

# WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

December 2025

£2

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BLADON



High Street, Woodstock



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Garcia:	Gloria and Cum Sancto from Missa pastoral
Cornelius:	The three kings
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Rutter:	Carols

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## Editorial

When I told our good friend Wayne Lewis, about my plans to take four months away from Woodstock over the winter, he suggested I should write a section for each issue called 'Who's Nicked Nick?'. Although I feel I already have enough material for a first article on these lines, I'm running out of time so this Editorial will have to make do this month as my travel blog.

I am currently writing this in Fremantle, just south of Perth, WA, while staying with Suzy, a lovely family friend from way back. I have only been away eight days so far, five of them in Sri Lanka; I will write more about this extraordinary island country in future issues. I went to the 2nd day of the first Ashes Test in Perth (not inside the ground, but in a pub just outside called 'The Camfield'). We heard two English wickets falling while we were just on the newly opened pedestrian bridge crossing the Swan River. The atmosphere was lovely. The 'barmy army' - well, the ones we met - were not barmy at all; engineers, pilots, teachers, and every profession you could think of. They were decent, happy Englishmen, even if they were about to suffer their quickest Test loss for over a century.

Internet access has been super-fast everywhere I have been - from the humblest bar on the beach in Sri Lanka to my economy seat on Qatar Air. So managing the magazine while I'm away is super easy (so far), and I don't envisage any major problems. What I miss, of course, is the daily interaction of spontaneous conversation, so I will be relying on all of you to come up with ideas and copy.

This month, we are starting up the 'Keep It Local' section discussed a year ago. We have a lovely article about two of our residents taking aid to Ukraine, together with the usual reviews, news, letters, Council Matters, etc. for you to enjoy. Please continue to send any ideas that you may have - and thank you to all the wonderful contributors, advertisers, and distributors.

**Nick Manby-Brown, Editor**

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## Subscriptions

The magazine costs £2 per issue, or £20 per year, and the price will remain the same for 2025/2026.

It can be purchased at Blenheim Palace, Mary and Martin's Newsagent, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock Bookshop, Woodstock Grocers, and Wootton Stores. It can also be delivered - please contact Nick ([editor@wobl.news](mailto:editor@wobl.news)) for Woodstock, or Lucy for Bladon.

For bank transfer, please pay to Woodstock and Bladon News Limited - 04-29-09 - 81754981, and use the first line of your address as the reference. We are sadly now unable to accept payment by cheque.

**For those who haven't paid for this current year, please pay as soon as possible.**

## Please write for our magazine

Send your contributions to: [editor@wobl.news](mailto:editor@wobl.news)

If you have an interest that is not currently being followed by this magazine, please contact me.

The next issue will be a January one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 4 January 2026**.

We aim to be balanced and inclusive, and welcome new contributions that are of interest to our readers.

**PLEASE NOTE: The answers to last month's (and this month's) quiz and crossword are on Page 36**

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Cover image: 'It's coming on Christmas' by Rod Craig

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## Humanitarian help to Ukraine

Two of Woodstock's residents recently joined drivingukraine.com and delivered a much needed 4x4 for the frontline with Russia.



Paul and Chris in Battlecrack, about to board the ferry in Dover

Chris Coe and Paul Williamson are now safely back from Lviv - and what a highly charged and emotional experience that was!



Lviv workshop, with prototype emergency extraction vehicle

Paul says "As the 50th convoy we were a total of 13 vehicles, all 4x4s, some to be used in the frontline directly against the Russians, others to be used as support vehicles moving supplies and medics around".

Besides leaving gloveboxes full of chocolate and whisky, three UK farmers donated 10 brand new generators - very helpful when the power supply is so intermittent.

Most of our vehicles have previously gently pootled around farms and country lanes, but having been driven at pace through France, Belgium, Germany and Poland, are now at or heading towards Eastern Ukraine.

Our truck is now working with the 11th Assault (Infantry) Battalion, 59th Brigade somewhere near Odesa.

The troops say "You see a car with four wheels - we see a means to staying alive".



Field of Mars, Lviv

We weren't emotionally prepared for our visit to Lviv war cemetery or the greeting from local officials and residents in Lviv town centre. We felt very humbled and teary, especially with the local choir singing us and their soldiers a safe return home.

We're planning to return again in 2026, so if you know of any free or cheap 4x4s, especially Toyota Hilux or Mitsubishi L200 please let us know. Or if you fancy being part of a future convey - let us know that to or contact Fynn and Jake at drivingukraine.com. This is a local organisation based in Deddington, set up by Fynn Watt in 2022 to supply vehicles for medics on the front line, which has now donated over 270 vehicles. Their contact in Lviv is Maksym, who at the age of 24 will soon be joining the military. He says "Please tell everybody not to forget us or our fight against Russia - we need your help".

Paul (07950 026284) & Chris (07786 110059)

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

## Public Toilets

I attended the Town Council meeting on 11 November and spoke at the start about the item on public toilets, asking that the Town Council:

1. Consider asking WODC for funds to rectify the long-term neglect of their properties before WTC takes ongoing responsibility.
2. Consult with local people and businesses to ask for feedback regarding possible closure of Brown's Lane.

Ultimately, the issue was discussed and the Town Council ignored both suggestions and has declined to take on the toilets. This means Hensington Road will continue in a poor condition and Brown's Lane will close.

According to the stats, both sets of toilets are visited on average 7 times a day. There is well-founded speculation that this could be low due to toilets available elsewhere (museum, hospitality venues etc). In my brief speech at the start, I suggested it could also be because people (such as myself and visitors to the town) are unaware of their existence, and also that they have a track record of being 'broken' - if you've been let down once in an emergency, you are more likely to seek guaranteed relief elsewhere?

The condition of both sets of toilets is poor after years of neglect by WODC. The cost to upgrade both sets over 10 years is estimated at c. £100k - it would seem fair for WODC to contribute some or all of the money required to rectify problems in return for WTC taking responsibility for ongoing costs, but this was not considered.

The annual income from each toilet is c. £500, whereas running costs are c. £16,500. It was interesting to note that the Mayor expressed shock that the toilets run at a loss. I am unclear why toilets should break even or run at a profit - they are an essential public service.

In my opinion, the provision of public toilets in a town is a mark of a civilised society. 14 million people in the UK have incontinence issues, 15 million menstruate, and 16 million have some kind of disability. Then there are small children who simply cannot wait.

The British Toilet Association has a campaign running to make toilet provision a legal requirement. A Royal Society for Public Health report (2019) stated: "Public toilets should be considered as essential as streetlights, roads and waste collection."

What might be the impact of closing the Brown's Lane toilets on local businesses? I hear anecdotally

that when they are temporarily out-of-order this causes a significant increase in people going into at least one pub in town, purely to use their toilet facilities.

In Northern Ireland, the Derry City and Strabane District Council's Community Toilet Scheme pays local cafes, restaurants and other businesses £300 - £800 pa to allow members of the public to use their facilities for free. This is a cost-effective way for the City to offer a much needed public service, and gives local businesses the opportunity to support the community and increase their footfall whilst their basic costs (water, electricity, toilet paper, cleaning products, staff) are covered. Why could Woodstock not investigate something similar?

I am deeply frustrated that the first residents knew that an essential public service was at risk was when the agenda was published a few days before the meeting took place. Neither research into alternative ideas nor consultation with residents or businesses happened before the Town Council took a decision. They did not even pause to think, to defer the decision, in the light of my request and suggestions at the start of the meeting.

Do the Town Councillors really claim to represent residents?

## Sam Dawson

Dear Editor,

### An Editorial Visitor

My dear friend Nick - of more than fifty years and living proof that long friendships survive oceans, airlines, and questionable pub choices - arrived in Perth, Western Australia, where he set up office in heritage-listed South Fremantle. Not quite as ancient as the UK of course, but we're trying our best down here with what little history we've got!

In true sporting spirit, we made a beeline for The Camfield to join the Barmy Army. Nick was absolutely thrilled (not) to witness the Poms being comprehensively massacred - his words, not mine - though I'll be politely reserving bragging rights until further notice. (Don't worry, they're tucked safely away for deployment at an appropriate moment.)

Since the Ashes outing was cut short, I've taken it upon myself to show Nick the finer points of Fremantle life: the markets, the pubs, the speakeasy, and every quirky corner in between. For a supposedly 'most remote city', we're doing our part to keep visitors entertained... even those from across the ditch. Or the hemisphere. Or... well, you know.

So if you find yourself anywhere near Perth, please do come and say hi. If it was good enough for the pommy convicts, it's certainly good enough for you.

## Suzy Pearce

Dear Editor,

### Proposed new GP surgery

I regularly walked through the Accident and Emergency Department of the John Radcliffe Hospital to review cardiac emergencies. One issue was apparent both day and night. The waiting area was crammed with patients who should have been assessed and treated in GP surgeries. Some were genuinely sick, others certainly were not, and some decided to leave through frustration at the inordinate waiting times. How did the NHS reach this nightmare situation? It undoubtedly followed the Department of Health's decision that GPs need not cover their patients out of hours or at weekends. That heralded the end game for the much valued family doctor on which the NHS was originally based.

Our health care system is unable to respond appropriately in too many respects. First and foremost, no condition benefits from waiting and our hospitals are currently overwhelmed. This introduces the issue of the Woodstock Surgery which everyone agrees is unable to meet requirements. Options for a new site are on the table but what should primary care look like for the future. Before Covid I talked with the local practice about an ambitious project that we hoped might be built on the corner of Oxford Airport (where the 'park and ride' is proposed) This would have provided acute care for illness or minor injuries on a 24 hour basis. An investigations department with an X-ray, ultrasound and ECG machines was included together with a pharmacy. Physiotherapy, dieticians and mental health workers were to be an integral part of the development as was a gymnasium with fitness trainers. The plans also included an outpatients department for hospital consultants to conduct appointments on a local basis and help manage chronic illness without multiple hospital visits. That said we lost the private finance group who were prepared to fund the development in the wake of the Covid debacle.

The Labour government have recently announced that they will use private monies to expand GP hubs throughout the UK. Ministers have proposed a new network of 250 'one stop shops' bringing together family doctors, dentists and pharmacies in a single location. The programme, appropriately called NHS Neighbourhood Rebuild is promised to involve innovative public and private sector partnerships. The Health Secretary now supports private companies to play a role in primary care in partnership with the fact that private hospitals treat a million surgical patients per year in an effort to meet cancer targets. Karin Smith, the Health Minister stated "Our new NHS Rebuild approach will give local health care the investment it needs, repurposing and building a new generation of Neighbourhood Health Centres across the country.

It will go hand in hand with reform and efficiency, ensuring proper value for money for taxpayers". Noble sentiments indeed when GPs are asked to do ever more without increase in practice funding or the ability to hire more staff.

With both access and parking becoming ever more taxing for the John Radcliffe I would suggest that this policy provides the perfect opportunity for Woodstock to upgrade and transform its primary care. We need substantially more ambitious facilities which our doctors and patients surely deserve. More of the same in a new building is not in anyone's interest.

## Professor Stephen Westaby

### Letters are important for our Community

Please send letters to editor@wobl.news

The deadline for the January issue is Sunday 4 January

## The Woodstock Society

Our 2025-26 season of talks started with a barn storming high level analysis of Britain's geo-political position and options for Britain at the end of WWII by Ashley Jackson. He gave a spell-binding talk of the big picture, without any slides. This was followed by something completely different - a presentation of the Life of a Guide Dog by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. This was a fun, if not chaotic, evening.

The pace hereon picked up with the November talk by Malcolm Brecht, who until recently was Air Vice-Marshall and director of the Boeing C-17 aircraft programme outside USA. A local man he is now retired after 34 years' service having commanded bases in UK, Iraq and Afghanistan. He gave a compelling talk on leadership and communication in different cultures.

Our next speaker needs no introduction - he is Charlie Ross, the world famous auctioneer and TV personality. Do join us for what will be a fun-packed talk preceded by mulled wine and mince pies.

The New Year starts with plenty of local interest with a presentation by a director of Oxford Airport and then the return of a favourite art historian, Alice Foster, with a controversial subject - Women in Work.

We then have to get geared up for a talk on AI by a representative of Saïd Business School. We can then relax for a fun evening with David Lowe disclosing some secrets of his TV theme tune business. Finally Jill Cable wraps up the season regaling us with her knowledge of human transplants.

## Bob Frost



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## Portrait of the Month - Heather Carter



For three decades, Heather Carter has been a warm, uplifting presence in Woodstock - someone who has woven herself deeply into the community through friendship and commitment. Heather works as Managing Director of the Visitor Attraction at Blenheim Palace.

When Pippa welcomed Heather into her home in the heart of Woodstock for a chat and a portrait session their conversation quickly centred on what makes the town so special to her.

Heather and family first moved to Bladon before settling in Woodstock a few years later. "We were really excited to move here," she recalls. "We already had friends in the town, and we wanted to be part of the community." With young children at the time, being able to walk to work and stay close to home helped her balance family life and career while forming strong local ties.

Those ties continued to strengthen. Involving herself in the local school through parents' groups and associations, friendships were built that Heather still treasures. In addition, for the past 15 years, she has volunteered with Wake Up to Woodstock, helping to run events that bring the community together and strengthen the spirit of the town.

What she loves most is Woodstock's friendliness. "You can walk into town at any point and you'll know somebody," she says. "There's always someone to talk to. It just is home."

Portrait by fine art photographer Pippa Hetherington

## Keep it Local

*Editor's Note: In October 2024 (my second issue), I put forward a suggestion of a regular article about buying local produce, sharing garden equipment, and going to local sports and music events rather than travelling miles to large venues. I asked for a volunteer contributor, and a year later, my wish was granted; and I am delighted to introduce Vanessa Ayres, who will be a regular contributor from now on.*

*Here is Vanessa's introduction.*

When I moved to Woodstock, after having spent my life living in dense, urban areas, I was looking forward to benefiting from a better quality of life: more walks in green spaces; fewer frenetic crowds to contend with; and fun community activities like talks and farmers' markets.

What I hadn't anticipated was becoming part of a strong, connected neighbourhood. Now, I leave extra time when I walk to the shops, so I can chat to neighbours I meet along the way. In autumn, I delight in the generosity of people who leave unwanted apples from their trees outside their houses, for anyone to take.

This is my inspiration for this column: highlighting the things that make our communities even better. And perhaps now, more than ever, we should lean in to our immediate communities to further strengthen our connections and help each other out, whether that's getting together for some Christmas cheer, or more practical initiatives, like sharing costly equipment between neighbours (e.g. a lawnmower). We are living in challenging times after all!

At the same time, the column will celebrate the work of small, local businesses run by creative, entrepreneurial, local people who want to share their ideas to make the lives of the people around them better.

To start off, I'd like to hear from you. What kinds of things do you do on your street to keep the community together? Do you run a small business that you'd like people to hear about? Email me at [keepitlocal@wobl.news](mailto:keepitlocal@wobl.news). I can't wait to hear from you!

Vanessa Ayres

# Council Matters

Woodstock and Bladon News has reported on Council meetings since at least 2022, and all reports are available to view on our website - [wobl.news/council-matters](http://wobl.news/council-matters). The magazine endeavours to remain professional and accurate. This month we report on the Town Council/Blenheim Dialogue meeting and one Town Council meeting. We also have a report from Calum Miller, MP.

## Woodstock Town Council

### Woodstock Town Council and Blenheim Palace Dialogue meeting held at 4.30pm on Tuesday 28 October

The Chair alternates every meeting and it was the turn this time for Roger File of Blenheim Palace.

**In attendance** were Councillors Grant, Poskitt, Parnes, and Williams for the Council, and Heather Carter, Roger File, Dominic Hare, and Merilyn Davies for Blenheim Palace.

**The Minutes** of the last Meeting were not referred to or approved.

**Timetable of Events to be held at Blenheim:** Heather Carter said we are in the Halloween event now, and that the usual Christmas at Blenheim events would follow. 2026 would follow a similar pattern to 2025. There would be scaffolding in place till about May 2026, with no filming or weddings as a result. There would be jousting at Easter, Salon Privé, and Half Term entertainments. There would be no Battle Proms or Game Fare in 2026.

**Parking Issues:** Councillor Grant said there had been many complaints about traffic in the town during Blenheim events, including ambulances being unable to drive through. A Blenheim representative replied that they are working on the problem with County Councillor Andy Graham. Various options are being considered. Some parts of the town are the sole responsibility of the County Council.

At this point Roger File queried why a resident was filming the Meeting. The resident explained his reasons, and the filming was allowed to continue. Another resident asked why a public address system was not being used as it was so hard for many attending to hear, but no answer was given.

The Meeting then continued with **Parking Issues:** A resident asked whether Blenheim monitor the arrangements they put in place to control the traffic. The reply was that they do. Another resident raised firework noise and could not silent fireworks be used. The reply was that Blenheim puts out warnings to residents for some events, but that other events are

not their responsibility as to noise, though they do suggest the silent option to the event organisers. Another resident raised the problem of event parking down the hill towards and into Old Woodstock. The reply was that this was being looked into.

The Agenda item **Proposed new doctors` surgery** was now brought forward. Roger File referred to the work of the Steering Committee that had been set up, which includes Calum Miller, MP. The Integrated Care Board had at last accepted that a new surgery is needed for Woodstock. He listed the three sites that had been identified by the Committee: the Owen Mumford site in Green Lane, which had been acquired by Blenheim; the Banbury Road development site; and the land East of the Park View development. The Committee would meet again in four weeks` time.

Some work had been commissioned to see how a surgery project could be achieved on the Mumford site. A resident asked how patients were expected to get to a surgery on the Own Mumford site. The reply was that the doctors have got a patients` consultation group together; and 70% of patients come from out of Woodstock. In answer to a question as to what money Blenheim would put up towards a new surgery, Dominic Hare replied that Blenheim always pays what it is obliged to under its Planning Agreements. Roger File added for clarification that it was not the whole of the Mumford site that was being looked at, but just part. A resident then offered Blenheim a "big thank you" on behalf of the surgery`s patients.

Another resident said that there had been an analysis of the factors needed for a new surgery - most factors were met in the Police Station site, but that because there had to be adequate room for expansion over twenty five years, the car-parking provision on that site would be insufficient. However, he said, the new surgery really needed to be in Woodstock. Roger File`s reply was that it was not him, but the ICB that had to be convinced. Councillor Parnes said that we had not seen a document claiming that a new surgery could not be put on the Police Station site.

Councillor Williams said that the proposal was for a building with a footprint of just under 1,000 square metres. This would allow for 100 car-parking spaces. The reply was that any proposal must comply with the requirements of the doctors and the ICB, who look for best value for money. A resident asked whether the proposal for the Police Station was for a building of more than one storey. The reply was that there had been many iterations of the proposed scheme, with a lot of work being done by experts, and Blenheim had spent ten years and much money looking at the proposal, including looking at using the fire-station and public lavatories sites. Councillor Grant asked whether Woodstock will be getting a

surgery on the Mumford site by 2028, as MP Calum Miller had claimed. The reply was that 2028 could be achieved for any of the sites, if the parties were willing.

**Blenheim housing development schedules:** Blenheim reported that the **Hill Rise** development is under way. The **Cherwell site** - ie. land to the East of Park View has a planning Application filed, with a hearing by Cherwell District Council expected in the New Year. The **Owen Mumford site** will be redeveloped for employment-related uses. Asked about access, Roger File said there was lots of parking available. Asked if buses could access the site, he said that Blenheim talks with Stagecoach about all their developments. He did not know if the ICB have rules on the distance of bus-stops from surgeries. He also said the question of availability of pavements would have to be looked at. With regard to the **Banbury Road site**, details are being worked on and the planning process may start in summer 2026.

**Botley West Update:** Blenheim reported that the public part of the process is coming to an end, with the deadline for final submissions in November. A decision is expected by the end of January 2026. Adjustments have been made to the original proposal, including some land being removed from it. Councillor Parnes referred to the claim that thermal plumes might affect the radar system at the airport. Roger File said a report on this had been handed in to the inquiry. Resident Hilary Brown raised the issue of the Community Benefit under the proposal, which she said is too low, despite the promoters claiming that their offer is the highest provided by any other project, and she gave two examples. We need to fight for this money, she said, for the community, and she invited the Councillors present to write to continue negotiation for this money.

**Hill Rise Development:** Councillor Grant said a resident of Hill Rise had expressed concern to her, because of breaches of the planning conditions for this site. Roger File said Blenheim knew nothing of any breaches.

**Flooding:** Councillor Parnes asked about the flooding in Bear`s Close. Roger File said that Blenheim had done major work on the ditches on their land, but he thought the flooding may be coming from the other side of the road.

**Tony McHugh**

### Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 11 November

10 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The recently elected Councillor Cynthia Muthoni was welcomed by all. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

### Public Participation

4 members of the public spoke. **Hilary Brown** reminded the Council that the **community benefit fund** offered by the developers of Botley West Solar was inadequate and unfair. She urged the Council to write to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to lobby for more community benefit. Hilary also asked if the Council has a local community emergency plan in place as WODC are encouraging local town and parish councils to make plans, especially with respect to flooding. This plan, with emergency contact numbers should be prominent on the Council website. **Sam Dawson** then asked the Council to carefully consider the potential closure of the **public toilets in Woodstock**. There are a large number of visitors to the town and it is a sign of a civil society to have public toilets. **Annie Cripps** then asked about her recent request regarding the report from the **court case** involving Councillor Parnes. This is now a petition which includes the names of over 40 residents and Annie asked why the Council was unable to tell them. **Chris Coe** then also asked for **transparency and accountability** from the Council over this matter and was shocked the tax payers had not been given an answer to this simple question. **The Mayor** replied that the Council`s insurers had told the Council not to comment on the case and that the Council did not know when the report would arrive if at all. Chris asked for clarification but was told to be quiet and that the public session had finished.

### Planning

There were no objections to planning applications for 18 Park Street, 27 Boundary Close and 78 Cowells Road. Regarding the proposed McCarthy and Stone development on the Hensington Road Police station site, there will be an appeal in front of a Planning Inspector at WODC in Witney on 17 December.

### Mayor, Clerk and Councillors` Reports

The Mayor thanked those involved for attending and helping at the **Remembrance Day** ceremony on Sunday. The Clerk reported that grant applications to the Council are now open, closing on 5 December. The election for the open position on the Council will be on 18 December, closing date for applications being 21 November.

**The District Councillors` report** contained 2 important plans for West Oxfordshire. The first is a consultation on sites proposed for development as part of the WODC Local Plan. For Woodstock these are the existing sites (Park View, Hill Rise and Banbury Road), although this does not prevent developers applying between now and 2043. The other relates to ideas for the new structure of local government in Oxfordshire to be decided by the government.

**Finance**

The current balance is £425,214.20.

**Environmental**

The riverbank stabilization work in the Water Meadows will be deferred until the summer of 2026 due to Environmental Agency guidance. The first £580K of £1.64 million in S106 allocation is due by March 2016 but coordination between WODC, schools and sports clubs is limited. There is a meeting planned with WODC at the beginning of December.

**Public Conveniences**

Following a meeting between the Council and WODC in October it was clear that the District Council wants the town council to take responsibility for both the Hensington Road car park and Browns Lane facilities. The Hensington Road car park toilets will remain with WODC if not taken on by Woodstock Town Council. The Council voted no to both due to costs (£16K per year each) so the Browns Lane toilets will close.

**Hensington Road Car Park**

WODC is proposing a change to the maximum stay times in the car park. Currently 101 spaces have a maximum stay of twelve hours. Proposed changes are for 66 four hour bays and 35 twelve hour bays. The WODC consultation will run until 26 November. The Council objected to the changes.

**Woodstock Fire Station**

Councillor Andy Graham joined the meeting at this point. He explained that OCC is looking at the Fire and Rescue Service throughout Oxfordshire and there is a consultation under way, starting on 28th November and running through to January. There is a proposal for a new station in Kidlington and closing Woodstock station. The merits of the Fire station in Woodstock were discussed and the Mayor will be organising a town meeting for 2 December to discuss this matter. The Council voted to oppose the closure of the station.

**Other Business**

**Donations:** the Council agreed to donate £100 to the Royal British Legion for supplying the wreaths for Remembrance Sunday and £300 towards the cost of securing the wall brackets on properties in Woodstock town centre to display small Christmas trees.

**Speeding signs:** Councillor Poskitt is looking into vehicle stimulated radar signs to remind drivers of the speed restrictions through Woodstock. Suggested sites are Oxford Street, Manor Road, Banbury Road and Hensington Road. Prices will be confirmed later.

Due to restrictions of space not all Council business has been included. Please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

**Graham Brown**

**Calum Miller, MP**



Over the summer months, I have really enjoyed spending more time with businesses, charities and individuals in our community. I am returning to Parliament full of admiration for the many volunteers who serve others across our area. Thank you, too, to all those who have shared their concerns about what is happening personally, locally, nationally and internationally.

Many people spoke to me about the level of development proposed for our area. At Salt Cross by Eynsham, in Yarnton, Begbroke and Kidlington and in Bicester, thousands of homes are already planned. Some have been held up by the underfunding of new road connections. Challenges in getting connections and service for energy, water and telecoms are also real constraints – and we know that we need more doctors, dentists and health services alongside childcare and school places.

I have been working with local residents on two specific issues. In Bicester, this is a crunch month for a decision about the London Road crossing. East West Rail will bring new connections to our area but our campaign has been to ensure that it does not come at the cost of cutting Bicester in two. In Woodstock, I continue to work with the GPs, the local NHS, the councils and Blenheim Palace to develop a firm proposal for a new doctor’s surgery, which I believe we can deliver by the end of 2028.

Over the summer, we have heard more detail on new proposals for the Puy du Fou resort, a whole new town at Heyford airfield and the strategic rail freight interchange at Ardley. These only highlight further the need for national government to take responsibility for delivering infrastructure - both physical and social - before new developments open. I will continue to press ministers for these commitments.

**Calum Miller, MP**

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## Common Law Marriage - The Myth That Won't Die

Marriage is one of those words that means different things to different people. Some couples say they're married because they had a wedding, signed the register, and posed for photos. Others simply live together for years and consider themselves married because, well, it feels like they are. No paperwork, no "I do" in a licensed venue, no witnesses - just a shared sofa and a Netflix subscription.

I get it. It sounds romantic. It feels reassuring. But here's the truth: 'common law marriage' is a myth. You can live together for decades, share a dog, raise children, and still not have the rights of a married couple or civil partners. The term 'common law marriage' sounds logical, and yes, it exists elsewhere, but not in England and Wales. It's simply a social idea, not a legal one. When one of you dies, the law will treat you as strangers. That's not me being overly dramatic - that's just how it is.

The harsh reality is that the law doesn't care how many IKEA trips you've survived or that you raised children together. Cohabiting partners have no automatic rights, no claim on each other's assets, and no inheritance tax perks. None.

### You're Not Alone

Research shows that a quarter of cohabiting couples without a Will believe their assets will automatically pass to their partner when they die. They are wrong. Unless you're married or in a civil partnership, your partner is automatically entitled to nothing. Not the house, not the savings, not even the dog. It's a harsh reality, but it's reality nonetheless.

And it gets worse. If you don't have a Will, you lose control over who gets what. The law will distribute your assets according to a formula that ignores your relationship. Your partner could be left financially exposed, and your family could face an administrative nightmare at the worst possible time.

### Why Marriage (or Civil Partnership) Still Matters

If you're married or in a civil partnership, the tax man is surprisingly polite\*. When one of you dies, everything you own can go to your partner without paying a penny in inheritance tax. On top of that, you can pass on any unused tax allowance - that's £325,000 at the time of writing - so the survivor gets double, making it £650,000. Add the property allowance of £175,000 each, and you're looking at a combined tax-free amount of £1 million. That's not pocket change.

Civil partners get the same deal. Unlimited transfers, combined allowances - it's like a two-for-one offer, but with houses and money.

## So, What's the Solution?

You have options. The obvious one is marriage or civil partnership. It's not for everyone, and it's not a decision to take lightly. These are legal contracts with consequences if things go wrong. Divorce or dissolution can also be costly and stressful. But for long-term couples, the financial and legal protections are hard to ignore.

The other option is a Will. A properly drafted Will ensures your wishes are carried out and can provide some protection for your partner. It won't solve the inheritance tax problem entirely, but it's a start. Plus, it's a statement that says: "I've got you covered." A Will removes guesswork, prevents family disputes, and spares your loved ones from the undignified process of proving their connection to you. It sets out who gets what, who looks after the children, and even who takes care of the dog.

If you're in a committed relationship and you own property, have savings, or simply want to avoid chaos after your death, do something about it. Speak to a solicitor. Get a Will. Consider whether marriage or civil partnership makes sense for you. And don't rely on myths; rely on well-drafted legal paperwork instead.

*\*Note: Just so you know, this was written before the 2026 Budget announcement. So if the Chancellor has been tinkering with inheritance tax since then, the figures in this article might now be as reliable as a weather forecast for Glastonbury. Always check the latest government guidance or, better still, ask a solicitor who actually reads this stuff for a living.*



Anna Boucher, Senior Associate

Anna Boucher is an inheritance tax, wills and probate specialist solicitor at The Burnside Partnership (Combe office). Each month, Anna will share helpful tips on inheritance law, mixing humour with practical advice. If you have any follow-up questions, you can email her at [anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com](mailto:anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com) or call the Combe office on 01865 987781 and ask for her secretary, Bev.



# WITNEY MODEL AND COLLECTORS CLUB EXHIBITION

**Saturday 10th January 2026**  
2.00pm-4.00pm

You are warmly invited to  
attend our free Witney Model  
and Collectors Club exhibition.

Come and have a look around as we host a Witney Model and Collectors Club exhibition full of model cars, trains, aircrafts and even fairgrounds. With memorabilia and general collections also on display there is sure to be something to interest anyone in attendance. There will be refreshments on offer throughout the afternoon.

We look forward to welcoming you soon!



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## WOBL Around The World



With grateful thanks to these  
intrepid travellers.

This month we have (from left to  
right):

Yours truly in Negombo, Sri Lanka  
Stacey in Bucharest, Romania  
Melanie in Vancouver, Canada  
Paula in Nairobi, Kenya  
Therese at Tigers Nest, Bhutan

*Editors Note: Please take your  
copy of WOBL for the next travels,  
and then take a photo to show us  
where you have been. So far we  
have followed 30 people to 21  
countries. There are 195 in the  
world - let's try to get to all of them.*



## Woodstock Methodist Church Christmas Tree Festival

**Afternoon Tea and All Age Nativity Trail -  
13 December 2025, between 2 and 4.30pm**

You are warmly invited to our 2025 Christmas Tree  
Festival launch afternoon tea and All-Age Nativity  
Trail. Please come along and:

- View the 20+ mini beautiful Christmas Trees and find out about the organisations who have decorated them including Woodstock Primary School, Tuesday Tots, Woodstock Bowls Club, the Stroke Club, the Scout and Guides plus many others.
- Take part in the fun Nativity Trail and learn more about Christmas story from Mary, Joseph, the Angels, and others involved in the Christmas story.
- Enjoy a cup of tea, coffee and a piece of cake or mince-pie.

All are welcome and entry is free with donations being shared between equally between our 2025/27 Church Charities; Bridewell Organic Gardens (a local charity that provides mental health recovery through gardening), All We Can (an international development and relief organisation whose mission is to ensure every person's potential is fulfilled) and the Church.

For those who are not able to come on this date, the Christmas Tree Festival is running until 3 January and the church will be open during daylight hours on 14 December and then every day from the 20 December until the 3 January. Please pop in!



## Our Natural World

### A Community Art Exhibition Celebrating 50 Years of the Woodstock Natural History Society

In 2025 the Woodstock Natural History Society (WNHS) celebrates an extraordinary milestone—its 50th anniversary. For half a century, since its founding in 1975, the Society has encouraged people of all ages to engage with the wildlife and landscapes around them, nurturing curiosity, understanding, and respect for the natural world. This golden anniversary is not only a time to look back on those five decades of field walks, talks, and wildlife recording, but also an opportunity to look forward—to the next generation of naturalists and environmental stewards.



North side of exhibition - Bladon CofE Primary and Marlborough CofE School

As part of its year-long celebrations, WNHS organised a very special community event: an art exhibition titled 'Our Natural World'. Held in late October at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock, the exhibition brought together pupils from the Marlborough CofE School, Woodstock CE Primary School, and Bladon CofE Primary School. More than 200 artworks, created by children aged four to eighteen, transformed the church's historic interior into a vibrant gallery of colour, imagination and wonder.

#### A Shared Theme: 'Our Natural World'

In the weeks leading up to the exhibition, teachers and pupils discussed the meaning of the theme 'Our Natural World'—what nature means to us, how we relate to it, and why it matters. These conversations inspired the young artists to interpret the theme in their own creative ways. Some painted landscapes filled with wildflowers or woodland scenes; others drew birds in flight or hedgehogs nestled in autumn leaves. Collages, paintings, and mixed-media works celebrated everything from insects and mammals to oceans, trees, and skies.

Walking among the displays, visitors were struck by the diversity of approaches and the depth of thought

behind the pieces. Many children used recycled or natural materials; others experimented with texture and pattern. The result was a joyful, sometimes poignant, reminder of how children perceive the beauty and fragility of the world we share.

#### Art for the Joy of Taking Part

Importantly, the exhibition was not a competition. WNHS wanted every pupil to feel free to participate purely for the pleasure of creativity and for the satisfaction of contributing to a public celebration of nature. The focus was on inclusion and collaboration, echoing the Society's long-standing belief that engagement with the environment should be open to everyone, regardless of age or expertise.

Teachers said how enthusiastically pupils responded. "It was wonderful to see the children thinking about wildlife in their own neighbourhoods—what they see on the way to school, in the garden, or in nearby fields," one staff member commented. "They were proud to share their work with family, friends, and the community."



South side of exhibition - Marlborough CofE School and Woodstock CE Primary School

#### Bringing the Community Together

The preview evening was a heart-warming affair. The Revd Sarah Bourne, Rector of St Mary Magdalene, and her daughter Lucinda provided beautiful live music, which filled the church with warmth and energy while guests admired the artwork. Parents, teachers, WNHS members, and visitors mingled, celebrating both artistic creativity and the shared love of nature that connects Woodstock and its surrounding villages.

Over the course of the exhibition, more than 200 visitors viewed the displays. For many, it was a chance to rediscover local wildlife through fresh eyes. For the Society, it was a tangible way to connect its fifty-year heritage with the enthusiasm of a new generation. As one member observed, "These young artists are tomorrow's natural historians. Their curiosity and imagination are exactly what we need to protect our environment in the years ahead."

#### A Collective Effort

Pulling together an exhibition on this scale required teamwork, goodwill, and a strong sense of community spirit. The Society is deeply grateful to the Reverend Sarah Bourne and her colleagues at St Mary Magdalene Church for their generous hospitality in hosting the event. Special thanks also go to Andrew and Mark Fairbairn, and to Reuben, whose help transporting and setting up the display boards was indispensable. Over twenty-five WNHS members volunteered to install and later dismantle the exhibition.



Hedgehog - Bladon CofE Primary School

#### Fifty Years of Nature, Knowledge, and Friendship

Founded in 1975, the Woodstock Natural History Society has grown from a small group of enthusiasts into an inclusive organisation dedicated to learning, recording, and sharing knowledge about the natural world. It continues to hold monthly illustrated talks—covering everything from bird migration and wild orchids to Arctic ecology—alongside field trips, walks, and visits to sites of ecological interest. Members also contribute to biodiversity recording projects through the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre and national wildlife databases.

Throughout its history, the Society has remained firmly rooted in the local community. It is as much about friendship and shared curiosity as it is about natural history or environmental science. Its coffee

mornings, tree-planting efforts, and fundraising events bring people together in the same way this art exhibition has done—through a common appreciation of the beauty around us and a desire to protect it.



Woodland - Woodstock CE Primary School

#### The Broader 50th Anniversary Programme

The exhibition formed one highlight in a series of anniversary activities designed to celebrate and strengthen the Society's role in the community. A commemorative nature trail pamphlet, supported by the Woodstock Town Council, is guiding residents and visitors through local wildlife sites and features. Together with 'Our Natural World', these initiatives embody the Society's forward-looking vision: to encourage understanding, enjoyment, and care for nature across all generations.

#### A Glimpse of the Future

If one message ran through the exhibition, it was hope. The children's work, full of life and colour, expressed both wonder and responsibility. From the smallest paper hedgehog to the boldest landscape painting, and the detailed owl or kingfisher, every piece conveyed an awareness of how closely our wellbeing is tied to that of the environment.

As climate and biodiversity challenges continue to make headlines, the exhibition was a reminder that

education and creativity are powerful tools. The pupils' work showed not only talent but also empathy and awareness, demonstrating how the next generation is already thinking about their relationship with the natural world. Seeing their work displayed so beautifully in the church was deeply moving, and gave us great optimism for the years ahead."

Gratitude and Reflection

Behind the smiles and photographs, the 'Our Natural World' exhibition was also an act of gratitude—to the teachers who encouraged participation, the families who supported their young artists, and the Society members who gave their time and energy. Above all, it was a thank-you to the children, whose creativity reminds us why natural history matters. Their art will not only live in memory but will, in the best sense, renew the Society's mission: to observe, learn, and care.

Looking Forward

The Woodstock Natural History Society continues to welcome new members of all ages. Whether you enjoy birdwatching, botany, photography, or simply a good walk in the countryside, you will find friendly faces and shared interests among its members. The Society meets monthly from September to May at St Hugh's Hall, Hensington Road, and also organises regular outings during the summer. As it enters its



Dangerous beauty - The Marlborough CofE School

next fifty years, the Society's purpose remains as clear as ever—to celebrate, record, and protect the natural world, while inspiring others to do the same. The 'Our Natural World' exhibition embodied that vision: past, present, and future coming together in one community celebration.

For more information about upcoming talks, walks, and membership, please email [contactWNHS@gmail.com](mailto:contactWNHS@gmail.com) or see the Society's updates in WOBL and local parish magazines.

Adrian J. Delnevo, Chair, WNHS

Curate's Log

What Does Christmas Mean to You?



As the days grow shorter and the lights begin to twinkle in shop windows, we know that Christmas is coming. For many of us, it's a season that brings a mixture of emotions - joy, nostalgia, excitement, and perhaps a little stress too. It's a time when our calendars fill up and our to-do lists grow longer: cards to send, presents to buy, food to prepare, people to see. But amid all the bustle, have you ever stopped to ask yourself what Christmas really means to you?

Over the years, I think Christmas has come to mean many different things to different people. For some, it's a time for family - the one point in the year when everyone gathers under one roof, even if only for a few days. For others, it's a time of generosity and kindness, when we think of those who might be lonely or struggling, and find ways to offer support. For children, of course, it's a time of excitement and anticipation - the sparkle of lights, the mystery of presents, the magic of the story told once again.

Yet for others, Christmas can be a difficult time. It can highlight absences as well as presences, grief as well as joy. The pressure to make everything 'perfect' can leave us exhausted. The advertisements tell us what we 'need' to buy in order to be happy, but happiness cannot be wrapped or purchased. Sometimes, in our eagerness to make Christmas special, we risk missing the quiet wonder at the heart of it all.

Because at its heart, Christmas exists to remind us of the birth of Jesus - a baby born in modest surroundings, whose life would go on to change the world. The birth of Jesus marks the start of an extraordinary life: the life of a man whose teachings and ministry have shaped history for more than two thousand years, often in ways we might not even realise. Jesus taught about inclusion, highlighting the importance of reaching out to those on the margins. He invited people to see the world through the lens of love — to act not out of fear, power, or insecurity, but from compassion. His message was, and remains, one of peace, forgiveness, and hope. I recognise that, in the ways church institutions and individuals act, it may not always feel like this.

When I read the story of the first Christmas - of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds in the fields, of angels proclaiming good news - I'm reminded that the very first Christmas was simple, humble, and full of grace. There were no fairy lights, no festive playlists, no supermarket queues. Just a young couple, far from home, welcoming new life into the world. It was there, in that unlikely setting, that God chose to come

among us - not in splendour, but in vulnerability; not with noise, but with peace.


All the churches in Woodstock and Bladon will be holding a variety of services throughout Advent and the Christmas period; from quiet, reflective gatherings to joyful celebrations. So please have a look at the advert in this magazine for more details.

And this Christmas Day, St Mary Magdalene's Church will again host a Community Christmas Lunch, provided by Blenheim Palace, following the 11 am Christmas Service. All are warmly welcome - whether you'd like to come just to eat, or to eat and join in helping with serving and clearing up. Most importantly, we will be eating together - celebrating the gift of community, companionship, and shared joy. For more details, please see the flyer in this month's magazine.

However you mark Christmas this year - whether it's full of family, friends, or quiet reflection - may you find moments of peace and joy that remind you of what really matters: love that reaches out, light that shines in darkness, and hope that never fades.

With every blessing - Gemma

Revd Gemma Ferrier



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**Woodstock Community Christmas Lunch**

Provided by Blenheim Palace

**Christmas Day - Thursday 25th December, 2025**

**St Mary Magdalene's Church Woodstock**

A small number of meals are available for home delivery if you are not able to get to the Church - please contact me for more details

**You are warmly invited to come and share Christmas Day lunch in St Mary Magdalene's Church**

**12.30 - 3.00pm**  
Lunch served at 1pm

You are also invited to join us for our Christmas Day service 11-12pm

**Come just to eat, or eat and also helping with serving and clearing**

**30 places available**

To reserve your place, please contact Revd.Gemma Ferrier on 07971529242 or email [curate@woodstockandbladon.com](mailto:curate@woodstockandbladon.com)

Benefice of WOODSTOCK & BLADON

BLenheim PALACE

# The Oxfordshire Museum

We have an exciting range of activities and exhibitions lined up this Christmas at the OM.

## Oxfordshire Craft Guild Winter Exhibition

This exciting exhibition is now open in our Garden Gallery, featuring 26 makers from across Oxfordshire. The exhibition includes Pottery, Jewellery, Glass Making, Weaving and more. It's the perfect opportunity to support local makers and find some unique Christmas gifts. The exhibition is open during museum opening hours and runs until Wednesday 31 December. Free entry.

## Flower Fairies

This year we're having a Flower Fairy Christmas at the OM! In celebration of these incredible creations by Cicely Mary Barker we have a special iSpy trail for little ones, where they'll have to search the museum for 12 hidden flower fairies! We also have a great collection of Flower Fairies merchandise in the shop, including books, calendars and postcards.

## Garden Art

We welcome local artist and sculptor Will Budgett to the OM this December, where we will have several silhouette art installations in our museum garden. These will feature a clever combination of sculpture and light, producing incredible effects. All pieces will also be available for sale.

For details on all our workshops please visit our website: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museumworkshops](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museumworkshops)

# Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

Monthly Talks at The Coach House at the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock at 7.30pm

## Wednesday 7th January

John Piper: an Oxfordshire Artist

Speaker: Lizzy Rowe, Art Historian and Tour Guide

Traces of John Piper, the neo-Romantic British artist, writer and designer, can be found all over Oxfordshire. This talk will show you Oxfordshire through the eyes of a man who cared deeply about the countryside and our built heritage and celebrated it in his art.

## Membership of The Friends 2025-2026

Single £20; Double £30. Membership details and our full 2025-2026 programme are on our website. [www.friendsoftom.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftom.org.uk).

Membership gives you free access to all our talks which take place in the Museum in Woodstock but are also available on ZOOM. Non-members are very welcome at these events for a fee of £5, payable on the evening.

# Woodstock Baptist Church

## Concert - Saturday 13 December 2025

Gareth Davies-Jones 'Darkest Midnight in December'

Gareth Davies-Jones is back at Woodstock Baptist Church on Saturday 13th December at 7pm.

Gareth's Solo Christmas Acoustic Show, 'The Darkest Midnight in December', brings a welcome oasis of acoustic calm amongst the busiest of seasons. Armed with fresh interpretations, arrangements and melodies, and with a little background on the writers themselves, he comes back to Woodstock, aiming to uncover some of the original potency and impact of familiar seasonal music.

Tickets are £15 and available at [garethdavies-jones.com/tour](http://garethdavies-jones.com/tour).

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# Woodstock Literature Society

## Review of talk by Dr Helen Appleton: Christmas in Medieval Literature

In this captivating and richly illustrated talk, Dr Helen Appleton wove together the stories of the legendary King Arthur of Camelot with the real King Edward III, who has been called 'a real life King Arthur,' through their mutual love of Christmas revelry, extravagant feasting, and jesting.



In telling these stories she wove in fascinating insights into the Christmas Edward III spent in Woodstock at the former royal palace. Records show that the whole surrounding countryside was stripped bare of game, sheep and cattle to feed the enormous royal retinue and the overall cost amounted to over £1million in today's money. The locals must have been extremely relieved when the itinerant court moved north to Carlisle. His queen Philippa and sister, Eleanor of Woodstock, wore priceless jewelled and embroidered gowns for the revelries, and valuable gifts such as jewel-encrusted golden goblets were exchanged. Some of these items have survived to modern times and were illustrated in the presentation.

Turning to the legendary Arthur, Dr Appleton discussed the 14th century chivalric romance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight written by an unknown Northern poet. In this poem the Christmas revels of Arthur's court are well underway when they are interrupted by a mysterious Green Knight. He challenges the knights of the round table to a game: one of them must strike his head off with his axe, and in return will receive a blow year and a day later. Sir Gawain rises to the challenge, as it is a test of honour and chivalry. The narrative is eerie and rich with a surprise trick ending: the Green Man is an ancient pagan symbol but the Green Knight in the poem turns

out to be the host of the feast himself! The blending of pagan Yuletide games with a Christian festival is skilfully handled by the Gawain poet. Needless to say, 'the beheading game' as it is now called is not one for the modern family Xmas!

In her telling of the real and imagined worlds of the medieval Xmas, Dr Appleton led her highly appreciative audience gently towards their own coming festivities.

## Linda Glee

For information about the Woodstock Literature Society visit [www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk](http://www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk)

# Updates on 'Botley West' EXAMINATION OVER



The deadline for Interested Parties to comment on Botley West Solar Farm Examination passed on 10th November 2025. The Examination is over.

For the next three months, possibly less, the Inspectors will be considering all the evidence and information, writing their report and making a recommendation to Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Mr Miliband will then have up to three months to make his decision whether to allow the largest solar farm in Western Europe to go ahead right here in this part of Oxfordshire.

## THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING

Thank you to the many hundreds of you who have seriously engaged with the Examination, sending in many well argued and evidential submissions on a wide range of issues about which you are justifiably concerned.

We are delighted that the Examiners (ExA) have listened to all of us and have not spared their words in criticising the Applicant (PVDP) for their many shortcomings. We hope that they will recommend that the Development Consent Order is NOT granted and, because PVDP has failed to provide sufficient evidence, that Mr Miliband cannot be confident of deciding in their favour either.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Stop Botley West is entirely dependent on your generosity, both in time and donations. We appreciate your support. Thank you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us at Stop Botley West

Please keep up to date by visiting [stopbotleywest.com](http://stopbotleywest.com) for the latest news.

## David Mostyn

20 August 1944 to 5 November 2025

David was born in Leeds in 1944 and grew up in North Wales. He later went to boarding school in South Africa, where his father worked as a minister.

He graduated from Durban Art College with a degree in Fine Art and moved back to London in the 1960s. He began his career as a typesetter and artworker before moving into art direction with Hamlyn Publishers. Embarking on a freelance career as a commercial illustrator in the 70s, David produced a weekly comic strip for the Beano and Dandy, and his clients included Penguin Books, Disney, Marvel, and DC Comics. He illustrated over 500 children's educational books, made TV appearances on the BBC, and gave talks at the Edinburgh Festival. His career spanned over 50 years, and he was one of the most respected artists in his field.

**Ben Mostyn**



I first met David (and his American wife Liza) in the early 80s when we were neighbours on Boars Hill. Our children were the same ages and we spent many a happy evening over drinks and supper parties. I was a printer at the time, and we therefore became customers of each other. My two step-sons were sceptical of David being a cartoonist for the Dandy, until he borrowed a bit of paper and drew Desperate Dan in a few flourishes of his pencil in seconds.

He then moved to Bladon, and when I moved to Woodstock, we renewed our friendship. David was always laughing and joking, and his laughter was infectious. He kindly contributed many cartoons for WOBL for us - some of them I still don't understand - I gather that David didn't always understand his own humour either! I'll miss his wonderful quirky humour, and I'll miss him.

**Nick Manby-Brown**

## The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 10th December 2025

### The Music of Epiphany: Gifts and Stars

Epiphany is a feast of abundance and transformations, set in the very dead of winter. As well as focusing on the visit of the Wise Men and the extravagant gifts they bring, the season also considers Jesus' Baptism and his first miracle at the Wedding at Cana. T. S. Eliot's beloved poem The Journey of the Magi leads us to considerations of the dreams and journeys that also feature in Matthew's gospel account. There is much wonderful music to illustrate this, and Patrick will also plunder the worlds of art and poetry to portray this rich array of stars, camels and gold. Featuring music by Palestrina, Byrd, Mendelssohn and Britten.

**About the speaker:** Patrick Craig is a Vicar Choral at St Paul's Cathedral. For twenty years he combined this with an international career singing over a thousand concerts with the world-renowned early music consort The Tallis Scholars. He also sings with the award-winning group The Cardinal's Musick. He founded and conducts this country's leading all-female professional choir, Aurora Nova. He has conducted concerts for the BBC Proms, the Brighton, Lichfield and Aldeburgh Festivals, and with the City of London Sinfonia. As a Cambridge history graduate with a lifelong interest in the arts, he has gone on to lead choral workshops for amateur singers across the world, where he places music in its historical and cultural context. He regularly lectures for the St Paul's Adult Education programme and for John Hall's Venice Courses, which have allowed him to incorporate his interests in theology, art and poetry. In 2020, when his singing and conducting work disappeared overnight as a result of the Covid pandemic, Patrick poured all his experience into online presentations which have raised vital funds for the Help Musicians Charity.

This hybrid lecture will be held at the Warwick Hall, Church Green, Burford, OX18 4RZ at 11am and via Zoom. Please be seated by 10.50 for notices of upcoming events. Numbers are no longer restricted but booking is recommended to reserve a place at [www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk). Non-members are welcome (space permitting) at a charge of £10.

Further information will be circulated via the newsletter and bookings can be made via the website or please contact Lisa Etheridge on 07918 180895 for a booking form.

To learn more about The Arts Society Cotswolds, please log into the website - or contact Alison Morgans on 07771 817050

## Woodstock Probus Club

On 21 October the club had a very successful tour of the Mini factory. We split into 3 groups, and although the basics of each tour were probably the same, there were clearly differences depending on the guides' interests. It is always impressive to see a field of robots hard at work, producing all sorts of minis in apparent random order though this must have been carefully programmed behind the scenes. The robot dog trotting around doing sniffing and recording was also fascinating. Watching it lying down on its side and then getting up, and trotting up the stairs was amazing. We also saw inside a mini engine - it looked very compact and complicated, and I could see no sign of a dip-stick.



I was not allowed to take photos inside the factory but I include a photo from the mini museum which was also our assembly point. After a really interesting morning, we had a nice lunch at the Hinksey Heights golf course with splendid views of Oxford's spires.

Our speaker on 6 Nov was Andrew Hanlon, Headmaster of Marlborough School. His topic was 'Life of a Headmaster in a State School'. Andrew has been teaching for 32 years and for the last twelve years he has been Headmaster of the Marlborough School. Although his week is largely filled with activities related to the running of the school he still likes to do some classroom teaching. He likened his job to that of a CEO in a medium-sized company.

The Marlborough school opened in 1939, on land given by the Duke of Marlborough, hence the name. The first pupils were a mixture of local children and evacuees from elsewhere in the country following the outbreak of war. Currently the school has 1086 pupils, 80 teachers and 40 support staff. Its academic record is very good with 60% of pupils going on to A levels. The school has been rated outstanding by Ofsted, and, perhaps not surprisingly, is over-subscribed. Currently it is in the process of a £4.5m

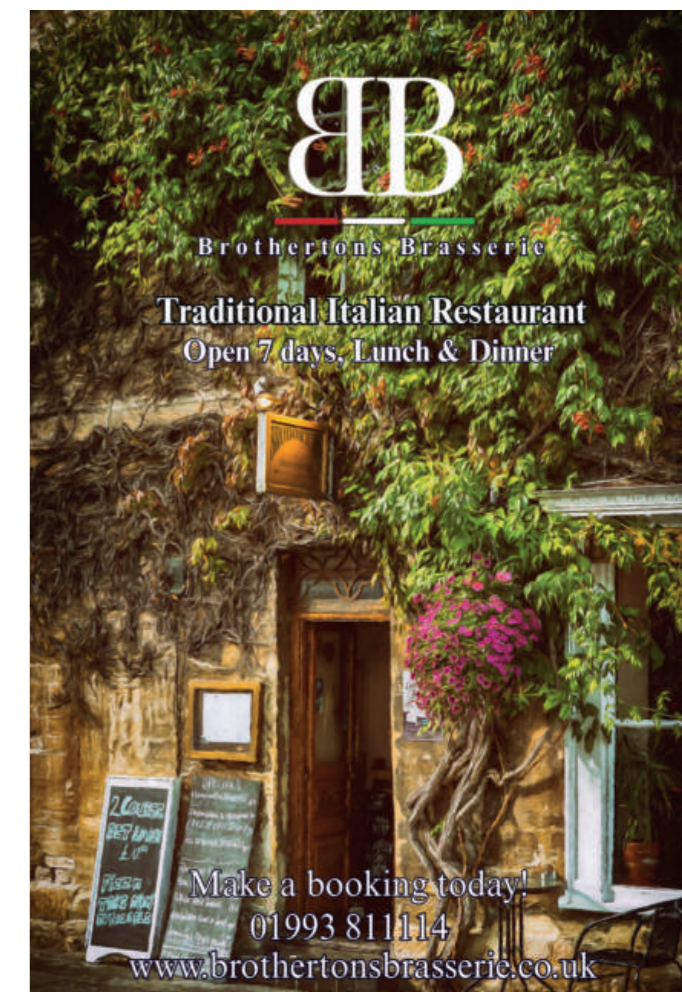
extension. Because of its excellent track record, it is not suffering from the recruitment and retention challenges experienced by many schools, and is, in fact, fully staffed in the more difficult recruitment disciplines of maths and physics. It is in the top 3% of the highest-performing schools in the country and provides advice to each pupil as to their best future career move. Mr Hanlon also serves as an Ofsted inspector which has the advantage of allowing him to see what works at other schools and to implement the best ideas at the Marlborough. Of recent years he has noticed a significant increase in pupils with special needs, a reduction in reading linked to a change in how pupils use the web and less support from some parents with respect to discipline.

The Marlborough is the location of the Ormerod Resource Base providing specialist support for students with Communication and Interaction Difficulties and Physical Disabilities. They can participate in mainstream classes or have tailored learning according to their needs.

**Other Probus Activities:**

Our next outing is to the Birmingham Royal Ballet to see The Nutcracker on 27 November. As in recent years our Pre-Christmas Lunch is now a Post-Christmas lunch, scheduled for mid-January.

**David Anderson, Past President**



# The Marlborough C of E School

## Battlefields Trip

Just before midnight on 17 October, a coach full of 45 very sleepy Marlborough Year 9s, alongside Mr Moss, Miss Cox, Mr Moore, Miss Winfield, and Miss Sheridan, departed from Woodstock and headed for Dover. Crossing the English Channel just before dawn, the group landed in Calais for our annual World War 1 Battlefields Trip.

The first day centred around Arras, France, the site of a lengthy battle in 1917. We began with a visit to Vimy Ridge, the site of a crucial Canadian victory, to see preserved Allied and Entente trenches and a vast monument. Next, we headed to Neubille-Saint-Vaast German Cemetery, the largest German military cemetery in France. Finally, we visited the Wellington Tunnels, which were carved out of medieval quarries to create underground barracks for 24,000 soldiers. After a busy day, we headed to Belgium and arrived at the hostel, which has welcomed Marlborough students for many years, for a well-deserved rest.

On Day 2, we crossed back into France, and explored the Somme region. The day began with a visit to the Devonshire Trench, the resting place of 163 soldiers who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. We then visited Fricourt German Cemetery, where 6000 of the 17000 buried soldiers remain unknown. Following this, we arrived at the Lochnagar Crater, the site of the largest mine of the war. Next, we visited the Thiepval monument to the 70,000 British and South African soldiers who went missing during the Battle of the Somme. Here, some students found the names of family members who were lost in the war. After this trip we visited the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, which memorialises those who fell on the first day of battle. Finally, we returned to Ypres. After dinner, we saw the Last Post at the Menin Gate, where a choir and buglers honoured the fallen.

On our third and final day, we began with a visit to the excellent Leonidas Chocolate Shop. Laden with treasures, we then went back to the Menin Gate. The group looked at the names of the soldiers who marched through the gate on their way to the front lines and who later went missing. Then, we visited Essex Farm Cemetery, a former dressing station where John McRae wrote his famous poem 'In Flanders Fields'. Our penultimate stop was to the Langemark German Cemetery, which memorialises 44,000 soldiers. Awed by the sight, one student said, "You know that people died in the war, but you get there and realise just how many people died - there are fields, and fields, of tiny squares, each with 4 unknown soldiers, all buried together." We ended by visiting Tyne Cot, the world's largest cemetery for Commonwealth forces.

At last, it was time to cross back over the Channel. The travellers arrived back in Woodstock late Sunday evening, wearied but still buzzing about all they had seen. The battlefields trip is always a student favourite, and provides a fantastic opportunity for students to enrich their learning. Reflecting on the trip, one student said: "I think it's really important to learn about this topic, since so many people have ancestors who fought in the war. You're not just learning about history, you're learning about your history."

## Woodstock Remembrance Sunday Service

The school was represented by Principal Mr Hanlon and two of our Year 8 students, Sasha and Leo, at the Woodstock Remembrance Sunday service. They joined the Duke of Marlborough, Calum Miller (MP), and representatives from the Army, Air Force and many other community groups, in laying a wreath on behalf of the school community.



Principal Mr Hanlon with Sasha and Leo

The Reverend Sarah Bourne led a poignant service at the War Memorial and a two-minute silence was observed at 11:00am followed by the sounding of the Last Post. The names of the servicemen and women were read out and will be remembered always.

A Whole School Assembly was also held to mark the time when the whole Marlborough community gathers to take part in our own act of Remembrance, as we do every year at this time.



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# Bladon CofE Primary School

Over the past two years, the staff and children at Bladon Primary School have been working on many different ways to develop resilient learners. We are delighted to share that we have officially been granted the Silver Pupil Resilience Award in recognition of the progress we have made as a school in building children's resilience. As part of the process towards the award, we have held parent and staff workshops on resilience building strategies and language. We've also introduced regular resilience assemblies as well as a weekly resilience award. We have even welcomed inspirational speakers (ranging from mental health professionals, to scout leaders, to Olympic athletes) to come and share their own resilience stories with the children.

Here are some pupil voice gathered during the project:

"If you just persevere, you would keep doing the same thing over and over- you need resilience to think of new ways to improve."

"Resilience is when you try and then you fall down, and then you think what went wrong and then come back with a different approach."

"I can do tricky things if I just keep going and take a break if I'm sad or cross."

A huge well done to Mr Daw, who worked really hard to lead the school to our first Pupil Resilience award!

Ellie Jenkins, Assistant Headteacher

# Woodstock CE Primary School

## Curriculum Updates: December

### Children in Need: Pupil Parliament Fundraising 2025

Thank you to everyone who dressed up, baked, bought, or enjoyed cakes for this year's Children in Need fundraising event. We were delighted to join forces with the Fire Service, who kindly brought a fire engine at the start of the day and even arranged for Pudsey to visit and greet the children. We extend our sincere thanks to the Fire Service for collecting and counting all of our donations, and to Ben, who generously invites Pudsey to join us each year. Our Pupil Parliament showed great dedication in organising and running the Cake Sale at the end of the day. We are grateful to all who queued - despite the rain - to purchase the wonderful selection of cakes and bakes. In total, we raised £450, contributing to the impressive collection of over £7,000 across the wider community. We deeply appreciate the important work Children in Need does in supporting numerous charities and families during challenging times.

## Year 1 History Day



Year 1 recently took part in a Life of a Victorian Child workshop hosted by the Oxfordshire Museum. The children were fascinated to learn what everyday life was like for Victorian boys and girls, discovering how challenging daily routines could be and how different school was compared to today. Through hands-on activities and storytelling, they gained a real sense of how children lived, worked, and learned in the past - an experience that brought their history topic to life.

Anna Poole, (DHT, DSL & Curriculum Lead)



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# 'Woodstock - A Contemporary History in Photographs'

The long awaited book from local photographer Jay Alice is finally here! As a little winter pre-launch, Jay will be selling a limited number of copies of her book from The Woodstock Bookshop from 10 December. You can now own a beautiful 'coffee table' collection of over 200 photographs of Woodstock scenes, buildings and people. You may even be in it! I met with Jay in The Woodstock Arms to discuss her inspiration for the book.

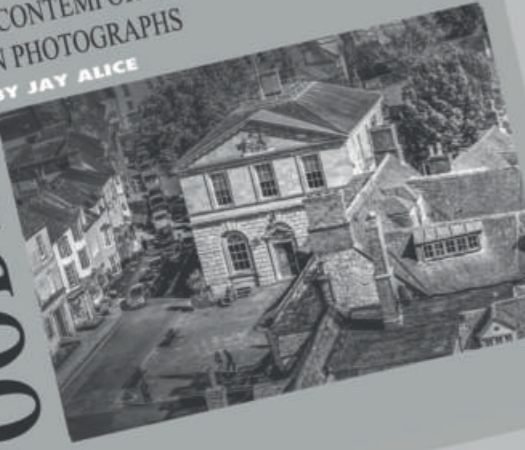
One of her main inspirations was the commission she undertook to capture the VE day 75th anniversary celebrations held in the lockdown of 2020. As most of you will remember this was an exceptional day where the town came together in a way unlikely (we hope!) to ever be repeated! I am sure you all remember Jay coming round with her camera and here you will see some of the results, stunning photographs that are a joy to look at as much as being of great social importance. A whole chapter is dedicated to these images.

She also has a real passion for architecture, people and community and as a parent, photographer and business owner in Woodstock says she found so much here to inspire and impress her. She wanted to create something solid to share her love of this town and its people and that would capture a moment in time that can be seen for years to come. The book will be on sale for a very reasonable pre-launch price of £25 per copy and you can also contact Jay for direct purchases via her website [www.jayalicephotographic.com](http://www.jayalicephotographic.com).

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*Church of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock*

**7.30pm Festive drinks**

**8:00pm Guest Talk Begins**



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# Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

Museum newly accredited and a Christmas Jumper Competition



We are delighted to announce that VisitEngland has awarded the museum its 'Quality Assured Visitor Attraction' status. The award follows a visit to the museum by a mystery shopper, who rated the museum across eight topics. A 60% rating is classed as good, being the pass mark. We achieved "an overall commendable score of 73%".

The assessor stated in his report that "key strengths highlighted in the assessment included the staff, cleanliness, and the attraction itself. The carefully curated displays offer a fascinating insight into Oxfordshire's transport heritage, bringing the past vividly to life. What makes the experience even more special is the team of staff and volunteers, who are friendly, knowledgeable, and clearly passionate about what they do, creating a warm and engaging atmosphere throughout the visit".

The assessor identified that we have some work to do on the toilets and catering facilities. The trustees have formed a sub-committee to review these and other suggestions in the report, which would improve our visitor offering. A different mystery shopper will visit during 2026 when the museum will be reassessed.

Locally other attractions with the award include Blenheim, Oxford Castle & Prison, The Ashmolean, The Sheldonian, Bodleian Libraries, Didcot Railway Centre and Waterperry Gardens.

Father Christmas will be visiting the museum and seeing children in his 'Bus Grotto' on Sunday 14 and 21 December between 10am and 3pm. There is a small extra charge for every child who sees Santa but each child will receive a present. On both days The Oxford & District Model Railway Club will be bringing their model railway layouts for visitors to see. Older children and adults may be allowed to operate some trains.

On New Year's Day we shall have heritage bus rides from 11am until 3pm when we shall have a free to enter competition for 'The Best Christmas Jumper'. If you are feeling a bit frail after the previous night's celebrations, come along in your best or worst jumper and enjoy the museum and wallow in nostalgia.

May I wish all readers a Very Happy Christmas.

Frank Collingwood

FRI. NOV 28TH 19:30

## FRASER SMITH QUARTET

*The talk of London' - award winning saxophonist - a bebop & swing master - with Rob Barron (piano), Paul Jefferies (bass) & Steve Brown (drums)*

St Hugh's centre, Hensington Rd, Woodstock, OX20 1JL - This is a 'bring your own' snacks & drinks event



# WOODSTOCK JAZZ

SAT. DEC 20<sup>TH</sup> 19:30

## BEN HOLDER QUARTET

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# The Woodstock Bookshop

## Ten Biographies for Christmas



Biographies and memoirs make excellent gifts as they appeal to lovers of both nonfiction and fiction alike. Stylistically, they are likely to appeal to a broad audience making them a safer choice if you're not a confident judge of someone's reading tastes or you know they won't enjoy the imaginative or fantastical. Biographies are stories albeit (largely) true ones which satisfy fiction-readers who want narrative and character development and not just unembellished facts.

We have chosen ten new biographies and memoirs of individuals who have lived fascinating and groundbreaking lives that we think will make captivating gifts.

**We Did Ok, Kid : A Memoir**

by Sir Anthony Hopkins (Simon & Schuster, £25)

**Inside : Winning. Losing. Starting Again**

by Boris Becker (HarperCollins, £22)

**Electric Spark : The Enigma of Muriel Spark**

by Frances Wilson (Bloomsbury, £25)  
Shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize 2025.

**The Great Gambon: Michael Gambon in his own words (and others)**

by Milly Ellis (Little, Brown Book Group, £16.99)

**Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts**

by Margaret Atwood (Vintage Publishing, £30)

**The Boundless Deep : Young Tennyson, Science and the Crisis of Belief**

by Richard Holmes (Harper Collins, £25)  
Shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize 2025.

**Bread of Angels**

by Patti Smith (Bloomsbury, £25)

**Somewhere, a Boy and a Bear : A Biography of A. A. Milne and Winnie-the-Pooh**

by Gyles Brandreth (Penguin Books, £25)

**Mother Mary Comes To Me**

by Arundhati Roy (Penguin Books, £20)

**Seriously Silly : The Life of Terry Jones (the authorised biography)**

by Robert Ross (Hodder & Stoughton, £25)

If you are still looking for inspiration, please come and browse at The Woodstock Bookshop where we can offer recommendations for all ages in many different genres. Also, a reminder that this year, to offer an easier option for gift buyers, we have produced a new range of gift tokens that will be valid to spend in the shop. Local artist, Rod Craig, has kindly allowed us to use his original artwork on the tokens, including two designs especially for Christmas. They are available to buy from the shop in denominations of £10, £15 and £25.

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## Panniers

### Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon

As winter grips the UK with shorter days, icy roads, and biting winds, many cyclists hang up their bikes. Yet with proper preparation, winter riding can be enjoyable, healthy, and eco-friendly. Here's how to gear up effectively.

Start with visibility and safety. Dark mornings and evenings demand reliable lights - make sure batteries are charged up and maybe carry a spare set for emergencies.



*Layered clothing and having the right gear are key for everyday cycling in winter*

Bike maintenance matters too. Quality rubber dramatically reduces slips on ice and wet leaves so make sure tyres are in good shape. Stopping power in the wet brings extra challenges so brake pads or discs need to be checked and kept clean. Clean the chain frequently and keep it well oiled. Full mudguards will help you to stay dry.

Finally, monitor weather apps for black ice warnings, and carry a phone and a mini-tool kit.

For clothing, layering is key to comfort. A moisture-wicking base layer, insulating mid-layer (fleece or merino), and breathable waterproof shell beat bulky jackets. Seal your extremities - lobster gloves, overshoes, thermal cap under helmet, and a buff protect face and neck. Windproof overshoes are game-changers below 5°C and consider a waterproof cover for your helmet. Hi-vis comes into its own over winter and you can increase your visibility with reflective tape and straps.

With these steps and the right mindset, winter cycling keeps you fit, cuts congestion, and saves money - and the sunsets can be amazing. Happy cycling!

**David Walker**

# Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

Are you a traveller? A refugee, perhaps? As we head towards Christmas, many of us think about making some kind of journey. It might be just round the corner to the pub; or it might be to visit family halfway across the world.

Famously, at least in the way Luke’s gospel tells the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a journey of about 65 miles as the crow flies (roughly equivalent to a journey from here to the south coast). Today, Bethlehem is in the occupied West Bank so the journey would still be a difficult one.

Perhaps less well known is that Matthew’s gospel tells a story of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus having to escape a threat to their lives from the political authorities. They run away to find asylum in Egypt, probably for some years, until it is safe to journey home again.

If you are a traveller or a refugee from an old place of threat, then, whether or not you hope to go back, may your time here be full of peace. And if the home you have here brings you trouble, then may you too find peace. But for all of us, wherever we are on our journeying through life, may this Christmas bring blessings.

**Paul Carter, Woodstock and Bladon Methodist Churches**



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# Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone, we welcomed Angela Edmonds a newly qualified demonstrator in the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Area, with her title ‘Gardens from Afar’. Angela began her demonstration with an interpretation of her own garden which at this moment in time has still many dahlias in bloom, but the trees are bare. We then travelled to gardens in Bangkok, Grenada and Las Vegas. Alison had many tales to tell along the way. A very enjoyable evening.

Our December meeting on the 8th is a Christmas workshop with a social - festive fun with mince pies and mulled wine. We do not meet in January so our meeting after that will be on the 9 February, with Alison Gillott and her title, ‘A Pocket Full of Posies’.

We meet in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park. The meetings start at 7pm and visitors are always welcome. If you would like to know more about the club, please contact Ann on 07701 000977.

**Margaret Lang**

## Bladon Snippets from the Past

In my early years in the village - a real Christmas tree with real candles was ignited, truly lit-up with the wings of the angels in danger - such a fire hazard!

Another Christmas Eve - and it started to snow - heavily too. So it continued, and a final flurry of white came on 10 March no less!

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# Wake Up To Woodstock

## Join Woodstock’s Business Community in 2026

As 2025 draws to a close, Wake Up to Woodstock recently celebrated its fourth and final networking mixer of 2025. It was a warm, festive gathering kindly hosted by WUTW member, Blenheim Palace. Surrounded by historic beauty and a truly local spirit, businesses from Woodstock came together for conversation, connection and well-earned end-of-year cheer.



*The Christmas Mixer at Blenheim Palace. Credit: Cyrus Mower Photography*

It’s no secret that this year has been a challenging one for many. Yet, time after time, our local businesses have shown resilience, by showing up, supporting one another and keeping the heart of our community going. That spirit is exactly what makes Woodstock a special place to live, work and trade.

As we look ahead to 2026, we’d love even more local businesses to join our growing network. Whether you’re a small independent, a service provider, a new startup or a long-established name in the town, Wake Up to Woodstock offers a supportive space to meet others, share ideas and build meaningful in-person connections.

If you’d like to be part of this thriving community, we warmly invite you to get in touch at [info@wutw.co.uk](mailto:info@wutw.co.uk) for membership details.

Let’s make 2026 a year of stronger partnerships, opportunities and a brighter future for Woodstock’s businesses.

We’d like to offer our sincere thanks to all of our members and to everyone who has supported us in 2025.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Nickie Rogan, Chair, WUTW**

# Friends of St Martin's Bladon

On a warm but overcast afternoon at the end of October Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, Patron of the Friends of St Martin’s, led an intrepid crowd onto the roof of Blenheim. Because we are locals, some of us thought we knew what to expect and were rather cool about the idea. We could not have been more wrong. We were truly amazed by the view. If you have not been there, you really should seize the opportunity which will certainly not come again in your lifetime. Even on a murky October afternoon, you can see miles of glorious countryside as well as the lake and the Northern section of Blenheim grounds. The work being done on the roof is also incredible. There are carvings being restored as well as what seemed to me acres of lead being replaced over new sturdy beams. It really is a mammoth undertaking. We were able to examine carvings close-up which are usually only seen from the ground, some distance below us.



We had allowed one hour for our roof visit and thought this would be too much but the time flew and all too soon we were shepherded down to the Marlborough Room for tea. This was an elegant treat with linen table cloths and napkins with tea in China cups, sandwiches, scones and cakes, a real treat. This was all provided by our Patron but the Friends sold tickets for the afternoon and so we were able to add a healthy £400 to our funds which have been somewhat depleted recently by the provision of a kitchen for the Church Room. A big thank you is due to Lady Henrietta who suggested the event, organised, and financed it.

**Mollie Hance**

# Celebrate Christmas 2025 with Churches Together in Woodstock & Bladon

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December

9.30am – Crib Service – St. Martin's, Bladon  
10.30am – Carol Service – Woodstock Methodist Church  
10.30am – Christmas All-Age Service – Woodstock Baptist Church  
11.00am – Coffee & Carols – St. Hugh of Lincoln, Woodstock  
11.00am – Christmas Family Service – Bladon Methodist Church  
11.00am – Christingle – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock  
6.00pm – Christmas Carol Service – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December

7.00 pm – Christmas Carol Service – St. Martin's, Bladon

Christmas Eve – Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December

2.30 pm – Christingle – St. Martin's, Bladon  
4.00 pm – Crib Service – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock  
9.00 pm – First Communion of Christmas – St. Martin's, Bladon  
11.00 pm – Midnight Mass – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock  
11.15pm – Midnight Communion – Woodstock Methodist Church

Christmas Day – Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December

8.00 am – Christmas B.C.P. Communion – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock  
9.30 am – Christmas Sung Communion – St. Martin's, Bladon  
10.00am – Christmas Day Celebration – Woodstock Baptist Church  
10.30am – Christmas worship – Woodstock Methodist Church  
11.00 am – Christmas Sung Eucharist – St. Mary Magdalene, Woodstock

The true light that  
shines on everyone  
was coming into the world.

John 1:9



## Improving Your Home Part 4 Conservatories and Garden Rooms

Conservatory extensions can provide a cost-effective way to add bright, versatile living space without the full expense of a traditional extension. Conservatories can serve multiple purposes, from dining rooms and lounges to home offices or hobby spaces. Modern high-insulated designs with high-performance glazing can be used year-round, increasing floor area for dining, relaxation or home working. Because they're generally quicker to build and fall under permitted development in most cases, they can add value and appeal to a property, with less disruption than a full-scale brick extension.

The thermal efficiency of modern conservatories has improved with advanced glazing technologies, including double and triple glazing, low-emissivity coatings, and thermal breaks, which maintain comfortable temperatures throughout the year while reducing energy costs. In terms of materials, uPVC is cheapest, then aluminium, then timber/wood with bespoke detailing. Polycarbonate roofs are cheapest; glass or tiled/insulated roofs cost more, and triple or high-performance glazing even more. Construction timelines are typically much shorter than traditional extensions, often completed within weeks rather than months.

In terms of costs, a basic uPVC "lean-to" style will start at around £1,800-£2,400/m<sup>2</sup> for basic frames with polycarbonate or simple glazing. More complex designs in Edwardian/Victorian styles are around £2,200-£2,800/m<sup>2</sup>, and premium/ luxury conservatories in timber with high-end glazing and bespoke features are £3,500-£4,200/m<sup>2</sup> or more depending on the scale and detail, according Homebuilding Magazine. For context, traditional single-storey brick extensions cost £1,800-£3,500/m<sup>2</sup> depending on quality and location. Foundations costs can vary from £100-£280/m<sup>2</sup> depending on ground conditions. Conservatories are generally cheaper in upfront cost but may cost more to heat, especially if not well insulated or if glazing and roof are not high quality. In terms of return on investment the RICS estimates a 5% uplift on property value, while Savills suggests up to 10%, and 15% for high-quality conservatories.

Garden buildings can provide extra space for home offices, studios, gyms, guest accommodation or simply as a retreat, providing a clear separation between work and home life. Because they are usually classed as permitted development (subject to size and siting limits), most can be installed without full planning permission, reducing time and professional fees. Many manufacturers deliver

prefabricated modules, meaning a typical build can be completed in days rather than months, with minimal mess and disturbance. Expect £1,500-£2,500/m<sup>2</sup> for a basic to standard insulated garden room with electrics; premium buildings may cost £2,500-£3,000+ per m<sup>2</sup> where large glazing, high-end cladding or bespoke layouts are specified. You should also allow for costs in connection with utilities including electricity, plumbing and drainage.

Well-designed garden buildings that are fully insulated, wired and secure, allowing year-round use can enhance property appeal. Rightmove reports that listings mentioning "garden office" or "garden room" attract more buyer interest, and agents note a growing premium for homes with quality outbuildings. Reliable evidence for return on investment is hard to find, but what evidence there is emphasises that ROI depends on build quality, purpose, and integration with the existing property. High-quality garden offices with utilities would show the strongest returns.

In short, conservatory extensions can make a home feel roomier with more light whilst a garden building can provide a flexible space that is cheaper than an extension, with each potentially boosting resale value when buyers prize extra space.

Jan Liberadzki BA Arch (Hons), MSc, JLDA

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Helping You Create a Better Home

Answers

The answers to the Cemetery Junction Quiz in the November issue are:

- 1 The Soap Opera was 'The Archers'
- 2 We come of age in Britain at '16'
- 3 The children's series was 'The Banana Splits'
- 4 The insurance compmpalny was 'Prudential'
- 5 The lyric was 'Thunder Road'
- 6 The music icon was 'David Bowie'
- 7 The British city was 'Reading'
- 8 The instrument was 'The Cello'
- 9 The travel programme was 'An idiot Abroad.'
- 10 The actor was 'Ralph Feinnes'

The answers to the Christmas Quiz on Page 38 of this issue are:

- 1 The Christmas film was 'Miracle on 34th Street'
- 2 The Christmas film was 'The Holiday'
- 3 Kevin’s surname was 'McCallister'
- 4 The musical instrument is the 'Jazz flute'
- 5 The US city is 'St. Louis'
- 6 The muppet was 'The Great Gonzo'
- 7 The 2004 movie was 'The Polar Express'
- 8 The Christian name was 'Jill'
- 9 The country was 'Germany'
- 10 The music legend was 'Otis Redding'

The answers to Woody's Cryptic Crossword in the November issue are:

Across: 7 tolerate, 8 tirade, 10 stonehenge, 11 iris, 12 linear, 14 notables, 15 enamel, 16 sparta, 20 regulars, 23 omelet, 24 nest, 25 horsetrade, 27 season, 28 discrete

Down: 1 contrive, 2 mean, 3 warhorse, 4 leonine, 5 street, 6 admire, 9 reimburse, 13 evaluates, 17 propense, 18 anecdote, 19 astride, 21 eleven, 22 athens, 26 rare

The answers to the Crossword on Page 38 are:

A Dutch name for Father Christmas is 'Sinterklaas'

Across: 1 Dorset, 4 dentists, 8 ethic, 9 sneakiest, 11 stag, 12 clog, 13 impel, 15 gastric, 16 reel, 17 orb, 20 thin, 21 eastern, 24 skint, 25 rove, 26 till, 28 unpopular, 30 exist, 31 escalate, 32 fished.

Down: 1 dressage, 2 rehearse, 3 etch, 4 din, 5 take it easy, 6 sleepy, 7 settle, 9 self-control, 10 eager beaver, 14 archetypal, 18 devilish, 19 inflated, 22 assume, 23 biopic, 27 deli, 29 ape.

Fitness, What's On

Exercise and movement classes in and around Woodstock. Please report errors and discrepancies.

Monday

- 9am - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at St Hugh’s Church Hall, Hensington Road (engergitraining.co.uk)
- 9.30am - Cardio Tennis at Woodstock Tennis Club
- 12pm - Age UK Stretch and Balance Class (open to all) at Woodstock Community Centre
- 7pm - Boot Camp at Tackley Playing Field with Energi Training

Tuesday

- 6pm - Hatha Yoga Flow with Inspire Studio at Woodstock Community Centre
- 6pm - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at St Hugh’s Church Hall, Hensington Road
- 6pm - Jim’s Fitness Bootcamp in Tackley (Jim Brown PT)
- 7.30pm - Zumba with Rhonda at Woodstock Youth Club

Wednesday

- 9am - Boot Camp at Tackley Playing Field with Energi Training.
- 7pm - Pilates for Sport and Functional Activities at Woodstock Community Centre
- 8pm - Hatha Yoga with Kira at Pilates Studio on Hensington Road (07887 512523)

Thursday

- 6.15pm - Mountain Bike Club with Project Active
- 6pm - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at Woodstock Town Hall (engergitraining.co.uk)
- 7pm - Beginnner Pilates Reformer class at Woodstock Pilates Studio, Hensington Road
- 8pm - Vinyasa Yoga with Kira at Woodstock Pilates Studio, Hensington Road

Friday

- 10am - Zumba with Rhonda at Woodstock Youth Centre, New Road
- 10am - SOMA Breathing Energised Meditation at St Hugh’s Church Hall, Hensington Road

Saturday

- 8.15am - Blenheim Bootcamp with Project Active
- 9am - Bazza’s Bootcamp at Kirtlington Village Hall

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Regular Events

This section tries to list regular events. If you would like your event included here, please email [editor@wobl.news](mailto:editor@wobl.news).

Culture

- Bladon Garden Society**  
The 3rd Thursday of every month at 7.30pm, usually in the Church Room in Bladon
- Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum**  
The Friends hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On
- Woodstock 50+ Cinema Club**  
Monthly films hopefully starting again
- Woodstock Literature Society**  
This well established society hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On
- Woodstock and District u3a**  
All events are listed in What's On
- Wootton Village Hall Talks**  
These take place monthly

Music

- Kings Arms / Mandolirium**  
Listen to our local group in our local pub, usually every third Thursday at 6.30pm.
- Singing for Fun**  
For July, August, and September, this takes place at the Woodstock Baptish Church at 2pm on the 1st Monday of the month
- The Crown**  
Live music every Friday nights from 7.30pm
- Woodstock Jazz**  
Usually on the last Friday of the month at St Hughs

Social

- Bereavement Cafe**  
The 3rd Friday of every month between 3 and 5pm at St Mary Magdalene Church
- Ladies Coffee Morning**  
The last Tuesday of every month between 10am and 12noon at 10 High Street, Woodstock
- Methodist Coffee Club**  
The Coffee Club meets every Thursday morning 10.30am to 12 noon in Woodstock Methodist Hall.
- St Mary Magdalene Church coffee morning**  
First Saturday of the month between 10am and 12noon. All proceeds to our local food bank
- Woodstock Lunch Club**  
Lunches are held in the Community Centre every other Wednesday at 12 noon.
- Woodstock Stroke Club**  
Every other Tuesday between 10.15am and 1pm at the Community Centre

Sport

- Cricket at Blenheim Palace**  
The local team play on the South Lawn at Blenheim Palace most Sundays during the summer
- Woodstock Bowls Club**  
The outdoor season runs from April through to September and the indoor season from October through to March.

What's On

For the latest information, please click on the Events link at [www.wobl.news](http://www.wobl.news). If you would like your event included here, please email [editor@wobl.news](mailto:editor@wobl.news).

Friday 12 Dec 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Music Society - Concert  
Choir and Chamber Music: Celebrating Christmas  
St Mary Magdalene

Saturday 13 Dec 2025, 19:00

Woodstock Baptist Church - Concert  
Gareth Davies-Jones: 'Darkest Midnight in December'  
Woodstock Baptist Church

Monday 15 Dec 2025, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk  
Mr Charlie Ross: Tales from an Antique Auctioneer  
- BUMPER Christmas Event  
St Mary Magdalene

Saturday 20 Dec 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music  
Ben Holder’s Christmas Cracker: Ben’s with his quartet putting the ‘Merry’ into Merry Christmas  
St Hugh's Centre

Thursday 01 Jan 2026, 11:00

Oxford Bus Museum - Event  
Heritage bus rides from 11am until 3pm when we shall have a free to enter competition for 'The Best Christmas Jumper'  
Oxford Bus Museum, Long Hanborough

Wednesday 07 Jan 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk  
William Turner of Oxford and Shipton-on-Cherwell.  
Speaker: Dr Colin Harrison  
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

Saturday 17 Jan 2026, 15:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk  
'Greek Tragedy in Performance: Speaker':  
Professor Laura Swift  
St Mary Magdalene

Monday 19 Jan 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk  
James Dillon Godfray: Oxford Airport – Past, Present and Future  
St Mary Magdalene

Monday 16 Feb 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk  
Alice Foster: Women's Work  
St Mary Magdalene

Saturday 21 Feb 2026, 15:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk  
'Going up-market: The Theatre in the Jacobean period': Professor Emma Smith  
St Hugh's Centre

QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

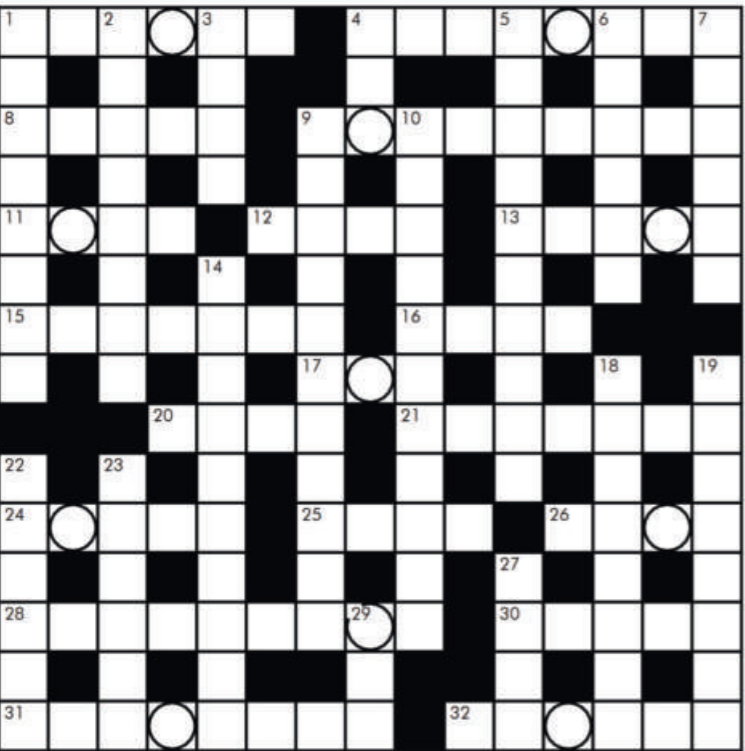
This month, all the questions have connections to well known Christmas films.

- 1. In which Christmas movie does a young girl named Susan influence a judge on Christmas Eve to declare that Father Christmas exists, because "In God we Trust."
- 2. Which Christmas film features stars from The School of Rock, Alfie, Shreck and Titanic?
- 3. In Home Alone, what is Kevin's surname?
- 4. Will Ferrell, the star of Elf, also played Ron Burgundy in Anchorman, who was a virtuoso on which instrument?
- 5. Which US city features in a Judy Garland film, set in the year it hosted a World Fair and the Summer Olympic Games?
- 6. In The Muppet Christmas Carol, Michael Caine plays Ebenezer Scrooge, but which muppet portrays Charles Dickens, as the narrator?
- 7. Ebenezer Scrooge appears as a puppet in which 2004 Christmas movie, in which a true Hollywood star plays several characters, including a train conductor and Santa Claus?
- 8. Tim Allen played Santa in The Santa Claus. In the Disney series Home Improvement, what was the Christian name of Tim the Toolman's wife?
- 9. The opening scene of which nation is the backdrop of the film White Christmas?
- 10. Bruce Willis, star of Diehard, had a hit with a cover of the song, Hard to Handle, originally written and recorded by which Stax Records and Soul legend?



The answers to both the quiz and the crossword can be found on Page 36

Solve the clues to this straight crossword. Read through the letters in the marked squares to reveal a Dutch name for Father Christmas.



- Across

  - 1. English county
  - 4. Tooth doctors
  - 8. Moral principle
  - 9. Most cunning
  - 11. Male deer
  - 12. Wooden shoe
  - 13. Urge on
  - 15. Of the stomach
  - 16. Scottish dance
  - 17. Sphere
  - 20. Slender
  - 21. Oriental
  - 24. Cash-strapped
  - 25. Wander
  - 26. Cash register
  - 28. Out of favour
  - 30. Live
  - 31. Intensify
  - 32. Angled
- Down

  - 1. Equestrian sport
  - 2. Practise
  - 3. Engrave
  - 4. Noise
  - 5. Relax! (4,2,4)
  - 6. Drowsy
  - 7. Resolve
  - 9. Willpower (4-7)
  - 10. Keen person (5,6)
  - 14. Typical
  - 18. Wicked, evil
  - 19. Blown up
  - 22. Believe true
  - 23. Biographical movie
  - 27. Prepared food shop
  - 29. Primate

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