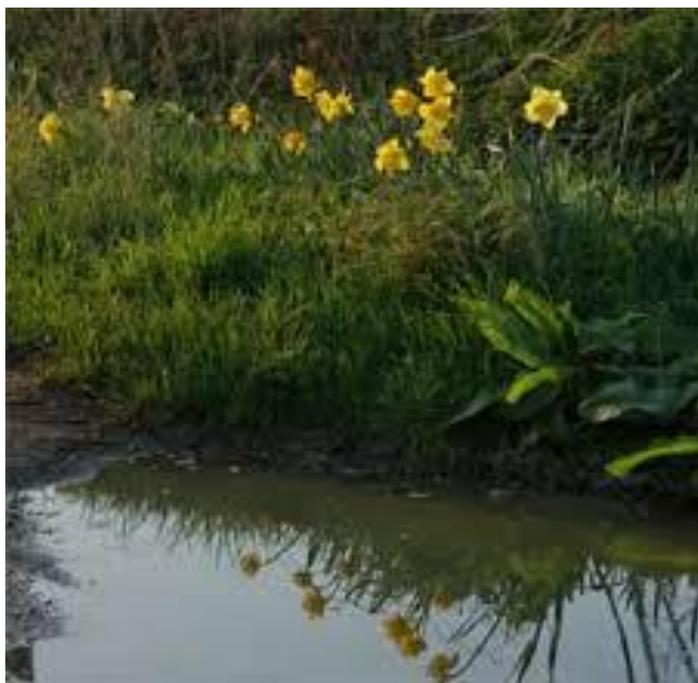


The Mouthpiece

Culham's Newsletter

March 2026



Dates for your Diary

Sun Mar 1 st	10.30am	Leaving service for Rev'd Jo Allen	Dorchester Abbey
Fri Mar 6 th	7.30pm	Ladies of Culham – Singing workshop	St Paul's Church
Wed Mar 11 th	7.30pm	Parish Council Meeting	Culham Pre-School/Nursery
13 – 29 Mar	tba	Culham Spring Clean & Litter pick	The Village
Sun Mar 29 th	11am	Palm Sunday Service	St Paul's Church

Talking Point by Rev'd 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.

Rev'd Emma Firth

Team News

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 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

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/

Culham Village Community WhatsApp Group

Please scan the QR code below to join now!



To engage with your local community, please join the **'Culham Village Community'** WhatsApp group.

To scan the QR code above simply open up your 'photo' app and hover it over the QR code and join the relevant group that interests you.

Culham Village Defibrillator



The Culham Village Defibrillator is located at the Culham Village Nursery & Preschool on an external wall facing onto the Glebe.

Village News

Village website: www.culhamvillage.org.uk

Summary of Culham Parish Council Meeting Held on Wed 11th Feb 2026

1. Welcome by chair and declarations of interest
No interests declared
2. Public participation:
 - Flooding in A415 near the traffic lights. Robin will take this to Highways and report again to FixMyStreet
 - Grass area around traffic lights is overgrown. This will be changed with the new road crossing
 - Litter picking around A415 to the train station. Great British Spring Clean (13-29th March). **Action Mike is organising a Culham event and this will be advertised in The Mouthpiece**
 - Disaster Management Plan - **Action Sam will provide a template to get us started**
3. County Cllr report:
 - Discussed County Councillor's report
4. District Cllr report:
 - Discussed District Councillor's report
5. Other topics:
 - Community orchard: **Action Siobhan will prepare a plan for a planting in October.** Trees will be planted by professionals, families can do bulb planting in parallel
 - Tree next to #1 Tollgate Rd: We need to start doing tree surveys regularly. **Action Siobhan will talk to Muddy Spades to carry out a tree survey of the Recreation Ground and The Green.**
 - The councillors approved the IT Policy
 - The councillors approved the Reserves Policy
 - The councillors approved the minutes from last meeting
 - The councillors approved assigning the grass cutting contract to J Drewe, based on their quotation submitted on 7th January, subject to no cheaper quotations having been received by the Clerk. **Action: Denise to communicate the result to J Drewe and share the 2026 cutting schedule (same as 2025)**
 - We need to find a solution for the tree trunk standing near the orchard site. **Action Chris will contact the Silva Foundation**

Further details and links to documents referenced in these notes can be found on the Culham Parish Council website:

<https://culham-pc.gov.uk/>

Great British Spring Clean

The Great British Spring Clean is the nation's biggest mass-action environmental campaign. Each year, more than 400,000 volunteers clear litter from our streets, parks and beaches.

Love Where You Live

Since 2016, our army of millions of amazing Litter Heroes has shown they love where they live by pledging to pick more than 4.5 million bags of litter.

The Great British Spring Clean and Great Big School Clean are back for 2026 and will take place from **13 to 29 March 2026.**

Mike Cooper will organise a date for Culham – keep an eye on the WhatsApp group and the village noticeboards for the date! Collection bags and litter pickers will be provided.



Ladies of Culham Next Dates:

- 6th February – Pot luck dinner
- 6th March – singing (Anne)
- 10th April – paper flowers (Jo)
- 1st May – perfume making (Gaynor)
- 5th June – printing (Marianne)
- 3rd July – dyeing (Jo/Laura)
- 7th August – walk & social
- 4th September – decoupage (Marianne)
- 2nd October – McMillan Event / tiramisu
(Melody)
- 6th November – pub quiz (Laura)
- 4th December – wreath making

We look forward to lots of workshops, shared experiences and socializing as the year goes on.

To be added onto the LOC WhatsApp group, or any questions, please email us

Email ladiesofculham@gmail.com

First Aid course for the over 60's

Paul Tiney of Foremost First Aid Training is running a First Aid course for the over 60's in The River Room, All Saints Church, Sutton Courtenay on **23rd March 10.30 to 12.30**. Cost £10. Numbers are limited.

'Would you know what to do in a medical emergency at home or in the community? Come and join us for an informative morning looking at some key first aid emergencies where you could make real a difference. Held in a relaxed setting, we will explore some simple steps to take which could save a life of a relative, friend or neighbour.'

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- The unresponsive casualty (recovery position)
- Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation
- The safe use of an AED (defibrillator)
- Falls
- Open question time for any concerns about first aid

If you would like to take part please contact Charlotte Storrs charlotte@charlottestorrs.co.uk

Paul Tiney

Owner & Training Manager
Foremost First Aid Training
Tel: 07761 605909
www.foremostfirstaid.co.uk
info@foremostfirstaid.co.uk



First Aid at Work | Paediatric First Aid | Family First Aid | Defibrillator & Bespoke courses

Outdoor First Aid | Sports First Aid | Basic Life Support | Immediate Life Support

Once in a generation decision - a chance to have a say on the future of local councils

The Government launched its formal public consultation today on options for the shape of councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The last time a change of this scale happened was over 50 years ago so this decision will have a significant impact to everyone in the district for many years.

What is changing?

The Government is scrapping the current district and county councils and replacing them with new 'unitary' councils. Unitary councils deliver all council services under one 'roof'.

What are the proposals?

The Government asked the existing councils to develop proposals for them to consider. There were three proposals submitted to government:

- A single county unitary that covers all of Oxfordshire, which means it will be one of the largest rural unitaries in England
- Two unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire: one covering the existing council areas of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire ('North Oxfordshire'); one covering the existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire ('Ridgeway').
- Three unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. One covering the existing Oxford City council area but with expanded boundaries taking in all the greenbelt area and more (Greater Oxford). One covering the remaining existing council areas of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire. One covering the remaining existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

What do the current councils think is the best option?

South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Berkshire and West Oxfordshire overwhelmingly support the two unitary option. 142 out of 158 councillors in attendance at councils last year voted to support submitting the two unitary proposal including councillors from all political parties. Oxfordshire County Council support their single unitary proposal and Oxford City Council support their three unitary proposal.



Why are SODC supporting the two unitary option?

South Oxfordshire council believes that the two unitary proposal is the only one that will deliver improvements to council services, will be financially sustainable, will be responsive to communities and will deliver economic stability.

It means creating councils of the right size – not too big to distant and ineffective, not too small that they aren't financially viable. When councillors considered the proposals they felt the two unitary was the one that best met the government criteria and would deliver the best outcomes for South Oxfordshire. It will still be challenging in some ways, as any reorganisation of this scale is bound to be, but is considered, on balance, to be the best option.

Engagement feedback

During our public engagement last year, people told us their top four services that needed improving are roads and transport, planning and development, adult social care and education and schools.

The Two-Councils proposal won't just be more of the same –your District councillors think it will be a chance for something new and better. The councils aim to be progressive, innovative and modern, providing good value for money, quality services.

Each proposal has its own website that you can visit to find out more:

- A single county unitary proposal for Oxfordshire developed and supported by Oxfordshire County Council: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire
- A two unitary proposal for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire developed and supported by Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire and West Oxfordshire councils: www.twocouncils.org
- The three-unitary proposal for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire developed and supported by Oxford City Council: www.oxford.gov.uk/three-councils

The link to the government consultation is here:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire>

Please contact Sam Casey-Rerhaye or Robin Jones if you would like to know how to respond without using the weblink.

Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye

Councillor for Sandford & the Wittenhams ward

Tel: 01235 635566

SODC District Councillor's Report – January 2026

Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye – Sandford & the Wittenhams

Sam.Casey-Rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

Budget 2026-27

We are approaching the final major budget for the council before the government confirms the future council configuration for our area (which will then limit our ability to commit funds to things due to the accompanying legislation).

The good news I am hearing is that there will be no cuts to services in 2026, and a strong prospect of further investment in facilities and community grants, subject to approval at the council's budget meetings on 12th February. One thing already under discussion is a community cohesion project, to make sure as best we can that all our communities feel welcome, supported and included in South Oxfordshire, at a time when division is in the air.

I and my fellow Green councillors are scrutinising the budget papers on 3rd February, where I chair the Scrutiny Committee; and we intend to make suggestions for other activities/projects where the District council can add value to our public services using the substantial returns on investment from reserves that are reported in the budget.

Anyone can look at the budget papers on the SODC website Scrutiny Committee agenda page.

A secure short-term future for our local leisure facilities in uncertain times

With the government planning to reorganise councils in Oxfordshire in the coming years, a short-term contract extension - rather than a new long-term deal – has been agreed for leisure centres and pools in our area.

The council's current long term leisure services contract is nearing its end in August 2026. Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), a charitable community interest company who operate under the brand 'Better', has been the provider for leisure services on behalf of both District Councils since 2014 (and separately for both councils for several years before that). This covers seven locations in South Oxfordshire and four in Vale of White Horse, including outdoor pools in both areas, at Wallingford and Abingdon.

Changes within the new three-year extension will generate cost savings for the councils without any change to the service. There is also further significant investment earmarked for facilities across both districts in the remaining lifetime of the council, which is good news at a time when many councils have sold off or closed their leisure centres.

Councillor Grants agreed

I had lots of applications for this grant this year, which is great. It does mean that not all the applications will get the whole sum applied for, however. Working with the Council grants team, I have worked through them and applicants will be informed soon.

Talking of grants....

The **CIL community grant** is now open for applications.

Applications for the second round of the Community Infrastructure Levy Grant Fund opened on Friday 30 January for town and parish councils and not-for-profit community groups in South Oxfordshire. A total of £750,000 is available to support projects that improve or create new community amenities, such as community centres, sports and cultural facilities, play areas, and open spaces. Grants of £75,000 to £250,000 will be awarded for projects that are needed as a result of more development in the area.

More information, including details on how to apply, is available on our website: [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) Grant Fund - open - South Oxfordshire District Council](#). The closing date for applications is 30 March 2026.

LGR - government consultation launching soon

The government's Local Government Reorganisation consultation is likely to launch in early February. They will seek views on **all** the three proposals put forward to reorganise local government in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

The District council are working on an extensive communications and engagement campaign to run alongside the government consultation to publicise this and to encourage as many people as possible to take part. This includes a refreshed TwoCouncil.org website, which will be launching soon – this explains the option the District councils in South and Vale are favouring (Ridgeway and North Oxfordshire councils) plus links to the other two options, One Oxfordshire and the City Council's Greater Oxford 3 councils proposal.

New Council Tax billing method

Residents can now get their council tax bill by email instead of a paper bill in the post without needing to sign up for an online account with us. As part of the work to encourage people to use the digital services if possible, the easy e-bill sign up will reduce paper use and reliance on postal services, saving the councils money too. Residents can fill in a form on our website to switch to e-bills. If you do want to set up an account to handle everything online, you can do that on the Council website too.

Garden Waste Permits for 2026

Existing garden waste permits will expire on **31 March**. To continue receiving fortnightly collections from **1 April** and to avoid any interruption to their service, residents will need to buy a new permit. **New permit sales will open mid-February**. The vast majority of the 69,000+ customers will be able to buy their permit via their 'MyAccount' or by visiting southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit

Offline Support: Residents who need assistance, should call the Customer Services team on **01235 422422**

Free Business Webinars

As the decarbonisation work - replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps and solar panels - continues at Park Sports Centre in Wheatley, the construction company AtkinsRéalis has, as part of its social value commitment, organised free online webinars for local community to develop a range of new skills. Please share

- [Carbon Literacy for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises \(SMEs\)](#) **11 February | 11am – 12.30pm**
- [Building Blocks for a Social Media Strategy](#) **20 February | 10.20am – Midday**
- [A Social Value Guide for Small Businesses](#) **24 February | 11am – Midday**

Retirement

The Head of Service for Planning, Adrian Duffield, has announced his plans to retire after over 40 years working in local government and nearly 25 years at the councils, including 17 years jointly at South and Vale.

Cornerstone music events

Enjoy three standout nights of live music at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot this Spring. Beginning with [Katy Rose Bennett & ISCA](#) on **Friday 6 February**, bringing heartfelt folk songs, rich storytelling, and stunning a cappella harmonies from one of the UK's most distinctive vocal groups.

Then on **Saturday 14 March**, award-winning singer and actress [Patti Boulaye OBE](#) presents Here I Am, a joyful one-woman show filled with unforgettable songs and hilarious stories from her remarkable career on stage, screen, and beyond.

And to finish with a bang, [King Pleasure and The Biscuit Boys](#) hit the stage on **Saturday 28 March**, delivering high-energy swing, blues, and rhythm & blues from one of the world's most celebrated vintage bands.

You can book [Cornerstone website](#) or call the box office: 01235 515144

Contact me-

Please email me if you have any queries or need help: sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

Oxfordshire County Council News January/February 2026 – Cllr Robin Jones (Berinsfield & Garsington Division)

(Berinsfield, Burcot, Clifton Hampden, Culham, Drayton St. Leonard, Garsington, Nuneham Courtenay, Sandford-on-Thames, The Baldons)

Email: Robin.Jones@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Mob: +44 7916 293681



Last Full County Council on December 10th

Our Green Party motion in opposition to the giant 'Abingdon Reservoir' or South East Strategic Reservoir Option, recently named 'White Horse Reservoir' was voted for unanimously. Our opposition at this juncture was founded on the absence of a requirement for a full Emergency Discharge Plan in advance of planning consent. A letter has now been sent by OCC to the Secretary of State concerning this. The reservoir will be ten times the volume of Farmoor Reservoir and 4.5 times its surface area. South Oxfordshire District Council also passed a similar motion days later.

A LibDem motion, which we Greens seconded, also passed. This was recognising a requirement for greater community cohesion in light of the recent climate of fear engendered by the lamp post flag flying campaign supported by the 'Raise The Colours' far right group. An action plan is being worked on.

Next Full Council on February 10th 2026

This will be to agree the County Council budget for 2026-2027. There will therefore be no motions tabled by any party and no questions asked of Cabinet. The context for the budget is from a total population of 725,300, 18% are aged 15 or under, 18% are 65 or over which is about 130,000 of each. Rural areas have a higher proportion of elderly residents leading to concerns about isolation and access to services. Key age-related issues include providing for the needs of the elderly, ensuring services for children and youth are maintained (education, youth clubs, etc.) and enabling working-age adults to access employment and transport. Severe budget pressures derive from rising demand in services like Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs (SEN), inflation in contract costs, and legacy budget shortfalls. Compounding this is the Fair Funding Review 2.0 by central government, which will overhaul how councils are funded from 2026/2027. This is all against a backdrop of un-finalised Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution. The government has just provided indicative budgets for councils for three years so some planning has been made easier, but there is an identified shortfall of £5.4m this next year and this amount increases over the following years. It appears that the Council Tax will be set to rise, probably at 4.99% per annum for the foreseeable future.

Improving our fire service:

The public consultation on the future of Oxfordshire County Council's fire and rescue service which includes the proposed closure of Henley Fire Station was extended until the end of January 2026 from 20 January as originally scheduled. Rob MacDougall, Oxfordshire County Council's fire and rescue service's Chief Fire Officer, said: "I'd like to thank everyone who has already shared their thoughts on our proposals through the public consultation, we've had over 900 responses to date. Based on the interest shown, and because we want as wide a contribution of opinions as possible, we've now decided to keep it open for another couple of weeks, until the end of this month."

The consultation is available online at [Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#). My apologies if this report lands with you just too late to contribute, but the 'Facts First' document on the above page states the changes planned.

Wicklesham Quarry

OCC have controversially approved a major commercial/industrial development on top of Wicklesham Quarry outside Faringdon. Almost all of the 29-acre Site of Special Scientific Interest would be de-listed and access to 150 species of fossil contained in the globally unique Faringdon Sponge Gravels lost.

X

OCC has announced that it will stop using X, including its separate account for travel updates, OxonTravel from April. Other public bodies such as Cherwell District Council have also decided to leave over concerns about the rise in hate speech and abuse towards women and girls.

Leaving County Hall

OCC is leaving its current premises at the end of 2026. County Hall is being turned into a four star hotel. The council is returning to its former building Speedwell House but is seeking temporary accommodation until Speedwell is ready for occupation.

Culham Maps for sale

Roy Pople has recently retired and is selling his collection of old maps. Roy has four large maps of Culham , two are dated 1933 and two dated 1912 showing all the buildings.

What makes the maps rare is that they have many different hand written notes, land sales dates and prices with coloured boundaries.

Please contact Roy if you wish to see some images and more details of these unique maps, or indeed you wish to buy one.

osroy57@outlook.com



We're making some changes!

To improve punctuality and reliability across our network, Oxford Bus Company and Thames Travel are updating our services to run more smoothly with the new Congestion Charge and free Park&Ride services.

From Sunday 22nd February, our new timetables will come into play and be updated on both our website and app. If you're not sure about your journey, check out the journey planner on our website, or contact our customer service team for help. We're here to make sure your travel is as smooth as possible.

For Culham, the main affected service will be the 45. For more information, feel free to check out our website! <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/service-changes-22nd-feb-26>

To contact Oxford Bus Company:

Email: info@oxfordbus.co.uk

Facebook: [facebook.com/oxfordbuscompany](https://www.facebook.com/oxfordbuscompany)

Telephone: **01865 785400**

Address: **Cowley House, Watlington Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 6GA**

Our Customer Services team can be reached using the above contact details to provide information on timetables, fares, routes, general information or to take your feedback. Advisers are available between 08:30 and 17:30, Monday to Friday and Saturday, 10:00 to 16:00.

Other News



Hooray - we can start to hear spring in the birdsong morning and evening!

In early spring the local RSPB Local Group (Vale of White Horse) heard enlightening talks on Corncrakes (Jan) & international comings and goings at Filey.

Our onward programme is as below.

Membership for the remainder of the 25-26 season is now reduced to £10 for adults (whether or not you are an RSPB member), and free for under-16s. This gets you the talks and walks below, and a quarterly e-Newsletter

If you prefer to attend individual talks, you can do this as a non-member for £5 a time. You can join using the form on our website (under "Contacts"): www.rspb-vwh.org.uk.

* Mon 16th Mar: Bringing a Boom to Middleton Lakes (7.30pm River Room & Zoom)

Beautiful and tranquil, **RSPB Middleton Lakes** is a mosaic of wetlands, meadows and woodland in the heart of the River Tame Valley. Katie Thorpe (Site Manager) will describe the many activities directed towards encouraging shy, elusive bitterns to breed on the reserve. Male bitterns boom (the loudest UK bird call) in spring to attract females and defend territories.

This date is also the deadline for our annual photo competition.

* Sun 29th Mar: College Lake walk

* Mon 20th Apr: Wildlife of the Chilterns (Jon Mason) (7.30pm River Room) (and photo competition results)

* Sun 26th Apr: Greenham Common walk

* Mon 18th May: AGM & Members' Evening (7.30pm River Room)

* Sun 31st May: Otmoor walk



Introducing White Horse Reservoir

Thanks to everyone who took part in the recent statutory consultation on our proposed new reservoir. We're grateful to everyone who shared their views and attended our community information events. We're now carefully reviewing all the feedback received.

In January 2026, we were pleased to introduce the project's new name: **White Horse Reservoir**. Formerly known as the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), it remains the same project with the same vision, but with a new identity that reflects its role in securing future water supplies and delivering lasting benefits for people and nature.

We've also published a tender notice to appoint a main works contractor to help design and build the reservoir. Construction is expected to create around 1,800 jobs, with roles during and after the build spanning careers such as ecologists, engineers, archaeologists, electricians, park rangers and sailing instructors.

To stay updated on our progress, please visit thames-sro.co.uk/whitehorsereservoir

Matrix Arts Centre

Matrix Arts Centre is offering music taster lessons and parent information sessions for children aged 2–7 on **Sunday 15th March** in Sutton Courtenay. For more information and to book, please visit www.matrixartscentre.org.uk

The advertisement features a photograph of a man and a young boy smiling while looking at a book on a piano. The top left corner has the Matrix logo (a blue diamond shape) and the text "MATRIX MUSIC SCHOOL & ARTS CENTRE". The top right corner has the Yamaha logo (a three-pointed star) and the text "YAMAHA YAMAHA MUSIC SCHOOL". Below the photo, the text reads "Music Open Day", "Come and try our engaging music courses on Sunday 15 March - book now!", and "Children start their music journey with us between the ages of 2 - 7 and can continue through to 18". At the bottom left is a graphic of piano keys, and at the bottom right is a QR code. The contact information "Matrix Arts Centre, Sutton Courtenay OX14 4UA, www.matrixartscentre.org.uk" is located at the bottom center.

MATRIX
MUSIC SCHOOL & ARTS CENTRE

YAMAHA
YAMAHA MUSIC SCHOOL

Music Open Day

Come and try our engaging music courses
on Sunday 15 March - book now!

Children start their music journey with us between
the ages of 2 - 7 and can continue through to 18

Matrix Arts Centre
Sutton Courtenay OX14 4UA
www.matrixartscentre.org.uk

to



Message from Matthew Barber, Police and Crime Commissioner

Despite financial pressures, I am confident that we will be able to **deliver 53 more neighbourhood officers** this coming year, that's on top of the 218 extra officers delivered in the last three years.

This comes at the same time the Government has published a White Paper on Police Reform. It sets out radical changes including the regionalisation of policing into mega-forces that could see the abolition of Thames Valley Police. As well as plans for force mergers the document proposes the creation of a new National Police Force and suggests changing the law to introduce more direct control by ministers for the first time, risking the end of operational independence.

Despite some good intent around better sharing of information between police forces to tackle serious and complex crime, overall I am deeply concerned by these plans which will do nothing to deliver better policing locally and are likely to see less money available for the police in our area. I will continue to challenge the Home Office on these plans and stand up for policing locally.

Greater efforts on crime prevention, alongside more police officers, are making a difference, with crime falling across Oxfordshire. Locally the priority will always remain cutting crime and catching criminals despite the pressures imposed by Government.

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum tells the story of the county's military heritage through 50 objects in new exhibition



Soldiers of
Oxfordshire
Museum

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, the county's military history museum based in Woodstock, will open a brand-new exhibition entitled *Oxfordshire's Military Heritage in 50 Objects* from 21 March to 30 April 2026.

The collection of objects going into the exhibition combine highlights from the museum's permanent displays from the past 10 years with recently donated items on show for the first time. Museum Director, Ursula Corcoran, said;

"*50 Objects* brings many objects out of the archive and into the public gaze for the first time. We hope visitors will be inspired by the county's military heritage and even think of the family stories and treasures they hold themselves".

The objects have been selected from the 14,500 items preserved in the collection of SOFO Museum to give a glimpse into the story of Oxfordshire's military heritage. These objects tell the stories of residents of the county and the soldiers of Oxfordshire's regiments who have been impacted by, and influenced, conflict across the centuries.

Oxfordshire's military story stretches back nearly 2000 years, from the earliest named soldier in the county, Lucius Valerius Geminus, a veteran of the Second Augustan Legion who was buried at Alcester in 79AD. The county's regiments played roles in shaping the most significant conflicts of the last 200 years, from Waterloo to pivotal battles of the First and Second World Wars.

Throughout history, Oxfordshire soldiers have led the charge, at the forefront of world-changing events. A 19th century shako cap and Waterloo Medal highlight the 52nd (Oxfordshire) Regiment of Foot's role in Napoleon's defeat at the battle and encounter with his Imperial Guard.

A signed sketch and set of binoculars are used to illustrate their descendants' famous role during D-Day, 1944. 2nd Battalion Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were some of the first British troops to land in Normandy, leading the capture of two vital bridges over the Orne River and Caen canal in the early hours of the morning. The sketch of a Horsa glider, signed by the men who took part in the capture of what would become known as Pegasus Bridge, includes a note from one of the glider pilots, SSgt Wallwork, who wrote; 'On 5-6th June '44 I carried the best troops (Ox & Bucks & Engineers) in both Airborne Divisions (but don't tell t'others).'

The exhibition will include a collection of objects first uncovered by a French farmer in 2013, alongside the remains of an unidentified officer. Scraps of a uniform, badges, buttons, a pocket watch and trench whistle provided some clues which helped museum volunteers narrow down his identity to one of a small number of candidates, including Osmond Bartle Wordsworth, a collateral descendant of the famous poet, William Wordsworth. However, it was a chance encounter with a visitor to the museum, who knew another descendant that enabled DNA testing, through the Ministry of Defence, Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), which finally confirmed his identity.

In 2022, 9 years from when he was discovered, and 105 years since he fell during the Battle of Arras, his grave was rededicated in his name, no longer an unknown casualty of war. Ingram Murray, one of the volunteers involved with the research that helped identify Lt. Wordsworth, explains;

"After prolonged research with another volunteer using a wide range of sources, we successfully established that the remains were of Lieutenant Osmond Wordsworth, who had transferred to the Machine Gun Corps before being killed in action".

One of the most recently donated objects that will go on display for the first time at the museum is incredibly local – a set of beautifully decorated blackout curtains that came from a house on Park Street, Woodstock, just doors down from the museum.

Discovered while clearing a loft, the curtains had belonged to Joan Mary Shelmadine, one of the founders of the Samson press, which operated out of Woodstock from 1937. Dated 1941, the curtains had been used throughout the Second World War, then remained in the house in Woodstock ever since.

Alongside the exhibition, the museum will be expanding its outreach programme by taking a package of talks themed around *50 Objects on the road*, offering to bring selections of objects with an expert speaker to clubs, societies and organisations across the county. Talks and speakers are now bookable by contacting the museum or visiting the website.

Alongside its many volunteers that have contributed to and made this exhibition possible, the museum would like to thank the Greening Lambourne Trust for supporting the development of this new exhibition and outreach programme.

Further Information and Images

A full list of the 50 Objects, with images, can be found at:

www.sofa.org.uk/collection/oxon50objects/

The Mouthpiece

Please note that any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors. We accept contributions and advertisements in good faith and cannot be responsible for errors therein.

Please send contributions for the April 2026 issue of The Mouthpiece by **March 15th** to:

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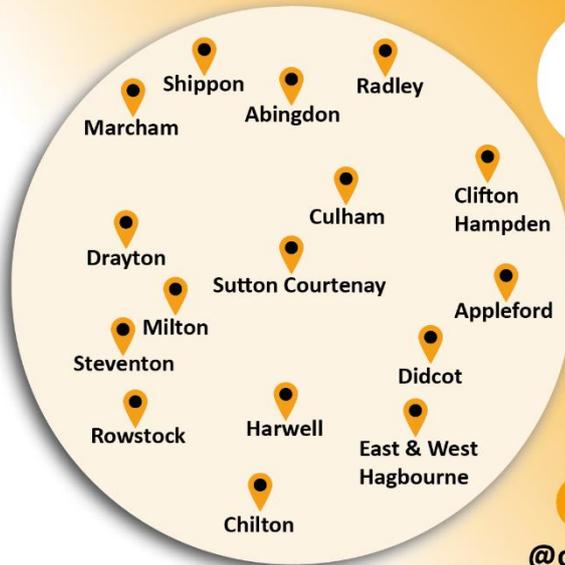


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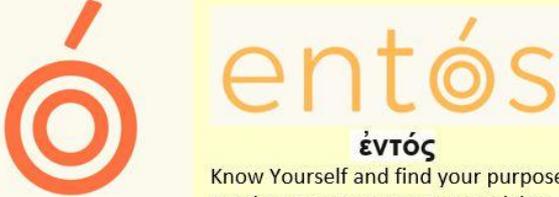


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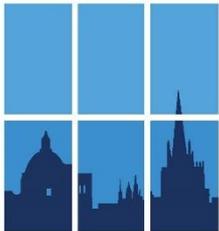
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