wi Fi, improved accessibility at stations like Cholsey, and adequate seating for passengers. Train travel isn't cheap, and passengers deserve a better deal.

It was great to welcome Dark Horse Roastery and Hendred Vineyard to Parliament in January as part of an event promoting Oxfordshire's independent hospitality businesses. I also had the pleasure of meeting students from Uffington Primary School during their visit to the House of Commons. Schools and other group that would like an educational tour of Parliament can learn more at www.parliament.uk/education or email me if you need a hand to book a visit.

Returning to the issue of water, I wrote to the Environment Secretary requesting a meeting to discuss the spiralling costs of the proposed reservoir, which appear to undermine the business case for allowing Thames Water to proceed with such a large project, one that bill payers would ultimately fund. We have, however, had some success with Thames Water on a smaller scale. For example, they joined me, business leaders from Didcot, the Environment Agency, and local councils to unblock measures needed to prevent flooding on Milton Park and Trident Business Park.

As always, if there is anything you feel I can help with, please do not hesitate to contact me and my team at olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk or by leaving a voice message on 0207 219 7657.

Olly

When it comes to our gardens at this time of year, less is often more. Resist the urge to tidy (leave that energy for the litter pick!) and instead sit back and let nature run its course.

1. **Leave some areas undisturbed**

Sometimes what really matters is what you don't do. Leave dead leaves, log piles, and dead flowers where they are. These provide vital shelter and resources for hedgehogs, insects, and small mammals, and are crucial habitats as wildlife becomes active in early spring.

2. **Feed the birds**

Providing food for birds is a great help, but make sure all bird feeders are cleaned weekly to prevent the spread of disease. If you won't have the time or energy to thoroughly clean feeders weekly using disinfectant, then it's better to grow native plants with berries and seeds, such as Elder trees, Hawthorn, and fruit trees, all of which provide natural bird feed.

If you think you have spotted a diseased or injured bird in your garden (obvious wounds or bleeding, swellings or crusty growths on the skin, heavy breathing), do not touch them or pick them up. Instead, report any sick birds you see to Garden Wildlife Health. Dead wild birds should be reported to Defra using the online reporting system.

3. **Grow food for bees and butterflies**

Sow native wildflower seeds in trays or modules now to grow plants for your own mini meadow later in the year.

4. **Keep an eye out for emerging wildlife**

As slumbering hedgehogs begin to wake, you can support them by providing suitable food (meaty cat food) and water (not milk) in shallow dishes. Avoid disturbing wild corners and log piles where a hedgehog may be hibernating and create gaps under fences to encourage safe movement in and out of your garden.



Check out the guidance on our website for more details:

<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/helping-nature-on-your-patch>

CHURCH SERVICES FOR MARCH 2026

1 st March	10.30am	Dorchester	Team Service
8 th March	4.00pm	Toot Baldon	Evensong
15 th March	9.30am	Toot Baldon	Mothering Sunday
22 nd March	11.00am	Marsh Baldon	Holy Communion
29 th March	10.30am	Palm Sunday Walk from Marsh to Toot	
31 st March	7.00pm	Toot Baldon	Tenebrae

Lent Group in the Baldons and Nuneham: Tuesdays throughout Lent, 7:30pm led by Catherine Mason and others: For details: catherinevmason@gmail.com.

There are many other special services, groups and events going on in the wider Dorchester Team throughout Lent, with full details here: <https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Lent-Leaflet-2026.pdf>

Full details of Holy Week and Easter Services will be in the April newsletter.



25TH MARCH, 8PM: THANKSGIVING EVENING FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE BALDON ANNUNCIATION
See notice on p5 for more details

CHURCH FLOWERS

Date

Marsh

Toot

LENT

NO FLOWERS

OTHER CHURCH DUTIES

Date

Sidesduty

Reader 1

Reader 2

Intercessions

8th March

Sara

Natasha

Peter

-

15th March

Peter

Veronica

Catherine

Peter

22nd March

Natasha

Sara

John

Catherine

29th March

John & Catherine

-

-

-