



# THE PRATTLER

The Heyford Village Newspaper

June 2025

Issue 480

A poster for the Nether Heyford Village Hall Summer Fete. The background is decorated with large, stylized leaf patterns. The text is centered and reads:

NETHER HEYFORD  
VILLAGE HALL  
**SUMMER  
FETE**  
**SATURDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2-5PM 2025**

**FEATURING:** Fancy Dress Competition (age 0-5 & 6-11)  
★ Daventry Silver Band ★ Raffle  
★ Vintage Vehicles ★ Dog Show  
★ Rose King & Queen ★ Stalls & Amusements  
★ Ice Cream ★ Refreshments ★ Gymnastics  
& Belly Dancing ★ Tug of war & lots more!

**Afternoon teas in Village Hall**  
email: [nhvsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:nhvsecretary@gmail.com)  
for further details

A small illustration of a village scene, similar to the one at the top of the page, located in the bottom right corner of the poster.

## Food Bank

Don't go hungry – if you are in need of help, please contact Towcester Food Bank 07724 832043 (24 hours). [www.towcester.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.towcester.foodbank.org.uk) Leave a message and they will phone you back. They can issue vouchers for food as well as a delivery or collection service.

Alternatively if you wish to help, please leave donations for the food bank in the box outside the door of 15 Middle Street or the One Stop Shop where they are delivered to the bank once a week. Thank you.

## The Prattler

The Prattler is run by an active voluntary committee comprising of Sue Boutle, Vicki Hamblin, Mary Rice, Jez Wilson and Mick Watts. If you would like to submit articles or have any suggestions for future issues, please get in touch with us by email or leave a message in Heyford Meats.

The Newspaper is supported by donations from the Parish Council, the Parish Church, the Baptist Church, Heyford W.I., Heyford Singers, the Bowls Club, the Village Hall and Heyford Picturedrome as well as the advertisers.

Thanks are due to the volunteers who distribute it every month. It is all very much appreciated.

  
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The April 2025 meeting took place on the 7th of April at the Baptist Church Rooms.

**Election of a Chair.** L Hall elected as chair for this meeting.

This was the last meeting prior to the Election.

**Election.** Clerk reported that there had been eight nominations for the eleven seats, and that there would therefore not be an election. Council would be free to co-opt new Councillors after the new Council had been constituted at the meeting on May 12th.

**Flooding Issues - Disaster Relief Plan/Emergency Plan.** LH and AW had met Environment (EA) and West Northants (WNC) officers and walked the village discussing flooding issues. Watery Lane was a focus of interest and the possibility of raising the kerb was discussed. The culverts all need monitoring. There is an unrecorded culvert at the top of Hillside Crescent. The widening of the Luddle Brook was raised as was the creation of attenuation ponds west of the railway. DM had met an EA officer and had established that the alarm system at the Weedon Rd bridge was broken. Cllr PB stressed that anyone flooded should report it, as the more floodings there were in a community the more response there would be, and unreported events obviously could not be considered. There would be surveys to come. It was reported that Steve Corcoran has volunteered to be a flood warden and was willing to work on an Emergency Plan.

**Rubbish collection generally.** The linkman had stood down after 15 years and the collection of both litter and dog waste was now combined and undertaken by Shield Services. Dave was thanked for all his efforts over the years. Clerk reported that the Playing Fields litter was being put in Waste bins outside the Village Hall. It had been assumed that the PC bin could be dispensed with as the contractors were taking rubbish away. The Clerk had asked the Village Hall what the situation was regarding the bins, and would contact WNC. There was disagreement as to the future of the PC bin and this would be discussed at the May meeting.

**VE Day – road closure.** As no plans had been forwarded or decided on it was resolved to cancel the road closure.

**Planning. Grand Union Canal Transfer.** This an ambitious plan to “convert” the Grand Union Canal into a river to transfer fresh water from the north to the south.

However, the plan would have little effect on the stretch of the canal within the Parish.

### **Reports.**

**Environment.** DM had met with an EA officer to discuss planting replacement trees for those removed during works by the river.

**Wellbeing.** KSM reported visiting the Patient Participation group at Bugbrooke surgery. Innovations include Doctors using an AI system to write notes – saving them considerable time.

**Infrastructure.** Winston Close light insurance. The situation has been resolved with Mick George's insurers paying out. They had made an offer of £2300 against Council's invoice for £2700 which was deemed acceptable. The Clerk had had correspondence from two residents in Winston Close who were under the mistaken impression that no insurance claim had been made.

**Heritage.** LH reported that there had been a hold up in producing the artwork, but it was hoped that this would be available shortly.

**Community.** The Community Lounge had started a weekly exercise course which would run for 12 weeks.

**Parish Council meetings** in 2025 will normally be on the first Monday of each month, (unless a Bank Holiday) and would start at 19.30.

**Reporting Canal Issues** can be done by phoning **0303 040 4040** during normal office hours.

**Reporting Highway and Footpath Issues.** The Clerk will report issues that Council is made aware of, but Council would encourage residents to use the Fixmystreet service to report issues themselves as there will then be no time lag; and first-hand reports are almost always better than 2nd or 3rd hand reports. The service can be found here

<https://www.fixmystreet.com/>

It is easy to use; you can have your own account and can check up on any issues you have reported.

Streetlights within the village can be reported to the Clerk, who will report them to the maintenance company. Please do not report to Balfour Beatty as they deal only with major Highway lights – i.e., motorway, A5 and A45.

Roadworks locally & nationally can be seen on this site

<http://streetworks.org.uk/live-traffic-works-map/>

<b>Councillor list with responsibilities and preferred means of contact.</b>	
Mrs L. Dilkes. 17 Furnace Lane, Nether Heyford, NN7 3JF e-mail thedilkesfamily@outlook.com 07967 753216	Finance, Youth Club
Mrs L. Eales – 3 Church Lane, Nether Heyford Tel. 01327 341707 e-mail lyndaeales@aol.com	Allotments, Youth Club
Linda Hall linda.hall.netherheyford@outlook.com	Chair, Website, Finance
D. Musson. 16 Rolfe Crescent, Nether Heyford NN7 3NG Tel: 01327 344461 davemusson073@gmail.com	Footpaths. Tree Warden
Ian Parris, 1 Winston Close, NN7 3JX 07909 514916 ianparris@ianparris.com	Councillor
Karen Rivett. 12 Watery Lane, Nether Heyford. NN7 3LN yartahk@gmail.com 07711 312069	Councillor
A. Williams 26 Church St, Nether Heyford, NN7 3LH anthony.k.williams@talk21.com	Vice Chair, Chair of Planning, Finance, Council rep to School Trustees
K. Sanders-Moody. Newlands, 4b The Green, Nether Heyford 07702 701862	Councillor
C. Leggett. chriseurolog@outlook.com	Councillor
J. Leggett justineeurolog@outlook.com	Councillor
Councillor Phil Bignell - West Northamptonshire Council, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester NN12 6AD. 07969 919779 phil.bignell@westnorthants.gov.uk	Strategic Planning Committee (Chair)

Clerk. Guy Ravine, Tel:07935 931787.

E-mail: netherheyfordparishcouncil@gmail.com

**Next Meeting: Monday June 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Baptist Church rooms.**



## Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul

### Services for June 2025

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Communion Service at Church Stowe
	11:00 am	United First Sunday Service at Flore Church
	6:00 pm	Service of Prayer and Praise at Heyford Church
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup>	2:00 pm	Pop up Messy Church at Heyford Village Fete
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Benefice Holy Communion Service at Upper Stowe
	10:00 am	Morning Worship at Flore Chapel
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Communion at Heyford Church
	10:00 am	Morning Worship at Flore Chapel
	6:00 pm	Holy Communion at Upper Stowe
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Communion at Brockhall Church
	10:00 am	Family Service at Upper Stowe
	10:00 am	Morning Worship at Flore Chapel
	4:00 pm	Café Church at Heyford
	6:30 pm	Flower Festival Thanksgiving Service at Flore Church
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Communion at Flore Church
	10:00 am	Morning Worship at Flore Chapel
	6:00 pm	BCP Evening Prayer at Church Stowe

### Midweek Services:

<b>Thursday</b>	10:00am	Holy Communion at Flore Church
	2:30pm – 3:30pm	Flore Church open for private prayer (not 19 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>Friday</b>	9:00am.	Morning Prayer via Zoom - Please contact the Rector for an invitation

**The Streets** we shall be praying for during June are: Middle Street, Manor Park and Parsons Close in Nether Heyford; Brockhall Road and The Crescent in Flore, the Main Street in Church Stowe and in Brockhall, The Old Rectory, Rose Cottage and Western Cottage.

Dear Friends,

*'Blessed are the peacemakers'* (Matt 5:9)

It's hard to argue with Jesus' statement from the Sermon on the Mount. We all long for peaceful lives in peaceful communities. When things get hectic, when life is busy and noisy, we long for 'peace and quiet'. Being in favour of peace is an obvious position to take. After all, we wouldn't seek to bless those who create conflict. Peace is desirable and we honour those who make it, just as we did in marking the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day last month.

Yet making peace takes time and hard work. The hard-won peace which Western Europe has enjoyed for 80 years remains a work-in-progress, absent in many parts of the world. The peace that God desires for all people and all creation is still a long way off (see Micah 4:1-4 for example). The news of conflict in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere, the trade wars, the wars of words between leaders and nations, the increasingly bitter and polarised nature of political debate all suggest that the peace we enjoy is fragile and under threat.

When we look back on the life of Jesus, we see that his birth was heralded by the angels proclaiming, 'peace on earth'. And at the Last Supper, his final gift to his disciples was, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you'. Peace is at the heart of Jesus' mission, but the peace Jesus speaks of is not just the absence of war, it is something much richer and more profound. It is all about wholeness and wellbeing and harmony and justice. Little wonder that we have to work to establish such a peace, that we must roll up our sleeves and play our part to create an environment of harmony, wholeness and wellbeing, in our communities, our nation and our world.

Again, it's hard to argue against harmony, wholeness and wellbeing, until we come across Jesus' words a little further into the Sermon on the Mount; *'You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...'* (Matt 5:43-44). For Jesus, peace-making is about harmony, wellbeing and wholeness, and its scope embraces all – those who disagree with us, those who are different from us, even those who are our enemies! This is the high bar we are to clear in our efforts to make peace in the world.

Peace and blessings be with you,

*Rev'd Stephen*

*Please note my new Telephone no. 07415 691541*



## Nether Heyford Baptist Church

### Services for June

June 1 <sup>st</sup>	10:30 am	Morning service led by John Perkins
June 8 <sup>th</sup>	10:30 am	Morning service led by Pastor Lee Hillyard
	4:00 pm	Songs of Praise led by Pastor Lee Hillyard (with tea and cakes)
June 15 <sup>th</sup>		Morning Service led by Alwyne Wilson (Coffee after the Service)
June 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10:30 am	Pastor pre record service.
June 29 <sup>th</sup>	10:30 am	Morning service including Communion led by Martin Buckby

### Events

Wed June 18 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am - 11:00	Prayer and Bible Study
Fri June 27 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am - 12:00	Informal "Drop In" - An opportunity to look through our book and jigsaw collection and share a cup of tea. No charge, though books /cards/ jigsaws available to buy.

**All welcome**

Thanks to everyone who supported the Coffee Morning last month which raised £336 of which £200 has been donated to Marie Curie and the remainder for church upkeep.



## Astronomy on the Green

This month I will consider the Zodiac as we interpret it, looking briefly at each constellation, its mythology and items of astronomical interest to observers. We begin with Gemini, as we are in June.

**Gemini** in Babylonian astronomy, the stars Castor and Pollux (Lugal-irra and Meslamta-ea) were known as the Great Twins. Both names can be understood as titles of Nergal the king of the underworld.

The Geminids is a bright meteor shower that peaks on December 13–14. It has a maximum rate of approximately 100 meteors per hour, making it one of the richest meteor showers.

**Cancer** in the Egyptian records of about 2000 BC it was described as Scarabaeus (Scarab), the sacred emblem of immortality.

The galaxy OJ 287 is located 3.5 billion light years away. Its central supermassive black hole is among the largest known, with a mass of 18 billion solar masses.

**Leo** was one of the earliest recognized constellations, with archaeological evidence that the Mesopotamians identified it as early as 4000 BC. In Greek mythology the Nemean lion would take women as hostages to its lair in a cave. Hercules killed the lion as one of his tasks.

NGC 2903 is a barred spiral galaxy. It is very similar in size and shape to the Milky Way at 25 million light-years from Earth. In its core, it has many regions of star formation.

**Virgo** Early Greek astronomy associated the Babylonian constellation with their goddess of wheat, agriculture and autumn, Demeter.

There are 35 verified exoplanets orbiting 29 stars in Virgo making it one of the richest constellations for exoplanets.

**Libra** was known in Babylonian astronomy as the "scales" or "balance". The scales were held sacred to the sun god Shamash, who was also the patron of truth and justice.

Libra contains several complex multiple stars that can be observed differently using small and large telescopes (showing different binary pairings).

**Scorpio** in Greek mythology, Scorpio's importance is attributed to Orion. Orion (the Hunter) boasted to the goddess Artemis and her mother, Leto, that he would kill every animal on Earth. Artemis and Leto sent a scorpion to kill Orion. Their battle caught the attention of Zeus, who raised both combatants to the sky to serve as a reminder for mortals to curb their excessive pride.

Due to Scorpio's location (straddling the Milky Way), this constellation contains many deep-sky objects such as the open clusters like the Butterfly Cluster.

**Sagittarius** in Greek mythology, Sagittarius is usually identified as a centaur: half human, half horse. Some confusion surrounds the identity of the archer. Either it was Chiron who changed himself into a horse to avoid his jealous wife Rhea, or Centaurus who helped guide the Argonauts in their quest for the Golden Fleece.

Sagittarius contains two well-known star clouds, both considered fine binocular objects. The large and small Sagittarius clouds that form part of the Milky way.

**Capricorn** has one of the oldest mythological associations, having been consistently represented as a hybrid of a goat and a fish since the Middle Bronze Age.

Messier 30 is a globular cluster with 'chains of stars extending from it (visible in a small telescope).

**Aquarius** (the cup or water carrier) in Ancient Egypt astronomy, Aquarius was associated with the annual flood of the Nile; the banks were said to flood when Aquarius put his jar into the river, beginning spring.

There are three major meteor showers with radiants in Aquarius: the Eta Aquariids, the Delta Aquariids, and the Iota Aquariids.

**Pisces** is associated with the Greek legend that Aphrodite and her son Eros either shape-shifted into forms of fishes to escape the monster Typhon or were rescued by two fishes.

M74 is a loosely wound spiral galaxy found 30 million light years away. It has many clusters of young stars and the associated nebulae, showing extensive regions of star formation.

**Aries** is associated with the golden ram of Greek mythology that rescued Phrixus and Helle on orders from Hermes the messenger.

An unusual galaxy in Aries is Segue 2, a dwarf and satellite galaxy of our galaxy the Milky Way, recently discovered to be a potential relic of the epoch of reionization.

**Taurus** in Buddhism, legends hold that Gautama Buddha (founder 593 B.C.) was born when the full moon was in Vaisakha, or Taurus.

Taurus hosts two of the nearest open clusters to Earth, the Pleiades and the Hyades, both of which are visible to the naked eye.

We can see that humans are very good at writing tales about the Zodiac. To my mind the secrets and facts hidden in these constellations outrank the story telling.

*Tony Boutle*



## Nether Heyford Village Hall

Registered Charity, No. 304256

[www.netherheyfordvillagehall.org](http://www.netherheyfordvillagehall.org) [nhvhevents@gmail.com](mailto:nhvhevents@gmail.com)

### Village Hall News

#### View from the Chair

Preparations are well underway for the village fete on 7 June 2-5pm. I'm sure you will appreciate what a mammoth task this is and how many people we need to bring it together. From the pre fete grass cut by 2 of our residents to the initial setting up of stalls and to the litter pick at the end. It's a very long day and very much a team effort. Any helpers around 9am that could help put up gazebos and tables (heavy stuff) would be greatly appreciated.

Hopefully this year we shall see fine weather again and be able to bring you a few different attractions.

This year sees the return of an old tradition of a fancy dress competition for the children up to 12 years old. Present yourself at the village hall gazebo after the opening ceremony to enter. I can't wait to see your imaginative creations!

For those enjoying tea and cake in the hall there may also be something to entertain you.

The Tug of War sponsored by the Foresters returns this year and the companion dog show is back too so get your pooches spruced up for the day.

Again this year we are appealing for donations of your wonderful home made cakes for the village hall cream teas which can be brought to the hall from 12 noon.

This is our main fundraising event of the year and helps keep the village hall going. I hope I see you there!

Please keep an eye on our Facebook page for up to date timings for the day. Continue to "follow", "like" and "share" our publications to help us gain traction.

Of course whilst all this is going on the hall is still going about its normal business. Please consider booking us for your party, meeting, group or celebration. Take a look at our website for up to date hire charges which have reduced rates for Heyford residents.

*Carol Tuckley (Chair)*

[Carolnhvhchair@gmail.com](mailto:Carolnhvhchair@gmail.com)



## Heyford Bowls Club

We've started our season well. The weather has been kind for most of the games and our green is looking good. We are now meeting Friday evenings where we hold a popular Meat Raffle and enjoy a social evening and we will soon begin our weekly Internal competition.

We are looking forward to the village fete on 7<sup>th</sup> June where we shall man our Spinning Wheel and we are meeting for Royal Ascot Ladies Day on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> for a meal, a flutter and a drop of Pimms. On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> our Ladies Captain is organising a Fun afternoon for all members.

We have 3 Away games in June with only one Home game at 6 pm on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> against Whyte Melville Ladies.

Our Short Mat section meet every Wednesday at 2pm and 7pm so pop along and have a go.

The Singles competition was held at the end of April with 20 participants. After a closely fought game the final was between Shirley Collins and Graham Drake - a nail-biter to the end, won by Shirley in one of the best finals for a long time. (Rosemary's words, not mine). More luck than skill me thinks, but most enjoyable and well supported. Thanks to Rosemary for organising.

Have a look at our website, especially The Gallery, and if you fancy a new hobby or a chance to meet new people, give us a call.

*Shirley Collins*  
(shirleybcollins@hotmail.co.uk)

## Welcome Packs

Welcome packs are available for newcomers to our Village. The information in them helps people feel at home quickly.

If you notice that someone has moved in recently, get a pack for them by calling:

Charles Kiloh, 3 Church Lane, Nether Heyford Tel. 07779 900860

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## Nether Heyford Village Hall



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## In Nether Heyford

At the time of writing, the weather has been beautiful, almost “lockdown like” you might say. Will it continue right into June? Will we have a dry sunny fete day? I do hope so, as it does help to attract the crowds and keep people on the green into the early evening. The WI will be hosting a cake and plant stall in the traditional way that WI's do, all over the country. It will be a huge shame if village traditions die out, but the truth is, that the majority of village organisations are kept going by the older generation. Many have worked hard to make these events successful for decades, and it would be wonderful to welcome younger women to help out and let the oldies put their feet up for a while.

In May, we welcomed Richard Piner who gave us a fascinating talk about the bird survey which he has conducted in his garden for nearly twenty years. He has recorded many different species and seen the rise in numbers for some, and the drastic fall for others. We were all wrong when we were asked to guess the commonest British garden bird... we were told that it is the wren. Would never have guessed that. Gives you a warm glow though, to think that such a tiny little thing has triumphed against adversity.

Our June meeting is our outing. We are not going too far afield this year, but are really pleased to be exploring what is on our doorstep. We are going out for lunch, and then having a guided tour around The Depot at Weedon. Many of us have visited to take advantage of the many retail opportunities, and have looked in awe at these large old buildings and wondered about their history. Well, we will find out on June 5<sup>th</sup>, how they came about and how they are being preserved. I shall be an expert for a whole week until I forget the details and then just have a sketchy outline of the facts.



Just a thought, perhaps I should try harder to memorise what the guide tells us; you never know a question might come up in the County WI quiz next year.

*Jane Wareing*  
01327 340875



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# Heyford Allotments

## A Strange Kind of Beauty

Many people's first impression of an allotment comes from having passed a site on a train or viewed it from the top of a double decker bus. A curious jumble of sheds, polytunnels and various frames and inventive pieces of trellis. At this time of the year that eclectic mix is peopled by lots of busy gardeners, tying up scarlet runners, planting out tender vegetables (now the threat of frost has passed), removing weeds that seem to grow in front of their eyes and of course hard working allotmenters carrying yet more cans of water for thirsty plants. It is a glorious sight, a strange kind of beauty that is peculiarly British.

Sadly, on neglected plots, you can also see too many piles of discarded gardening paraphernalia, partially hidden by long grass and rampant weeds. This is a depressing sight that too often gets allotments a bad press and leads to calls for them to be sold off for building land. Allotments are an easy target, but it does not have to be like this.

In some parts of the country, conscientious gardeners try to tend plots that are surrounded by an encroaching wilderness. Nothing seems to be done by the controlling authority and it is not until some brave person takes on the plot and begins a massive land clearance project, that change occurs.

In Heyford we have tried very hard to avoid this happening. We are proud of our site. When we know plots are no longer required, we strim the grass and cover them with landscape fabric. Generally, those plots are then quickly snapped up by new tenants. More problematic however, is the removal of rubbish; increasing amounts of plastic waste, carpet, old pieces of metal and piles of wood. Allotmenters are requested to clear their plots when they vacate them but only occasionally does that happen (although we are very grateful to those good souls who do show some civic responsibility).

In Heyford we ferry as much detritus as we can to the local authority waste disposal sites in our own cars. It has been suggested that waste could be burnt, but disposing of large quantities wooden waste on a well-used site such as ours is not tenable and certainly not good for the environment. Sometimes therefore, this challenge can only be met by hiring a commercial skip. That does not come cheap and ultimately the cost falls on other tenants through their annual rent.

We ask all allotmenters to look after their plots. Use them productively or ask for help in covering them. We ask them to remove rubbish and if at any stage tenants decide the plot is too much to cope with, let the Parish Council know; clear away any non-compostable waste and hand the plot back - for someone else to make use of.

Over the past six years, Heyford Allotments have seen a transformation. When the refurbishment began, we removed, with the help of volunteers, local tradesmen and

farmers, mountains of waste (including over 20 car tyres and enough carpet to cover the Green). We do not want to have to return to that situation.

### **Keeping in Touch**

There are, from time to time, vacancies for plots on the allotment site and we warmly welcome new allotmenters. If you are interested in taking on a plot - and benefitting from the things about which I have waxed so lyrical in this article, do contact Lynda Eales from the Parish Council and she will appraise you of the current situation.

Contacts: Mrs Lynda Eales, 3 Church Lane, Nether Heyford tel. 01327 341707  
email: [lyndaeales@aol.com](mailto:lyndaeales@aol.com)

Mike and Jill Langrish, 28 Manor Park, Nether Heyford tel. 07879777802 email:  
[langrish\\_heyford@hotmail.com](mailto:langrish_heyford@hotmail.com)

Good growing and enjoy yourselves.

*Mike Langrish*

## **U3A**

Monthly meetings take place in Bugbrooke Sports & Community Centre, Camp Close, Bugbrooke NN7 3RW.

They are usually on the **third Monday afternoon of the month**, starting at 2 pm.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June – From PC to DCI**

by Andy Tennet

A30 years of service.

Guests welcome at the monthly meetings – to learn more, visit our website  
**[www.u3asites.org.uk/upper-nene](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/upper-nene)**



## View from the Nature Reserve

I can't begin to write this without a comment on our exceptionally dry Spring. By the time you read this, the weather could have changed and Heyford could be worrying about flooding. Right now we have not seen serious rain for quite a few weeks. Almost all the blossoms are really magnificent this year. Some hedges and trees are still heavy with flowers. Some are gone but there is much to come. Cowslips have been wonderful on the reserve, increasing in number as years go by.

Inevitably the dry weather is having an effect on our wildlife.

Every year, at home, we feed Blackbirds with apples cut in half. They usually stop eating these sometime in late March. I am writing this on the 19th of May and both sexes of Blackbird are coming to eat 2 or 3 large apples every day. I attribute this behaviour to the lack of available Earthworms which normally form a large part of a Blackbirds diet. Many worm species are now in drought mode. That is lying deep down in soil, curling up a ball to conserve moisture. Recently, I was digging a post hole and came across worms in this mode.

Blackbirds have a little "dance" that is thought to replicate the rhythm of rain falling. This draws the worms to the surface where they are collected by Blackbirds which feed them to their chicks. Right now many worms are very deep down or encapsulated as described, This makes for thin pickings for any birds who rely on them for their young.

I chose to focus on Blackbirds at the beginning of this article to draw attention to the fact that European Blackbirds are now thought to be under threat from a virus new to the UK called Usuto Virus. This virus has had a severe, detrimental effect on UK Blackbird populations further South in the UK. I would encourage you to look online, at the BBC and others articles on this subject. In addition to this. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is asking people to monitor Blackbirds in their gardens. I would also encourage readers to visit the BTO site and consider taking part in this study.

On the reserve we are continuing to look at how we can best establish an effective method of documenting wildlife. For now, and for further generations we need to measure and record what lives, grows and breeds there. I have to admit that I am not at all "Techy". However, I have been testing two of the numerous online recognition Apps that are now available. Many "purists" frown when I mention things like "Merlin" or "Google Lens". However, my view is that these will never go away, and it's better to embrace them than ignore them. I have tested the song recognition part Merlin in several locations to good effect. I have also tried Google Lens to equally good effect. I know of people who swear by them and others who

swear at them. I got on very well with both and will continue to use them in conjunction with my shelves of wildlife books.

On the reserve, the deep rooted plants like Knapweed are doing very well. As are other drought resistant plants. The much vaunted grass parasite, Yellow Rattle, is also growing everywhere. Due to the dry weather, green grass is close to non-existent right now. However a good shower or two of rain will change that altogether.

Our pond is looking very sad with the only water now being in the deepest part in the centre. Maybe "our weather for now" is "our weather for the future" and we need to revisit the decision not to increase the size of this deep area.

*Dave Musson*



## **Heyford Cricket Club**

The season is well underway now and everyone has been enjoying the fantastic weather for our first few games. At the time of writing, our 1st X1 have had a steady start winning 2 and losing 2 of our first 4 fixtures. The 2nd X1 have played 3 games in Division 9 but, with some key players not being available, have yet to record a win. We have had an influx of new players which gives us more options as we progress into the year and many of these new members have already made important contributions with bat and ball.

Our Friday evening sessions for the Allstars and Dynamos have been really popular again this year and our thanks go to all the volunteers and helpers who make them such good fun for all the kids. We have started our Junior League cricket as well with both the U12s and U15s having turned out so far.

Friday June 6th sees our next fundraiser with our annual Golf Day at Silverstone Golf Club. We still have a few spaces available for anyone who fancies a sporting afternoon in the fresh air. The price is £70/head which includes coffee on arrival, 18 holes of golf and a 2 course meal afterwards. Please contact Chris Peck if you are interested on 07711 035258.

*Rob Pardon*  
*Chairman*  
07894 865194



[www.heyfordsingers.org](http://www.heyfordsingers.org)

*Music gives a soul to the  
universe, wings to the mind,  
flight to the imagination  
and life to everything*

**Plato**

And so, after a difficult year, our Spring Concert hopefully did a little of the above. Certainly the members of Heyford Singers gave all they had and opened with the name of our Concert 'Another Openin' another Show' in lively mood and then soared with the wonderful old lyrics and music of 'Ave Maria'. And then produced the calming influence of 'And So it Goes' which literally means 'That's Life' – a fatalistic comment on things one can't change or can't prevent from happening. We let go in 'Let Me Entertain You' as did the Gentlemen in 'The Wellerman' and we attempted jazz in 'Ain't Misbehavin' and sorrowful in 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore'. Our soloists in 'I am a small Part of the World' 'Sit Down you're Rockin' The Boat' and 'And So it Goes' were a testament to our Community Choir and a wonderful rendition of a Pam Ayres poem was a humorous addition to our programme. Ending on 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight' the Choir sang this beautiful Elton John composition from 'The Lion King':

*There's a calm surrender  
To the rush of day  
When the heat of a rolling wave  
Can be turned away.  
And Can you feel the love tonight?  
It is where we are,  
It's enough for this wide-eyed wanderer  
That we got this far.  
And can you feel the love tonight?  
How it's laid to rest?  
It's enough to make kings and vagabonds  
Believe the very best*

And you, the audience, responded magnificently to all the songs we sang – full house on Saturday and nearly full on Friday. So thank you all for your support and encouragement, without which our rehearsals would be in vain. And of course a big 'thank you' to everyone who made this all possible. We sang 'I Vow To Thee My Country' at the end of the performance in honour of VE Day and felt very proud to be singing this with our audience who had made the effort to attend – not just local people, but from places like Olney, Milton Keynes and further afield.

And if any of you felt you would like to join us or want any information about our Choir, our next term begins on Friday, 5th September so please do not hesitate to get in touch and call Keith Rands-Allen on 07971 786912 or visit our website [www.heyfordsingers.org](http://www.heyfordsingers.org) - obviously we desperately need men but we will take anybody who, like us, has the enthusiasm to sing and like Plato says, 'give a bit of life to everything else in our lives.'

## **Nether Heyford Tennis Club**

The new tennis season is underway, with a summer of long light evenings of playing to look forward to.

NHTC is a really friendly local tennis club that welcomes enthusiasm just as much as skill! We're based at the playing fields in Heyford and have members from all around the area. We have three high standard hard courts, with floodlights for evening playing.

If you're new to tennis or fancy getting back into it after a break, we've got a special Wimbledon offer for new members.

For the bargain price of £100 you will get membership of the club for one adult until March 2026, plus access to 8 group coaching sessions during June and July with our great fully qualified coach Ollie Reis. Lessons take place on Saturday morning between 10.30 and 11.30 and are a good way to meet other members and have fun as well as brush up on your racket skills. (Please note any coaching missed can't be carried over, all lessons must be taken during June and July.)

If you don't want to take up the coaching offer, we still offer discounts for new members, with the first year's subscription just £60 for an adult, or £90 for a family or couple.

More information about the club on our website:  
<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/NetherHeyfordTennisClub>

To take up the special new member offers, please email us at:  
[netherheyfordtennisclub@gmail.com](mailto:netherheyfordtennisclub@gmail.com)

## **Bugbrooke and District Flower Society**

It's time to get your tickets for our open meeting on Monday 23rd June.

Coral Gardiner will present 'Along the Silk Road'. Tickets available from Maria Owen 01327 341783. Visitors £12. Members £6.

This is sure to be a special evening with a very talented demonstrator. 7.30 pm at the Village Hall.



## Flore Arts Events

**Jazz in the Garden**, Sunday 13th July 2.30pm; gates open 1.30pm. Now pretty much a fixture on the Flore Arts calendar. Once again our hosts will be the generous owners of Rock Springs in Sutton St, Flore. This year we will again be entertained by Tad Newton's Jazz Friends.

As always we're anticipating a programme of foot-tapping jazz and ragtime favourites in a relaxed garden setting. You'll also have the opportunity to buy teas, cakes, soft drinks, Pimm's, wine or beer. Just bring something to sit on (and perhaps your dancing shoes).

Tickets: £15 (£5 under 18s). Please call Rosemary Read on 01327 341026 (between 9am and 6pm). You can also purchase tickets at Re, 2A Sutton St, Flore, NN7 4LE (during shop opening hours).

Here's a reminder of your diary dates for the rest of the year:

**Track Dogs:** Saturday September 27<sup>th</sup>. All Saints Church, Flore. A smorgasbord of folk, rumba, jazz and blues. Tickets will be £20; you can reserve one by calling Rosemary Read on 01327 341026 (between 9am and 6pm).

**De Parys Sextet:** Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup>. All Saints Church, Flore. Brahms, Mozart and more from some of the area's finest string players.

**Neil Richardson entertains: The West End comes to Flore:** Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup>. Millennium Hall, Flore.

Please keep watching this space for details - or keep up to date with our plans on our website at [www.floreartsevents.com](http://www.floreartsevents.com) and our Flore Arts Events Facebook page.

We hope to see you soon.



## 300-Club Winners

### April 2025

Winner      Ticket No. 2      Paul Hesketh   £65

Runner Up   Ticket No. 162   Julie Phillips   £30

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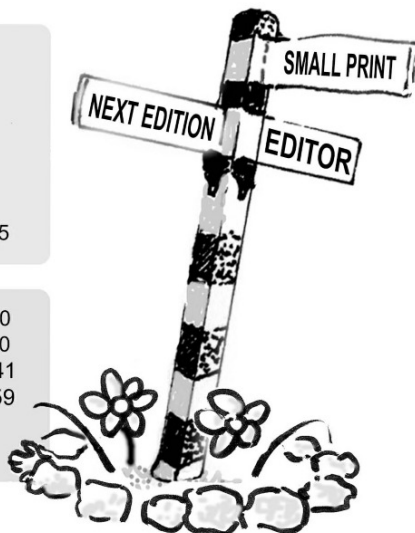
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