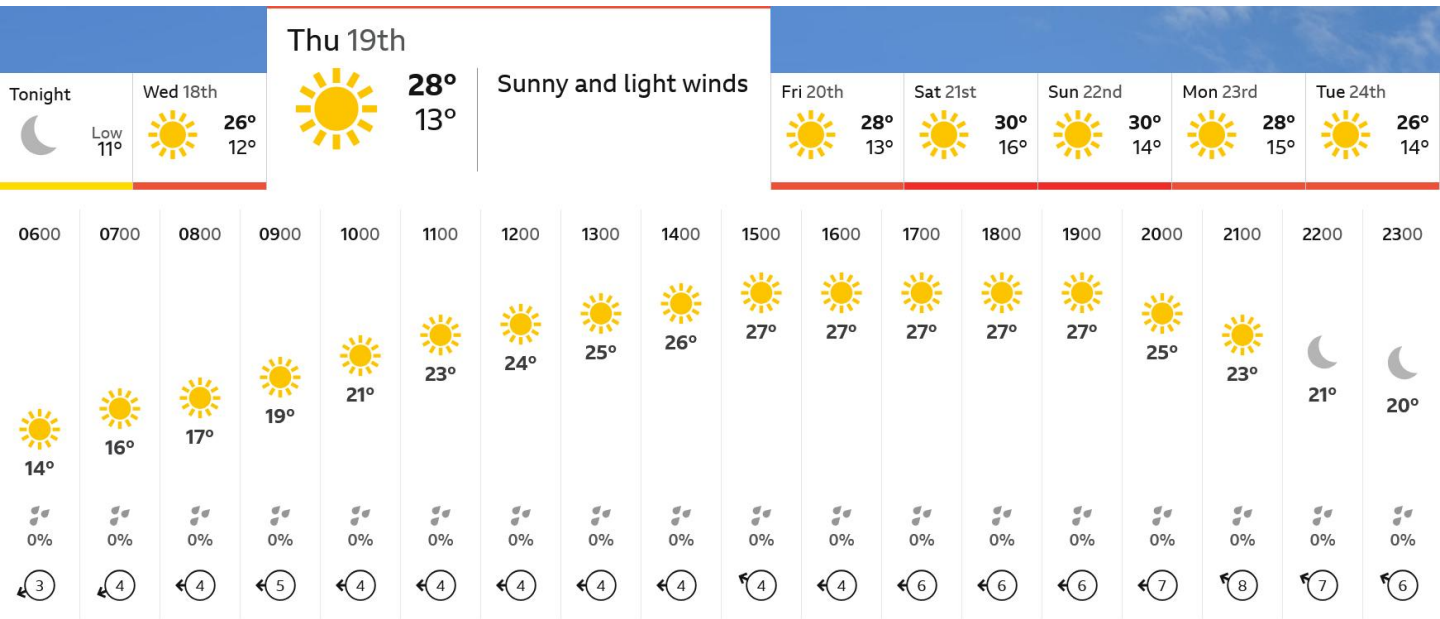


talking walking

Oxfordshire Ramblers Issue 66, October 2025



Start place



Hot on the heels of Britain's driest spring on record came summer, wanting to make its mark in our meteorological memory of 2025. Indeed, it did; this summer was the warmest on record in Britain. This affected us all on our walks, one way or another.

Furthermore, the warmth was persistent, driven by various factors including high-pressure systems, dry ground from spring, and unusually warm seas around our shores. This combination resulted in heat building up quickly and dissipating slowly.

We had no fewer than four heatwaves, which are defined in Britain as three or more consecutive days with a temperature above a specified number. For Oxfordshire it is 27C whereas for London and some adjacent counties, it is 28C. In the north of England, Scotland and most of Wales it is 25C.▶



Cover photo. A path maintenance team of Banbury & North Oxfordshire group, at Shutford. Photo Carolyn Tovell

Editor Dave Cavanagh davecavanagh1000@gmail.com
 Unless otherwise stated, items were written by the editor.
 Back issues www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/magazine.html



Chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers Richard Birch richard.birch15@virginmedia.com
Website www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk **Facebook** @OxfordshireRamblers



The sound emanating from under our feet on this walk wasn't made by gravel but by acorns, which were super abundant this year. PS look at the lovely clean boots. Photo Dave Cavanagh

There were two heatwaves in June, and one each in July and August. Temperatures reached the low thirties in our area, which resulted in four walks being cancelled, and at least another two shortened. Thunderstorm warnings saw another three walks cancelled. I suspect that many of us walked at a slower pace than usual.

Vale group has a policy of automatic cancellation of a walk when the temperature is forecast to reach 30C during the walk. This is primarily to protect a leader who may not feel up to walking in those conditions but who might feel obliged to lead anyway. Of course, a leader can cancel a walk at a lower temperature if they feel that it would be too high for them, health wise.

One consequence of the hotter weather was that the spring drought continued throughout summer, certainly in the south of England, and into autumn. At the time of writing – the middle of October – places with 'Marsh' in their name are still bone dry. Big cracks in clay soils often made for awkward walking. There is one footpath local to me where horses had caused deeply uneven ground with their hooves when the soil was very soft in winter. These high and low spots were 'fossilised' - petrified might be a better word – by the long period of hardly interrupted dryness since then, making walking not just uncomfortable but dangerous for turning an ankle.



Like dogs, cattle do not sweat. Here's a scene perhaps more often seen on the African plains than in Oxfordshire. Photo Nicola Copeman



Fields were riddled with deep cracks, which may have also done for this cottage. Photos Jan Knight (left) and Dave Cavanagh



The dry conditions, in this case in early August, enabled farmers to harvest early and then prepare the ground for the next crop. Photo Gill Hawkins

Oxfordshire ramblings

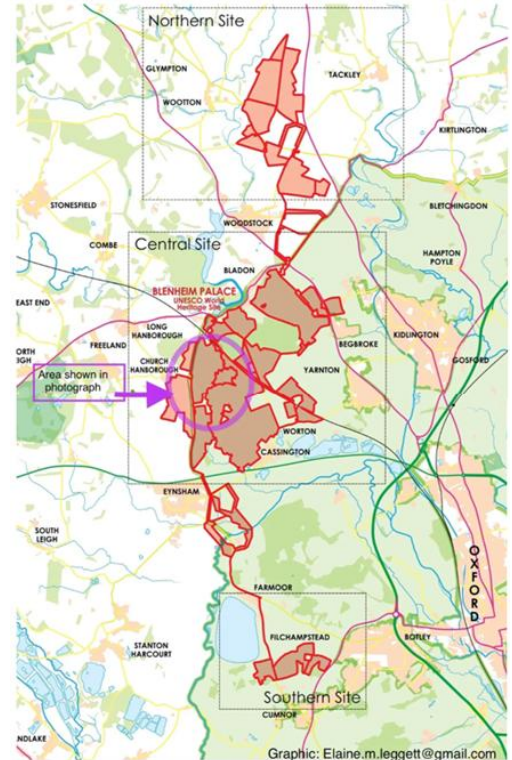
will give you a brief update each quarter on the current issues in Ramblers Oxfordshire Area

Richard Birch, Chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers

Botley West Solar Farm

The Planning Inspectorate's Examination of the Botley West Solar Farm application commenced on 13 May 2025. The next stages are:

- The close of Examination will be by 13 November 2025 at the latest;
- The Examining Authority must send its recommendations to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Ed Miliband) within 3 months of the end of examination stage.
- The Secretary of State then has up to 3 months to review the report and reach a decision i.e. this could be as late as mid-May 2026.



Area covered by the proposed Botley West Solar Farm

Abingdon Reservoir

During July Thames Water held a series of community information events in Steventon, Sutton Courtenay, Marcham and East Hanney.

Thames Water are planning to hold the statutory consultation later in 2025, when there will be the opportunity for the public to provide feedback on their proposals. The planning process is about two years behind that of the Botley West Solar Farm, with a Secretary of State decision in 2028. If approved the final completion date, after a 10-year construction and filling period, would be 2040.

Recent decisions taken include:

Intake/outfall structure: the location of the proposed intake and outfall structures has been confirmed on the River Thames riverbank near Sutton Courtenay.

Emergency discharge system: the preferred option for the reservoir's emergency discharge is a tunnel from the reservoir to the River Thames.

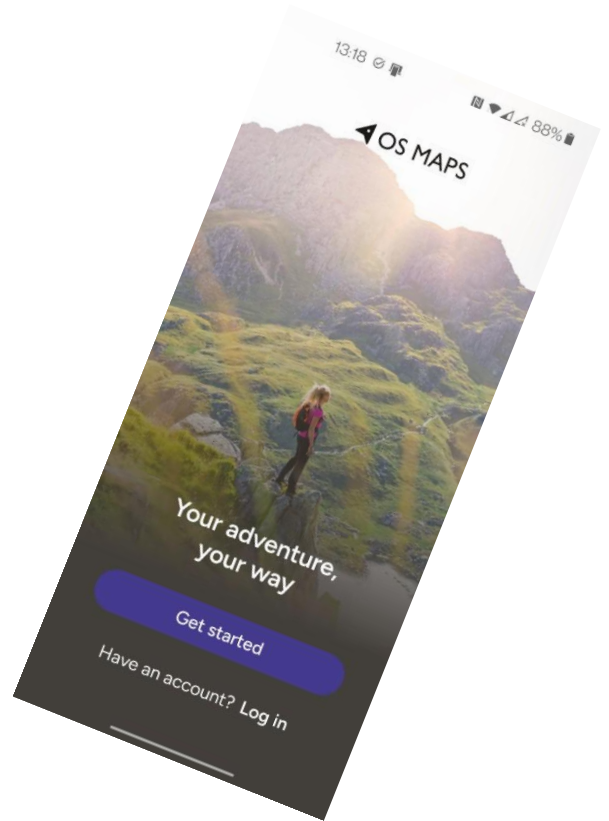
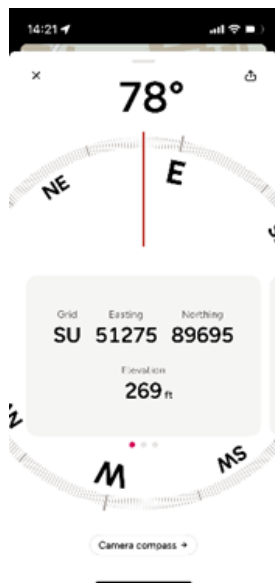
Wilts & Berks Canal: it is proposed that a channel is included within the reservoir site, running along the proposed Wilts & Berks Canal alignment, to make room for the future restoration of the Canal. ►

The latest information can be found at
<https://thames-sro.co.uk/SESRO>

Safety Tip

If you need to call the Emergency Services whilst you are out in the countryside for a walk it is very important that you can give details of your exact location. There are two free Apps that enable you to do this:

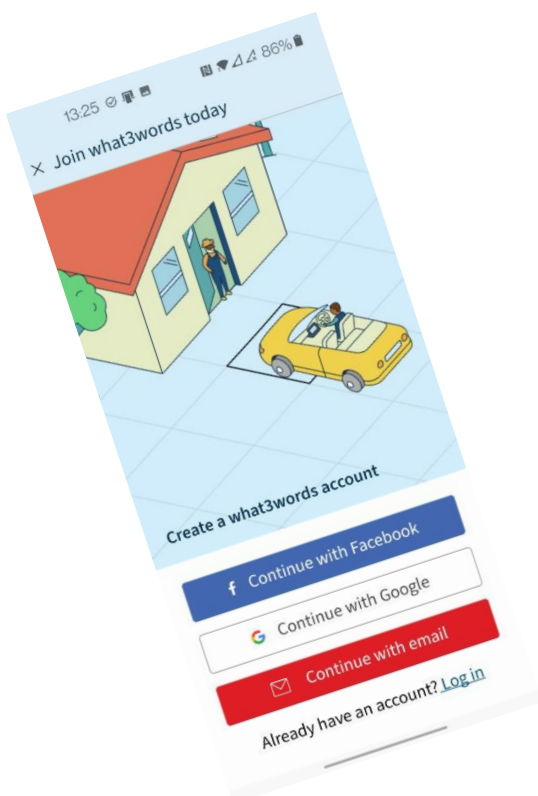
OS Maps – download the App and create a new account. The ‘Locate me’ function is accessed by clicking on the three dots at the top right of the screen. It gives your grid reference, and elevation, together with a compass. This tool is free but if you want to have the large-scale OS Maps then you have to pay a subscription.



What3Words - Every 3-metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words. Some Emergency Services use what3words. The App gives the three words for your current location (eg ///presses.horses.immune). You must be very careful to ensure that the spelling for the words is correct!!

Both Apps work off-line.

Discover more tips and links to safety-related topics on the Oxfordshire Ramblers website:
Walks Guidance - Safety



Group AGMs

Come along and support your Group and Area at their AGM

Banbury & North Oxfordshire Saturday 15 November at 1pm, Longford Park Community Centre, Hobby Road, Banbury, OX15 4GJ

Bicester & Kidlington Saturday 15 November at 3pm Fringford Village Hall, The Green, Fringford, Bicester OX27 8DY

Didcot & Wallingford Saturday 29 November at 2pm, East Hagbourne Village Hall, 53 Main Rd, East Hagbourne, Didcot OX11 9LR

Henley & Goring Friday 21 November at 6.30pm, The Christchurch Centre, 46 Reading Rd, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1AG

Hike Oxfordshire Thursday 6 November

Oxford Saturday 8 November at 1.30pm, Risinghurst Community Centre, Kiln Lain, Headington, Oxford OX3 8HA

Oxon Weekend Walkers Sunday 23 November at 3pm, The Red Lion, The Square, Eynsham, OX29 4HW

Thame & Wheatley Saturday 8 November at 1.30pm, Tiddington Village Hall, OX9 2LL

Vale of White Horse Saturday 1 November at 1.30pm, Steventon Village Hall, OX12 9SS

West Oxfordshire Saturday 1 November 2025 at 2pm, Combe Reading Room, OX29 8NT

Oxfordshire Ramblers AGM

The Oxfordshire Ramblers Area AGM will be held on Saturday 24 January 2026 at Longford Park Community Centre (hosted by Banbury & North Oxfordshire Group). Full details to follow.

Further details, including of pre-AGM walks, will appear in the [walks programme](#) on the Oxfordshire Ramblers website

wonderful landscapes
captured by our members this summer



Fields of gold in the Devil's Punchbowl, near the Letcombes above the Vale. Photo Dave Cavanagh



Photo Richard Savory



Vale group in Wiltshire. Photo Sandra Newton



On the Lambourn Valley Way. Photo Jan Knight



Shropshire, where Bicester & Kidlington walked this summer. Photos Tracey Timms





Photo Lynn Thomas



Henley & Goring group in France. Photo Cyndy Gray



It did rain sometimes. Photos Ian Macpherson



On the way

We come across all sorts of things on our walks.

Photo Ian Macpherson



In All Saints Church, Farnborough, on the Downs south of Wantage. Photo Ian Macpherson



Photo Ian Macpherson

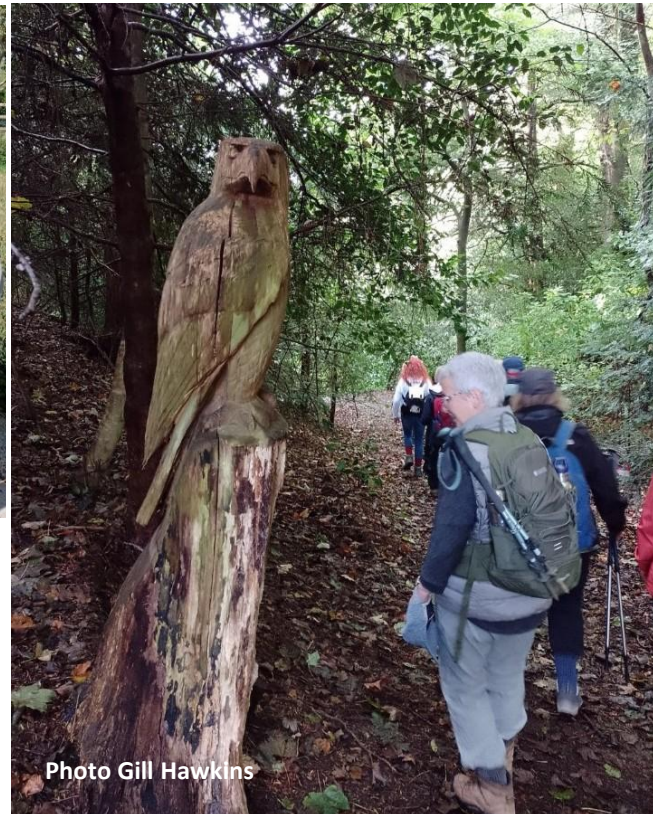


Photo Gill Hawkins





Photo Lynn Thomas



Photo Peter Flaxman



Photo Gill Hawkins



'ello 'ello 'ello.
Photo Mary Gough



Photo Richard Savory

In the way



Photo Gill Hawkins



Blitz and Klean, the path maintenance team of Bicester & Kidlington group, cut this fallen tree up and cut back vegetation on this bridleway and on two neighbouring paths. Photo Ian Baldwin



Photo Gill Hawkins



What do you need to visit Death Valley, Arizona?
Dental Records.

rest stop



Photo John Gordon

Ate horse at a restaurant
once – wasn't great.
Starter was all right, but
the mane was dreadful.
Alex Kitson at the 2024
Edinburgh Fringe.



I wouldn't have realised if it hadn't been
for that notice – Ed. Photo Mary Gough

I sailed through my driving
test. That's why I failed it.
Arthur Smith at the 2024
Edinburgh Fringe.

I've been taking salsa
lessons for months, but I
just don't feel like I'm
progressing. It's just one
step forward, two steps
back. Alec Snook at the
2024 Edinburgh Fringe.

Sign on a bench in Hobsonville, a suburb in
Auckland, New Zealand:

Dedicated to
M.R ATKINSON
"Not dead, just likes plaques"
August 2021

Area Picnic

Vale group hosted the Ramblers Oxfordshire Area Picnic at Chilton Village hall in July. The group laid on five walks and 66 members came along from throughout the county.



The event ended with cake, provided by Vale members.

Path maintenance

Henley & Goring group

Before and after photos



Members of Henley & Goring (HG) group go out with the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (SCPMV). They replace stiles with gates, build steps, insert fingerposts and cut back vegetation.

The SCPMV go out three times per month, on Wednesdays or Saturdays. The photos on this page are just a small sample of their recent activities.

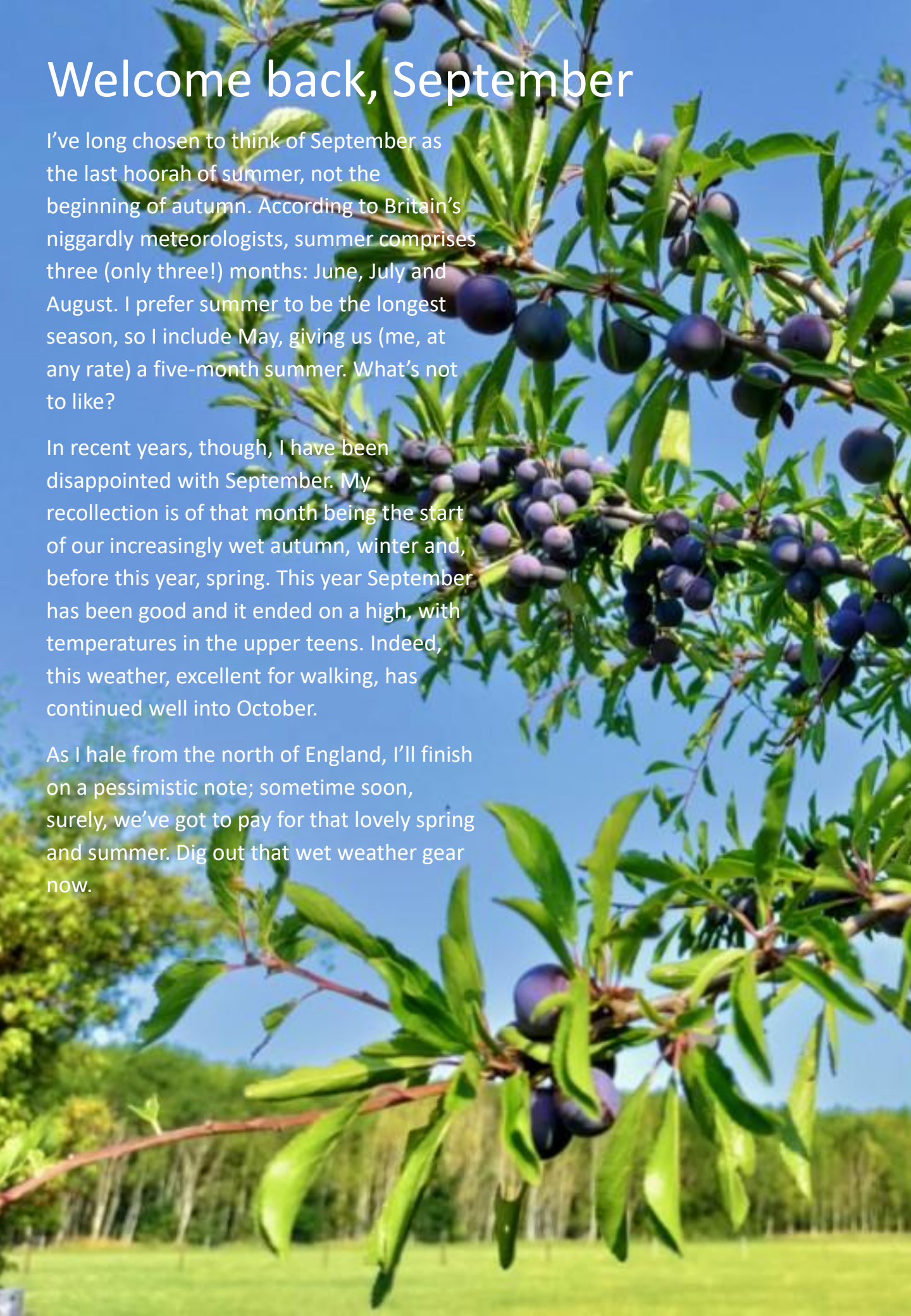


HG stalwart Wim puts photos of the SCPMV's work on the Henley and Goring Ramblers Facebook page, so you can see more of what they do.

If you are interested in finding out more, with a view to perhaps joining the SCPMV, then write to the.scpmv@gmail.com



Welcome back, September



I've long chosen to think of September as the last hoorah of summer, not the beginning of autumn. According to Britain's niggardly meteorologists, summer comprises three (only three!) months: June, July and August. I prefer summer to be the longest season, so I include May, giving us (me, at any rate) a five-month summer. What's not to like?

In recent years, though, I have been disappointed with September. My recollection is of that month being the start of our increasingly wet autumn, winter and, before this year, spring. This year September has been good and it ended on a high, with temperatures in the upper teens. Indeed, this weather, excellent for walking, has continued well into October.

As I hail from the north of England, I'll finish on a pessimistic note; sometime soon, surely, we've got to pay for that lovely spring and summer. Dig out that wet weather gear now.

Path maintenance Banbury & North(BNO) Oxfordshire group



BNO cleared vegetation from four stiles and approximately 150yds of footpath in early August in Nethercote, Banbury.

The stiles were cleared as a seasonal vegetation clearance, the group having also done them last year.

Photos John Gregory

The cover page shows four members of the five-person team who met in Shutford to clear vegetation from a footpath. They cleared some 200 metres – a big job.

If you would like to improve paths with the team, contact team leader John Gregory
jgregorybno@gmail.com



In early September Bicester & Kidlington group had a stall at St David's Barracks Garrison Cultural and Families' day, spreading the word about the health and social benefits of rambling. Photo Linda Rooker



What's the worst kind of tea on a hot day?
Humidity.

Path maintenance Blitz & Klean

Blitz & Klean, the path maintenance team of Bicester & Kidlington group, were in action several times over summer.

Pictured are some members of the team who tackled a footpath between Souldern and Somerton. They also cleared two fallen trees in nearby woodland.

In early July they cleared a footpath with help from the Bicester 3rd Scout Group.

If you would like to join them, contact team leader Ian Baldwin ianbaldwin@hotmail.co.uk



Photos Ian Baldwin

What do you call rabbits who hate hot weather?
Hot cross bunnies.

More on the way



Playing table tennis during a refreshment break at the Parkinson Garden, West Lockinge. Not sure what the umpire is doing holding a bat. Didn't matter, we ignored him anyway. Photo Jan Knight



Photo Jan Knight



Sundial and Time Capsule at Blewbury.
Photo John Gordon



**These photos at
Sonning Common
were taken in May
but I didn't spot them
at the time and are
too good to ignore.
Photos Cyndy Gray**





Photo Peter Skuse



Sally's homemade cakes at the end of her maiden walk as a leader. (I couldn't be on that walk ☹ - Ed.) Photo John Gordon



Which one is the prisoner?
Well, if I had to choose ...
Photo Becky David



A turnstile, in Wiltshire.
Photo Steph Woodley



Photo John Gordon

Path maintenance

Vale Path Volunteers



The Vale Path Volunteers (VPV) is the path maintenance team of the Vale of White Horse group which goes out twice each month (first Monday, third Wednesday).

Pictured is the footpath that goes along the east side of Ginge Brook, above the Hendreds, towards the Ridgeway. This, a popular path, gets heavily – uncomfortably – overgrown each year. Clearing it has become a regular fixture in the VPV's programme

Before (above) and after.
Photos Pat Rosum

Afterwards one of Pat's sisters gave us coffee and cakes. Sadly, not all members of the team could make it to this feast, so the rest of us had to eat their cake.

If you are interested in doing path clearance with the VPV, contact team leader Pat Rosum
Patrick.rosum@hotmail.co.uk



I used to hate darts but recently I've done a real 180. — Andy Gleeks, 2025 Edinburgh Festival



Such pointless precision. Dump away today (14 October 2025) and pay in euros, as it will only be €1720 (and 21 cents). Photo Dave Cavanagh

My mum often comments on my weight but in her defence, in the time she's known me I've put on nearly sixteen stone. — Burt Williamson, 2025 Edinburgh Festival.

Tag on an item of clothing (by a machinist who wants a change of job?)

People who say bath bombs are relaxing have clearly never tried to carry one home in the rain. — Ian Smith, 2025 Edinburgh Festival

FLIP INSIDE OUT
AND HAND WASH
COLD WATER
SO YOU DON'T
RUIN IT LIKE
EVERYTHING ELSE
IN YOUR LIFE