

# WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

April 2026

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WOODSTOCK &  
BLADON

# Spring Exhibition

## ECHOES OF THE LANDSCAPE



JON EARNEY SCULPTURE  
ROD CRAIG PAINTINGS

31st MARCH–6th APRIL 2026

NO 14 GALLERY MARKET STREET WOODSTOCK

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Both artists draw much of their inspiration from the beauty of the surrounding Oxfordshire countryside – Rod's light filled paintings are a fitting companion to Jon's meticulously crafted wooden sculptures.

## Editorial

Well, the Editor is on his way home, but with a flight cancelled through Kuwait, I decided not to claim on insurance and chose to get my money back. I will book another flight in a couple of weeks time, when hopefully the situation improves. There have been quite a few people stranded here in Sri Lanka, some are concerned about missed work and family commitments, but most are happy to enjoy a few extra days in this beautiful and friendly country. I am writing this Editorial on the first floor balcony outside my hotel room and looking down to the outside bar; then coconut trees with fairly decrepid beach chairs underneath; then 100 yards of golden sand; then finally groups of locals and tourists standing and watching the sun go down over the Indian Ocean.

As I've written before, I am constantly amazed at how easy it has been to keep in contact with Woodstock and Bladon through the magic of the internet. And I hope you have enjoyed my thoughts and views from other countries. Sri Lanka is very different in many ways from Australia, but the friendliness of the locals is very similar. Crossing the road is very different from back home, having to avoid 1960s Leyland buses, cycles with no lights, and of course the famous tuk-tuks. There are no pelican or zebra crossings, but there is lots of friendly 'tooting' to warn others of their presence. I have not seen any accidents, not even falls on the uneven and cracked pavements - I suppose because one has to make sure that you watch your step.

Anyway, back to the magazine. We have a full issue this month, with another page on Woodstock in New Zealand - well timed with the exciting 'Woodstock Project' that the Woodstock Coffee Shop are starting. We have a new regular column on our town's literary connections, with an interview with Martin Kemp. There are the usual reviews and announcements of local events, our Letters Page - please write with your thoughts as it would be nice to have some new names - and many other items.

**Nick Manby-Brown, Editor**

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This issue's front cover is a photograph from Pete Seaward Photography

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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

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

The next issue will be a May one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 19 April 2026**, for publication on Friday 1 May.

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

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## Portrait of the Month - Alex Sopilnik



For more than fifteen years, Alex Sopilnik has called Woodstock home, and in that time she has become one of its brightest sparks. Step inside her creperie and you step into her world: a riot of colour, laughter and the comforting scent of warm batter on the pan. Effervescent, bubbly and endlessly welcoming, Alex greets customers like old friends...because, more often than not, they are.

Originally from a small town in Poland, she chose Woodstock for its familiar sense of closeness. "It has a soul," she says, a rainbow of characters, from independent shopkeepers to loyal regulars. As a committee member of Wake Up Woodstock, she works to bring businesses together and keep the town thriving.

Food, she believes, brings people together. Her delicate French crepes: "just think of them as giant pancakes," she laughs, are simple, elegant and made with the love of a home kitchen extended to the whole community. Known affectionately as the 'queen of crepes', Alex donates to school fêtes, supports local causes and always has time for a chat.

When she first opened, locals questioned her choice of location. Her response? "I said, you will see...I will bring people to this place. By my character." She was right. In uncertain times, her message is simple: be kind, look out for one another...and come in for a crepe!

Portrait of Alex Sopilnik taken by fine art portrait photographer, Pippa Hetherington.



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PANTON DESIGN  
Office 1  
17 Market Street  
Woodstock  
Oxfordshire  
OX20 1SU

t: 01993 810704  
m: 07801 258899  
e: henry@pantondesign.info  
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# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

## Maths and Money

Two topics have riled me in recent weeks regarding the management of Woodstock Town Council - as is often the way, related to their finances. Or, more accurately, our finances - as the cash comes from us, council tax payers.

Firstly, accuracy of information provided to Councillors and the Public. It's not clear who puts the agenda pack together for meetings, but more attention to detail is required. Councillors are regularly presented with information that is not mathematically correct and asked to vote it through. Sometimes this is spotted and pointed out at meetings by Councillors or even members of the Public:

- The first 27/28 Budget presented 25th Nov 2025 had items that did not add up or make sense; the budget had to be reworked several times before it could be approved.
- The Asset Register presented 20th Jan 2026 stated that the Town Hall was valued for insurance purposes at £440,000 - a massive undervaluation. This was acknowledged 2 months later to be an error, but the Asset Register has not yet been corrected.
- The recommendation for Payroll Costs presented 10th Mar 2026 did not add up correctly.

These inaccuracies are not isolated examples.

It's not always the maths that is wrong. Frequent spelling errors and mistyping to one side, other errors arise. For example, the new Policies and Protocols presented for sign-off on 10th Feb 2026 were checked, for a fee, by two external companies before they were presented to Councillors. Despite this, errors occurred: the Electrical Safety & PAT testing policy referred to buildings managed by 'AUKCAP' - an organisation the Town Council does not use.

Therefore the question has to be asked: how often is information submitted for Councillors to vote on that is not mathematically correct, accurately costed, and properly thought through? Councillors are untrained volunteers, who have to be able to trust that the information they are given is accurate - and should not be obliged to get out a calculator every time to make sure!

Secondly - VAT. WTC is not registered to reclaim this - which means the people of Woodstock are losing tens of thousands of pounds every year. If WTC registers, they will be eligible to reclaim VAT going back for 4 years - so all is not lost!

The subject of VAT registration was discussed at the Council Meeting on 11th November 2025, with

a written recommendation from the Clerk that they get on with it. I can see no reference to the discussion or ultimate decision in the approved minutes - odd? I am not aware that the subject has been discussed in recent meetings, and we are nearly at the end of a tax year.

If WTC does not register and reclaim by 5th April 2026 an entire year's worth of VAT payments will be permanently lost.

Surely 'easy money' such as this should be a priority for our Town Council?

**Sam Dawson**

Dear Editor,

## Churchyard Upkeep

Graham Brown tells us (WOBL Feb/March 2026) that on 1 Jan 2026 the 'Parochial Council of St Mary Magdalene Church', Woodstock, wrote to Woodstock Town Council (WTC) asking it to agree to a transfer of its responsibility for the upkeep of the Churchyard to WTC and that (on 20 Jan 2026) WTC voted to reject this request, and pass the care of the Churchyard to West Oxford District Council (WODC).

This looks like a disastrous move by WTC, one which should have been subject to public approval before being taken, and one that should be reconsidered immediately and then reversed.

It is an insult not to have consulted the public because as everyone knows, whether resident or visitor, the Churchyard is a glittering jewel in the heart of Woodstock. Home to hundreds of different (and appropriate) plants, shrub cooing pigeons and nimble squirrels, it is a sanctuary for the odd pheasant and us, not least thanks to the new benches. We can all draw breath in the Churchyard's natural beauty, a real joy to behold not least in this early Spring.

What's more, over many years, it has been uniquely tended with knowledgeable and loving care by Jenny Atkinson (a Woodstock legend) and her dedicated team of Town volunteers. Any decent Town Council should be cherishing the Churchyard as a core duty and honouring those who curate it rather than trying to offload it and doubtless offending the volunteers into the bargain.

What makes WTC's shirking of responsibility even more horrifying is not only that it can easily afford the upkeep but that the planned reform of local government may well mean WODC will soon be abolished, with responsibility for upkeep passing to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). This is the same OCC that has for years failed to mend potholes, has reduced the number of dog waste bins as the number of dogs has increased,

arranged the ill-planned and crude pollarding of Woodstock's town centre trees just before Christmas, shows it is incapable of removing the plethora of flags on lampposts. It is self-evident that Woodstock cannot trust OCC with the upkeep of the Churchyard or preventing it from going to rack and ruin.

WTC may well plead it can no longer afford the cost of the upkeep. This is, of course, complete nonsense. It has property assets of £8.2m, runs a surplus of many thousands of pounds and boasts an income in excess of £94k. As Chris Coe points out in his letter to WOBL, WTC spends £210,500 on itself with 'staff and admin costs 55% of the total' (which is a vast increase on previous years) whilst cutting back on its grants and services.

WTC members presumably believe in the basic principle (set out by the UK government) that 'local issues should be decided, managed and resolved at the lowest practical level, close to the people who are affected by those decisions'. Could there be a better example of such an issue than the care of one of Woodstock's very few green public spaces? It must remain a local responsibility and WTC's sorry attempt to cast it aside really does make one wonder what WTC is actually there for.

**Anthony Glees**



# WOOTTON TALKS

Our next speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 17 April is **Mike Birkhead**, one of the world's leading wildlife film-makers - having made award-winning films on a range of species, including several on tigers alone.

At Mike's last appearance in Wootton, Mike spoke about the India tiger clan in Ranthambore and its most charismatic and powerful tigresses - and one man, Valmik Thaper, who dedicated his life to following the big cats.

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.

It was the subject of Mike's award-winning BBC film, narrated by Sir David Attenborough (celebrating his 100th birthday in May). Called *Cuckoo: A tale of Murder, Mystery and Deceit*, his talk is based on the film featuring leading cuckoo expert, Professor Nick Davies, a Cambridge behavioural ecologist, who carried out part of his doctoral research on spotted flycatchers at Wootton Place

Nick's book, *Cuckoo: Cheating by Nature* details his 30-year study of cuckoo behaviour and explores how common cuckoos act as brood parasites - laying their eggs in the nests of other, smaller bird species (like reed warblers) to trick them into raising their young.

Our speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 8 May is **Steven Pasissien**, the eminent cultural historian, who has written sixteen books. Steven will be talking about his 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.

Entry for events 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 sound-system plus 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)**

## The Woodstocks Project

From a single town in Oxfordshire, the name 'Woodstock' journeyed across the globe with generations of migrants. The Woodstocks Project is a global exhibition - both physical and digital - that traces this remarkable path of cultural diaspora. It reveals how these migrants shaped and enriched new communities, offering a powerful lesson for today: the vitality that newcomers can bring to our towns.

The idea for the project began with the strangest phone call I have ever received. A few years ago, the landline at the Woodstock Coffee Shop rang. A woman asked for directions to the shop. I asked where she was calling from. She mentioned a place I had never heard of, so I asked where that was. "In Ontario, of course," she replied, as if I should have known. I explained that she had the wrong country; and indeed the wrong continent. I did not prolong the conversation, suspecting the call might be expensive.

That unexpected moment, however, sparked my curiosity about Woodstock, Ontario. As readers of Woodstock and Bladon News will know, there are numerous towns named Woodstock around the world. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people from Oxfordshire - and from Woodstock in particular - migrated to North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and elsewhere. In several

of these places, they founded new towns named Woodstock and established thriving communities. Many retained a nostalgic link to their origins. In Woodstock, Ontario, for example, the town hall was built as a replica of our own one in Oxfordshire.

That curious phone call was the catalyst for the Woodstocks Project. The project seeks to collect and display contemporary photographic material from the principal Woodstock towns and cities of North America and Australia. The initial exhibition will be held at the Woodstock Coffee Shop, with a further display generously to be hosted by the Oxfordshire Museum. A complementary digital platform will also be developed to create a lasting online resource.

Beyond the exhibition, the project aims to foster communication between the municipalities and civic institutions of these towns - such as local history museums - as well as to encourage connections within civil society, from community groups to independent businesses such as coffee shops.

Initial visits have already taken place with the two larger Canadian Woodstocks (in Ontario and New Brunswick) and Woodstock in New South Wales, Australia. More outreach visits are planned to the Woodstocks of the USA, in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Illinois.

**Caralampo Focas, Woodstock Coffee Shop**

## Woodstock Around The World

### The Woodstock Hotel, Hokitika, New Zealand



We came across the Woodstock Hotel by chance: on a winding track overlooking the river on the hills above Hokitika, on the South Island of New Zealand's wild and damp west coast. This grand old hotel has been sitting here since 1865, born of the regional gold rush boom that made Hokitika the busiest port in New Zealand and even an unlikely candidate for consideration as the new nation's capital. The local population peaked at 25,000 in 1866, the year when 20,000 kgs of gold was extracted. It's much smaller today. Then, miners came over via Arthur's Pass from Christchurch and Otago on the east coast, from Victoria in Australia, and from China. The pass was



opened as a navigable road in 1866, a spectacular mountain route of some 250 kms. There were 100 pubs in Hokitika in 1866, plus numerous hotels and all sorts of other amenities and services to meet the needs of thousands of itinerant prospectors.

Today, there are only just over a million souls living in the whole of the South Island, a vast territory the size of England & Wales combined. Most of them are on the east coast in Christchurch's Canterbury region and south into Otago and Dunedin. Hokitika and the wild, wet, west coast is almost a hillbilly place, somewhat trapped in time, teeming with atmosphere, friendly to a fault and a reminder of the warmth and honesty of a tiny settler community; all set in a secret coastal paradise at the other end of the world. The Woodstock Hotel is a prime example of conviviality - brewing its own beer, serving traditional meals and hosting music nights twice weekly. Visit whilst the magic lasts.

#### Stephen de Wild

*Stephen lives in Suffolk and has been a regular visitor to Woodstock, Oxfordshire, over many years.*



#### From the Woodstock Hotel website:

The Woodstock Hotel has been here from the great days of the Goldrush, when Hokitika was the busiest port in New Zealand and was in the mix to be named the capital of New Zealand.

It is a little less hectic these days but still boasts a rich history and amazing scenery.

We look forward to seeing you here @The Woody

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# 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 one Town Council meeting.

And as part of our regular section where we offer other Councils to provide copy, we have a contribution from Cllr Andy Graham, from Oxfordshire County Council.

## Woodstock Town Council

### Town Council Meeting on 10 March 2026

Seven councillors were present, and nine members of the public attended the meeting. It was unclear if the OWL recording device was in use.

**Public Participation:** Two members of the public spoke. Sam Dawson followed up on her concerns raised at the WTC meeting on 20 January regarding the **Asset Register** and the undervaluation of items including the Town Hall itself, and therefore the real concern that Council assets were under insured. She had professional experience in this field and had offered her help, but had not heard anything back. She also raised concerns regarding the 'surprising' report from RoSPA about the **Watermeadows** and questioned if the Council had shared with the Inspector all the work that had actually been carried out by residents as opposed to the Council having a regular programme of clearing?

Chris Coe spoke to remind Councillors of the **Seven Pillars of Public Life:** Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership. These apply to those delivering public services to ensure public interest is prioritised. He went on to highlight the disparity between the Council's response to **one anonymous letter** regarding overflow parking in the Brook Hill area (an agenda item for two meetings already) to **two letters signed by 41 and 40 named residents** respectively, regarding the civil case: Sharone Parnes vs Woodstock Town Council, which have been ignored. The petition by residents of Brook Hill and Glyme Close had similarly not seen any action.

**Minutes from previous meetings:** Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were amended. The Mayor confirmed that the minutes were not verbatim but merely a record of decisions made. Any background discussions were not minuted if no decision had been taken.

**Planning:** Reference No 26/00291/FUL Change of use of 10 no. units to commercial use: There was

concern voiced of the potential for unsociable noise which would affect the ambiance of the area if this change was agreed and led to the development of gyms, restaurants etc. These concerns were to be noted in their response to the application.

**Appeal decision:** **Feathers Hotel** appeal against refusal of consent for the two flag poles was refused - they will therefore have to be removed.

**Mayor's Report:** Councillors were requested to please attend the **Town Meeting** in the Community Centre on Tuesday 24 March at 7.30pm.

**Clerk's Report:** Bleed kit now available, kept inside the defibrillator box outside the Community Centre. **Asset Register** is being updated with revaluations, including correction of the typing error which noted the value of the Town Hall carried over from last year. Local organisations seeking **printing services** by Council Staff are soon likely to be charged.

**OCC Report from Andy Graham: Free Park and Ride services** into Oxford have been extended until 26 December. **Cadogan Park** suffered flooding at the Tennis Club end but clearance of the offending roots has hopefully been successful. **Bens Close** continues to flood. A meeting has been planned with all interested parties as it is not just an issue for one of the stakeholders, they have to work together to find a solution. The OCC is still trying to understand the best way to light the town centre without being garish. The Owen Mumford site proposed for the new **Doctors Surgery** - a transport survey is underway to better understand where patients travel from and how and if there are any opportunities to coordinate routes. Cllr Williams asked that the transport infrastructure plan should be an integral part of the planning application not added on after. It was requested that all **potholes** identified should be logged please on [fixmystreet.com](http://fixmystreet.com)

**Property:** Councillors agreed that £1,488 incl VAT should be spent on a matching locking tower unit cupboard for use by the Stroke Club in the new Community Centre kitchen, to replace their existing rusty one. The total project has come in under the £30k budget. The entire roof on the Community Centre first requires replacement of all the asbestos sheeting before any **solar panels** can be fixed. No indication of how much the solar panels would generate toward this cost was quoted. It was considered that the Report submitted was inadequate on which to make decisions. More information regarding possible interest free loans, loans, grants etc was needed.

**Environment:** RoSPA Report on the Water Meadows was considered - An unanswered question: how often is the grate actually cleared by WTC? A contractor has refused to clear if the water is too deep. It was not clear how often this had been the case. A suggestion

was made that the contractor was engaged to clear the sluice before the water levels got too high. An issue was introduced; who actually owns the sluice? If OCC owns it, then WTC will not pay for any remedial work clearing the grate and would not do so until the ownership issue is resolved.

**Christmas Lights:** The relevant committee (Cllrs Spencer Churchill, Addis and Cooper) has yet to meet. This is now becoming urgent otherwise no relevant companies will be available.

**Environmental:** The Environment Working Group are meeting with Blenheim's hydrologist for advice re the **Water Meadows management**. There appears to be evidence in documents from the Land Registry which would confirm that in fact OCC own the grills in which case WTC will not have any responsibility for them. American crayfish and the Russian Balsam must be removed but there may be environmental protocols to observe. A statement regarding the appalling **potholes** and road conditions in our area was agreed and two draft letters of complaint it was agreed would be sent to the Rt. Hon. Heidi Alexander MP the Minister for Transport. The letters will also be sent to Calum Miller, MP and OCC Councillor Andrew Gant. Cllr Spencer-Churchill is to submit a separate letter in support of WTC's position.

**Hensington Road car park changes:** The Mayor noted that 21 houses in Hensington Road do not have any off road parking and therefore presumably park here. WODC changes to the bays were generally agreed to be no improvement and in fact should revert back to the original layout. Parking spaces for full time workers were deemed inadequate and the ratio of long stay to short stay bays is wrong and creating more deferred parking in the neighbouring streets. More strong representations to WODC are to be made. The redundant garages in Union Street have been ignored to date, but may create an opportunity.

**20 MPH signage:** Quotations are to be sought from three companies for six illuminated signs. Battery and solar required building on experience from Bladon whose batteries do not last very long at all. The Long Handborough signs with graphics were deemed to be a distraction, although Cllr Dawson noted that there was evidence that they appealed to children who then exerted pressure on the driver to slow down. With no budget allocation, it was suggested that the signs could be paid for from reserves.

**Grant Applications:** Seven applicants have been successful; Woodstock Harriers were awarded the £300 they asked for, West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice were awarded £500, with all other applicants given £400. There will be a second round of grants which can be applied for using the form on the WTC website.

**New Drs Surgery:** The draft Letter to WODC Planning was agreed asking for joined up thinking with regard to the Surgery Planning application. This must include a realistic, long term, fully funded transport plan in place before any planning application is granted.

**WTC - Amendments to Standing Orders** specifically regarding the emailing of council documents. Not all Councillors choose to receive council documents by email, or have access to it.

**WTC Policies:** The Draft Reserve Policy was passed which notes that WTC maintains three types of reserves: Earmarked; for a specific purpose to be spent within the financial year. The General Reserve is the balance on the Councils revenue account which are not held for any specific purposes other than to cushion the Councils finances against any short term cash flow issues. WTC will endeavour to maintain a minimum General Reserve of three months predicted annual expenditure.

**Unitary Council consultation:** For anyone keen to understand the options for the OCC/WODC reorganisation that is coming, you are encouraged to review the report by Councillor Muthoni available to view in the Agenda Pack for this meeting. The Mayor led the thanks to Councillor Muthoni for her very comprehensive report, which all agreed would be submitted as the response from WTC.

**Air Ambulance Recycling:** The siting of an Air Ambulance Clothing Bank in Hensington Road car park was again refused.

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.

**Annie Cripps**

## Oxfordshire County Council

### Report from Cllr Andy Graham

Dear Residents of Woodstock and Bladon

I just wanted to update you on recent issues that have come to my attention and to which I have some positive news.

**Flooding:** Despite the unrelenting rain, gully clearance now being done more regularly than ever before (annually) has helped to alleviate some of the flooding in Bladon and in parts of Woodstock. However, Cadogan Park and near the bowls club had been flooding making it difficult to access. I am pleased to report that the county council has completed a thorough investigation using camera and have cleared the roots of trees getting into the

pipework up to 80 metres of the drains along the road. (I was there in the pouring rain and can testify to the work being done by the teams!) We will continue to monitor the situation and it will be put on a regular maintenance programme. The not so good news in Bens Close, Woodstock where water was coming up from the ground flooding yet again a number of properties and not for the first time. Thames Water, WODC and OCC and residents will have met by publication date to agree a more permanent plan with our MP Calum Miller.

**Highways:** Please report potholes via [www.fixmystreetoxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.fixmystreetoxfordshire.gov.uk) and where you can safely take photos is the most effective way of reporting highways road surface failures and potholes. We can all play our part. The county council has recruited additional teams to catch up on the backlog, and the work is being scheduled but will take a few months. Whilst some of the repairs are temporary, it is intended they will be properly sealed on a 2nd visit so please be patient ( I share the frustration) and drive carefully. Under investment by central government in our roads system across the country over decades has led to the culminative effect of failing surfaces and a patchwork of continual road repairs.

On a brighter note designs for a road improvement programme at Judds Garage A44 and B44077 with crossing/ bus shelter are progressing (an accident black spot in the past 20 or 30 years and these will go out for public consultation in the Summer months if not before. The surface area opposite Judds Garage is scheduled for complete repair too. I expect to give more details in future edition

**Village Travel Network:** I wanted to commend the work of the Village Travel Network for their latest proposed walking and cycle path which is designed to via the latest development Hill Rise, Glyme Close, Green Lane, Park View, Blenheim and Bladon which the county officers will work with me and the VTN to progress.

Plans for the Park n Ride near the Bladon Roundabout are progressing.

Best Wishes to you all

Andy

## Wake Up To Woodstock

### AGM Update

Wake Up to Woodstock held its Annual General Meeting last month, bringing members together to reflect on the past year and look to the months ahead. While the meeting was relatively brief in terms of formal updates, it provided a useful opportunity to

confirm leadership for the coming year and begin early planning for some of Woodstock's much-loved community events.

Members were pleased to unanimously vote Nickie Rogan back in as Chair for another year. Nickie has played a reliable and committed role in supporting the association and its work. Her reappointment reflects the confidence members have in her and the positive direction the organisation continues to move in.

The meeting also included an update on communications activities. WUTW continues to focus on maintaining strong engagement with local businesses and the wider community through social media and local promotion. Communication remains an important part of ensuring that Woodstock's independent shops, hospitality venues and services are supported and visible.

Plans are also underway for the first Wake Up to Woodstock networking event of the year, which will take place this spring. These events provide a valuable opportunity for local businesses to connect, share ideas and strengthen relationships. Members are encouraged to keep an eye on WUTW socials and email updates for further details.

Although November may feel a long way off, one of the main discussion points was the next Woodstock Festive Fayre, following the huge success of last year's event, boasting the largest number of stalls on record. Once again demonstrating how special Woodstock's festive celebrations are, by attracting visitors from across the region and creating a wonderful atmosphere in the town.

Planning for the next one is already underway, as events of this scale require organisation well in advance. Conversations focused on practical elements, including mulled wine stands, volunteer helpers, and the placement and decoration of Christmas trees in Woodstock's centre. These festive touches play an important part in creating the warm, welcoming environment that people have come to expect from Woodstock at Christmas.

The AGM is a reminder that while these annual events appear effortless on the day, they rely purely on the dedication and collaboration of local businesses, volunteers and the Wake up to Woodstock team, working behind the scenes.

WUTW looks forward to continuing this work and welcomes ongoing support from the local business community as plans develop.

For more information on membership, volunteering at Woodstock Festive Fayre and a Night of a Thousand Candles, or attending a networking event, get in touch via WUTW website - [wutw.co.uk](http://wutw.co.uk).

**Emma Murphy**

## WOBL Around The World



**From top to bottom, left to right:**

Leslee is at Joshua Tree National Park, California, USA

Pim Kolthof is at Cloud 9 Beach, Siargao, The Philippines

Paula is at the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

A stranded couple waiting for their flight, having a fish pedicure in Lords Bar, Negombo, Sri Lanka

Chris and Meg at Elsie's Bar in Zermatt, Switzerland

*Please send your travel pictures with [editor@wobl.news](mailto:editor@wobl.news)*



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## Nature Matters

As March slips quietly into memory, April steps forward with a quickening that feels almost breathless - the moment when the countryside, poised for weeks, finally opens its hands. The soft overture of late winter and early spring now swells into something fuller and more confident, the colours deeper, the sounds brighter, the pace unmistakably accelerated.

Leaves that only hinted at their arrival in March now unfurl decisively. Hedgerows take on a fresh, luminous green, and woodlands shift from a tracery of bare branches to a gathering haze of leaf. Hawthorn, already stirring earlier in the season, now clothes itself fully, its tender foliage a reassuring sign that spring has taken firm root. Orchard trees scatter blossom into the air - a gentle snow of promise for the months to come.



Bluebells at Bladon Heath woods

Beneath the strengthening canopy, April draws its own carpets. Bluebells begin their annual transformation of woodland floors, the first flowers appearing early in the month before deepening into sweeping blue and violet drifts. Their scent, subtle at first, thickens in warm spells, drifting along shaded paths. Wildflowers multiply: wood anemones lingering from March mix with fresh stitchwort, red campion, and the first rising stems of wild garlic preparing to flower. Everywhere the ground seems newly animated, stitching colour and movement into places that felt bare only weeks before.

Birdsong, already rising through February and March, now reaches new richness. The chiffchaffs that announced the close of winter continue their rhythmic calls, but they are quickly joined by returning migrants. Willow warblers scatter their descending, silvery notes through hedgerows; blackcaps introduce their fluid, confident phrases. Swallows skim low over fields and water, loops of grace and energy, while house martins trace higher arcs before swooping to eaves and riverbanks. By month's end,

the first swifts may appear - dark scythes cutting through the sky, and low over Woodstock streets, screaming with the sheer exhilaration of return.

Nesting, once tentative, is now at full intensity. Blackbirds and robins carry food in purposeful flights, vanishing into shrubs with quiet urgency. Blue tits and great tits examine hollows in old timbers, stone walls, and nest boxes, bringing a lively busyness to gardens and woodland edges. The dawn chorus, already stirring in March, becomes a jubilant early-morning tide in April - layered, insistent, and impossible to ignore.

Insects respond just as eagerly. Bumblebees move methodically along verges and hedgerows, their steady hum a soundtrack to warm afternoons. Orange-tip butterflies flutter along damp meadow edges and watercourses, flashing their namesake colour as they search for cuckooflower and garlic mustard. Speckled wood butterflies dance in shafts of sunlight along woodland rides, while holly blues trace delicate loops over gardens and churchyards. Hoverflies and beetles gather around blossom, adding soft movement to still air. In the ponds, the frogspawn of March loosens into clusters of tadpoles, and the earliest damselflies emerge, their slender bodies glinting as they rest on reeds.

April's weather remains capricious - sunshine sharpened by sudden showers, warm days offset by cool winds - yet despite these shifts, the season's momentum is unmistakable. Everything leans forward, growing, rising, unfolding. And with each change comes a small reminder of childhood Apriels, when every discovery felt miraculous and the world seemed to transform between one day and the next.

As the month closes, spring stands fully awake. What began quietly in February and strengthened through March now prepares to crest into May, where the fullness of early summer waits in the wings, ready to take the season's story into its next generous chapter.

## Mayfly Dun



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## Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (SOFO)

### Military and History Affairs Talk Reviews

At a time of growing concern in the UK about our capacity to defend ourselves and Europe in the wake of Putin's war against Ukraine, it has never been more important that we understand military issues and our military history. To this end, a large audience at SOFO heard Brigadier Tim Waugh CBE give a very informative talk on 19 February 2026 on the 'International Challenges in the Arctic Ocean'. It was chilling in all senses.



Brigadier Tim Waugh CBE

Brigadier Waugh was in charge of NATO's signals units in the 'High North' for a decade, following a long career in our Army. Outlining the deeply worrying gaps in NATO defences in the Arctic region he explained why its strategic importance has grown as the ice cap melts and new viable sea routes and fishing grounds emerge.

Waugh explained that even though president Trump says global warming is a hoax, he is clearly deeply worried that both Russia and China are planning to use the High North to encroach upon NATO territory. This is why he has insisted the Danes sell Greenland to the USA even though America is most vulnerable to Russian military pressure in Alaska and along the North West Passage into the Pacific, areas America has long neglected to defend. Waugh noted wryly that the US president has often dismissed any talk of a direct Russian threat to America ('we have that big beautiful ocean as separation'), seemingly oblivious to the fact that, via the Bering Strait, Russia is only 4kms from the USA.

We were told that Russia is now spends huge sums it can ill afford on increasing its armed might in the Arctic to put Europe and NATO under growing pressure. Putin has massively expanded the size of Russia's Northern Fleet whilst building and

developing its military sites along the whole of the Kola peninsula, to include new hidden harbours for nuclear submarines and runways for long-distance bombers. Russia is also busily exploiting its treaty rights (granted in 1920) to expand its bases and rare earth mines in Spitsbergen/Svalbard. Russian crack troops are being spared from the meat-grinder that is the Ukrainian front to be sent to the Far North.

Waugh explained that China's aim is probably less militaristic; it wants to radically reduce the costs of shipping goods to Europe (with savings of \$200,000 per trip compared to the Shanghai to Rotterdam run round the globe) but more trade means increasing its economic presence in (and pressure on) Europe. China, we learned, is also investing in new ice breakers (it is set to have five very soon and together with its close ally Russia is constructing 5 'Arc7' ice-class container ships for the 'Polar Silk Road'. One quarter of the world's resources of rare minerals and fish are found in the Arctic Circle and Russia has 40 icebreakers to get at them, the USA only 5, most in the Antarctic. Brigadier Waugh concluded with a stark truth: we in the UK like to believe we are safely at the back of Putin's firing line; in fact we and the Norwegians are likely now at the front.

Anthony Glees, SOFO Trustee

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

To his vast fan base, Al Murray is loved as a great British comedian. What far fewer people may know is that he is also a very talented Oxford History graduate with an enduring passion for military history - which, self-evidently, is no laughing matter. A packed audience in Blenheim's splendid Orangery heard him deliver a really memorable and wide-ranging talk in aid of the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock.



Al Murray in the Orangery at Blenheim Palace

Al displayed a deep and detailed understanding of our modern military history, explaining how in 1940-41 Britain stood alone but defied Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, before the USA was attacked by Japan and became our ally, together with the USSR when it was attacked the same year. With great skill and sensitivity, Al explained how ordinary soldiers (like members of his own family) had been conscripted civilians who did not want to fight but knew that they had to, and how they went on resolutely to fight to keep these Islands free from fascism in all its forms.

Al argued that they were rallied to this cause not just by the post-war promise of a National Health Service (getting lectures on this between fighting from Forces educationists) but by great leadership, in particular that of General 'Monty' Montgomery (the UK's best WW2 general in Al's opinion) who understood, Al said, more than traditional army officers, what it actually meant to be an ordinary civilian under arms. Al explained why the death cult of Nazism made warfighting so hard: our soldiers had to confront Nazi SS ideology of either winning or dying.

Asked what had made the deepest impression on him in his own research, he said it had been the Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp and rocket factory, built deep into the Harz mountains in central Germany, overseen by Speer and von Braun, and where a former inmate and victim had been Al's guide. Al had learned how huge numbers of human beings were sacrificed daily and even expert slave workers were forced to suffer appalling chemical burns and inhale highly toxic fumes in a relentless bid to churn out V1 and V2 rockets. Any attempt at sabotaging them (and there were many) was met with instant death. With Hitler's Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe they had been built to bring Britain to its knees.

But thanks to the bravery and grit of our armed forces and those of our allies, Al concluded, they did not succeed. The prolonged and rapturous applause of Al's audience in Blenheim demonstrated not just the power of his presentation but the simple truth that military force must sometimes be called upon to determine the fate of nations and secure our belief in liberty. Al's talk made it plain why we need the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (and others like it) to remind us of this truth, at a time when Britain once again faces threats to our free way of life from the evil strongmen stalking Europe and the globe.

Anthony Glees, SOFO Trustee

**Future Talks in this series at SOFO, both at 2pm:**  
**Saturday 14 April** 'What do we still forget about the Forgotten War' (the WW2 Burma Campaign)  
**Saturday 13 June** 'The Rise and Fall of the British Army' 1975-2025.

## Plant of the month

### Erythronium 'Pagoda' (Fawn Lily or Dog's-tooth Violet)



April, derived from the Latin aperire meaning 'to open', certainly captures the energy of the month. Now past the spring equinox, no other time compares for a gardener. The weather is captured well in this poem:

"You know how it is with an April day  
When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You're one month on in the middle of May.  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,  
A wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of March." Robert Frost

This month I've chosen a star performer in the shade because, let's face it, most of us have those trickier spaces in our garden. This will brighten them up.

This is a champion bulb to plant in shade or part sun, and it looks great when potted. Its mottled leaves, which have a canine-tooth shape, emerge from the ground in late winter. By April, you should have delicate, nodding flowers that brighten up shady spots. It prefers well-drained soil and is relatively disease-free. Related species are found wild in parts of Asia (and North America for this hybrid's parents), and it thrives in woodlands. In the garden, it works beautifully under the canopy of trees or shrubs and prefers slightly acidic, humus-rich soil.

These partner up perfectly with Ferns, Dicentras and Rodgersias in the shade. The leaves of the Ferns and dicentras compliment the Erythroniums as they are quite light and airy. Whereas Rodgersia provides a good contrast with coarser, larger and pinnate leaves. They also work well at giving you interest at different levels in the border and can all cope with similar tricky conditions.

**Top tip:** After flowering is the best time to split the bulbs and spread them around your garden. Plant the bulb 4 inches deep to deter squirrels and mice. I have found chilli powder helps with this too. When transplanting, be careful to keep the soil around it moist and don't let the bulb dry out.

**Dom, Head Gardener & Owner at Ford and Kent Gardens**

## Curate's Log



Spring is a season that seems to whisper hope into the world around us. After months of cold, dark days, we begin to notice small signs of change: lighter evenings, buds on branches, birdsong in the morning. It feels like the world is gently waking up again.

This is the season in which we celebrate Easter, a story at the heart of the Christian faith that speaks of new life emerging from the most unexpected place. The Easter story doesn't ignore pain or struggle - it moves through it. From loss and uncertainty, it opens onto hope. The image of the empty tomb is not just about something that happened long ago; it is a reminder that endings are not always final, and that new beginnings are possible, even when we can't yet see how.

In the weeks leading up to Easter, Christians observe Lent - a quieter, more reflective time. I often think of Lent as a kind of cocoon. It is a space where we are invited to pause, to take stock, and to look honestly at our lives. How are we with ourselves? How do we treat those closest to us? What kind of presence are we in our community and in the wider world?

We don't always make that space easily in our busy lives. Yet even a small moment of reflection can be the beginning of change.

Easter reminds us that transformation is possible. Just as a cocoon gives way to something new, so too can our lives open up in unexpected and hopeful ways. Whatever this season holds for you, may you find signs of new life - within yourself, in others, and in the world around you.

With every blessing,  
**Revd Gemma Ferrier**

## Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

Recently, the idea of restoring the UK's Christian heritage has become a political topic; but talk of 'Christian values' seems to be shading into the question of what we do with redundant church buildings.

In Christian circles people often say "the church is the people, not the building". But church communities usually have responsibility for buildings; and church buildings can be a mixed blessing. The architecture can be a great aid to spirituality: whether your taste is Victorian neo-Gothic, or modern minimalist, there can be something in church architecture which

encourages a sense of awe. Church buildings can be fantastic. But they also tend to be expensive.

Insisting that church buildings must always remain as church buildings risks destroying the actual church community - the people, that is, rather than the building. In any case institutions like mine are bound by charity law almost always to sell to the highest bidder (to do otherwise tends to be somewhere between remarkably tricky and impossible).

And all of this, I suspect, because of a conflation of the ideas of 'heritage' and 'values'. Tradition is not the same thing as preservation. Church buildings can be fantastic, but they are not museums - at least, not while they remain the home of a church community.

Christian heritage is part of the history of these islands. The stories of faith (and its buildings) in the United Kingdom are complex; but, in the end, the Christian stories are about a different union and a different kingdom.

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

## Christian Aid Week in Bladon 10 to 14 May 2026

### Christian Aid Week

We in Bladon are looking for volunteers to help with a fundraiser for Christian Aid. Last year we had a house to house collection, a tea party and some stalls in a neighbour's garden and raised over £1,000. All the money raised goes to the international effort to bring help and humanitarian aid for the victims of war, displacement, and natural disasters. Currently the focus is on Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan and the Middle East.

If you feel you could help, do come to a meeting to share ideas and plans over a coffee and biscuits on Saturday 18 April between 10 and 11am in Rectory Farmhouse, 2 Church Street, Bladon.

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## Woodstock Exhibition Foundation

### 2026 Lecture - Reminder of date

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'



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.

**Frank Collingwood**

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## Woodstock Literary Connections

**Martin Kemp, Emeritus Professor and Author. Interviewed in Woodstock by his PA, Judd Flogdell**



*Professor Martin Kemp*

Having worked with Art Historian, Martin Kemp for more than 15 years now, I was happy to ask some questions for an article about Woodstock authors. It was probably because of this long-term association that I moved from nearby Middle Barton to Woodstock around eight years ago, so kicked off our Q&A session with a similar question for him.

**JF:** When did you first come to Woodstock and what brought you to move here?

**MK:** I came here in 1997, when I was appointed as the Chair in History of Art at the University of Oxford. Prior to that, I'd been living and working at Universities in Scotland for more than 25 years. The places I've lived in have always been about ten miles away from where I work, so Woodstock suited it well; as it is about ten miles away from Oxford, a very, very nice place and it provides a kind of 'mental lung'. If you're living on top of the shop as it were, there can be a kind of pressure that comes in, whereas I can meander round the park and refresh myself with the glorious views of the lake and so on.

**JF:** Your career has seen you publish more than 30 books since 1967, many of these have been published since you have lived here. Which one stands out from this time, and why?

**MK:** Living with Leonardo, published by Thames & Hudson in 2018 stands out. It's not a memoir, it's not an autobiography, but it's looking in a personal way at the 'Leonardo business', ranging from attributions to major exhibitions. I think it's instructive for somebody; a young art historian, or anybody who is writing books to see the whole business of writing books, exhibitions and so on. It's a kind of crash course in things to do, and things not to do.

When I came here, I was in the last half of my career, and the first half was spent in terms of publications, in establishing myself as somebody who writes books and eventually. I graduated to becoming "an author"- and there is a difference. In fact for an academic to write a book, then you're an academic who writes books. If you're an author, that means that you write books, but if you make your living from writing books you're called a writer. Most people wouldn't recognise the difference, but being on the receiving end of things I notice it.

**JF:** You were locked down in Woodstock during the COVID pandemic. How was your life and work as a writer affected by this?

**MK:** I was very fortunate, in that nobody close to me was greatly affected by COVID. During the early part of the lockdown I spent a lot of time working on another book, sat outdoors in my garden. I've got this enormous advantage by living in Woodstock, in that if I was writing and getting bogged down by it, I was able to walk in the park with these great vistas, Capability Brown's landscape and there's a mental refreshment in going out around dusk, when the daytime birds and creatures are settling down and the night ones are emerging. There is a kind of magic of nature which transcends the hideous nature of the shutdown.

**JF:** Books are important to a lot of people here in Woodstock. How do you feel about having an independent bookshop in town?

**MK:** On the Woodstock bookshop, I'm delighted at its survival. We have been hearing for some years that all the books, are going to be electronic and we're going to have Kindles, instead of traditional books with paper pages and covers. That fortunately, proved not to be the case. I always enjoy the intimate business of having a book in your hand, opening it, looking at it, and thumbing through it; you can settle on a particular part, or you can read the whole thing solicitously from beginning to end. I think the physicality of the book is part of the understanding of it and is important.

**JF:** What do you think about the art scene in Woodstock?

**MK:** The art scene is reasonable, but it tends to get eaten up by Oxford, where the art societies and its groupings tend to be bigger and more conspicuous than the local ones. There have been two rather sorry closures of art galleries over recent years in Woodstock. One was Dahl-e and the Bear which was double-fronted over Oxford Street and Market Street, and the other, Zuleika Gallery in Park Street which was nicely run by Lizzie Collins.

**JF:** If you were to put one of your books into a time-capsule for future Woodstock residents to find, which would you choose and what message would you leave for the future?

**MK:** Overall, I think I would choose the book called The Science of Art which is about optical themes and Renaissance art from Brunelleschi, up to Seurat and the late 19th century. Nobody else is going to do that again; it's done and it's probably the book which most represents what I do at research level. That is to say looking at imagery in Science and Art, and seeing the symbiosis between the written word and the visual image.

**Judd Flogdell**

## Woodstock Natural History Society

Our monthly meetings, to which all are welcome, are held at St Hugh's Hall, Hensington Road, Woodstock, from 7.30 pm until 9.00 pm on the second Tuesday of each month. That constant provides a backdrop for a bewildering variety of fascinating subjects, and the Society still looks remarkably sprightly despite having passed its first half-century.

Our March meeting was also our AGM, whose business was despatched with impeccable efficiency by our outgoing chair Dr Adrian Delnovo. A founder member of the Society in 1976, Adrian returned to Woodstock on formal retirement festooned with him a wealth of interests and contacts across all aspect of the living and fossilised environment, which have enabled us to enjoy a wonderful events programme for the last eight years. In recognition of his unique service, the Society made Adrian its first Life Member. Membership is holding up well, and the finances are healthy. The Committee for the coming year was elected.

The speaker for the evening was Dr Steve Carter, Carnivore Programme Manager of the Vincent Wildlife Trust. This remarkable organisation has saved several key mammals from insignificance over much of their historic range. The resurgence of the

European Otter across the inland and coastal waters of the British Archipelago of 4k-6k islets and islands, and the recent recovery of the Pine Marten, indeed its return to 12 Welsh counties, both stem largely from Vincent initiatives. The Trust is also working on captive breeding of the European Wildcat, which it plans to re-establish in Wales after a long absence from the principality. Moreover, the much-depleted Water Vole, although not everyone's idea of a carnivore, benefits from Vincent's work. Other species whose fortunes Vincent is restoring include three bats. The most impressive of these is the Greater Horseshoe, which under Vincent's tutelage and purchase of historic buildings is expanding along the South coast from its South-Western fastnesses, but the Lesser Horseshoe and the Bechstein's have also been rescued by the Trust from the slough of impending extinction. Nor is Vincent's interest confined to these shores; expanding the range of the European Mink (who knew?), once widespread from Portugal to the Urals yet now confined to the Western Pyrenees and the Danube Delta, is another Vincent project.

One thing that makes the Vincent Wildlife Trust unique is the sacrifice and single-minded selflessness of its founder, John Vincent Weir, who spent his £120 million fortune on improving species diversity. Another is its use of both science and social science in tackling any problem. A local population has to support the return of a species if such a project is to be successful, and all reintroduction plans are discussed with the local human populations.

This reference to consultation enables me to slide frictionlessly into our April meeting, where the Society will on Tuesday 14 April entertain representatives of the developer of the planned Botley West Solar Farm, the largest in Europe. The meeting will not be an opportunity for political debate and we hope that our members and their guests will respect our guests. What we wish to discuss is the environmental and ecological impact and the plans for mitigation should the development go ahead.

We are still seeking a new Walks Organiser, who could be an individual, a couple, or two friends, and would welcome volunteers. Please think if you can do this; our walks are well-attended.

We would love to see you at one of our events, and very much hope that you will want to become a member (£18 p.a.). For a copy of our programme please email [contactwnhs@gmail.com](mailto:contactwnhs@gmail.com). please also check this column regularly, and come to one of our Tuesday evenings. We are also keen to help young people appreciate nature, and will do what we can to assist schoolteachers wishing to embark on relevant projects.

**Stephen Vickers (Dr), Meetings correspondent**

## Woodstock Literature Society

### Review of a talk by Professor Emma Smith: Going Upmarket - The Theatre in the Jacobean Period



Professor Emma Smith

We were delighted to welcome Professor Emma Smith back to the Society in February, this time to talk about the changes in theatre towards the end of Shakespeare's life. As the reconstruction of the Globe in London has illustrated, Elizabethan theatres were open air at the end of the 16th Century, and part of a variety of cheap entertainment available on the South Bank, including bear baiting and brothels. At the beginning of the 17th century, however, theatre owners began to develop a new business model, offering a more luxurious indoor entertainment at a much higher price to tempt a more affluent clientele. The King's Men, the company Shakespeare wrote for, acquired the former Blackfriars site, north of the Thames, which they developed into an exclusive and intimate theatre. This new performance space resulted in some interesting changes in how plays were written and performed.

Firstly, more affluent playgoers arrived at the theatre dressed to impress, and enjoyed watching spectacular performances with elaborate costumes, scenery and special effects. Professor Smith noted how Marlowe's Dr Faustus was adapted to include scenes such as one in which Faustus' moral dilemma was represented by a heavenly throne descending from above while hell was represented below stage, perhaps by exploding fireworks. The absence of ordinary working people

in the audience might also help to explain how in Coriolanus, written at about the time Blackfriars opened, the eponymous hero could get away with abusing the common people and not be booed off stage.

Secondly, more elaborate sets meant that plays needed to be written with natural breaks to allow for changes to be effected, including the trimming of the many candles which would have been in use. Thus the structure of the five act play, familiar to us today, came into being. The use of candles made it possible to differentiate between day and night, and public and private spaces, in a much more realistic manner. Professor Smith likened the effects created by shadows to that of 1940s Film Noir, which used black and white film to suggest moral ambiguity. It is thought that Thomas Middleton revised Shakespeare's original Macbeth to highlight the secret plotting and psychological dilemmas of the characters through the use of intimate candlelit interiors. Macbeth's comparison to life as a 'brief candle' has a real resonance here.

Professor Smith gave us a fascinating glimpse into the changing nature of the theatre in the Jacobean era, reminding us that these plays were written to be performed in particular settings for particular audiences.

Anne Handsley

**Bladon Gardens Society**

**Guest Speaker Event**  
*The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon*  
**16th April 2026 7.30 pm**

**Kathy Slack**  
 Food writer and Kitchen gardener  
**"Grow Yourself Happy"**  
 How growing food affects mental health



*£3.00 entry for non members*  
*Doors open at 7.00pm for Tea and Coffee*

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

## Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

### Tricycles became popular 150 years ago



Royal Salvo Companion tricycle (Sociable)

gearing, but he quickly abandoned that for a chain-driven model. Early types had tiller steering to the front wheel, but James was not satisfied with this and replaced it with rack-and-pinion device.

James was in his forties by now and commuted to work in Coventry with his son William on a tandem. One day they finished up in a ditch because the son was peddling faster than the father. James thought about the problem and designed a 'Differential Gear' so that the wheels could rotate at different speeds when cornering. Such devices are used on motor vehicles today. However, James cannot be said to have invented the differential because earlier versions existed, although James was probably unaware of them. He registered a patent in 1877, number 1956.

The photograph is of a Royal Salvo Companion tricycle on display in the museum. It is designed for the gentleman to sit on the right with the higher saddle, as we look at the photograph, while the lady sat on the left. This tricycle became known as the 'Sociable'. The gentleman had control of both the rack & pinion steering, which was operated by the middle upright handle, and the brake, which was operated by the lever to the left of the gentleman.

One feature worth noting is the chain, which is enormous compared to today's cycles. A second is the fact that, if the gentleman does not have a lady to share the peddling, the Sociable can be easily converted for a single rider by removing the Lady's

The Penny Farthing reached the peak of its popularity in the 1870s. However, not everyone was keen to ride such contraptions. There were many accidents and injuries, and some people were not physically capable of climbing onto a Penny Farthing, keeping balance when there, and safely dismounting, when intended. An alternative was needed.

Tricycles had been around since 1819, but no model had ever put into production. The French had been the major innovators in the development of cycles but the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 meant their engineering expertise was diverted for military purposes.

In 1876 an Englishman, James Starley of Coventry, took out a patent for the Coventry Lever tricycle. His first model was constructed with lever

saddle and bringing the two big wheels closer together.

In April our free heritage bus rides restart on the first and third Sundays of the month for the summer season. Our popular Easter Chick Hunt will be held on Easter Sunday (5 April) and on the Easter Monday Bank Holiday. Our Easter Bunny will be about on both days.

On Sunday 26 April some of our vehicles will be participating in 'Drive It Day' organised by the National Association of Road Transport Museums, of which we are a member. This event is not at the museum, but we expect many visiting vehicles at the start and end of the day.

Frank Collingwood



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## The Oxfordshire Museum

### 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 still accepting entries for our annual open art competition. It's the fourth time we've run this popular competition and to mark the Oxfordshire Museum's 60th anniversary our theme for this year is 'Celebration'. The competition is open to all 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)

### Museum Resource Centre Tours

Did you know that we offer free tours of our Museum Resource Centre near Standlake? It's a purpose-built facility which houses our vast county collection and is full of fascinating items which we don't have space for at the OM. If you fancy having a peek behind the scenes then why not sign up to one of our free guided tours. For more information on our upcoming tours please visit the what's on page of our website.

## Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

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

#### 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.

Charles has written a fictional novel 'Ipseity' based on Briggens House and it will be for sale on the evening.

#### Wednesday 6 May

Uncovering Oxfordshire's Dinosaur Highway

**Speaker:** Dr Duncan Murdock, Collections Manager, Earth Collections Natural History Museum, Oxford

In a stunning find, researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham have uncovered a huge expanse of quarry floor filled with hundreds of different dinosaur footprints, creating multiple enormous trackways. Dating back to the Middle Jurassic Period (around 166 million years ago), the trackways form part of a huge 'dinosaur highway' and include footprints from the 9-metre ferocious predator Megalosaurus, and herbivorous dinosaurs up to twice that size.

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum Annual Membership: £20 (single), £30 (double). Our 2026/27 programme of talks and events begins on 1 April.

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 and can be viewed after the event. Non-Members are very welcome at these talks for a fee of £5, payable on the evening or via email: [friendsoftheoxfordshiremuseum@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftheoxfordshiremuseum@gmail.com).

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## The Great Woodstock Giveaway

The Great Woodstock Giveaway returns this Spring to turn 'Trash into Treasure'



Leo, three, and Eliza, four, at their homemade lemonade and bake stall last year

The early English proverb that 'one person's trash is another person's treasure' will be put to the test once again this Spring, as the Great Woodstock Giveaway returns on Saturday 9 May.

Residents across Woodstock will be setting out unwanted and unused items outside their homes for others to browse and collect, creating a town-wide treasure hunt and a community celebration of reuse.

Last year's inaugural event proved a huge success, raising more than £750 for Woodstock Primary School's PTA, which went towards improvements including new playground equipment and additions to the school library. Organisers hope this year's event will be "bigger and better", bringing neighbours together while giving second-hand items a sustainable new lease of life.

The event is the creation of Woodstock resident Lucy Rhodes, who first encountered a similar initiative in her parents' Oxfordshire village.

"It was great fun to be out and about chatting to neighbours, rifling through items outside houses and coming across amazing finds," she said. "We struck gold with a garden Wendy house that our children absolutely love.

"But it was also incredibly rewarding to know that items were being reused in a sustainable way while helping to raise money for the school. The Nursery and Reception children had a wonderful new playground fitted last summer, and knowing the Great Woodstock Giveaway contributed to that is so fulfilling. "Plus, what a great way to kickstart a spring clear-out!"

Last year, Lucy's three year old, Leo, and his friend Eliza, four, even ran their own homemade lemonade and bake stall to add to the fundraising efforts.

Organisers are inviting residents not only to take part in the giveaway but also to seize the chance to hold a street party, set up a refreshments stand, or simply share a cup of tea with neighbours. Community leaflets will be delivered and posted on noticeboards soon, with organisers urging everyone to save the date.

This year's event poster includes a QR code linking directly to the Woodstock Primary School PTA donation page, although donations are entirely optional. Residents are also welcome to support alternative charities of their choice at their stalls.

Katriona Ormiston-Rees

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## Woodstock Probus Club

Our lecture at the meeting in February was by Katherine Shepherd, who spoke on SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). There may be as many as 1.7 million children affected and on the SEND register - around 5% have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) which gives legally defined support. She covered 4 main areas: cognitive learning, communication and interaction, Social emotional and mental health (SEMH), and Sensory and/or physical needs. Schools should publish their SEND offer to children in need.

Our speaker said that she transitioned from being a teacher who had the attitude 'I can't teach with that pupil in the class' to being appreciative of the difficulties disruptive pupils may be experiencing, to working with them to provide the attention and understanding they required, often with very encouraging outcomes. Much has been written about SEND in the media in recent weeks.

Our social activities included a leisurely meeting of the cycling group, following a short winter break. We all had a nice lunch and friendly chat, and a not-too-strenuous day out. The next outing, scheduled for 18 March, is more serious.

On 12 February we had an outing to Welford Park to see the snowdrops. It was a bit rainy but the snowdrops love that sort of weather. We had a pleasant cup of coffee in the marquee before a stroll round the very extensive drifts of snowdrops. I've included a photo of our morning out. It seems that snowdrops were often grown around monasteries and used for medicinal purposes. Galantamine is rather poisonous but it seems the monks might have been on to something as it may have some beneficial effects on Alzheimer's, and has been approved for use by NICE. But be careful - don't be tempted to eat them. They belong to the amaryllis family as do daffodils, and get their name, galanthus, from the greek - gala (milk) and thos (flower). Several of us then went on to the Boxford for lunch, where the special menu was very nice and reasonably priced.

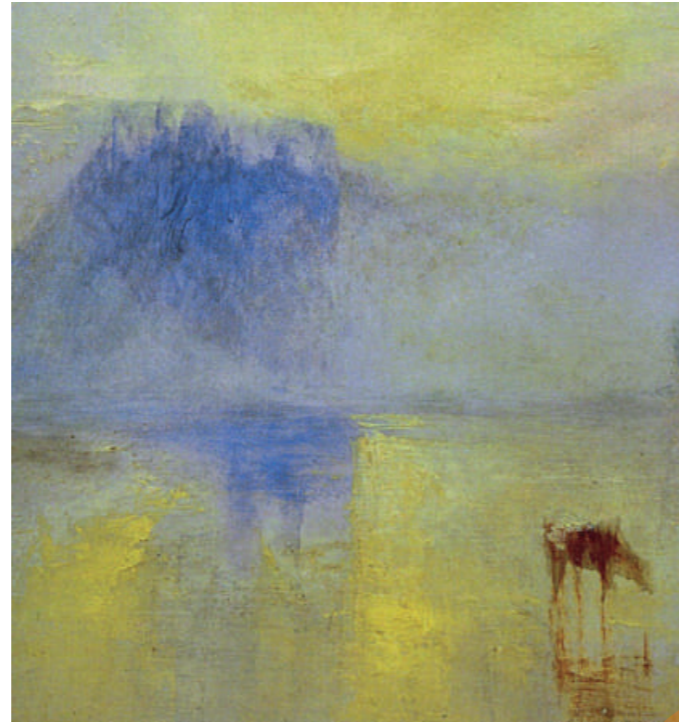
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## The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 8 April 2026  
**J.M.W. Turner, Airy Visions Painted with Tinted Steam**



One of the greatest painters of the Romantic movement, and widely regarded as Britain's greatest and best-loved artist, throughout his life Turner was obsessed with light and the forces of nature. His use of colour was to become visually stunning, particularly in his astonishing treatment of sunrise and sunset. Among his most beautiful works are his pictures inspired by Italy, and it was there that his use of colour was to become truly liberated, an aspect of his art which was to attract both praise and condemnation.

**About the speaker:** Val Woodgate is currently a Lecturer and Guide at Tate Britain and Tate Modern, for the Art Fund, the National Trust, U3A, City of London libraries (Barbican and Guildhall), and other organisations. Formerly a Tate Guide for 39 years, she was also a member of the Teaching Team at Dulwich Picture Gallery, where as well as lectures Val gave 50 Study Days and evening courses for DPG; she lectures and runs courses at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester and on P&O cruises representing the Tate.

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.

## Keep It Local

### The Great Woodstock Giveaway

Climbing roses tumble down front doors while lush peonies and late-spring tulips grace the front gardens of houses all around Woodstock. It's a lovely time of year to stroll around Woodstock's streets and heralds the return of ... the annual Great Woodstock Giveaway. So, while it's still cold and grey outside, check your attic, look through your wardrobe, clear out the playroom and get ready to place your unwanted belongings outside your homes on Saturday 9 May. Then roam around and browse and chat. You never know, your neighbour's unwanted toaster might be just the thing you've been looking for!

Last year's Giveaway was a huge success. You raised £800 for the Woodstock CE Primary School PTA to contribute towards things like the school library, playground equipment and supporting Art Week for all the primary school children to enjoy. You also raised funds for other charities chosen by people participating in the Giveaway.

At the heart of the Giveaway is community spirit: Getting to know the people around you better, strengthening bonds and just having fun! It's an excuse to organise street parties with everyone contributing something, from drinks and nibbles to tables and chairs. Kids love the chance to run around and play, while other children take the opportunity to set up cookie and lemonade stands to help contribute to good causes.

The Giveaway provides something for everyone to enjoy and this year, the organisers want to make it even bigger and better. So please help out, whether by spreading the word among friends and neighbours, selecting a charity to support, or organising a street party.

If you'd like to get involved at a more organisational level by, for example, putting leaflets through letterboxes, please contact Lucy Rhodes at [lucyrhodes273@gmail.com](mailto:lucyrhodes273@gmail.com). The Great Woodstock Giveaway will take place on Saturday 8 May.

**Cheers, Vanessa Ayres**

### Bladon Snippets from the Past

Churchill's Funeral - the world was watching Bladon but residents were cut off. We could not exit or enter the village and a 'Policeforce' was on-hand to see that this was observed.

Quite a day! Crowds formed long queues to view the grave when they could.

**Mary F. Sitch**

## Gwenllian (Gwen) Bullock



Gwenllian Bullock turned 100 years young on 21 March 2026! She was born in 1926 in Penarth, Cardiff where she lived until she met her husband, Douglas, during WW2. The TV show 'Gavin and Stacey' has always been a fond family favourite, dubbing Gwen and Doug as the 'originals' as Welsh Gwen met her Essex-born husband Doug with their 'meet-cute' in Barry Island, where Regimental Sergeant Major Doug was stationed to train the troops.

They moved to Woodstock in 1997 and 29 years later, Gwen still lives in wonderful Woodstock. Her family celebrated the centenarian celebration with a surprise afternoon tea party at the Bear Hotel. Gwen, known as 'Nana' to many, has 3 children, 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. An avid rugby supporter to both London Wasps and Wales, dog-lover (owning at least one of most breeds in every era of her life), and familiar face to the Woodstock Butchers, Greengrocers, Blenheim tea-rooms and attendant of charity coffee-mornings...(and not forgetting often being one of the last ones 'standing', *albeit sitting*, at Woodstock Live and Nocturne's dance floors!).

Over the last 100 years of her life she has experienced many historical world events, seen the advancement of technology and graduated from reading books to now listening to Agatha Christie via her own iPad. Her anecdotes and stories fascinate all who are privileged enough to listen, especially hearing about her time during the Second World War. She is a remarkable woman and has taught us that age is just a number and you're only as old as you feel!

**Clara Boon (Granddaughter)**

## The Marlborough C of E School

### A Standing Ovation for School of Rock!

The rafters are still shaking and the echoes of electric guitars are lingering in the corridors after our spectacular production of The Next Generation School of Rock the Musical. Over the course of four incredible nights in the MEC building, our students performed to a completely packed venue, delivering a full-throttle experience that left audiences absolutely floored.

This year's production was particularly ambitious, featuring a talented double cast that allowed even more of our students to take centre stage. The sheer energy and 'stick-to-it-ivity' displayed by every performer was matched only by the dedication of the staff and crew working tirelessly behind the scenes. It is safe to say our audiences weren't just entertained - they were blown away by the professional standard achieved here at The Marlborough School.

This production provided our students with amazing opportunities to build confidence, master live instruments, and form lifelong memories across different year groups. It is moments like these that define the spirit of our school community, proving that when we work together, we can truly achieve greatness. Congratulations to everyone involved - you rocked the MEC!

### Ms Cutter (Subject Leader for Drama)

#### Year 11 Destinations Day

This year's Destinations Day for our Year 11 students took place Tuesday, 24th February. This is an important event in our school careers calendar, giving Year 11 students valuable advice and insights into the various pathways available post-Year 11.

The day began with an assembly from the Careers and Sixth Form team, outlining all of their choices, and then pupils had a range of options through the day. Students considering A-Levels had the opportunity to visit taster lessons in the Sixth Form department, whilst students interested in apprenticeships and college had the opportunity to prepare their CVs and practice their interview skills with local professionals. Each student received constructive feedback following their interview. It was a hugely positive day for our Year 11 cohort as they consider their next steps; we are exceptionally proud of the maturity and resilience they have displayed.

We were delighted to welcome 15 industry professionals to school to hold the mock interviews and act as guest speakers; a huge thank you to those companies who gave up their time to support our event.




Key Stage 4 Awards Evening

### The Woodstock Annual Community Litter Pick!

Accompanied by Sixth Form staff and Principal, Mr Hanlon, Year 12 students participated in The Woodstock Annual Community Litter Pick.

Students enthusiastically donned high-vis vests, litter pickers, and bin bags, taking to the local streets around school to collect litter. It was a beautiful morning to be in the fresh air, with students and staff coming together to support our local community. Students returned to school with a great sense of accomplishment and very full bags of rubbish!

A huge well done to our Sixth Form students, truly living out our vision and values of respect, both in school and the local community.



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## Woodstock CE Primary School

### Curriculum Updates and News

#### Year 2 Visit the Cotswold Wildlife Park

Year 2 had a truly memorable day on their recent visit to Cotswold Wildlife Park. The children were full of excitement as they set off to explore the wide variety of animals and learn more about the habitats they live in, building on their recent Science lessons about living things and their environments. As they walked around the park, they observed animals from around the world, discussing how each one is specially adapted to survive in its habitat. The trip also linked closely to their Geography learning, as pupils identified animals from different climates, including tropical rainforests, dry deserts and cooler regions.

It was wonderful to see the children asking thoughtful questions, sharing their knowledge confidently and showing such enthusiasm for their learning. The visit not only brought their classroom studies to life but also inspired a deeper curiosity about the natural world.

#### Year 5&6 Space Dome Workshop



As part of our Year 5&6 'In the Beginning' launch day in February, children dressed in space-related costumes. Science Oxford staff set up an inflatable dome in the hall and children participated in an Out in Space show.

Immersed in the inflatable dome, children looked at the wonders of the night sky. They learned about the movement of the earth, moon and other planets, relative to the sun in our solar system, how and why the sky changes throughout the year and tour some of the other bodies in our solar system. They explored the stars in a learning environment that was out of this world. Seated on the floor of the dome, the children had a 360-degree view of the night sky above them, including the planets, the moon, and the stars. We all agreed that this was a fascinating visit, which greatly enriched our curriculum.

#### Year 1 Visit to Blenheim Palace

Year 1 had a wonderful and enriching visit to Blenheim Palace, where they stepped back in time to learn about the Kings and Queens connected to this magnificent historic site. As they explored the grand rooms and beautiful grounds, the children discovered fascinating facts about British monarchs and how they have shaped our country's history. The visit brought their history learning to life, helping them to understand what life was like in the past and the important role that royalty has played over the years. The children were full of curiosity, asking thoughtful questions and sharing their ideas as they imagined what it might have been like to live in such an impressive palace.

## Bladon Primary School

### World Book Day



Both staff and pupils had a brilliant day celebrating World Book Day on Thursday 5 March. We were overwhelmed with the fabulous effort that the pupils and their families made with our Traditional Tales theme this year. Along with costumes from some of the more familiar Traditional Tales we were pleased to see that some pupils had used it as an opportunity to explore stories from other countries and cultures. Princesses, mermaids, pigs, gingerbread men and even a giant gathered for a special assembly! Mr Stokes, our Reading Champion, shared a clever technique to support readers in finding a text they will enjoy rather than judging a book by its cover! The children were thrilled to join with other classes for some 'Buddy Reading', so that older children could read to younger children and share their love of stories. Mr Stokes welcomed each class to his 'Reading Café', where he helped them to find new texts to get their teeth into! Orchard Class enjoyed games of character and book charades throughout the day, Maple and Chestnut Class took part in the 'Design a Book Token' competition and Acorn Class were excited to welcome some parents in as 'Mystery Readers'! We hope this special day has helped to foster a love of reading for all our pupils and will be a memorable experience they will look back on fondly!

## Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone - what a lovely show of daffodils everywhere how it lifts one's spirit. We had a very successful AGM with Ann stepping down as Chairman after six years. Ann led the Club through Covid and kept our enthusiasm of flower arranging high on the list of activities to keep us occupied during that time. She was thanked so much by everyone. Our new Chairman will be Liz who has been Secretary of the Club for a few years, so we really look forward to her leading us. She will bring new ideas to the Club encouraged by the great committee. Thanks were expressed to Anthony for always providing us with a wonderful programme each year. The rest of the evening was spent with Ann teaching us a paper craft and we all made a daffodil.

Our next meeting on 13 April will be Gill McGregor with her title 'Floral Artistry and Flair in April'. We are hoping to learn lots of new techniques with her. On 11 May we will welcome Sharon Badger with her title of 'A New Lease of Life'.

We have very many club members who are highly qualified and arrange flowers for weddings or funerals if anyone is interested, please contact us.

Subscriptions are now due for the year of £45 which is very good value as we have a varied programme. We meet at the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse - meetings start at 7pm and visitors are welcome for a charge of £10. Please contact me on 01865 376587 or 07963 349443 for any further information.

Margaret Lang

## Meme of the Month

Cycled to the shop to buy a bottle of gin, but then I thought, what if I fall off my bike and the bottle gets broken? So cleverly, I drank it all outside the shop. Good thing I did too, I fell off my bike seven times on my way home



## Panniers

### Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon

One of the first questions I ask a group of children at the beginning of a Bikeability course is "where do you ride?"

A few will say on the road, with a parent, but most will say on pavements near their home or in a local park. The fact is that, without some form of dedicated cycling infrastructure, many children's bikes will languish in the shed or garage. This is something that we hope we can improve with the proposed Woodstock Cycling and Walking Network.



Cycle paths and quiet streets allow children to get out and explore. Image: The Bikeability Trust

The charity Sustrans (now known as the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust) defines a good quality cycle path as one suitable for an 'unaccompanied 12-year-old. It says paths should be designed based on five core principles - coherence, directness, safety, comfort, and attractiveness.

Those are the principles we intend to apply to a network of routes linking all Woodstock's existing and planned residential areas - Park View, Hensington Estate, Randolph Ave, Banbury Road, Brook Hill and Hill Rise - together with the primary and Marlborough schools. Some of the network will be off-road, on well surfaced paths, and elsewhere it will be on existing or planned residential estate roads with low levels of traffic.

Cycling has enormous benefits for children. It gives them a sense of freedom and independence, boosts self-confidence, and allows them to explore their local community. Children who cycle regularly are also more likely to stay active as adults.

David Walker

## Going Green or Greener

Going green at home is increasingly important for households seeking to reduce energy bills, improve comfort, and cut carbon emissions. Making your home greener can deliver long-term financial and environmental benefits, and with rising fuel prices and ambitious national climate targets, improving the energy efficiency of existing homes has never been more relevant.

Draughty, poorly insulated homes lose heat rapidly, increasing demand on heating systems and raising energy costs. The most effective and low-cost improvement to make a home greener is to reduce the amount of draughts by draught stripping all windows and external door openings and letterboxes, followed by improving insulation in lofts, walls and floors. Loft insulation is usually the easiest and most cost-effective upgrade, and adding or topping up depth can significantly reduce heat loss. Cavity wall insulation is suitable in many post-1920s homes and provides quick, relatively inexpensive efficiency gains. Older homes with solid walls require internal or external wall insulation, and both options can improve comfort and reduce energy demand. For ground floor suspended timber floors, insulating between joists reduces heat loss and draughts. Replacing single glazing with double or triple glazing improves heat retention, reduces draughts, and helps soundproof homes. Modern glazing uses low-emissivity coatings and inert gas fills to boost performance. For period properties where replacing windows is restricted, secondary glazing offers an effective solution.

Reducing use of fossil-fuels is central to greener living. Heat pumps - air source or ground source - offer low-carbon alternatives to traditional boilers. These work most effectively in well-insulated homes and pair well with underfloor heating or oversized radiators. Although installation costs can be significant, running costs are generally lower, and grants may be available depending on government schemes. Replacing outdated boilers by upgrading to a modern condensing boiler, installing smart heating controls, and zoning the heating system to heat only the rooms in use can significantly reduce gas consumption.

Installing solar photovoltaic (PV) panels has become increasingly viable as costs have fallen. PV systems generate electricity that can be used in the home, reducing reliance on grid power and cutting bills. Pairing solar panels with a home battery allows excess energy to be stored and used later, improving self-consumption and resilience, especially during power cuts which are likely to increase in frequency with climate change. Solar thermal systems, although less common than PV, can provide hot water using renewable energy. Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) systems capture heat from

outgoing stale air and use it to warm fresh incoming air. This reduces heat loss and improves indoor air quality, making MVHR particularly beneficial in airtight or newly renovated properties. Water-saving measures also contribute to a greener home. Low-flow taps and showerheads, dual-flush toilets, and water-efficient appliances reduce consumption without sacrificing comfort. Rainwater harvesting systems can supply water for gardening, flushing toilets, or even laundry with the appropriate filtration, easing pressure on mains supplies. Smart energy monitors help track usage patterns and identify waste. Adjusting thermostat settings, reducing standby power, and washing clothes at lower temperatures are all straightforward ways to cut energy use without structural changes.

When renovating, choose sustainable materials such as recycled insulation products, FSC-certified timber, lime-based plasters, and low-VOC paints. These reduce environmental impact, improve indoor air quality, and support sustainability. Choosing local suppliers and materials reduces carbon from transportation. Combining insulation improvements, low-carbon heating, renewable energy generation and efficient resource use significantly reduces your environmental footprint while increasing property value and appeal to future buyers.

Jan Liberadzki BA Arch (Hons), MSc, JLDA

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## Sustainable Woodstock



Thanks to Graham Brown who organised the Annual Litter Pick in Woodstock this year for Sustainable Woodstock, and all the volunteers who came along to support. I was not able to be there this time as I was confined to quarters after recent surgery so it was great to not only see sunny weather but see that so many turned up. Dr Robert Edwards, one of our retired GPs, used to organise the litter pick but in 2017 he asked if Sustainable Woodstock would take it on and we've organised it since (Robert always comes along to support as well). It was great to see Woodstock come together with others joining in weeks before including Marlborough School 6th form, Blenheim staff and a few local residents. Thanks also go to Barry Wheatley who donated so we could purchase the litter hoops that helps picking be

more efficient, and additional thanks to the eco-church at St Mary Magdalene who came along to the pick and organised refreshments after the litter pick.

BE AWARE - that Nitrous Oxide cannisters were found again on Shipton Road leading to the A4095 in areas that were cleared last year and despite being illegal since November 2023 (for use other than catering), it is clearly being distributed near schools. These cannisters (about 30cms tall) need special disposal and if you do see or find, please don't place in general waste but inform WODC of your findings. Otherwise, the volunteers picked along Banbury Road to the B4027, Shipton Road and some parts of the town finding the usual mix of bottles, cans and food waste wrappings plus a new curiosity – unopened tins of food – all probably thrown from cars.

We hope you feel satisfied that you did what you could to reduce the decomposition into our soils, damaging our wildlife and being washed away into our rivers and eventually the seas. YOU ARE HEROES that will hopefully return next year !!

Interested in volunteering or networking with us - email us and/or sign up for our free newsletter [sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com). Things you can do <https://www.wwf.org.uk/thingsyoucando>.

**Hilary Brown**

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## The Woodstock Society

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### Secrets Of The TV Theme Tune

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

Church of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock

**7.30pm Meet & greet**

**8:00pm Guest Talk Begins**

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**Full year membership £16 reduced  
Visitors' Fee £8**

*For further information on membership and this season's  
programme please visit [www.woodstocksociety.org](http://www.woodstocksociety.org) or email us  
at [info@woodstocksociety.org](mailto:info@woodstocksociety.org)*

## Woodstock & District u3a

Our March speaker was Malcolm Wells whose talk was entitled 'So Far So Good'. He entertained us with tales about his time in the Army as a medical assistant in the Gulf War, a cellist with the Army and the 16 years he spent with Canine Partners, a charity who train assistance dogs. Malcom had many amusing tales which included playing the wrong National Anthem at a Royal Banquet and being mistaken for a member of the Royal Household when receiving his MBE at Buckingham Palace.

On 2 April we will hear Dave Thornhill talk about 'Flooding and Climate Change'. David will speak about how the climate change is affecting flooding in the UK and what it means for our communities. He will look at the different types of flooding we face and how planning, infrastructure and nature-based solutions can help us respond. Visitors £3.00 to include tea/coffee and biscuits.



The Needlework Group have been busy making blankets to sent to The Hamblin Fistula Charity. This charity treats women who due to lack of maternity health care in Ethiopia are suffering from appalling childbirth injuries. Each woman in given a homemade blanket on arrival in hospital. They become a treasured source of comfort to the women. Three full sized blankets and two baby blankets have been sent off. The group continues to knit blankets.

The walking group went on an interesting historical walk in Oxford. We assembled at Gloucester Green Bus Station and walked up Walton Street, stopping for a quick look inside the beautiful St Barnabus Church. Our next stop was the Schwarzman Centre for The Humanities, where we were able to see the amazing domed glass ceiling. The route then took us back into Oxford via Park Town and University Parks, which was carpeted in spring flowers.

Book Group 1 have just finished reading 'Leanard and Hungry Paul' by Ronan Hession. This was followed by a lively discussion about the book. Our book for March is 'Beautifully Ugly' by Alice Feeney.

The first Welsh Conversation Group will meet on 26 March at 10.30. If you are a Welsh speaker or would like to practice your Welsh, please get in touch with us. For more information, please refer to our website: [www.woodstocku3a.uk](http://www.woodstocku3a.uk).

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at St Hugh's Centre, Hensington Road at 2pm for a 2.15pm speaker. Our U3a branch is centred in Woodstock but welcomes people from the surrounding areas. Are you recently retired and looking for local social activities around interests you have? Our interest groups develop when someone is willing to run them - maybe you have something that you can offer? If so please make contact with us through our website.

**Sian Wallworth, Press Secretary**

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**Events information:  
[www.oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk](http://www.oxfordbusmuseum.org.uk)**



## Oxford Textile Artists Forthcoming Exhibition

Oxford Textile Artists is a group of committed textile artists who meet monthly to share their ideas, experiences and their passion for textiles.

Following three successful exhibitions of textiles and mixed media at The Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock, their new exhibition 'Reflections' will be at the museum from Saturday 2 May until Sunday 31 May 2026.

Opening times are: Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10am to 5pm; Sundays, 2pm to 5pm; Bank Holiday Monday 4 May and Monday 25 May 2pm to 5pm (otherwise closed on Monday)

Admission is free.

### The answers to Woody's Cryptic Crossword on Page 38 of this issue are:

**Across:** 1. Menace, 4. Atomic, 8. Rheostat, 10. Danger, 11. Ague, 12. Oval Office, 13. Entrance Fees, 16. Supreme Court, 20. Aristocrat, 21 Army, 22. Rotate, 23. Tear Drop, 24. Settee, 25. Statue

**Down:** 1. Mahogany, 2 Noose, 3. Citroen, 5. Tadpole, 6. Manifesto, 7. Coerce, 9. Trade Secret, 14. Resistant, 15. Primrose, 17. Protege, 18. Extract, 19. Arrows, 21. Audit

## 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

### The answers to the Women of Woodstock and Blenheim Quiz on Page 38 of this issue are:

1. Elizabeth 1st
2. Henry 2nd
3. Queen Anne
4. Diana, Princess of Wales
5. Henrietta
6. Jackie Kennedy/Onassis
7. Consuelo Vanderbilt
8. The Marquis of Blandford
9. Bridgerton
10. Cadogen Drive

## 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).

### 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

### Thursday 02 Apr 2026, 14:15

Woodstock and District u3a - Talk  
Dave Thornhill: Flooding and Climate Change  
St Hugh's Centre

### Tuesday 14 Apr 2026, 14:00

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust - Talk  
Brigadier (Retd) Ben Barry OBE: The Rise & Fall of the British Army 1975 - 2025  
Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

### Thursday 16 Apr 2026, 19:30

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk  
Kathy Slack: 'Grow Yourself Happy' How growing food affects mental health  
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

### 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

### Wednesday 06 May 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk  
Dr Duncan Murdock: Uncovering Oxfordshire's Dinosaur Highway  
Oxfordshire Museum

### Monday 18 May 2026, 20:00

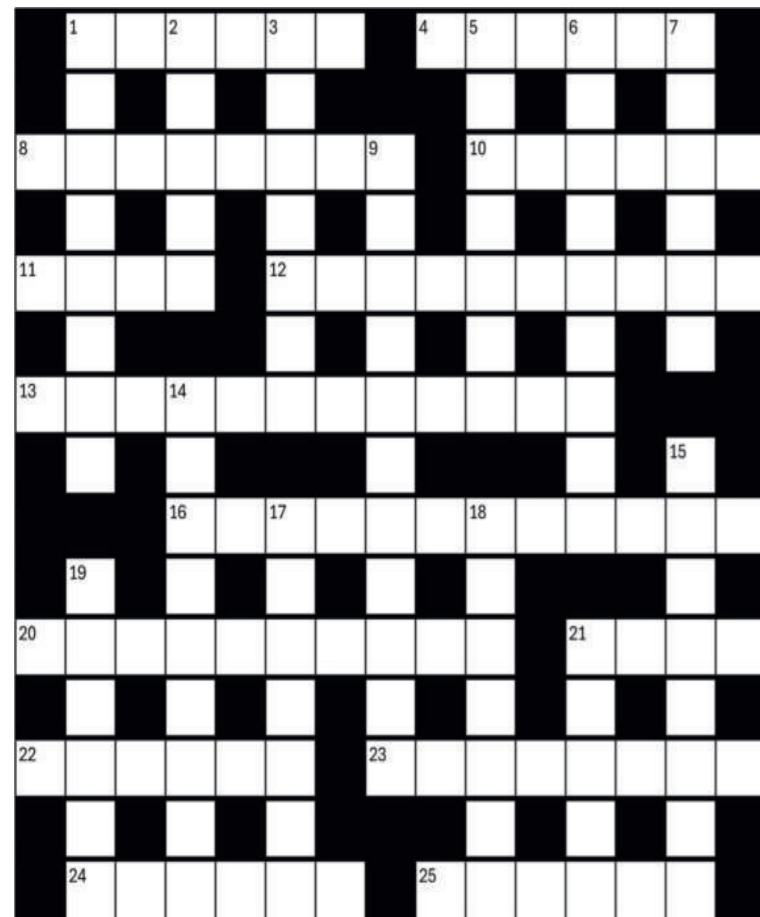
The Woodstock Society - Talk  
Jill Cable: The Early Days of Human Organ Transplants  
St Mary Magdalene

## QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

This month, the questions are all about the women of Woodstock and Blenheim. Answers can be found on Page 36.

1. In 1554, which future Queen of England was imprisoned in Woodstock Park by her sister?
2. Which King housed his mistress, Rosamund Clifford within Woodstock Park?
3. Which Queen granted Woodstock Park to John Churchill in 1705?
4. Sarah Churchill was John, 1st Duke Marlborough's wife and a very influential member of the Royal Court. She was the 6x great grandmother of both Winston Churchill and which Princess, who has a lasting direct influence on Royal succession?
5. The only outright Duchess of Marlborough was the second incumbent, between 1722-1733. The current Duke has an older sister named after The Duchess, a 67 year old interior designer, what is her name?
6. Tina, the 2nd wife of the 11th Duke, (1961-71) shared a previous husband with which iconic widow of the 1960's?
7. Which Duchess, buried, like Churchill, in St Martin's Churchyard, Bladon, credited with having a loveless marriage, which saved Blenheim, was the mother of the 10th Duke?
8. Rebecca Mary Few Brown is an indelible figure in the history of the Marlborough dynasty, as the mother of George, who currently holds which title?
9. Nicola Coughlin, one of the Derry Girls, played Penelope Featherington in which Costume Drama, featuring particularly the Water Terraces, Great Court and Long Library of Blenheim Palace?
10. Which residential road, close to Blenheim Palace, features the maiden name of the 10th Duke's wife? She was famous for twice bringing Dior fashion shows to Blenheim, as well as riding pillion on a motorcycle at the opening of the Oxford Speedway track.

## Woody's Cryptic Crossword No 003



### Across

- 1 Danger when one goes after males. (6)
- 4 A cat in charge of nuclear energy? (6)
- 8 Adapting to Earth's changing resistance with this? (8)
- 10 Risk garden alteration. (6)
- 11 Fever if unclear when losing head. (4)
- 12 Egg-shaped post room found in DC. (4,6)
- 13 Pay these to see a hypnotist. (8,4)
- 16 Best date? Try somebody here. (7,5)
- 20 Noble star actor I converted. (10)
- 21 Cromwell's new model? (4)
- 22 Spin work schedule note. (6)
- 23 Sign of emotion? Collapse after run. (8)
- 24 Put in place support couch. (6)
- 25 Liberty, for example found in law missing beginning of trial. (6)

### Down

- 1 Chopped Hogmanay tree. (8)
- 2 He soon climbed hidden rope. (5)
- 3 Nicer to be transported in this voiture. (7)
- 5 A little European swimmer. (7)
- 6 Promise plain ring. (9)
- 7 Exact pressure. (6)
- 9 Business confidence - a competitive advantage. (5,6)
- 14 One opposed to changing train sets. (9)
- 15 Demure, elevated thing found in bed. (8)
- 17 Someone who is guided by Peer got changed. (7)
- 18 Remove former area of land. (7)
- 19 Points the way to quarrels. (6)
- 21 Check for gold taken from examiner. (5)

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