

Friends of Iffley Village

website: www.friendsofiffley.org

Chair: Martin Reed
Newsletter Editor: Juliette Gammon

Spring/Summer Newsletter 2025

Chair's introduction

Welcome to this Spring/Summer edition of the newsletter. We hope that you are enjoying the sunshine, but equally we are hoping that we are also blessed with April showers! Wildlife is flourishing again - the volume of birdsong has gone up and up since the middle of February, and our resident robins, blackbirds, song thrushes and dunnocks are now being joined by spring migrants such as chiffchaff and blackcap (though some of these will have wintered locally). Down toward the river, swallows can already be seen and from the middle of the month the increasingly rare call of the cuckoo can be expected, ringing out across Iffley Meadows, and even visiting our very own Horse Fields. There are few places left where that evocative sound still heralds the arrival of Spring and it is delightful to have this annual visitor in the Conservation Area. If, like me, your education missed out on birdsong, you can readily find recordings on YouTube, or try downloading a birdsong app (e.g. Merlin) that will automatically identify what you are listening to. A young roebuck with velvety antlers has been regularly spotted on the Horse Fields in recent weeks; he is quite bold but his harem of does tends to stay closer to the hedgerows, where the blackthorn is currently blossoming and showering passers-by with 'snowflakes' of fallen petals. The very similar cherry plum, on the other hand, is already mostly over for this year, as are the village's magnificent magnolias.

Not surprisingly there's been a noticeable uptick in visitors in the rural lanes. Iffley's ecosystem services are truly invaluable and our City Council should be recognizing that in its forthcoming new Local Plan. See page 3 for how you can support this by emailing the planning department.

In this edition we report on the hugely successful premiere of the short film of committee member Peggy Seeger's ecological song *The Mother*. You can next hear Peggy at the Village Hall on 4 May at 4pm when, in advance of her forthcoming tour, she will be launching her very final CD, and talking about songwriting. Tickets will be available in the village shop and online.

In addition, this newsletter reports on several highways issues following discussions with County Councillor Brad Baines at the April meeting of your committee; and on page 3 you can find an update on the work of contactors in the village.

Martin Reed, chair@friendsofiffley.org

Peggy Seeger launches her final CD with a talk about songwriting

Church Hall on 4 May at 4pm

Tickets from village shop and online

FOR YOUR 2025 DIARY

Fri, 9 May	10am	Waterperry Gardens	FOSM*	Gardens and Church of St Mary the Virgin with Geoffrey Tyack (9.30am for Iffley Turn minibus)
Sat, 10 May	10.30-5pm	Iffley Church	Living Stones	Guided workshop. Limited numbers, apply by 28 April. To book tinyurl.com/3s4kydex
Tues, 13 May	7,30pm	Church Hall	Film	<i>United-93</i>
Sat, 17 May	11-5pm	Iffley Church	Living Stones	Service celebrating St Dunstan, workshops, talks, bells. info@scholagregoriana.org or £15 at door
Sun, 18 May	4pm	Iffley Church	Ox Arts Festival	'A life of love and joy': songs from Medieval Europe. Tinyurl.com/4py2yte4
Tues, 20 May	7.30pm	Church Hall	History	Oxfordshire Country Houses with Alastair Lack
Sun, 1 June	3pm	Church Hall	Music	The Garnet Horn Trio: Brahms Horn Trio/ Schumann Romances, Trygve Madsen Horn Trio.
Tues, 10 June	7.30pm	Church Hall	Film	<i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>
Sun, 28 June	6pm	Vicarage/ Church Hall	FOSM*	Drinks in Vicarage Garden followed by 7pm supper
Sat, 13 Sept	3pm	Church Hall	FOSM*	AGM and Annual Lecture
Sun, 14 Sept	2,30-4.30	Church, Hall, Glebe	Open Doors	Guided tours, trails including Court Place Gardens. FREE
Sun, 28 Sept	3pm	Iffley Church	Music	Peter Sheppard-Skaerved: music for the violin and viola.
Sun, 28 Sept	4-7pm	Hawkwell House	FOIV**	Late summer Village Fete

*Friends of St Mary's ** Friends of Iffley Village

Nature and Music Spring Event

A sell-out audience enjoyed our Nature and Music Spring Event at the Village Hall on 22 March. We screened the premiere of a short film based on *The Mother*, the ecological song by the internationally renowned singer, song maker and activist Peggy Seeger. The film presents a global perspective of the mounting threats to nature, showing how acting locally to save the ancient meadows in Iffley Village is part of the urgent global need for action. We were entertained, informed and inspired by local ecologist Hugh Warwick in conversation with an exceptional panel comprising Peggy, local award-winning filmmaker Nicolas Brown (who made the film); and committee member and ecologist Dominic Woodfield. Over drinks afterwards, we were particularly pleased to receive suggestions from nearby community groups for future showings of the film. Further details will be announced in due course. And much further afield, the film is an entry at the Deauville Green Awards Festival, an international film festival being held in June at the GoodPlanet Foundation in Paris dedicated to ecology and social responsibility.

Planning update: Oxford Local Plan 2042

Oxford's Local Plan is currently being rewritten, setting out how land is to be used for construction in Oxford. But sites don't just need to be for housing or employment. National Policy says that Local Plans can also designate sites as Local Green Space:

*The designation of land as **Local Green Space** through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.*

FOIV's view is that the Horse Fields, an ancient surviving meadow in the rural Iffley Conservation Area, meets ALL the necessary criteria for protection as Local Green Space:

(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value..., tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and

(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Local Green Space designation has successfully been achieved elsewhere, including on land previously allocated for construction when its biodiversity value emerged late in the planning process. This is what has happened in the case of the Horse Fields, when biodiversity surveys (done by the Council after allocation in the previous Local Plan) showed that the Horse Fields meet the criteria for a City Wildlife Site.

We recommend that members take action to help save the Horse Fields in perpetuity by writing to **planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk** asking that the Horse Fields in Iffley ('Land between Meadow Lane and Church Way') is designated as Local Green Space in the upcoming Local Plan 2042. Please also mention why the Horse Fields are of special significance to the Conservation Area and Quiet Route and how they could, if properly managed, become a resource for outdoor education, helping both young people and wildlife to thrive into the future.

Iffley Mead

FOIV has been informed by Cllr Brad Baines that the anticipated planning application for the development of this site has been submitted to the City Council and is currently in the process of validation. FOIV are disappointed that the applicants have not seen fit to run a further pre-application consultation with the affected community before making a formal application, particularly as very 'live' issues and concerns around access, of particular concern to residents of the Augustine Way and Cavell Road areas, appear to remain unresolved.

Cllr Baines has been asked to pass on this disappointment and to request that the applicants reconsider the need to carry the local community with them on this development. In the meantime, we wait to see the detail of the planning application which is likely to go live imminently. FOIV advises members and other residents to scrutinise it closely when it does, to see if matters raised during the previous consultation have been taken on board.

Highways (within Conservation Area)

CPZ: The CPZ is now in force and feedback has been largely positive. One unwanted side effect is that clear lanes permit even greater speeding. FOIV asked the County for guidance on speed controls following the recent speed surveys, but the relevant Officers say that they are unable to visit us during an election period. If members have views on appropriate interventions on Church Way and Abberbury Road please email the Chair.

Lighting: Following FOIV's request for suitable lighting, we are informed that Park Town and Headington have also raised this issue, and that a trial is being done in the former which will be used to inform options for conservation areas with historic lighting fittings.

Towpath: FOIV remains very concerned that the County Council is not proposing any meaningful actions to address shortcomings in towpath safety, even following a critical coroner's report into the recent fatality. We will continue to lobby our County Councillor.

In answer to many concerns raised over the years we are pleased to report that the Lockkeeper's vandalised car, parked for five years on the Public Footpath adjoining Mill Lane, has finally been removed recently by the Environment Agency.

Court Place

FOIV has requested that Oxford University Development demonstrate how and where it has delivered the biodiversity enhancements and "net gain" that it committed to in the planning application. So far there has not been a clear or satisfactory answer, but the discussion is continuing. FOIV considers it important that promises made by planning applicants in order to obtain planning consent are fully delivered and followed up. We shall continue to press for information and answers on this matter.