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Newsletter May 2026

Chairman’s Report

At the AGM on Thursday April 2nd, 2026, Bob Villa informed the Committee ‘That, unfortunately, for the time being I find my personal life has changed, in as much that my family needs greater support. Therefore, to give this support I will not be putting my name forward although I will continue my interest in and my support of the Association’.

The remaining eight committee members, Susan Bluden, Brian Blunden, David Eagar, Andrea French, Anne Pepper, Janette Potter, John Laidler and John Turkentine were re-elected on bloc.

John Turkentine was unanimously elected Chairman and Cllr Janette Potter unanimously elected Vice-Chairman.



The four new, regularly updated, notice boards are just one of the ways that has improved the communications between Chelmsford City Council Parks, the Association and the Public. The responses to queries, damage and maintenance reports are being speedily dealt with.

I try to meet up with the volunteer working groups who are very keen to learn about The Common, its history and wildlife and what both Galleywood Common Association and Galleywood Heritage Centre do.

Our next meeting is the Annual Common Walk on Thursday 2nd July. Meet in the Main Car Park off Margaretting Road at 7.00 pm.

John Turkentine

Bird Walk

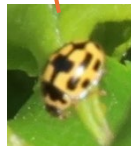
On Sunday 19th April the Galleywood Heritage Centre held its annual spring bird walk on Galleywood Common on a lovely sunny morning. Around 40 species of birds were seen or heard with highlights being White Throat and the birds of prey - Kestrel, Buzzard, Red Kite and Sparrow Hawk. The annual autumn bird walk will take place on Sunday 11th October 2026.



Speckled Wood Butterfly



Crabapple Blossom



Susan Wilson

Trees on The Common

Galleywood Common is a Lowland Heath, with relatively poor soil supporting Gorse, Heather and grasses. There were only a few scrub trees on the top of the Common until the 1930/1940s. The Gorse was kept well under control, being harvested by villagers and particularly local bakers for their bread ovens, as it burns at a higher temperature.



The Galleywood Heritage Centre Archive image of the brick works in early 1920s, with the newly completed Grandstand on left horizon. Much of this working area is now flooded - The Pond.



An image of a view of The Common as it was in the 1920s. The Trees in the background were within in the churchyard and the attached glebe land. The heather and gorse in blossoming in the foreground - no trees

After the closure of the racecourse in 1935 and the brick works in early 1940, windblown silver birch seeds established saplings in the bare soil and the unattended remains of the earlier decommissioned Napoleonic fortifications earth works from 1805.

Silver Birch is a very quick growing tree, it's large volume of saplings beyond the control of the then rabbit and deer population, but is comparatively shortly lived. Annual leaf fall and decaying wood /bark soon formed a humorous layer allowing bird dropped acorns to shoot.

In the early 1950s Myxomatosis decimated the rabbit population allowing all the tree saplings to grow to maturity, and annually provide increasing amount of leaf fall, further enriching the soil!

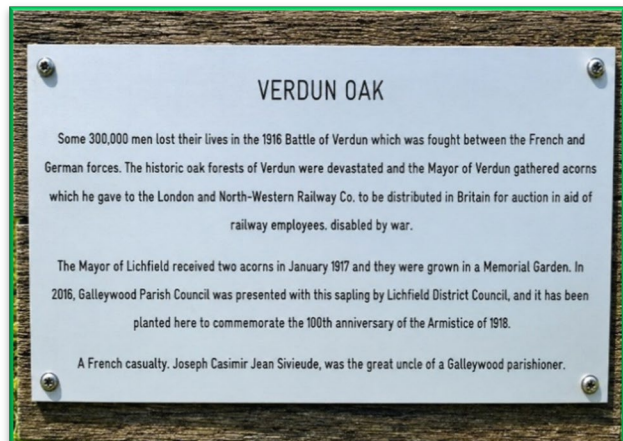
In recent times very few oak saplings have actually been planted



On the Triangular grassed area to the rear of the Galleywood Youth Centre at the junction of The Street with Stock Road.



On the Grassed area at the junction of Church Lane with Margaretting Road



Another sapling, not on The Common, but on the Galleywood Parish Council owned land at Twitten Green. A Verdun Oak.

Chelmsford City Council Senior Parks Officer Report May 2026

Since our last diary entry, we have had a number of regular parks volunteer sessions and local companies who come out onto The Common and give their time to help manage and restore areas for heather and acid grassland species such as harebells. These have included Ringway Jacobs with a fantastic team of 38 staff, EMEA (a team of 4 who regularly volunteer with us) and Rickard Luckin Solicitors (a team of 8).



The key aspect of site management is working to selectively remove gorse and bramble and bash bracken. This is incredibly arduous work, and many teams find this particularly challenging as it can only be done by hand. By doing this and then either plug poisoning or hand digging out roots we can establish more, and extend existing, heather areas.

In addition to heather management and restoration, we have installed new 'stop and perch' flat seats, to allow those with mobility issues the opportunity to walk further on The Common, repaired the plank bridges, dug ditches, removed invasive bramble, coppiced willow in the ponds and cut back paths. The next few months will see us starting our bracken bruising campaign, managing the site in a traditional heathland manner.

Galleywood Common Local Nature Reserve is one of Chelmsford City Councils 6 Local Nature Reserves. The work undertaken by the parks volunteers is planned in accordance with its LNR management and Green Flag plans. The site is incredibly special as it is a rare acid grassland site with heathland species and habitat. The impact of the parks volunteers is substantial to this site as its management cannot be undertaken by machinery due to its sensitive nature and fragile soil structure. Lowland heath is a habitat as it is a type of ancient wild landscape. [Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme](#) describes lowland heath as containing dry heath, wet heath and valley mire communities, usually below 250 metres (820 ft) in altitude, on acidic soils and shallow peat, typically comprising heathers, gorses, fine grasses, wild flowers and lichens in a complex mosaic. We have lost approximately 80 per cent of our lowland heath in Britain over just the last 200 years.

