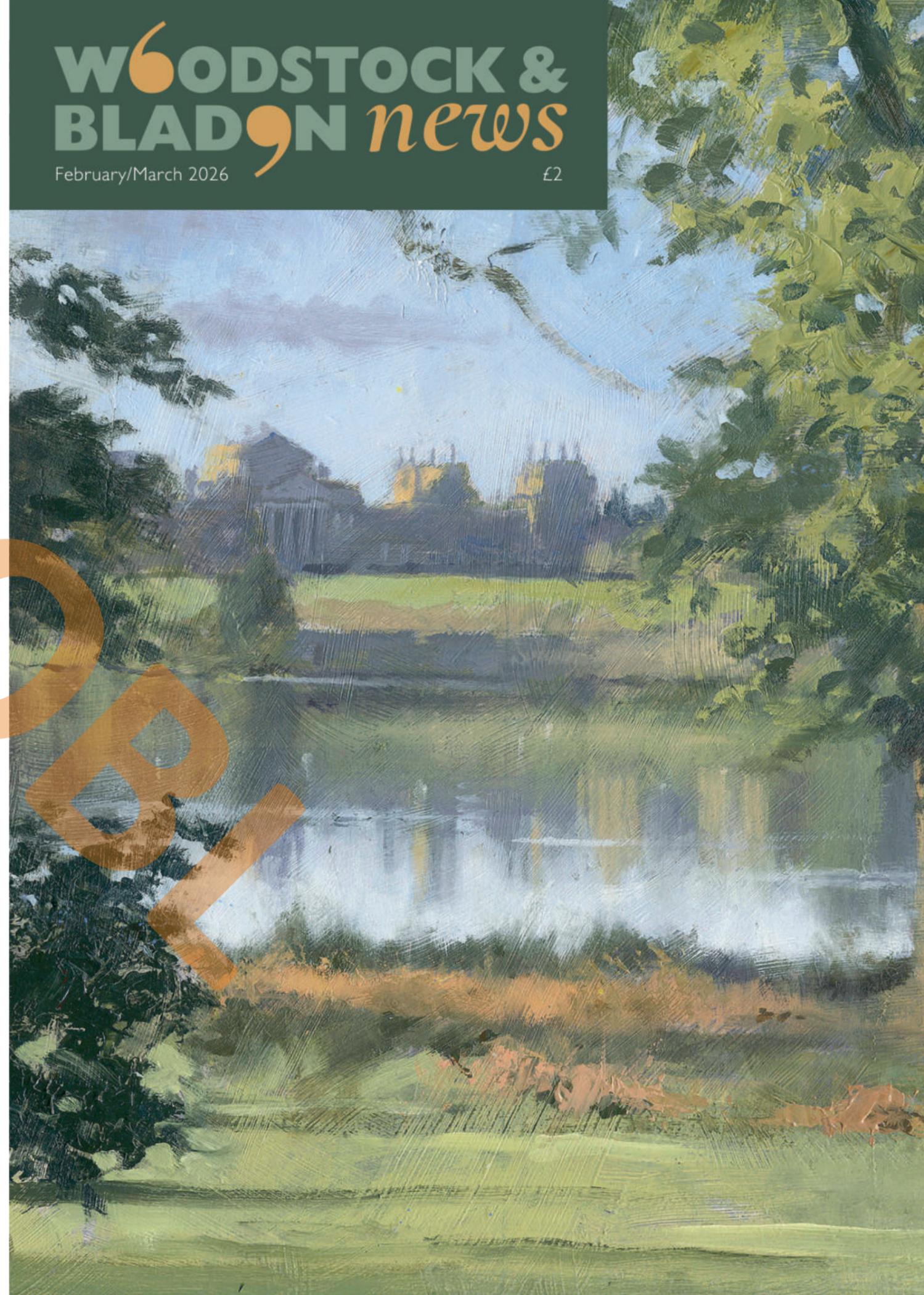


# WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

February/March 2026

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## Editorial

I'm still 'down-under'. While I'm beginning my journey back home, my stay in Australia is going to be one month longer than planned. This means I have to either cut short my stay in Sri Lanka or delay my return to the UK. I think I know what my decision will be! I do consider myself so very lucky to have been able to stay with friends in three of the major Australian cities - Perth, Brisbane, and Melbourne. It has been a huge honour to see how life is lived in this vast and beautiful country.

I have already spoken about transport and sport and want to mention another subject - dogs. The three friends I have stayed with have all owned dogs - of differing shapes and sizes. I have got to know a Kelpie, a Kangaroo Dog, two Cocker-Poos, and a Greyhound. They are all so different, but so very similar as well. Beautiful animals who just crave exercise (sometimes), food (usually) and love, companionship and friendship (always).

The main difference I have noticed between Britain and Australia is that public spaces are much more friendly for dogs with many parks and beaches being clearly marked 'dog friendly' (though some do state 'no dogs'). The beach closest to where I'm currently staying welcomes dogs, and it is a pleasure to see families and dogs off the lead sharing the same space. Seeing dogs playing in water is usually a hilarious sight!

I was asked a few days ago whether I missed Woodstock. I found it slightly difficult to answer. While I miss family and friends, the difference in time, distance, temperature, and weather make it very hard sometimes to picture life on the other side of the world. What on earth would it have been like for the 'Ten Pound Poms' I wonder, with hardly any phone calls and, of course, no internet.

One thing I do miss is bumping into people as I wandered into Woodstock, and those friendships that were so easily made in shops and bars. I hope I've still been able to keep in touch with what is happening in Woodstock and Bladon, and I look forward to seeing everyone again soon.

### Nick Manby-Brown, Editor

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This issue's front cover features an original oil painting: 'Blenheim through the trees' by John Somerscales

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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) 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 an April one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 15 March 2026**, for publication on Friday 27 March.

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

**PLEASE NOTE: The answers to this month's quiz and crossword are on Page 32**

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Woodstock and Bladon News is printed on 100% sustainable paper which helps promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

# Whatever happened to the Woodstock Bypass?

## An Obituary

On 3 September 1939, a Woodstock Borough Council meeting agreed the route which the Oxford County Council proposed for a Woodstock Bypass. There is no mention in the minutes of the declaration of World War II on that day.

Following the war, the Borough Council and, after 1970, the successor Town Council wrote regularly to OCC asking for the bypass to be built, on a number of grounds. The highway and the footways in Old Woodstock are too narrow. There are 91 dwellings within six metres of the carriageway and 76 listed buildings on the A44 as it passes through the town. Noise and pollution are a source of constant stress.



In 1977 the Woodstock Action Group was formed by Sheila Braithwaite. They held a public meeting at which about one hundred people voted for the bypass, and one against.

Shortly after this we learned that an OCC Capital Works Programme existed but that our bypass was not even mentioned in it. The Town Council then worked hard to get on to the bottom rung of the Programme: a fourteen-year long ladder on which we had to wait patiently behind Wallingford and other road improvements.

In May 1989 the Town Council held a public meeting at the Marlborough School at which 68 voted for the bypass and 7 voted against.

At last, the bypass was mapped, surveyed and designed. The cost was estimated at four million pounds of which the County and the Department of Transport would pay half each. A Public Inquiry was scheduled for June 1992.

In May 1992 Woodstock Town Council voted by eleven to three in favour of the bypass. OCC wanted to save £600,000 by blocking off Shipton Road

instead of giving it a bridge over the bypass which was to run from Bladon Roundabout to the Wootton turn off from the A44. WTC wanted the bridge to be built to give access to the Marlborough School from the East.

Opposition to the Bypass was noisily co-ordinated by George Gandy and Philip Redpath.



The case on behalf of WTC was to be presented to the inquiry by myself and Col. Nigel Clifford, a retired Royal Engineer. When the Inspector arrived, we found that he too was a retired Royal Engineer, both of whom knew each other well. The Inspector ruled that if Nigel spoke one word to the Inquiry he would have to stop proceedings and the whole circus would have to be rescheduled months later. I rapidly had to find the time to attend for the whole two weeks.

When the result was announced by the Secretary of State it was in favour of construction with a bridge for Shipton Road. Great rejoicing. Funding was confirmed from Central Government. More rejoicing.

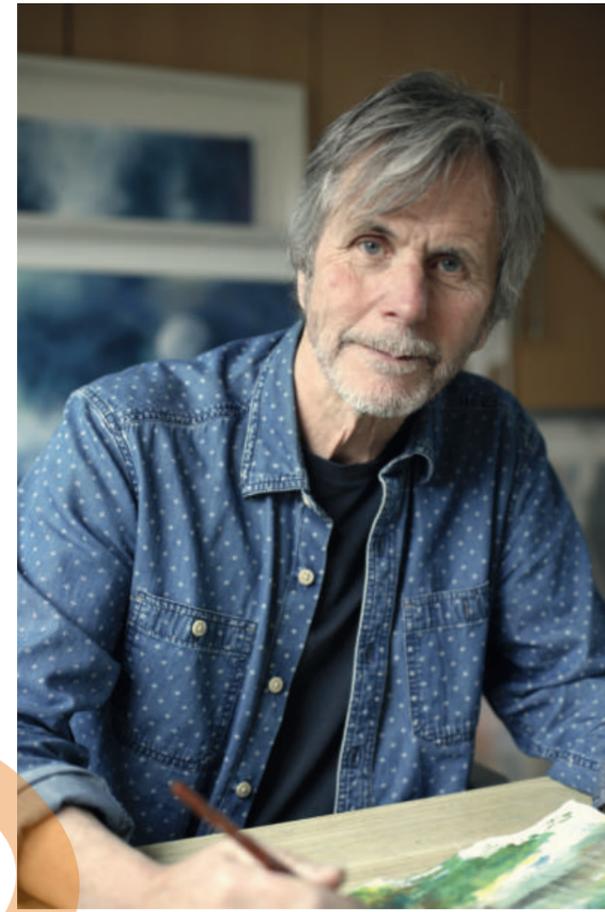
But ..... No party had an overall majority on OCC. Up to this point the Conservatives and LibDems had supported the bypass which had been in the Capital Works Programme for fourteen long years and on which half a million pounds of council income had already been spent. Only now did the LibDem group vote against OCC's support for the bypass. Together with the Labour councillors they resolved to spend the County's two-million-pound contribution on traffic management schemes in their own Wards. No local authority has ever turned down Government finance for road building before or since this event.

Once the Woodstock bypass was removed from the Capital Works Programme its site could no longer be protected against planning applications. None of the political parties want to build roads anywhere nowadays.

RIP.

**Dr Robert Edwards**

# Portrait of the Month - Rod Craig



Rod Craig's bond with Woodstock extends far beyond the forty years he has lived here. After establishing a design business in 1976, he maintained studios in the town for nearly two decades, embedding himself deeply in the life of the community. For Rod, Woodstock is a place of familiarity and vitality, where people know one another, and local shops, galleries, and cafés pulse with energy - a place with its own rhythm, charm, and welcoming heart.

His daily walks through the town and the nearby Blenheim grounds have long nourished his creativity. During lockdown, he ventured further into the estate's wilder corners, producing paintings that are less literal records than emotive reflections, capturing mist, rain, storms, and low light - moments resonant with atmosphere and feeling.

Music runs alongside his art, full of energy, warmth, and surprise. Rod performs with his band Mandolirium, mandolin in hand, spinning through bluegrass, Celtic reels, gypsy swing, and unexpected riffs that keep audiences smiling and tapping along. Their sessions are a highlight of local life - see page XX to find when you can next catch them at the King's Arms.

Generous with his time, quietly observant, and deeply attuned to his surroundings, Rod is a cherished and much-loved figure in Woodstock. Through his art, his music, and his presence, he enriches town life, embodying the creativity, authenticity, and communal spirit that make Woodstock truly remarkable.

Portrait by fine art portrait photographer, Pippa Hetherington.

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# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

## Woodstock Council votes to more than double the spend on itself!

I have recently witnessed some unusual and sometimes disturbing discussions at Woodstock Town Council but the 20 January meeting was the most remarkable.

Three Councillors variously commented that the budget process was not transparent, that the independent auditors should be asked to review the budget process and that the statutory rules were not followed but despite this, at the third attempt, the budget was agreed.

What this means for Woodstock residents / taxpayers, is that the Council will spend £210,500 on itself (that's £3,500 more than the last budget iteration and £109,500 more than last financial year) whilst simultaneously removing the mere £5,000 previously allocated for Town Projects.

In the last financial year and the previous four years the Council has never spent more than 36% of total expenditure on itself but the £210,500 Staff and Administration budget for 2026/27 will be 55% of the total. Conversely, the proportion of expenditure spent on services will reduce from the average of 64% to less than half (45%). All this without, as one Councillor commented, no robustly assessed reasoning.

**Chris Coe**

Dear Editor,

## Update on the new houses proposed for east of Park View

Hanlon's Razor says: "Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity."

I recently checked Cherwell's website regarding this planning application and had to remind myself of this. They don't mean to get it wrong, they are just human. And make mistakes. BIG ONES.

At the time of writing, the Parish impacted by this development is still showing as Kidlington. This is wrong. I have pointed this out to the Cherwell planning department, and asked them to rectify it.

The correct parish is in fact Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp. No-one from Cherwell has consulted them regarding the sudden arrival of 500 houses in their parish, and what they think that community might need! As they were unaware, the parish could not engage with Blenheim at an early stage to see what might be offered.

The consultation window is now officially closed.

After pointing the error out to Cherwell, I made the Chair of the relevant Parish Council aware - he has

asked for extra time so that they can consider what they need and ask for an allocation of S106 funds and/or land to provide it.

The Chair also recognises that his parishioners (both current and future) use the facilities of Woodstock. I have suggested that he reach out to Woodstock Town Council to ask for their views and advice on what might be required. Woodstock might not benefit directly from the council tax receipts for those properties, but it would be nice if our facilities could be improved in some way to support them and mitigate the impact of their arrival right next to our town.

Who knows what might be achieved at this late stage in the day - but if you don't ask, you certainly won't get anything.

What a missed opportunity - it shouldn't take a member of the public to spot such a glaring error. One which could cost the residents of both Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp and Woodstock dearly for years to come.

**Sam Dawson**

Dear Editor,

## Empty Retail Space

In the very heart of Woodstock, the building which houses both the Sue Ryder charity shop and the Chef Imperial Chinese restaurant is currently on the market. It is more than likely that the current owner or a new purchaser will apply to our local planning authorities for a permission for change of use. If granted, then yet another commercial site in the town centre will be turned into private housing, possibly for the benefit of Airbnb landlords or remote second home owners or holiday rental companies. This would serve to worsen a situation where town centre properties have over the past few years been gradually emptying of full time residents.

Apart from looking lifeless such 'dead centres' in towns throughout the country depress local businesses and permanent residents alike.

May I therefore raise the profile of this long-term issue and ask our Woodstock Town Councillors to scrutinise, and if needs be oppose, any future 'change of use' planning applications? The Town Council could be overturned at the next level of planning, but at least local views will have been officially expressed and noted. And while considering the future of town centre properties, perhaps WTC could find a new tenant quickly for their own property which until recently housed the Zuleika Gallery? If a tenant cannot be found, then maybe the Oxfordshire Museum could be invited to use the space for temporary exhibitions, at least in the shop window area. This would add interest and colour to this corner of the town.

Woodstock has many highly successful businesses - the Cotswold Tailor, the Woodstock Butcher and Woodstock Greengrocer, the Back Lane Tavern, Alfonso's Icecream, the Woodstock Coffee Shop, Brothertons, two excellent bookshops, two busy hairdressers, and many, many more - who thrive (yes, indeed, this is not the narrative of decline voiced by long-term opponents of the new parking regime) in the current arrangements for parking and general traffic control. They need however the level of commercial activity to remain as it is rather than diminishing under the shadow of the increasing suburbanisation of the town centre.

Yours sincerely,

**Linda Glees**

### Letters are important for our Community

Please send letters to editor@wobl.news

The deadline for the April issue is

Sunday 15 March

## The Woodstock Bookshop

### Welcomes National Year of Reading



With 2026 designated the National Year of Reading, there has never been a better time to settle down with a good book. Whether we open the cover for relaxation, entertainment, information or solace, over half of adults in the UK are regular readers - and, contrary to those who have been prophesying the death of print since the advent of ebooks, physical books are still the preferred format. Digital phenomena such as bookstagrammers, BookTubers (check out the excellent Jen Campbell) and BookTok tell their own story: print culture is alive and kicking. Twenty-first-century readers are connecting with new sources of book recommendations and heading for bookshops armed with reading lists on their phones.

People who love reading often love writing, so it is unsurprising that there are so many wonderful books

about books and bookshops. A plethora of memoirs (heirs to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* but thankfully more accessible!) capture the magical power of the printed word. The one by Professor John Sutherland even goes by the title *Magic Moments* and describes an enchantment most of us will recognise: the spell we fall under when we enter the world of an engrossing book. Francis Spufford in *The Child That Books Built* groups his most spell-binding narratives by the type of landscape they are set in: the woods in *Where the Wild Things Are*, the mountains in *The Hobbit*, the town in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *The Long Winter*. Sarah Moss in *My Good Bright Wolf* recounts how at various times in her life she has taken refuge in page and print to escape the 'dark forest' of her mind.

Books take us out of ourselves. They open windows into other worlds, real or fictional. Little wonder that nature writing, literature of place and travel writing - think Chloe Dalton, James Rebanks, Robert Macfarlane - are more popular than ever. These books transport us to real locations while fantasy, a growing trend among adults as well as younger audiences, teleports readers into imaginary landscapes. Soaring sales for Rebecca Yarros, Sarah J. Maas et al. say it all.

An especially beloved genre is books about bookshops. Helene Hanff's *84, Charing Cross Road* is a justly well-known classic, as is Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Bookshop*, but more recent additions to the field proliferate: murder mysteries such as *Death of a Bookseller*; historical novels like *The Paris Bookseller*; international fiction including *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* and *Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookshop*; bookseller memoirs by Shaun Bythell and Oliver Darkshire, and literary fiction epitomised by *The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry*.

What makes this novel by Gabrielle Zevin so memorable? A strong sense of place: the fictional Alice Island, Massachusetts, apt to get cut off from the mainland in stormy weather. Convincing, likeable characters: the eponymous hero, a passionate bookseller; Lambaise, the local police chief and reading convert; Amelia, bibliophile and out-of-town love interest; and, Maya, a little girl who comes into A. J.'s life in much the same way as Eppie enters Silas Marner's in George Eliot's classic tale. Best of all, there's the bookshop itself, Island Books, which plays the role of all good, local bookshops - as a hub for buying, discussing and enthusing about books, a community resource, a flourishing independent business at the heart of Alice Island. A. J. sums it up in ten words: 'A place is not really a place without a bookstore.' Everyone at The Woodstock Bookshop would definitely agree with that!

**Alison Kelly**

# Wake Up to Woodstock

Success at Woodstock's Most Festive Day of the Year!



Woodstock truly came alive last November, with a day and evening that captured everything special about our town. From the energy and community spirit of the Woodstock Festive Fayre in the day, to the magical atmosphere of the Night of a Thousand Candles, it was a celebration to remember.

High Street businesses, local traders and visitors came together to enjoy festive shopping, seasonal treats and the warm welcome Woodstock is known for before the town became a centre of seasonal music and a sense of togetherness. The Woodstock Warblers also made their carol singing debut!



Photos credited to Cyrus Mower Photography

"It's days like this remind us just how special Woodstock is. Thank you to everyone who came out, supported local businesses and helped create such a memorable festive celebration for our town." Wake up to Woodstock.

The team behind Woodstock's business dedicated business association, is looking forward to getting organised for forthcoming events in 2026. Details of which will be found on [www.wutw.co.uk](http://www.wutw.co.uk).

**Ema Murphy, Communications**  
Wake Up to Woodstock

## The Woodstock Society

*Celebrating 60 Years of History & Discussion*



**Jyotveer Gill**  
Said Business School  
Associate Director of Education Technology and Web Development  
Trustee at the University College of Estate Management  
2024 winner of the CIO Awards

**The Human Side of AI**  
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**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March**  
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8:00pm Guest Talk Begins

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# WOBL Around The World



**From top to bottom, left to right:**  
A lifeguard at Gold Coast  
Mike and Annie at the Test match at MCG, Melbourne  
Stan and Caroline in Crete NMB on the Gold Coast  
My barmen in Negombo, Sri Lanka NMB, Annie, and Mike at the Aussie Open Real Tennis in Melbourne  
My hosts at the United Services Club, Brisbane  
Thanksgiving party in Fremantle  
Playing snooker at Tatersalls Club, Brisbane  
Christmas BBQ in Brisbane  
Our barman at Tatersalls Club, Brisbane



# 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. The magazine endeavours to remain professional, balanced, and accurate.

This month we report on two Town Council meetings and an Extraordinary Meeting.

As avid readers of the 'Council Matters' section will know, in June 2025 we started a section at the end of the Council reports, where copy was invited from Calum Miller MP, and from Oxford County, West Oxford District and our own Woodstock Town Councils. With the exception of our WTC, all have now had two issues in each of which they have been able to talk directly to our readers. Sadly, WTC chose not to send copy for the October 2025 issue, and despite Email reminders to the Clerk, no copy has been forthcoming for this issue either.

Readers may draw their own conclusions from this. As Editor, I feel this is an opportunity missed for town councillors to communicate with their electorate.

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## Woodstock Town Council

### Woodstock Town Council Meeting on 13 January 2026

8 councillors and 14 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

A minute's silence was held as a tribute to former County Councillor **Ian Hudspeth** who recently passed.

**Public Participation:** 5 members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown, speaking on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock, thanked Councillor Poskitt for representing the Council on the campaign for a **plastic free Woodstock** and asked for a new councillor to volunteer as Councillor Poskitt was stepping down. Hilary also mentioned the town **litter pick** which would take place in early March. Chris Coe spoke regarding the **Council's draft budget for 2026/7**, asking for a rationale and a source of the numbers. Chris wanted an explanation for the doubling of the expenditure of the Council while at the same time cutting services. Ed Creasey submitted a **petition from Brook Hill residents** regarding pollution and flood risk to their properties from the Water Meadows. Ed highlighted the fact that sewage had been released 41 times into the Glyme from the sewage works and the Council was halving the Water Meadows budget. He wanted to see the Council protect the community and act as good neighbours.

Michael Bowles referred to his question from the last Council meeting regarding **the town clock** and apologised if any comments had been taken personally by the Clerk. Michael was now in contact with Councillors about the clock maintenance. Next, Annie Cripps spoke, saying 40 residents were still awaiting a response from the Council regarding the **legal action taken by Councillor Parnes against the Town Council**. Annie said this reflected poorly on the Council and urged an acknowledgment of their correspondence. Finally, Nick Mason from the Fire Service urged those present to complete the consultation if they did not agree with the **proposed closure of Woodstock Fire Station**.

**Planning:** The application to extend the Black Prince was rejected by the Council on the grounds of overdevelopment.

The Council will add to its previous objection to the proposed development of 500 houses on land south of Perdiswell farm.

**Reports from the Mayor and Clerk:** The Mayor commented that McCarthy Stone had lost their appeal for their proposed development on the old police station site off of Hensington Road. £6,568 was spent of the £10K budget for Marrons to represent the Council for the appeal. The Mayor also noted the very good lunch club event at Christmas.

The Clerk noted that there had been a request that may apply to the Council budget, namely taking over the maintenance of **St. Mary's churchyard**, and therefore moved the draft budget discussions to the ETC meeting next Tuesday. The precept deadline to West Oxfordshire District Council is mid-February. Several councillors argued against this, the Mayor saying it was up to the Clerk to do this and to call the ETC meeting.

**Reports from the County and District Councillors:** The County Councillor was unable to attend the meeting and the District Councillors report included details of the old police station site appeal and Councillor Cooper commented on Councillor Poskitt's excellent presentation. Councillor Poskitt noted that District Council elections would go ahead in May this year.

**Finance:** The current balance is £379,857.

**Hire for Town Hall and Community Centre and Burial Charges:** It was agreed not to increase the charges for the Community Centre and review in 6 months. It was also agreed that weddings in the Mayor's Parlour would remain at £400, those in the Assembly Room increased to £450. Cemetery charges would be increased to £400.

**Draft Budget for 2026/2027:** This was deferred to the next Extraordinary Town Meeting.

**Parking:** Following proposals to introduce a proportion of 4hr stay bays at Hensington Road car park (66 of 101 bays from 12hr to 4hr) West Oxfordshire District Council decided to reduce the proportion of longer stay bays and change the maximum stay time for longer stay bays from 12 hrs to 10 hrs to reduce commuter use. Following other reported parking issues around town, the Council voted to call Oxfordshire County Council to carry out a full parking survey for Woodstock.

**Fire Station Closure:** Following the motion from the meeting of 11 November opposing the closure, Councillor Wheatley agreed to collect further comments from Councillors objecting to the proposed closure of Woodstock Fire Station for the consultation.

**Environment:** Councillor Connolly proposed that a Sports and Recreation sub working group be formed within the Environmental Working group to obtain feedback from the town and community groups to enable the S106 monies from housing development to be spent appropriately. This was passed with Councillors Connolly, Muthoni and Wheatley forming this sub working group.

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

**Graham Brown**

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### Woodstock Town Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 20 January 2026

8 councillors and 8 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

**Public Participation:** 2 members of the public spoke. Sam Dawson noted the risk assessments on the agenda and was concerned that the **Council was underinsured**, particularly the Town Hall and items containing gold. As she had professional experience in this field Sam offered her help. Chris Coe then spoke regarding **the budget**. Chris was concerned with the current draft budget being proposed, particularly with regard to the delayed decision last week due to the possibility of the churchyard being the Council's responsibility. Chris again questioned the increase in staffing costs coupled to the decrease in expenditure on services. He urged councillors to vote against the budget.

**Planning:** There were no objections to planning applications for Park Side, Park Street, and The Covert.

**Asset Register:** Councillor Cooper urged the Council to accept Sam Dawson's offer to help with the valuation of the Council's assets. The Council voted to accept the register but to continue to review.

**St. Mary Magdalene Churchyard:** On 1 January this year, the Council received an email from the parochial church council of St. Mary Magdalene Church wishing to transfer responsibility of the churchyard to the Town Council in accordance with the Local Government Act. The Mayor noted that if the Council did not want to accept this responsibility then it could be passed to West Oxfordshire District Council. After discussion the Council voted to pass responsibility to the District Council.

**Oxfordshire County Council Transport Meeting:** Notice was given of a meeting on 22 January regarding the introduction of double yellow lines on sections of Cadogan Park, Crecy Walk, Oxford Road, Park Side and the junction of Flemmings Road and Plane Tree Way. (These recommendations were subsequently approved).

**West Oxfordshire District Council - Off Street Parking Hensington Road:** Following the report from the last Council meeting, a further report from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the allocation of bays was discussed. The report stated that 50% of the bays would be 10hrs and 50% 4hrs, starting from 1st February. There was some confusion within the Council and clarification was asked for before the next meeting.

**Draft Budget for 2026/2027:** Following a previous separate meeting of the Clerk, the Mayor and Councillors Poskitt and Wheatley, a £17K overspend was now presented to Council. The figure for the precept was again discussed, the Mayor arguing that it did not need to be increased and that reserves should be spent. After further discussion and questions about protocol and transparency two motions were then proposed. The first motion was to accept the proposed draft budget as it stood, the precept to be determined separately. This motion was passed 4 votes to 3 with 1 abstention. The second motion was to increase the precept to £153K (previously proposed increase to £170K), an increase of £4K. This motion also passed, 4 votes to 3 with 1 abstention. Finally, the Council agreed that £2,450 of under spend from last year be carried over to this year and added to the £4,000 budgeted for local community grants.

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

**Graham Brown**

## Woodstock Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 10 February 2026

10 councillors and 8 members of the public attended.

**Public Participation:** Hilary Brown of Sustainable Woodstock addressed the Council, hoping that the broken bench on the Millennium Triangle would be repaired; asking again for a councillor volunteer to replace councillor Poskitt with the Plastic Free Community; inviting the Council to promote the Litter Pick organised for 14 March, and to pay £162 for the purchase of litter-picking hoops.

**Planning:** It was agreed that a supplemental submission be made to West Oxfordshire District Council regarding Blenheim's request for approval of the Reserved Matters in the Hill Rise planning permission.

**Mayor's Report:** The mayor reported that a resident had recently had a nasty fall in Union Street due to a pot hole. The pot holes in Oxfordshire are among the worst in the country. It was agreed that the Council must push the relevant authorities hard, and will talk with the MP.

**Clerk's Report:** 1. The public opening day at the Town Hall will change from Friday to Monday, 9am to 1pm, and by appointment. 2. The Council's Policies and Protocols have been reviewed by the Council's legal advisors, and have been approved by them. 3. WODC have introduced zoned parking time limits in the Hensington Road car park from 1st February, with 50% of spaces for maximum 10 hours stay, and 50% for 4 hours stay.

**County and District Councillors' Reports:** In the absence of Oxfordshire County Council's councillor Graham, there was no Report from OCC.

2. Councillor Poskitt reported for WODC matters. WODC will maintain the **public toilets** that they had wanted local councils to take over, but this will mean that the public toilets in Brown's Lane will close from 31 March 2026. The public toilet in the Hensington Road car park will be upgraded.

**Property:** 1. The new kitchen in the Community Centre is expected to be completed by the end of this week. 2. Councillors agreed the choice of contractor to carry out the maintenance of the Town's flag pole.

**Annual Town Meeting:** Councillors discussed what should be on the **Agenda** for this Meeting, to be held on Tuesday 24 March 2026. Residents will be invited, via the website, to submit possible Agenda topics.

**Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire:** Councillors discussed a letter received from WODC, which called for a response. Agreed councillors Dawson and Muthani will write a paper on the subject, to be discussed at the next Meeting.

**Environment:** 1. The Council has been served with Notice terminating the Lease of the Rosamund Drive playground on 2 August 2026. Confirmed that the Blenheim Hill Rise development includes a new playground. 2. It was agreed to replace the Millennium Triangle bench at an approximate cost of £380.

**London Oxford Airport:** Some of the concerns arising from the Botley West solar farm proposal have now been allayed; but others have not, and continue to be looked at.

**Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group:** 1. It is not clear whether a signalised option for the A44 and Charlbury Road junction is financially viable. A decision may be made by April. 2. OCC has decided to proceed with the proposal for yellow lines at the Cadogan Park and Flemings Road/Princes' Ride junction. 3. There are plans to reduce the speed limit from Hanborough Railway Station to Bladon, and along Lower Road, to 40mph. 4. The Village Travel Network have raised the issue of vegetation obstructing the cycle path between Bladon and Long Hanborough. It is also exploring with Blenheim and the Environment Agency possible routes across the River Glyme to link Old Woodstock with other parts of the town.

**Woodstock Town Council Policies and Protocols:** On being invited to approve the draft Policies and Protocols, councillors agreed that they could approve some of them, but that others needed to be considered in detail at a specific Meeting.

**Air Ambulance Recycling:** Thames Valley Air Ambulance have proposed to host a clothing bank at the Hensington Road car park. The proposal having been rejected by WODC for siting in this car park, councillors agreed to ask WODC to explain their objection and to reconsider the proposal.

The meeting closed at 8.34 pm.

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

**Tony McHugh**



**PAUL KAY HAIR SALON**

41a Oxford Street, Woodstock

Tel: 01993 810810

paulkayhairsalon@gmail.com

## Woodstock & District u3a

Our speaker for January 2026, was Anna Boucher from the Burnside Partnership. Anna is a specialist in Wills, Probate, Trusts, and Powers of Attorney and gave an informative talk on this subject which was full of practical information. The importance of Powers of Attorney was explained. Anna detailed the two different types. 'Property and Finance' and 'Health and Welfare'.

Anna stressed that this is not a morbid or depressing business. Most people find it is a great relief when everything is in place and your wishes are known.

In February our speaker was Timothy Walker a lecturer, botanist, gardener, & author, whose talk was entitled 'How to be a 21st Century Gardener'.

Timothy gave an extremely interesting talk about the future of gardening in the UK in view of climate changes. He explained how we reduce the impact of these climate changes on the world's natural resources and help plants whose habitat is evolving faster than they can.

Our speaker on 5th March will be Malcolm Wells. The talk is entitled 'So Far So Good'. We will hear light-hearted stories about his time at Canine Partners as their national speaker. Malcolm will also speak about his experience in the Army as a musician and medical assistant in the Gulf War. Visitors £3.00 to include coffee/tea and biscuits.

The Theatre Group went to see 'The Constant Wife' by Somerset Maugham an RSC production at the Playhouse at the beginning of February. At the end of February, the group is booked to see Edward Albee's 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' also at the Playhouse.

Welsh Conversation Group. Are you a Welsh speaker or would like to practise your Welsh? We are setting up a Welsh Conversation Group.

**Sian Wallworth, Press Secretary**

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## OXFORD BUS MUSEUM



Our 1881 horse-drawn tram was restored in our workshop. We know it is accurate because we had the original design drawings. Note the paraffin lamp and red chimney on the left of the tram under the canopy. As well as being a warning to oncoming traffic, it lit the inside of the tram.

Next to Hanborough Station OX29 8LA  
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[info@oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk](mailto:info@oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk)  
Café / Children's area / Shop

For events information:  
[www.oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk](http://www.oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk)

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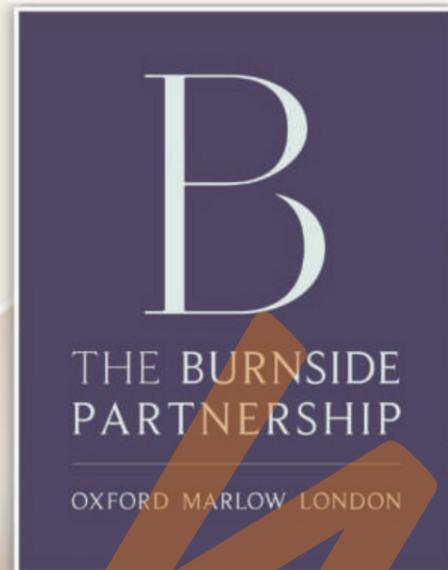
Trusted advisors to individuals and their families

We provide specialist advice on Wills, inheritance tax planning, probates, powers of attorney and generally protecting your assets. Our tax specialists are also here to help with your personal tax compliance.



For more information, please call our Oxford office on 01865 987781, visit [www.theburnsidepartnership.com](http://www.theburnsidepartnership.com) or email [info@theburnsidepartnership.com](mailto:info@theburnsidepartnership.com)

*"The team is superbly put together, showing professionalism and personality in equal measure"*  
Legal 500, 2024



## Inheritance Risks for Blended Families and Cohabitees in Oxford

There is a comforting British assumption that things will, broadly speaking, sort themselves out. We apply it to the weather, to plumbing, and - most perilously - to inheritance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Oxfordshire, a county notable not only for its spires and cyclists but also for its very high proportion of cohabiting couples and blended families. These are modern arrangements, entirely sensible in life, but surprisingly ill-served by death.

The difficulty arises when someone dies without a Will, thereby inviting the fixed laws of intestacy to step in. These rules are tidy and well-meaning, but they rarely reflect modern family life. Intestacy does not recognise "what Mum would have wanted". And it is spectacularly unimpressed by long-term relationships that never quite got round to legal formalities.

Let us begin with cohabiting partners. Despite what many people believe - often after thirty years of shared mortgages, Labradors and Christmas traditions - there is no such thing as a 'common law spouse' in England and Wales. On intestacy, an unmarried partner receives nothing. Not the house. Not the savings. Not even the toaster they jointly selected in John Lewis. Everything passes instead to blood relatives: children, parents, siblings. This can leave a surviving partner distressed - not to mention homeless.

Ex-spouses add another layer of interest. Divorce severs inheritance rights on intestacy, which is sensible enough, but separation does not. If you are still legally married - even if you have not spoken since the London Olympics - your estranged spouse remains first in line. Conversely, a new partner, no matter how devoted, remains legally irrelevant. The law, like an old filing cabinet, cares only about what is officially labelled.

Oxfordshire, with its property values, second marriages, and long-term cohabitation, is fertile ground for these problems. A house purchased before a relationship, children from a previous marriage, and a partner who 'will be fine' are all too common features of intestacy disputes heard in court. These claims are expensive, stressful, and often permanently corrosive to family relationships. Lawyers do well. Families do not.

The antidote, happily, is neither complicated nor gloomy. A bespoke Will allows you to decide who receives what, when, and on what terms. For blended families, this often means using trusts: for example, allowing a surviving partner to remain in the home for

life, while ensuring that the property ultimately passes to children from an earlier relationship. This approach acknowledges emotional reality while maintaining long-term fairness. It is also vastly cheaper than litigation conducted while everyone is grieving.

For cohabiting couples, a Will is essential. It can provide outright gifts, life interests, or discretionary trusts tailored to the survivor's needs, while still protecting assets for children or other beneficiaries. Without one, the survivor must rely on a court's discretion and hope the judge agrees they were sufficiently dependent. Judges are clever people, but they are not clairvoyant.

Alongside the Will itself, a statement of wishes is a quietly powerful document. It is not legally binding, which means it can be conversational, humane, and explanatory. It allows you to set out why you have made certain decisions: why one child receives more, why a partner may live in the house but not inherit it outright, why a stepchild is included despite not being legally related. This context can be invaluable in preventing disputes. People are far less likely to argue with a decision if they understand the thinking behind it - even if they still grumble.

In short, intestacy is designed for a world that largely no longer exists. Blended families and cohabiting couples are normal, sensible, and loving arrangements - but the law will not accommodate them unless formally invited to do so in Court. For my clients, writing a Will is not a negative or morbid experience. On the contrary, it brings clarity, relief, and the quiet satisfaction of knowing that those they care about are properly looked after. In that sense, making a Will is one of the most considerate things you can do: it spares your loved ones uncertainty, conflict, and the misery of an entirely avoidable - and often costly - legal dispute.

If you would rather these matters were handled calmly, clearly, and without leaving anything to chance, I can help. From our office in Combe, I advise clients across Oxfordshire on bespoke will-writing and inheritance planning, drawing on years of practical experience. A measured conversation now can spare your family a great deal of stress and expense later so do get in touch if you have any questions.

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.

## Nature Matters

There's a moment in late winter when the countryside begins to change almost without us noticing. February and March share that moment. Winter still shapes the landscape, but spring is quietly finding its way in. The days stretch a little longer, the light softens, and being outdoors starts to feel easier again.



Early spring - February and March (AI generated)

One of the clearest signs is blackthorn. Almost overnight, hedges that looked bare and lifeless are brightened by white blossom, sharp and fresh against dark stems. Cow parsley soon follows, its pale green leaves unfurling gently and hinting at the abundance still to come. These early changes are small, but once you spot them, they seem to be everywhere.

At ground level, colour returns bit by bit. Primroses glow along woodland edges, bringing a welcome softness to shady places. Lesser celandine opens its glossy yellow flowers whenever the sun breaks through, while violets hide quietly in sheltered corners. In damper ground, wild garlic pushes up in thick green drifts, its unmistakable scent released by passing boots or paws.

The sound of the season shifts too. Great tits and chaffinches grow more confident in their songs, calling from gardens and hedgerows. Skylarks rise over open fields, filling the sky with music that feels timeless. Closer to home, blackbirds rehearse rich evening phrases. Then there's the chiffchaff - one of the first migrant birds to return - its frequently rhythmic and repetitive chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff an unmistakable sound and a welcome sign that winter is loosening its hold. Long-tailed tits, once flitting about in cheerful winter groups, are now busy weaving tiny nests from moss, feathers, and spider silk, carefully hidden from view. Other birds are already nesting too: rooks and carrion crows attend their large, clumped nests, which stand out clearly in the tops of still bare trees.

On warmer days, movement returns in flashes. Queen bumblebees patrol low over grassy banks, searching for nest sites. Peacock and brimstone butterflies pause on sun-warmed paths and hedgerows. Around ponds

and ditches, frogs gather in shallow water, leaving floating clusters of spawn that are easy to notice and quietly pleasing to see - a familiar sign that the breeding season has begun.

As March moves on, trees begin to stir. Willow catkins soften from silver to yellow, elder buds break open, and hawthorn shows its first fresh leaves. The countryside still holds the outline of winter, but spring is clearly gathering strength.

Together, February and March form a gentle bridge between seasons. They don't rush. Instead, they ease us out of winter and quietly point the way forward. April will soon arrive with fuller leaves, brighter mornings, and a louder chorus of birds. For now, this in-between time invites us to slow down, look closely, and enjoy the familiar pleasure of watching the natural world come back to life.

Mayfly Dun

## Woodstock Exhibition Foundation

### 2026 Lecture

Prof Janina Ramirez will give the annual fund raising lecture on Saturday 4 July in St Mary Magdalene Church. The title of her talk is 'From Lady Godiva to the Foundations of Spain: How Legendary women prop up Nations'.



Four years ago Janina gave a lively well-received talk on A New History of the Middle Ages and we are delighted that she has agreed to come back to give a second talk.

The Woodstock Exhibition Foundation raises money so it can give grants to young Woodstock people, who either go to university or enter an apprenticeship. In 2025 we made grants to 29 applicants totalling £12,325.

Please make a note in your diaries and come along to support us.

Frank Collingwood

WOODSTOCK MUSIC SOCIETY  
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## SPRING CONCERT

**Brahms: Romantic choral works**  
including *Song of Destiny*

**Sibelius: The Captive Queen**  
*Finlandia*

Friday 27th and Saturday 28th March 2026  
St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock at 7.30pm.  
By kind permission of the Rector and Churchwardens  
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TICKETS

AT THE DOOR £16 (full-time students £5, accompanied children under 16 free)  
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OR Contact [concerts@woodstockmusic.info](mailto:concerts@woodstockmusic.info) or <https://bookwhen.com/woodstock>

Bladon Gardens Society

Annual General Meeting  
& Guest Speaker Event

The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

19th March 2026 7.30 pm

Andrew Mills  
Head Gardener Blenheim Palace

"Progress at Blenheim Palace Gardens"

Parking is difficult in Church Street and we must leave space for the Speaker. The school has given permission to park in the playground for meetings. Access to this is from Grove Road.  
Bladon Gardens Society Membership details  
Annual Subscription: £15 Visitors to monthly meetings £3

## Plant of the month

### Magnolia stellata or Star Magnolia



Photo by Mohan Nannapaneni

March is now upon us with all the joy that it brings. With animals and plants alike awakening with a renewed vigour. For a Gardener this marks the time when work in the garden starts to pick up pace. With warmer days ahead the soil starts to awaken and with it all the joy of spring blooms.

Steeped in history, the Magnoliaceae family have been around for about 95million years, in fact they pre-dated bees and relied on mainly beetles to pollinate. They were one of the first Angiosperms to become insect pollinated. Highly regarded by The Victorians, who believed the magnolia to symbolise Nobility which is fitting given the history and beauty of them.

It's a deciduous early flowering shrub which makes it perfect in smaller gardens. It grows slowly and doesn't need regular pruning unless you want to keep it restricted to a certain size. However, it can grow up to over 3m if left and in the right spot, so don't discount it as an ornamental tree in your garden if you have the space. Be mindful that it prefers a slightly acidic soil, but I have seen this grow fine in the chalky soil of the Chilterns. Place it in a sheltered position, protected from winds and late frosts if you can. Full sun to partial shade is its preference.

With its lightly fragranced white flowers with an ornate texture, it really does work hard as an ornamental shrub at this time of year. It can also be underplanted with bulbs which is always a bonus in my mind and adds to the spring show.

Top tip - Mulch in the spring and autumn to keep the soil healthy which will in turn help keep the plant healthy too. In a hot summer, give it a good drink or wait to directly after raining, then add more mulch. This will trap the moisture in. Do not mulch right up to the bark as this can cause a burning and/or fungal problems if water sits above the buttress.

Dom, Head Gardener & Owner at Ford and Kent Gardens

## Curate's Log

### Learning to See Differently: From the Road to Damascus to Our Own Community

Many people have heard the phrase 'a Damascus moment' or 'on the road to Damascus' - a way of describing a sudden, life-changing shift in perspective. The story behind that phrase, found in Acts 9 in the New Testament, is not simply about dramatic conversion. It is about learning to see differently - with greater awareness, humility, courage, and grace. It is a story that speaks powerfully to our own community and to the times we are living in. We heard this reading in church in January, just days after the World Economic Forum.

Many of us follow national and global news. We hear leaders speak in familiar language - competition, threat, blame, and control - often reducing complex realities into stories of winners and losers. These narratives matter because the way events are framed shapes how we understand the world and how we respond to it.

At the same time, there have been voices calling for a wider and more thoughtful perspective. Some speakers have urged people to pause, resist fear-driven thinking, and recognise our shared responsibility and interconnectedness. That message has a strong local resonance: the stories we hear - in the media, online, and in everyday conversation - shape how we see one another, our neighbourhoods, and even ourselves.

The biblical story of Saul, later known as Paul, explores this challenge in a striking way. Saul is not portrayed as careless or malicious. He is devoted, principled, passionate, and utterly convinced that he is acting in God's name. Yet his certainty blinds him. His faith has been shaped by fear, loyalty to authority, and a narrow understanding of who belongs.

On the road to Damascus, Saul's confidence collapses. A divine interruption - a voice and a blinding light - leaves the man who believed he saw clearly unable to see at all. His transformation is not simply about changing opinions. It is a complete shift in how he understands power, truth, and God's work in the world. The systems he once trusted no longer hold the same authority. He begins to see people, and God, differently.

This story invites us to reflect on our own blind spots. Blindness, after all, is rarely intentional. We all carry assumptions. We often prefer simple explanations to complex realities, and we are drawn to stories that confirm what we already believe. Social media and news algorithms can intensify this, feeding us more of what we agree with and pulling us into echo chambers where our views feel constantly validated.

Over time, this can narrow our understanding of those who think, vote, live, or believe differently from us.

Locally, this matters. It shapes how we talk about social issues, how we view newcomers, how we respond to difference, and how we interpret the challenges facing our town, schools, churches, and services. The question becomes: where might our certainty be hiding a blind spot? Where might we need to slow down, listen more carefully, or widen our perspective?

One of the most powerful moments in Acts 9 is that Saul's healing does not come through divine spectacle alone. Instead, God sends Ananias - an ordinary person, understandably afraid - to meet the very man known for persecution. Ananias voices his fear, yet still goes. He calls Saul "Brother." He offers compassion where resentment would have been easier.

It is through this act of everyday courage that healing becomes possible.

That detail feels especially relevant for community life. Change rarely happens in isolation. Transformation often depends on ordinary people choosing empathy over suspicion, courage over comfort, and grace over judgment. Sometimes we are the ones who need our vision restored. At other times, we may be called to be like Ananias - helping others see differently through patience, kindness, and brave conversation.

We may not always know what will cause the scales to fall from someone's eyes - or from our own. But the story of the road to Damascus reminds us that growth often begins when we are willing to question our assumptions and remain open to change.

In a world full of loud voices and competing narratives, perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can offer our community is a commitment to seeing more clearly - and more generously.

With every blessing,  
**Revd Gemma Ferrier**

### Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

There is what can seem a strange heart to the Christian faith. A symbol that we may see day by day in the world around us. Two lines crossing each other. On roads. On signs. On buildings. On jewelry. On skin. Yet it is a strange symbol. A first century means of execution that we remember and even glorify today. A sign of brutality and suffering whose meaning has been transformed by the events that are remembered and celebrated in Holy Week.

A cross stands as the symbol at the heart of what it means to be a Christian today.

Brian Zhand writes of the cross as being 'the wood between the worlds'; a symbol of this world that connects us to the heart of God.

Through the pain and suffering of a man dying upon a cross one ordinary Friday in Jerusalem, somewhere around 30AD, the memory and reality of that event endures. And the memory and reality of that event has been rendered 'Good' by the effects of that death on the lives and faith of those who have followed in the crucified one's name.

The strange symbol of the cross points us to the enduring message of Jesus, his gospel of good news which offers forgiveness, grace and mercy because of the wood that stands between us and God, and which call us to in love to respond in faith.

And as we lean in towards Easter through the season of Lent may the shadow of the cross not be a mere symbol of decoration but a sign of welcome that draws us Jesus.

#### Celebrate Easter with Churches Together in Woodstock and Bladon

Good Friday, 3 April at 10.45pm: Walk of Witness beginning at St. Mary Magdalene's

Easter Sunday, 5 April at 6.30am: Easter Sunrise Communion - by the Queen Pool

**Revd. Andy Mills,**  
**Minister of Woodstock Baptist Church**

### World Day of Prayer 2026 Friday 6 March 2026

Church's Together Ecumenical Service - St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock 7pm

Written by the women of Nigeria "I will give you rest, come"

Keleya, Keleya nobueze - Give him thanks, he is King!

Our sisters in Nigeria invite us to join them for the World Day of Prayer on Friday 6 March 2026. Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, rich in culture, languages, and traditions. It is a vibrant country full of resilience and creativity, while also facing challenges such as poverty, rising living costs, climate pressures, political insecurity, and inequality, especially for women.

Through this year's service, our Nigerian sisters call us to draw closer to God and find rest (Matthew 11:28-30). Their stories encourage us to work for a world where justice, peace, and acceptance are shared by all.



By taking part, we join a global wave of prayer that travels around the world—from sunrise in Western Samoa and Tonga to sunset in American Samoa 36 hours later. Our service will be held at 7pm on Friday 6 March at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock. All are welcome - all ages and genders!

If you would like any more information, please contact Debbie Teanby on 01993 812325 / 07882 447214 or email [doranteanby@btinternet.com](mailto:doranteanby@btinternet.com).

### Woodstock Relief in Need Charity

This Charity is very old. In 1652, it provided bread to 20 adults and 20 children every Sunday at the Mayors door.

In 1901, various charities including Sir Thomas Spencer's were amalgamated into The Woodstock Municipal Charities. These provided bread and coal up to 1959. Then tokens for spending at the local Co-op were distributed. In 1970 the name was changed to Woodstock Relief in Need.

The charity now donates money to individuals at Christmas and responds to requests for help during the year. It also donates to The Lunch Club, The Marlborough School for the senior citizens Christmas party and to the food bank.

The charity will consider requests for help with a) transport for hospital visits, b) help with problems like flooding, c) for children who need help funding school uniform and books and d) generally helping anyone needing financial help with utility bills etc.

Please contact the charity through the Town Clerk at the Town Hall.

**Gwen Mason, Chair**

## Woodstock Literature Society

Review of a talk by Professor Laura Swift on Greek Tragedy in Performance Held on Saturday 17 January 2026



Professor Laura Swift

It was a pleasure on a chilly January afternoon to be transported to the world of Greek Theatre in the 5th Century BC. Professor Swift explained how the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides arose as part of the Festival of Dionysia, held in Athens every Spring. This was partly a religious celebration, partly an opportunity to proclaim the supremacy of Athens in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also a mass entertainment in which dramatists competed for the prize of best play.

The theatres were very large to accommodate so many spectators, and this impacted on how the plays were written, with characters explaining what is happening and also evoking the scenery for the benefit of those sitting far away from the action. Elaborate stylised masks were worn to help identify the characters, and although none have survived, Professor Swift showed us some examples illustrated on Greek vases. Parts were shared between just three male actors, so the masks must have been a quick way of establishing a new character.

In contrast, the Chorus in a Greek tragedy consisted of a large number of men and boys; with three dramatists each producing three plays, the number of people involved in one festival could run to well over a thousand. The presence of the Chorus seems strange to modern audiences used to naturalistic drama, but it served a practical function, allowing actors time to change costume and also indicating the passage of time. Chorus members also wore costume to represent different ethnic or gender groups, and in this role passed comment on the action, although they were not active participants able to shape events, but rather

a link between audience and action.

This was a fascinating talk, both for those with an extensive knowledge of ancient Greek Drama and for anyone with a love of theatre, and was warmly received by the audience.

Our next talk is on Saturday 21st February, 3.00pm at St Hugh's Centre, Hensington Rd, when Professor Emma Smith will be speaking on Theatre in the Jacobean Period.

For more details about this and other events, do visit our website at [www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk](http://www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk).

Anne Handsley

## WOOTTON TALKS

Our next speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 6 March is **Steven Parissien**, one of the country's leading cultural historians, who has written sixteen books. Steven will be talking about his magisterial book, *Building Britannia*, which examines 25 distinct structures and explores how British nationhood was expressed through architecture and how these structures have been used to define or remake British history.

Rubbing shoulders with some 'expected' building choices - such as the Iron Age fort at Maiden Castle, Roman baths at Aquae Sulis (modern-day Bath), the early Gothic splendour of Lincoln Cathedral and the Tudor jewel that is Little Moreton Hall - are some striking inclusions that promise to open doors into less familiar areas of social history.

These include The Briton's Protection, a Regency pub close in Manchester city centre and the Edwardian Baroque Electric Cinema in Notting Hill, one of the country's oldest working cinemas - as well as The Gherkin in the City.

Our speaker on Friday 17 April is **Mike Birkhead**, the celebrated wildlife film-maker. At his last appearance in Wootton, Mike spoke about the India tiger clan in Ranthambore and its most charismatic and powerful tigresses. On this occasion, Mike is closer to home and will be talking about the 'cheating' cuckoo, due to arrive here soon to herald the start of spring.

Entry for this event in St Mary's Church is £10 in cash - and includes free food. Children over 16 welcome. Cards can be used to buy speakers' books. (Upgraded heating and sound-system - toilet facilities available).

To reserve seats, please contact us through our website [www.woottontalks.co.uk](http://www.woottontalks.co.uk).

Andy Morgan (01993 813016)

## Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

Visiting Buses on New Year's Day

There is much more going on at the Bus museum than just a static display of artifacts. The 2026 programme of events is now on our website.



David, Myra, and Paul. Photo: Kirstin Blackman

On New Year's Day we had a Christmas Jumper competition and were surprised by the number of visitors who took part. The winners of the adult section were a family, David, Myra and Paul. The joint winners of the children's competition were Harvey and Lucus.

Three buses also visited the museum on New Year's Day giving free heritage bus rides. Often visiting buses have interesting stories and histories to be discovered.

The first visitor was an ex-London Transport Routemaster RM 1859 in Reading livery. It is Leyland-engined with an AEC / Park Royal body. New in 1964 the bus worked in London until 1984, when it was acquired by St John's Ambulance and used for transporting volunteers. In 1994 it was bought by Reading Mainline Buses and went back into public service for four years before being sold for preservation.

The second bus was the first Optare Spectra ever to be built. The Spectra was a joint venture between Opore and DAF with the body based on a design by MCW Metrobus. This bus was built on a DAF DB 250 chassis and was exhibited at Coach and Bus Exhibition in 1991, before being sold to Reading Buses in February 1991 and numbered 701. Spectra buses typically seated 71 passengers and later were redesigned and built on a low floor chassis with a longer wheelbase.

Between 1992 and 2001 Reading buses bought another 25 Optares as replacements for their Routemasters. Other companies which operated Optares included London Buses, which also took 25, Travel East Midlands 20, and Arriva Yorkshire 42. However, the largest fleet was Wilts & Dorset with 78.

The last visitor was a 1961 AEC Regent V like our 1957 bus, 956 AJO but with a major difference: it is left-hand drive and was built for export to Lisbon, Portugal. It is often forgotten now but in the 1950s and 1960s, Britain was a major exporter of bus chassis and second hand buses.

The visitor, HH 97 96, was one of more than 200 exported to Lisbon between 1960 and 1966. The body was built locally by Portugal UTIC to a design by the English company Weymann. HH 97 96 worked in Lisbon until the mid-1980s when it was acquired for preservation and shipped back to Britain. Recently, it was bought by one of our directors and has been driven to York.

Frank Collingwood



Chartered Accountants  
Registered Auditors

The Old Tannery, Hensington Road, Woodstock,  
Oxon, OX20 1JL  
01993 814590  
[info@kbdr.co.uk](mailto:info@kbdr.co.uk)



## The Oxfordshire Museum

### WILD Colour

Saturday 24 January to Sunday 15 March. Free entry. This vibrant exhibition explores the importance of colour and pattern in the animal kingdom. From the stunning blue plumage of the hyacinth macaw to the multicoloured iridescence of a jewel beetle there are a variety of reasons why colour is so important in nature. This stunning collection of beautiful images is brought to The Oxfordshire Museum by touring exhibition specialists, Blue Tokay.

### C21 Exhibition

On Saturday 28 March we welcome back the C21 Art Group for an exhibition of nine artists covering landscape, still life, portraiture and abstract work. The C21 Group is one of Oxfordshire's longest established art groups, founded by renowned local artist Prue Pardue in the early 1990s. The exhibition will take place in the Garden Gallery between Saturday 28 March & Sunday 19 April. Free entry.

### The OM Open Art Competition 2026

We are now accepting entries for our annual open art competition. To mark the Oxfordshire Museum's 60th anniversary our theme for this year is 'Celebration'. The competition is open to Oxfordshire residents aged 11 years and over and most media types are accepted. For more information please visit: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/artcompetition](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/artcompetition)

## Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

### Forthcoming Talks in the Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

#### Wednesday 4 March

Oxfordshire Gems: how well do you know your county?

**Speaker:** David Meara, Archdeacon Emeritus of London.

Referring to his book '50 Gems of Oxfordshire', our speaker will pick out a few of his favourite places. We live in a county of contrasts, with the Cotswolds in the west, the Chiltern Hills in the east and the River Thames to the south. It is full of splendid gems, such as Blenheim, Hook Norton Brewery, the Oxford canal, the Maharajah's Well and the jewel in the crown, the City of Oxford. Come and enjoy a celebration of the rich variety of experiences, places and sights that the county of Oxfordshire has to offer. The book will be on sale (cash) for a reduced price £10.

#### Wednesday 1 April

How to forge a secret agent: the history of the Briggens House forgery unit.

**Speaker:** Charles Pither, Academic consultant physician and author

Briggens House, Essex is an 18th century manor house, requisitioned by the MOD in WW2. It was used initially for training Polish army exiles, being prepared to return to Poland to engage in acts of sabotage. Such personnel required fake documents, and the Poles established a forgery unit in the basement. This is the story of that secret unit.

### Annual Membership for the Friends

This runs for 12 months from April 1st. Membership gives you free access to all our talks which take place in the Museum in Woodstock on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm. They are also available on ZOOM. Non-Members are very welcome at these events for a fee of £5

## Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

### Veterans' Coffee & Chat at the Museum

26 March 2026, 10am - 12noon. Repeats every fourth Thursday of the month. FREE.

Supported by The Veterans' Foundation, our veterans' coffee mornings return to their regular slot on the fourth Thursday every month starting from 22 January 2026. Open to all veterans and serving members of the armed forces, you can enjoy free entry to our galleries plus complimentary tea and coffee, as well as the chance for a good catch up with old friends or to see a few new faces.

### An Evening with Al Murray: A Passion for History

Talk, 6.30pm, Friday 6 March 2026. Tickets: £65.

Known to many for his comedy persona, Al Murray's life-long passion for history - particularly the Second World War - now takes centre-stage with a number of books to his name, alongside his regular podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk* and annual history festival, *We Have Ways Fest*. Join us for an evening with Al at Churchill's birthplace and wartime home of MI5, Blenheim Palace, to explore his infectious passion for the period and a chance to get your questions answered in an audience Q&A session.

### The Battle of Singapore

Talk, 2pm, Saturday 21 March 2026. Tickets £12. Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum.

Join Mike Tickner to learn more about the battle for, and fall of, Singapore in 1942 - the greatest and most humiliating defeat in the British Army's history? Lieutenant Colonel Mike Tickner is a retired Regular Army officer with a long term interest in the British Army in India, particularly the Far East campaigns and the North West Frontier, with many talks, articles and battlefield studies to his name.

## North Leigh Roman Villa Volunteers

### A Stitch in Time: Embroidering North Leigh's Roman Mosaic



North Leigh mosaic embroidery with volunteer project leader Kerry Forkner

Last year was an extraordinarily creative one at North Leigh Roman Villa: the site and its precious 4th century mosaic inspired artworks, music, video, digital animation and even embroidery. The idea of capturing the mosaic via needle and thread emerged last year as volunteers were weeding on site one sunny spring weekend. The mosaic is in three sections, formed from many thousands of small stone tesserae, which were made 1,700 years ago from 4 local materials: cream and yellow limestone, blue lias, and terracotta tile. The saltire style design is typical of mosaics found around Cirencester, once the region's Roman capital Corinium.

The mosaic was discovered in 1816, during excavations by Henry Hakewill, whose illustration of what he found was first published in 1826. Subsequent pictures and photographs show the triclinium (winter dining room) floor suffered some gradual deterioration over the next hundred years until it was re-laid in 1929. As well as damage, close comparison has revealed small irregularities in parts of the pattern, and several differences between earlier depictions and the surviving mosaic. So, the completed embroidery, while accurate, will also necessarily be an interpretation of the ancient original.

There is a local tradition of recording Roman mosaics through embroidery, including the Stonesfield Tapestry on display in Woodstock's Oxfordshire Museum; and the 18th century Littlecote Embroidery depicted on the Hungerford Virtual Museum. North Leigh's modern embroidery will be 1.5 metres long when complete, compared to the 8.5m long mosaic. At about 5 stitches a centimetre it represents a huge labour of love.

Therefore, North Leigh's Roman Villa Volunteers are delighted to acknowledge the generous support of The Arts Society West Oxfordshire (TASWOX) in underwriting materials and other costs for this project. If you would like to leave your mark by adding a stitch in time to this embroidery email "SEW" to [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com) for details of the next embroidery sessions.

Conservation of the mosaic itself continues this spring: on Thursday 9th April during the Easter holidays a team of English Heritage conservators assisted by volunteers will be cleaning the mosaic. To join in and gain a unique view of this beautiful ancient artefact email "CLEAN" to [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com).

Our first public mosaic open weekend of 2026 will be at the end of May, on May 30th and 31st.



## BRIDEWELL EVENTS 2026

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6<sup>TH</sup> SEPT



The Walled Garden, Wilcote, OX7 3DT  
[www.bridewellgardens.org](http://www.bridewellgardens.org)  
registered charity: 1158456

## Woodstock Probus Club

Our speaker on 8 January was Aidan Salter who outlined the trials and tribulations of replacing the roof on St Mary Magdalene Church (SMM). He had experience of replacing a roof on another church but that had been 'easy' compared with the hurdles involved on replacing the roof here. SMM is a grade 2 listed building; the roof was 100 to 150 years old with lead which had required many repairs over the years and had been stolen or damaged twice. The architects and FTMRC (Federation of Traditional Metal Roofing Contractors) recommended replacing the lead with term coated stainless steel. The initial estimate was £160k +VAT but this turned out to be an underestimate because of all the modifications needed by various planning authorities. Eventually these were resolved and the leaky roof could be repaired.

There was also an opportunity to install solar panels on the flat roof though this too was not without bureaucracy from planning authorities. However, the roof has now been fixed and solar panels installed along with a 10kw battery. Permission has also recently been granted to sell excess electricity back to the Grid.

The combination of a waterproof roof complete with insulation has led to a warmer church and a reduction in electricity and heating costs of about £4000 per year. It required great persistence by Aidan and co-workers, over several years not just dealing with planning authorities, but also with raising the funds and he thanked everyone who helped with fundraising and donations.

A few years ago we decided to have our Christmas lunch after, rather than before Christmas, with the intention to brighten up a dreary January. This year we had it at the Holt on 12 January. As background music we were entertained by two well-known local artists, the Mandolirium duo.

Our next outing is to see the Snowdrops at Welford Park, but more of that in the next issue of WOBL.

**David Anderson, Past President**

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Oxfordshire & Home Counties

## The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 11 March 2026  
Raphael and Rome



Join Rome tourist guide Stuart Harvey for an in depth look at Raphael Sanzio, who Vasari described as "The Prince of Painters". Born in Urbino, he moved to Rome in 1508 and worked there for the last 12 years of his life, until his untimely death in 1520 at the young age of 37. His prolific output left a legacy that influenced artists for centuries. In this lecture we will take a chronological look at Raphael's works that are easy to visit in Rome today, as well as learning about his powerful patrons, including two Popes, various cardinals and a wealthy banker. Raphael's love-life cannot be ignored, and finally we will arrive at his monumental tomb in the Pantheon.

**About the speaker:** Stuart Harvey is a 'History and Art Communicator' of 30 years experience. He is a London Blue Badge Tourist Guide (qualified in 1998 - awarded 'New Guide of the Year') and also a Guida Turistica Abilitata della Provincia di Roma (qualified in 2010). He has worked in educational tourism since 1992, leading study tours all over Europe. Living in Rome since 2003, Stuart has developed a great love for the Eternal City and its many treasures. In addition to his primary career as full-time Rome tourist guide, Stuart's entertaining and lively lectures and virtual tours bring the rich artistic and historical wealth of Rome's 28 centuries to life for people all over the world.

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. Booking is recommended: to reserve a place book online ([www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk)) or contact Lisa Etheridge on 07918 180895 for a booking form. Non-members are welcome (space permitting) at a charge of £10.

To learn more about The Arts Society Cotswolds and to see what lectures, Special Interest Days and other activities are planned for the future, please log into the website [www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk).

Or contact Alison Morgans on 07771 817050.

## Keep It Local

### The Woodstock Harriers

"You make a lot of friends. I mean, I've got lots of friends in the running Club." Mike Shipway, former Chairman of the Woodstock Harriers has been with the Club for nearly 40 years. Every week, when they've finished their run and are gathered on Mike's drive to refuel and catch up, the sound of happy voices floats across on the breeze.

This Club has provenance. It was set up in 1924 as the Woodstock Harriers Athletics Club, when competitive running was still a fledgeling pursuit and the main sports events were football and cricket. Its 30-40 all-male membership engaged predominantly in local cross-country skirmishes and track races. The then Duke of Marlborough granted them use of a grass track inside Blenheim Park where they could train. In a 'Gentry' versus 'Commoners' cricket tournament the 'Commoners' batter struck the ball with such force that it hit the Duke of Marlborough. This prompted Winston Churchill to congratulate him!

With the advent of war and conscription, the Harriers disbanded. Then in the 1980s, as running became fashionable, the Club was reactivated by a group of serious runners. And from that point, men and women were welcomed. As well as training together, they'd compete in marathons across the country and abroad, from the London and Isle of Wight to the Jungfrau and Argentan Marathons.

Today, the Club is open to runners of all abilities and is evenly split between men and women. The only requirement is that you actually enjoy running! Club members aim to provide a friendly environment that supports and encourages runners of all abilities, helping them to get started or to improve. The Club regularly holds Couch to 5k groups to help people start or return to running. Above all, it's meant to be fun!

The Woodstock Harriers welcomes new members so if you are searching for a running group, that just happens to have a one hundred-plus year pedigree, look no further! If you'd like to sign up, visit [woodstockharriers.co.uk](http://woodstockharriers.co.uk)

Cheers, Vanessa Ayres

## Bladon Snippets from the Past

61 years ago Winston Churchill was to be buried at St Martin's Church and the World's press arrived in Bladon to provide communication: 14 or so red telephone boxes were installed on the corner of Park Lane near the front of The White House.

Mary F. Sitch

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## The Marlborough C of E School

### Sixth Form Open Evening



Sixth Form Open Evening

The evening of Thursday 22 January, saw over four hundred students, parents, and families attend our Sixth Form Open Evening.

The evening began in the MEC with a warm welcome and introduction from Mr Hanlon, Principal, followed by a speech from Head of Sixth Form, Ms Jones. Two of our current Year 13 students - Oran and Amerley - presented an engaging and passionate speech to the audience about their experiences as Marlborough Sixth Form students. Mr Gavin, Deputy Head of Sixth Form, brought the presentations to a close with a final speech.

Following the speeches, prospective students and parents had the opportunity to visit subject departments and to speak with A Level teachers. Current students were on hand to talk about life as a Sixth Former and acted as tour guides for those who were not familiar with the school. In the Sixth Form centre, Ms Jones, Mr Gavin and Mrs Fry (Pastoral Support Assistant) were on hand to meet prospective students personally and to answer any questions. There was also an opportunity to view some of our current Sixth Formers' coursework on display in the Art and Design Technology areas. Our Sixth Form is recognised as one of the best in the country and so demand for places is always really high.

It was a fantastic evening showcasing our exceptional Sixth Form; a huge thank you to all who attended.

### Key Stage 4 Awards Evening

The MEC was host to The Marlborough School Key Stage 4 Awards Evening on Thursday, 29 January. This annual event provides a wonderful opportunity to recognise and celebrate the commitment of Year 10 and Year 11 students to academic excellence,



Key Stage 4 Awards Evening

ambition and perseverance, in a particular teaching subject.

Between the presentation of awards, the audience enjoyed musical performances from our very talented students and a presentation on the recent German Exchange trip. In addition to this, Year 10 drama students delighted the audience by performing a scene from this year's school production, 'School of Rock'.

It was a fantastic evening showcasing the very best of our school - a shining testament to our school vision "Let your light shine". Congratulations to all students who received a certificate and continue to live out our school values of respect, perseverance and ambition on a daily basis. A huge thank you all parents, carers and family members who joined us for this special occasion.

**Sarah Fitchett, PA to the School Business Manager**

## Woodstock in Bloom

Snowdrops and crocuses have brightened Oxford Road, combining with Jenny Atkinson's display in the Church Yard and the long established magic of the bulbs in the Museum Garden to give the horticultural year a flying start. Daffodils will soon follow.

Andrew Mills at the Blenheim Palace Gardens is very kindly preparing pelargoniums, aka geraniums, and silvery white leaved cinerarias for planting at the end of May. He advises that these will need less watering than our previous petunias. Andrew is moving us into step with the dry summers of climate change.

On a personal note I am 86 years old and must step down from managing Woodstock in Bloom soon. Now is the time for readers to persuade their spouses, parents, children or neighbours that they would love to replace me, starting with a shadowing season or two. Send him/her along to wrobertedwards3@gmail.com. We have a wonderful team of helpers with the summer watering.

**Robert Edwards**

## Acquiring Land and Building a Home of Your Own

Building a new home on purchased land gives you full control over design, layout, and energy performance, and can be both rewarding and financially advantageous. Success depends on thorough planning, realistic budgeting, and professional support, and understanding these issues before committing to a plot helps reduce the risk of delays, unforeseen costs, or planning complications.

Land for self-build can be found through several routes. Plot-finding websites such as Grand Designs' land finder or Plotfinder.net list available plots, showing price, availability, and relevant estate agents. Registering with agents in your target area and giving them your budget increases the chances of early notification. Brownfield sites - previously developed land once occupied by permanent structures - are often viewed favourably by councils, and may already have services. Demolish and replace projects involve constructing a new home on a site with an existing building. Infill plots between existing buildings are sometimes permitted within settlement boundaries, though harder to secure in Conservation Areas. Back gardens in built-up areas and landowners willing to release land for sale are further possibilities.

Before purchasing, commission a full land survey covering boundaries, topography, and soil conditions. Soil type directly affects foundation design and cost. A flood-risk assessment is essential if the land lies in an Environment Agency flood zone, as this influences both planning approval and insurance premiums. Environmental considerations - protected species, trees with preservation orders, contamination, or archaeological significance - can restrict or prevent development and may require statutory assessments. Location, surrounding infrastructure, access, and market conditions all influence long-term value. Establish whether the land carries appropriate planning status. Greenfield land may face stricter planning controls, while brownfield land may benefit from presumption in favour of development but could involve contamination or demolition costs. A more recent route is custom build or serviced plots, such as Graven Hill in Bicester, where sites come with utilities, highway access, and at least outline planning consent, reducing early-stage risk though there may be design-control limitations.

Title investigation is essential. Your solicitor must confirm the seller has good title and identify restrictive covenants, rights of way, easements, ransom strips, or third-party rights that could limit residential use. Agricultural land often carries restrictions affecting planning. The plot must have safe, lawful vehicular access to the public highway, either by ownership or a registered right of way.

Utility connections must be available or viable to install, and extending services to remote plots can be costly, so these factors should be built into early budgeting.

Building a new home involves costs for land, professional fees, surveys, planning, demolition or remediation, materials, labour, utilities, and landscaping. A 10–20% contingency is essential to cover unexpected ground issues or delays. Self-build mortgages differ from standard loans, releasing funds in stages as construction progresses. Lenders typically finance 75–85% of land and build costs, requiring substantial upfront capital. Most materials and services for new residential construction qualify for zero-rated VAT, which can be reclaimed, helping reduce overall expenses while ensuring compliance with tax regulations.

New homes require structural warranties - typically NHBC or similar - for mortgage purposes and future resale. Construction insurance, public liability cover, and employer's liability where contractors are hired provide protection during the build. The self-build process typically takes 12–24 months from land purchase to completion and requires time, resilience, and financial commitment, but creating a home tailored to your needs is often deeply fulfilling experience as well as being financially rewarding.

**Jan Liberadzki BA Arch (Hons), MSc, JLDA**

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## Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone - we had a lovely evening on 8 December when we had our Christmas workshop and after doing our arrangements, we enjoyed mulled wine and lovely nibbles made by the committee.

We do not have a meeting in January so our next meeting is on 9 February when we will welcome Alison Gillot with her title 'A Pocket Full of Posies'. Our March meeting will be our AGM; we have a small break for tea/coffee and after that we have an In-House Demonstration. The subscription for the year will be due to be paid in March. Visitors will always be very welcome at a charge of £10.

If you would like to know anything further about our club, please contact Ann on 07701 000977. We meet in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park, Woodstock on the second Monday of the month and the meetings start at 7pm.

Margaret Lang

## Meme of the Month

This is a picture of an asteroid crater in Arizona...  
Look how close it came to hitting the visitors centre...



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## Panniers

### Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon

Cycling through traffic can feel daunting, especially on streets lined with parked cars. One of the most common hazards is the sudden opening of a car door - often called 'dooring'. A little awareness and positioning can greatly reduce the risk.

In Bikeability training we drill young riders to learn the expression 'car door and little bit more', meaning, as you pass a parked car leave at least a door's length (around one metre) and a bit extra. It means riding slightly further out than feels natural, but it makes you more visible and gives you space to react.

You can also look for clues that someone may be about to exit a vehicle: brake lights, movement inside, or a driver's silhouette in the mirror.



*The Dutch Reach is a technique that can save lives*

But it is not just cyclists who need to think about 'the door zone'. As motorists, we have an even greater responsibility to ensure the safety of vulnerable road users.

Since 2022 the Highway Code has encouraged drivers to use 'the Dutch reach', a method widely used in Europe. The technique means occupants of cars open the door with their opposite hand forcing them to turn their body and head as they get out. It's a simple thing to learn but it can save lives.

**David Walker is a member of Sustainable Woodstock, the Village Travel Network and is a qualified Bikeability instructor**

## Downpour

The weather forecast's right and now it warns of low cloud, rain beginning, then it builds, steadily to torrential rain that fills the pathways, now they're pools, a worry dawn. Water rises, nudges the shut back door. Relentlessly cascading through the mind, a sifting starts of past events in kind,

## Woodstock Community Skatepark Campaign

### Get on board!



Woodstock is a wonderful place to live, but one thing is noticeably missing - there are currently very limited dedicated leisure facilities for our young people. There is nowhere specifically designed for teenagers and older children to socialise, be active and develop their skills in a safe and positive environment. A purpose built skatepark would change that.

Skateparks are not just for skateboarders. They provide a shared space for scooter riders, BMX cyclists and inline skaters of all abilities. Importantly, they create an inclusive environment where young people can build confidence, resilience and friendships while improving their physical and mental wellbeing. A well-designed skatepark also becomes a positive community asset - somewhere families can gather, events can be held and local pride can grow.

We have launched a Facebook campaign to show there is strong local support. Demonstrating visible backing from residents is essential when approaching the council and applying for funding opportunities. The more followers, shares and engagement we have, the stronger our case becomes.



If you would like to see better facilities for young people in our town, please search for 'Woodstock Community Skatepark' on Facebook, click 'follow' and share the page with friends. Every supporter brings us one step closer to making this a reality.

Thank you!

### Woodstock Community Skatepark Campaign

as through the hours the rain clouds pour and pour. The cellar floods, its walls glisten with rain, darkness deepens, it stays throughout the day, anxiety muscles hope out of the way as rain pounds down again and then again. Warmer air sounds a warning: it can drown, the more moisture's drawn up the more comes down.

**Mason Beah**



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The actors appearing in Winston Churchill films in the Quiz on Page 34 of this issue are:

1. Gary Oldman in Darkest Hour
2. Ian McNiece in Dr Who
3. Simon Russell-Beale in Operation Mincemeat
4. Michael Gambon in Churchill's Secret
5. Robert Hardy in Churchill, The Wilderness Years
6. Timothy Spall in The King's Speech
7. Brian Cox in Churchill
8. Simon Ward in Young Winston
9. John Lithgow in The Crown
10. Richard Burton in The Gathering Storm

The answers to the Crossword on Page 34 of this issue are:

Crocodile Dundee came from Walkabout Creek

**Across:** 1. seaweed, 5. phrases, 9. available, 10. train, 11. ice up, 12. ownership, 13. gambits, 15. gavotte, 17. draught, 19. portico, 21. Old Bailey, 23. ensue, 25. egret, 26. teenagers, 27. elderly, 28. Trekkie.

**Down:** 1. shaking, 2. abase, 3. eclipsing, 4. dubious, 5. pfennig, 6. rotor, 7. spaghetti, 8. synapse, 14. meandered, 16. variegate, 17. diocese, 18. Tolstoy, 19. payment, 20. oversee, 22. actor, 24. sleek.

WOODSTOCK'S  
ANNUAL COMMUNITY

# LITTER PICK

LITTER HEROES!

Saturday 14th March  
Meet 10.45. Pick 11-13.00  
Meet Shipton Rd, opposite New Rd

Children and vulnerable adults must be accompanied by parent or guardian  
Wear - Wellies, robust shoes and seasonal clothing  
We supply - pickers, high-vis, etc (you may prefer you own)  
Questions? Email: [sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com)



## 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 (energitraining.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 (energitraining.co.uk)
- 7pm - Beginner 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

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 Literature Society**  
This well established society hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On
- Woodstock Natural History Society**  
Second Tuesday of the month at St Hughs
- 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**  
In St Mary Magdalene 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
- Veterans' Coffee & Chat at the Museum**  
Between 10am and 12 noon every fourth Thursday of the month at SOFO

### 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 to September and the indoor season from October 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).

### Wednesday 04 Mar 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk  
David Meara, Archdeacon Emeritus of London: 50 Gems of Oxfordshire  
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

### Monday 16 Mar 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk  
Jyotveer Singh Gill: The Human Side of AI: Myths, Realities and Future Possibilities  
St Mary Magdalene

### Thursday 19 Mar 2026, 19:30

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk  
Andrew Mills, Head Gardner at Blenheim Palace: Progress at Blenheim Palace Gardens  
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

### Saturday 21 Mar 2026, 14:00

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust - Talk  
The Battle of Singapore  
Mike Tickner: Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

### Saturday 21 Mar 2026, 15:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk  
'The Spanish Civil War and Beyond': Dr Daniela Omlor  
Woodstock Town Hall

### Friday 27 Mar 2026, 19:30

Woodstock Music Society - Concert  
Spring Concert: Brahms and Sibelius  
St Mary Magdalene

### Friday 27 Mar 2026, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music  
Northern Lights Quartet: Blending timeless 'Swing' and spicy Latin vibes these guys are awesome  
St Hugh's Centre

### Wednesday 01 Apr 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk  
Charles Pither: How to forge a secret agent: the history of the Briggens House forgery unit.  
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

### Monday 20 Apr 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk  
David Lowe: Secrets of the TV Theme Tune  
St Mary Magdalene

### Tuesday 21 Apr 2026, 20:00

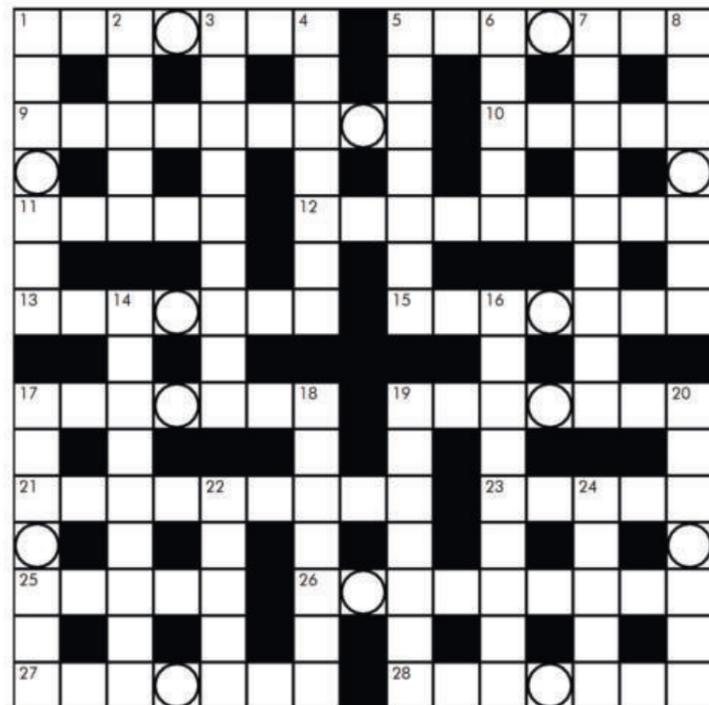
Woodstock Literature Society - Talk  
A Georgian Journey: Carolyn Kirby  
St Hugh's Centre

# QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

This month, we have a 'picture round'. Who are the actors who have all portrayed Sir Winston Churchill, and in what films? Answers to both the quiz and crossword on Page 32



Solve the clues to this straight crossword. Read through the letters in the marked squares to reveal the town that "Crocodile Dundee" came from.



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Across</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marine plant</li> <li>5. Idioms</li> <li>9. Free; on hand</li> <li>10. Locomotive; exercise</li> <li>11. Freeze over (3,2)</li> <li>12. Possession</li> <li>13. Opening moves</li> <li>15. French dance</li> <li>17. Breeze</li> <li>19. Porch</li> <li>21. Criminal court of London (3,6)</li> <li>23. Result in</li> <li>25. White heron</li> <li>26. Adolescents</li> <li>27. Aged</li> <li>28. Avid <i>Star Trek</i> fan</li> </ul> | <p><b>Down</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trembling</li> <li>2. Humiliate</li> <li>3. Overshadowing</li> <li>4. Doubtful</li> <li>5. Old German coin</li> <li>6. Helicopter wing</li> <li>7. Pasta strands</li> <li>8. Nerve ending</li> <li>14. Snaked, wove</li> <li>16. Alter in appearance</li> <li>17. Bishopric</li> <li>18. <i>War and Peace</i> author</li> <li>19. Remittance</li> <li>20. Supervise</li> <li>22. Performer</li> <li>24. Streamlined</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

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