

WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

May 2026

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Editorial

I was thinking that for this Editorial I would be back in the UK, but I decided to stay until the end of April. Whilst I'm missing Woodstock, it's just too easy, warm, and interesting in Sri Lanka.

I want to talk a bit more about this island country. It was hit hard by the 2004 Tsunami, with over 35,000 deaths. A catastrophic, abrupt commitment to decarbonisation in April 2021 inflicted more damage. Then Covid decimated the tourist industry. Now we have the Iran war, which should not really affect the island except that tourists are now generally scared of flying over the Middle East.

It's very sad. I have personally noticed a huge change in just 40 days - the bustling and noisy roads are much quieter now, and the bars and beaches are almost empty. It's nice for me, but bad for the country.

Prices here are ridiculously cheap. While I can personally welcome this, it is obvious that local inhabitants generally have no money whatsoever. So we try to be generous with our tips. As a non-smoker, I have even taken to buying cigarettes to give to beach vendors and tuk-tuk drivers. Despite the hardships, everyone manages to seem happy, even the supposedly wild dogs that the guide books warned us about. Sadly though, there is rubbish everywhere and the infrastructure is creaking. Locals rely totally on bottled gas for their cooking (please don't get me started on net zero!).

In the next issue, my Editorial will again be all about Woodstock and Bladon. A lot is happening in our community, and I hope that everyone is enjoying reading about the wonderful events that take place locally. I remember last year's extensive range of summer music very well - indeed I was planning to write an article on the subject - perhaps I will this year. I am looking forward to attending many of the wonderful planned events, such as Woodstock Live, and in particular, I can't wait to join all those going to the Concert for Rosie on Friday 15 May, with the wonderful Mandolirium.

Nick Manby-Brown, Editor

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Items included in this issue

Page	Item
5	Portrait of the Month - Paul Kay
8	Council Matters
13	Woodstock Natural History Society
19	Blenheim Park Cricket Club
20	St Mary Magdalene Churchyard
22	Woodstock Literature Society
24	Artweeks in Woodstock
25	Updates on 'Botley West'
26	Woodstock Literary Connections
28	Schools
36	Quiz and Crossword Answers
37	Regular Events and What's On
38	Quiz and Crossword

There are many other reports and notices from local clubs and societies

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 June one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 17 May 2026**, for publication on Friday 29 May.

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

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The front cover is a watercolour and pen artwork on paper by West Oxfordshire landscape artist Cathryn Jeff



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Portrait of the Month - Paul Kay



Set among the streets of Woodstock, Paul's salon has become part of the town's daily life. For over 25 years, he has built a loyal clientele, from young people to older generations, many of whom have followed him from earlier salons and stayed.

That loyalty reflects what Paul values most about the area. "They've got each other's backs," he says, describing a community where businesses support one another and people return time and again. It is this shared spirit that has helped the salon remain rooted here.

Inside, a striking tiger mural creates a strong focal point. Watchful and beautiful, it draws the eye from every chair and often becomes a quiet talking point between clients. The space feels considered but relaxed, much like the town itself, which builds steadily through the day, busy at lunch and into the evening.

For Paul, the work is as much social as it is creative. Meeting people from all walks of life, building relationships, and staying engaged with new ideas keeps things fresh. It is this balance, of conversation, craft and community, that continues to define both his salon and the place it belongs to. Paul feels to continue to succeed at the highest level it is important to re-invest in staff training and provide high end products.

Portrait of Paul Kay taken by fine art portrait photographer, Pippa Hetherington.





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Feastock 2026

If you haven't noticed via their Facebook (Feastock) and Instagram (feastock_woodstock) social posts last week, Feastock host tickets for 2026 have launched!....time to book your babysitters and get the recipe books out.

For those of you who have not been before, this is an excellent Community safari supper event which has been running for 5 years now; with Woodstock residents numbers hitting 80+ and funds raised (typically £1000) go to local charities. It really is a lot of fun; as every now and again you will notice (occasionally tipsy) neighbours walking in every direction through Town, to get to their next feed.....The format essentially is meet for drinks (kindly sponsored again by the team at Breckon & Breckon) and find out whose home you will be dining at for Starter, Main and Dessert. This year, you pay 'zero' if you host 6 others for a 'main' course. The evening wraps with a post-drinks party at a local restaurant/pub venue, into the late hours.

The eventbrite link to sign up is here <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/feastock2026-wine-dine-and-wander-at-woodstocks-3-course-safari-supper-tickets-1987413234484?aff=oddtcreator>; and also on socials (above) - you can sign up as a solo Traveller or as a pair.

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Wake Up To Woodstock

Wake Up to Woodstock was delighted to join businesses from across the county at a recent networking event hosted by Experience Oxfordshire, held within the magnificent Bodleian Libraries.



Set in the historic Divinity School, the event provided a unique backdrop for meaningful conversations, introductions and the strengthening of relationships across Oxfordshire's vibrant business and tourism community. Bringing together organisations from a wide range of sectors, it was a valuable opportunity to share ideas and reinforce the importance of connection in supporting local growth.

Wake Up to Woodstock continues to champion local enterprise, supporting independent businesses while also connecting them to wider county opportunities. Building on this momentum, as Woodstock's exclusive business association, is now planning its spring networking event, aimed at bringing together local businesses in a relaxed and welcoming setting. It will offer a chance to connect, share ideas and build relationships closer to home.

Further details to be announced shortly. In the meantime, visit wutw.co.uk to find out more and stay updated.

Emma Murphy

Flood Wardens

New flood wardens are sought to be the eyes and ears of Woodstock

An appeal has been issued for volunteers in Woodstock to help their communities understand flood risks and responsibilities by becoming flood wardens.

Oxfordshire County Council has extended its flood warden scheme to cover the whole county following successful pilot projects in Witney, Ascott-under-Wychwood, Abingdon and Sunningwell.

There is no set number of hours, and flood wardens can volunteer according to their own schedule.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, said: "Flood wardens are our eyes and ears on the ground and report things like blocked ditches and drains so that we can resolve these issues before a flood event can occur. As extreme weather becomes a more common occurrence, their role becomes so much more important.

We are so grateful to all the county's volunteers, whose hard work and local knowledge does so much to keep their communities safe. I would like to thank our existing flood wardens for their efforts and invite more people to join them in improving the situation in the places where they live."

Flood wardens are members of the local community. They can be individuals, representatives of the parish council or existing community resilience volunteers, highway wardens or police volunteers. The council will support flood wardens in their role and provide the necessary training. All flood wardens undergo an informal one-hour call prior to signing the agreement to help them understand the role in more detail.

Anyone wanting to become a flood warden can read more and sign up online through the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit here: <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/flood-wardens/>

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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 2 Town Council meetings, and the Annual Town Meeting, where residents are invited to have their say.

And as part of our regular section where we offer other Councils to provide copy, we have a contribution this month from Calum Miller, MP.

Woodstock Town Council

Extraordinary Town Council Meeting on 19 March 2026

6 councillors and 6 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: There was no public participation on the agenda.

Planning: There were no objections to planning applications from 90 Manor Road and 15 Green Lane.

Mayor, Clerk and Councillors' Reports: The Mayor reminded all of the Annual Town Meeting taking place the following Tuesday.

Finance: The current balance is £370,806.

Printing Costs for External Parties: After discussion, it was agreed that printing adverts for local events would be accommodated by the Council, a maximum of 5 copies, one for each noticeboard.

Public Safety Report: Councillor Parnes submitted a report raising concerns regarding the installed air source heat pumps on the front elevations of the new Ryegrass development. The key areas of concern were planning compliance, public safety of water freezing on pavements and character impact. Following discussion, a motion was passed to request an inspection from West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Enforcement, seek clarification from Cottsway Housing Association on the planning consultation process and notify Oxfordshire County Council Highways of the potential hazard.

Confidential Matters: After 32 minutes, the public was asked to leave and the meeting went into a confidential session.

For full details please refer to the Town Council website for agendas, documents and minutes.

Graham Brown

Annual Town Meeting on 24 March 2026, held at the Community Centre, New Road.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor chaired the meeting, attended by approximately 60 residents. The Town Clerk took minutes.

A number of speakers were invited to give a short address. **Oxfordshire County Councillor (OCC) Andy Graham** told the meeting that he had been busy on their behalf. His focus was to ensure Woodstock gets its fair share and has its say. Regarding travel, free Park and Ride buses in Oxford have been extended to the end of May. The new parking arrangements in Cadogan Park will be implemented in the summer and a junction with traffic lights will be created at the Judd's Garage junction, together with a new bus shelter, next year. The trial of booking to use the recycling centres has seen no evidence of increased fly-tipping. Annual gully cleaning and the removal of roots blocking pipes has resulted in a reduction of flooding.

West Oxfordshire District Councillors (WODC) Cooper and Poskitt reported that the local plan was progressing and reported no new housing plans in the West Oxfordshire part of our area. The swimming pool is undergoing maintenance and will open for 'cold swimming' from 23rd May to 19th July, 'warm swimming' will follow until 30th August. Their written report included details of the proposed unitary authorities plan for 2028, planning updates for land east of Perdiswell Farm, Botley West Solar and Salt Cross Village and local infrastructure including the public toilets, new parking restrictions in Hensington Road car park and the care of St. Mary's churchyard.

Thames Valley Police were represented by Inspector Chris Ball who introduced Sergeant Miriam Purple as the new officer for Woodstock. Woodstock has the second lowest crime rate in Oxfordshire, mainly involving low level anti-social behaviour. There is CCTV in the town centre and the recent use of a drug detection dog found nothing.

Blenheim Estate were invited but were not represented at the meeting.

Councillor Poskitt, as councillor responsible for finance at Woodstock Town Council, then presented a **financial report**. The approximate year end balance is £360K. Around £470K was spent in the year 2025-26, with an income of £440K, the shortfall will come from reserves. It has been questioned why such a high proportion of the budget is spent on administration and staffing costs and why staffing costs were over budget for 2025-26. Staffing costs did not include pensions and HMRC payments by mistake, staffing salaries will be increasing from April this year and there will be an increase in staff as the Council had been understaffed before. The precept, the amount

residents pay to the Town Council in their Council Tax, has increased by a small amount, relating to 40p per annum for a band D house. The Council has budgeted for £370K income and £383K expenditure for 2026/7 so reserves will again be used to cover the difference.

The WODC officer responsible for CIL, the **Community Infrastructure Levy**, was unable to attend. CIL is a planning charge used by local authorities to fund infrastructure such as schools, transport and parks and has been recently implemented by WODC.

An update from our **MP Calum Miller** was in written form; Calum apologising for being unable to attend as Parliament was in session. Design work for the new surgery at the former Owen Mumford site is being costed for the District Valuer who will determine value for money, a decision expected late summer. Improving access to the site is being looked into. Flooding problems in Woodstock, particularly seen repeatedly in Bens Close, are being discussed between Thames Water, OCC, WODC, Sovereign Homes and Blenheim Estate. Similarly, following requests from Brook Hill residents, Calum has contacted OCC regarding the trash screen in the Water Meadows. Calum met with crew members at the Fire Station and shared their concerns, confirmation from the Chief Fire Officer stated the proposals were not a cost cutting exercise.

Deputy Mayor Sarah Williams also spoke about the **new surgery** saying the Town Council fought hard for the old police station site but the Integrated Care Board said no so the option is closed. The Town Council is not opposed to the former Owen Mumford site in principle but are concerned about access and have called for a feasibility study to be carried out. Resident Stan Scott also spoke about access to this site and will object to planning permission on these grounds.

Complaints to the changes in **Hensington Road car park** were noted, the problem being the 10 hour spaces being used for shorter periods of time. The Mayor said that the Town Council had objected to the changes made by WODC.

As previously noted by Calum Miller MP, OCC are looking into the **flooding issues** in Banbury Road and Bens Close. Thames Water is looking at an emergency system, a permanent fixture to stop flooding in this area.

Councillor John Banbury spoke regarding the **poor lighting** on the main roads and particularly where the buses turn on Stratford Lane.

Resident Anthony Glee then spoke about **St Mary's churchyard** and the transfer of custodianship to

WODC. The church authorities asked the Town Council to take this responsibility in January but it was quickly passed to WODC. Anthony was appalled that the Town Council did this, was it a matter of not being able to afford it? He would like to see the Town Council retain responsibility for the churchyard, a green jewel in Woodstock so well maintained by Jenny Atkinson and volunteers. There was loud applause from the audience.

The Mayor responded that the Council did consider the matter and took advice, there being other things to consider such as liability if a wall collapsed. She was sure WODC would look after the churchyard. Resident Jenny Atkinson then spoke saying the grass cutter employed by the Town Council was wonderful, careful and looked after the churchyard. It is a closed churchyard and should be the responsibility of the Town Council. People have given money for the upkeep and volunteers are upset. Many people visit the churchyard and it is a community asset.

Resident Tom Harvey asked why £50K had been allocated in Council funds for **playground inspections** and there had been none. The Mayor replied that currently there is no environmental warden.

Resident Chris Coe questioned **how the Council spends its money** and why the Council will spend £201K this year on staff and administration costs compared to an average of £101K over the past 6 years. This is the reason we are not getting the services we should have in town. Chris said the Council was not listening and that there had been no response to letters sent. Resident Dr Robert Edwards made a comment on the **Mill Stream in the Water Meadows** suggesting Blenheim Estates should pay for the upkeep as stated on the Column of Victory. Last to speak was resident Sam Dawson who asked why, in real terms with inflation factored in, there had been a **recent decrease in the precept?** Woodstock has lost out by tens of thousands of pounds. The precept should be increased in line with inflation to improve the lives of residents. Councillor Poskitt responded that she could not agree more but failed to convince the Council.

Paper copies of several reports were available at the meeting, hopefully these will be available on the Town Council website or by request to the Town Clerk.

Graham Brown

Letters are important for our Community
Please send letters to editor@wobl.news
The deadline for the June issue is
Sunday 17 May

Town Council Meeting on 14 April 2026

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

Before the start of the meeting, the Mayor read a letter of resignation from **Linda Addis**.

Public Participation: Ed Creasey spoke against the proposal to divert some of the **Water Meadow budget** to buy **two benches for OWL**. This Council is the private landowner of the Water Meadow with statutory duties. Under Section 25 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, where a watercourse is impeded, the landowner is legally required to remedy that condition. This is not optional. Local residents have been successfully clearing the watercourse themselves all winter - keeping the river flowing and even a record rainfall didn't impact residents.

Recent testing at the Sheep Wash on the Glyme next to the meadows found nitrate and phosphate levels high enough that Blenheim advised against entering the river. Yet you are knowingly necessitating residents to clear debris from sewage-contaminated water from Woodstock Town Council land to protect their homes. On 14 January, 42 of those residents out of 51, submitted a formal petition asking for the Council to fulfil its obligations. It has not been acknowledged or responded to. The Nolan Principles demand Accountability and Openness. Diverting funding from mandatory infrastructure to buy benches is a reputational and financial risk. Please fulfil your obligations to this land and to these residents before spending on extras.

Minutes from the previous meeting 19 March: The amendments to the draft minutes, again mostly the rectification of spelling and grammatical errors were agreed. The final note pertaining to the discussions in the confidential session highlighted the potential impact on lettings of the vacancy for a Community Centre Caretaker.

Planning: Reference Number: 26/00694/HHD - No objections

Mayor's Report: Thanks were extended to all those who supported the **Treasurers Valuation** held in aid of the Mayor's Charity on 11 April in the Town Hall.

Notice was given of an **Extraordinary Town Council Meeting** to be held on 28 April. This was due to agenda items being received too late for discussion at this meeting.

Good news received last night that the **Woodstock Fire Station** was likely to receive a reprieve from closure. Cllr Cooper took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor for leading the campaign in our community, to save the fire station.

Clerk's Report: Accounting irregularities in respect of VAT were highlighted by the last internal auditor which are now being addressed, for example day lettings including weddings are a taxable income likely to require the Council to be VAT registered. Given the potential risk to the Council's financial compliance and public accountability this work is now considered urgent and therefore under the clause covering serious risk to the delivery of council services or public safety on council premises, the Clerk exercised his authority to commission a professional company to assess when the council should have registered for VAT, assist with submitting a back dated VAT registration and provide guidance on partial VAT recovery as well as a partial exemption spreadsheet, full report and reasonable aftercare.

The Clerk was not able to give any indication at this stage of the true extent of the council's liabilities or how long the investigation would take. As there was no budget allocated for this liability, it would have to be paid for out of reserves when the time came and these must be carried forward. Cllr Grant noted that in 2023 the then Mayor had said that all VAT had been collected, but that she had always, always, been concerned about the Council's handling of it from the years of running her own business.

The consultation regarding the **S7 bus** is underway and closes on 20 April. Please email your thoughts to public.transport@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

WODC Report: Constitutional change comes into effect after the Annual Meeting in May. Planning changes in the pipeline (moving from two bodies to one) are designed to speed up planning applications. The Mayor said that this did not sound very democratic.

The opening of the **Woodstock Swimming Pool** which was addressed in the Town Meeting does depend on the basic maintenance work being finished in time.

Thanks were warmly expressed to **Julian Cooper** for his long service in WODC, first elected in 1986 with just four years 'off' in the intervening 40 years.

Finance: Income and expenditure reports were passed, noting that expenditure made in the last financial year is reflected as such and not carried over into the new financial year.

WTC Property: Proposed improvements were agreed for the **Woodstock Law** to action at their own expense. An Insurance Reinstatement Cost Assessment of all council property is still pending as part of the review of insurance cover. The **Bowls and Tennis Club** have requested a new 20 year lease which was agreed. The **escape door replacement** at Community Centre to match with the others at a cost in excess of £1000 was agreed.

Environment: Although in a new financial year, the Mayor proposed (seconded by Cllr Williams) an unplanned expenditure to provide and pay for **two new benches** out of the Water Meadows budget as there was no budget for the OWL. The unplanned nature of this proposal was not discussed, only which pot the money was coming from, and this matter did not meet with general agreement. It was considered very poor optics to take the money out of the Water Meadows budget given the serious situation for the council with regard to their inactivity in acknowledging, let alone resolving, the Water Meadow issues. It was agreed that the benches would be purchased but the money will come out of general reserves. The Mayor abstained as it was her proposal but agreed to the alteration of the wording and so the proposal was passed.

Christmas lights: Despite the urgent call for a meeting of the Christmas Lights Committee to plan for this year's display, only Cllr Cooper was ready to attend; it was not quorate and therefore did not proceed. Cllr Spencer-Churchill proposed that we have the same decorations as last year. He was reminded that apart from the Town Hall Christmas tree, the decorations were not well received by residents. Others supported decorations down the main streets, maybe including lights around the tree trunks and possibly additional support for the WUTW decorations. A new committee was formed for this year only chaired by Cllr Williams (and to now include the Mayor) to put a plan together by Tuesday 28 midday in the hope that the Clerk could still find a company which would provide something for us within the £12-15k budget.

New Drs Surgery: A Report was presented noting we have a new Thames Valley ICB (Integrated Care Board) having merged Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West with Frimley. The non negotiable priority remains that a feasibility study re transport to the new surgery is completed before the planning application is submitted.

Meetings to support this aim have been arranged with Calum Miller MP and Andy Graham WODC and a meeting is sought with the OCC Transport Officer.

Shipton Road Street lights: Sharone Parnes was concerned regarding the lack of street lights on and around the **Shipton Road Mini roundabout**. This has been the ongoing situation since September 2025. WTC sought an explanation of why OCC were not acting with greater urgency.

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

Annie Cripps

Calum Miller, MP



The war in the Middle East has created fear and uncertainty, with rising petrol, diesel and heating oil costs placing real strain on household budgets. I have urged the Government to keep the UK out of the conflict, support a peaceful resolution, and provide targeted help for families and businesses facing higher energy and transport costs.

Closer to home, progress is being made on key local issues. Plans for a new Woodstock Surgery are advancing, with the Owen Mumford site selected as the preferred option. Detailed proposals are in development, with planning permission possible by late 2026 and opening by 2028 or earlier.

The illegal waste dump is finally being cleared following residents' concerns about risks to the River Cherwell. Tackling organised waste crime remains a priority, and I will continue pushing for stronger enforcement and accountability.

After a difficult winter for potholes, Oxfordshire County Council has increased repairs, doubled roadwork teams, and boosted maintenance funding.

I am also working with national and local partners to ensure new housing developments are matched by proper infrastructure, including roads, water, energy, healthcare and schools.

Since being elected, my small but hardworking team and I have handled over 13,000 cases, helping residents navigate complex systems and access support. It is my privilege to serve our community. I am always happier when I step off the train from London to be back home. The biggest pleasure is to meet the people in each of our communities who are making a difference to the lives of others. Many of them are volunteers who are passionate about helping people.

Do you know someone who deserves celebrating? Please share your words of praise for local heroes - not all of them wear capes! I'd love to hear about the special individuals who make up our constituency, so drop me a line and help me celebrate them too!
Calum.miller.mp@parliament.uk

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AND ROSIE'S SISTER SUSIE B.

An Artists in Woodstock
event raising funds for
Mind and The Samaritans



Woodstock Natural History Society

Woodstock Natural History Society's 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 14 April meeting focused upon the potential environmental effects of the proposed Botley West Solar Farm, which might be established on farmland owned by the Blenheim estate, becoming the largest onshore array of solar panels in the UK, and the tenth largest terrestrial solar farm in the world. Perhaps most importantly, it will be the largest farmland-based solar farm in the world, most such largescale projects being on desert sands.

This proposal divides opinion among lovers of nature. On the one hand energy sourced directly from the sun can supplant hydrocarbon-generated electricity and is, at least if one discounts the energy cost of manufacturing the equipment, less environmentally damaging. On the other hand, solar panels are less photogenic than the idyllic verdant pastures of the county's Thames floodplain, may reduce food production and hamper some iconic plant and animal species.

The Natural History Society, save myself, is civilised, polished and welcoming, so our members and friends were asked not to assail the speaker from the solar farm consortium with their general views about the proposal, but to focus upon the question of mitigation of environmental damage.

By and large, they complied admirably. This was partly because the speaker, Mark Owen-Lloyd, was himself so reasonable and civilised, but also because it was clear that the proposal as it now stands includes much to encourage public access and encourage biodiversity.

Mr Owen-Lloyd told the meeting that the National Grid had been designed with a paucity of access points, with the expectation that a relatively small number of large power stations would feed electricity into it. As so many of these behemoths have reached the end of their natural lives a much larger number of smaller generating projects has been developed, yet most hampered by several years' delay before they could be connected to the grid. A sizable East-West feeder cable passes through Farmoor, to which cable an access point had been negotiated in 2021, paving the way for a power generation project in this area.

Negotiation with the County and District Councils,

and the iterations of the planning process, have further shaped the original proposal, and that which is now before the planners envisages 850 hectares of solar panels on a site of 1418 hectares. All existing woodland and watercourses are protected, and a range of wildflower meadows and 'skylark plots' will be established, together with the restoration of some wetland. Around Bladon and Long Hanborough some land is set aside for small-scale horticultural and educational projects, in connection with the Oxford Farm to Fork scheme and the Roots Allotments Company. Sheep will graze the area under the solar panels, although the overall impact on food production was not discussed. There will be footpaths and a cycleway from Bladon to Begbroke. A Community Benefit Fund will be established.

The questions were lively and extensive. Our members and visitors raised a range of issues, ranging from sheep welfare, noise and vibration to the visual impact. Overall, the evening was good-natured and informative, and we left certainly better informed on the proposals. Although opinions on the project overall remain divided, it is clear that major efforts are being made to encourage biodiversity should the solar farm 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. please also check this column regularly, and come to one of our Tuesday evenings, the next oif which is Tuesday 12th May, 7.30 pm. 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

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Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

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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.

Wednesday 3 June

A Literary Waterways' Tour: flowing words & 'liquid history'

Speaker: Mark Davies, Oxford local historian, author and tour guide

The waterways of 'river-rounded' Oxford feature in innumerable works of literature, from Chaucer's pilgrims to Jerome's 'Three Men' and Tom Brown's higher education, via the children's classics of Alice and Wind in the Willows. Recently, Philip Pullman's 'gyptians' have joined this historically informative list; and Town & Gown affrays are inevitable!

The Talk will be preceded by the AGM at 7pm

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. Please use this EMail for the Zoom link.

For an application form and full details of all our activities and benefits, see our website: friendsoftom.org.uk

The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 13 May 2026 The Nocturne in 19th-century Music and Art



In 1859 when Franz Liszt edited the Nocturnes of the Irish composer John Field, he said in his preface "to him we may trace the origin of pieces designed to portray subjective and profound emotion." Once Field had coined the term nocturne in 1812, other composers such as Chopin, Mendelssohn, Fauré and Debussy followed suit and contributed to an increasing repertoire of atmospheric and meditative night pieces. However, from the early 1870s, the term 'nocturne' was used in the titles of paintings by the American painter, James Whistler, and in addition to exploring the history of the musical nocturne, the study day explores its relationship with the world of art.

About the speaker: Peter Medhurst appears in the UK and abroad as a musician and scholar, giving recitals and delivering illustrated lectures on music and the arts. He studied singing and early keyboard instruments at the Royal College of Music and at the Mozarteum in Salzburg.

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 or contact Lisa Etheridge on 07918 180895 for a booking form. Non-members are welcome (space permitting) at a charge of £10.

Woodstock Exhibition Foundation

Janina Ramirez, our local authoress and TV presenter will be giving a talk entitled *From Lady Godiva to the Foundations of Spain: How legendary women prop up a nation* in St Mary Magdalene Church on Saturday 4 July at 7pm followed by a Wine and Nibbles reception.



John Collier, *Lady Godiva*, oil on canvas 1898

The talk will be based on Janina's latest book, *Legenda*, which Alice Roberts described as 'Fearless, stunning and shockingly relevant'.

In the book Janina peels back the layers of time to reveal how the lives of women have been co-opted by those intent on crafting national identities. Their names are well known and summaries of their achievements taught in classrooms for decades, but medieval women like Joan of Arc, Lady Godiva and Isabella of Castile have been misrepresented, their stories twisted and weaponised. Ground-breaking 18th and 19th century women, who blazed a trail through revolutionary Europe, have been forgotten, their legacies too easily dismissed or ignored.

Please put 4 July in your diary and come along. Profits from the evening will help the Foundation, which gives grants to Woodstock young people who either go to University or enter apprenticeships.

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Plant of the month

Weigela 'Florida Variegata'



May - finally warmer days, louder birdsong, and flowers beginning to bring us some joy.

This is my favourite time of year for gardening, but the pace changes from here on out! For this month's plant of the month, I've chosen a star shrub that flowers for a long time: Weigela 'Florida Variegata' (v).

Rather than originating from the Sunshine State, as the name might suggest, the botanical name comes

from the Latin *floridus*, which means flowery or showy. Aptly named, as the flowers carpet the branches for a good couple of months, which is terrific value. Even more so when you consider the foliage is variegated with creamy white tips, providing interest for most of the year.

This is a deciduous shrub, which means there's plenty of room to plant bulbs around the base. It's well suited to most gardens, as it grows to a modest, bushy size and is easily controlled by pruning in late summer after flowering. Take out some of the older wood and cut back flowering shoots to beyond where their flowers had been, but be careful not to shape it too artificially. It grows a bit loose but symmetrical, which is part of its character. This will keep it compact and not too leggy.

Another major plus point for this shrub is that it will cope with full shade to full sun, giving you options to fill trickier spots or even repeat it in different areas of the garden to provide continuity. It can provide wonderful contrast to purple-foliage shrubs such as *Physocarpus* or *Berberis*. Weigela also works very well with peonies, flowering at similar times and generally within a similar colour palette.

Dom, Head Gardener & Owner at Ford and Kent Gardens

Nature Matters

May is often remembered as the true height of spring - a time of colour, birdsong, and those long, gently warming afternoons that seem to stretch on without urgency. The countryside still carries that same spirit, now unfolding with a richness that feels both familiar and quietly uplifting.

Trees stand in full, fresh leaf, casting soft, dappled shade across paths and open ground. Hedgerows are at their busiest, alive with movement and sound, and thick with blossom. Hawthorn is at its peak, its creamy-white flowers brightening boundaries and filling the air with their distinctive scent - a sure sign that the season is gathering pace.



A quiet May scene - hawthorn and cow parsley by a sunlit gate

Wildflowers are everywhere if you take a moment to notice. Cow parsley forms airy drifts along verges and trackways, creating those soft 'mayflower' avenues that appear almost overnight. Red campion and stitchwort bring touches of pink and white beneath hedges, while buttercups scatter gold across meadows. In quieter corners of grassland, early orchids can be found, subtle but striking for those who pause to look. As the weeks pass, yellow rattle, cranesbill and the first knapweed begin to emerge, hinting at the deeper colours of early summer.

Birdsong remains a constant companion. Late-arriving migrants continue to join the chorus, while swallows and house martins sweep low over fields in easy arcs. Swifts soon follow, their high, screaming calls cutting through warm air as they race overhead. In scrub and hedgerow, warblers chatter and flit unseen, and from somewhere just out of view, the unmistakable call of the cuckoo carries across the landscape.

There is new life everywhere. Recently fledged birds - robins, blackbirds and long-tailed tits - appear in gardens and hedges, still finding their way under the watchful care of their parents. Overhead, buzzards

circle effortlessly on rising air, and the increasingly common red kites drift on the wind, and maneuver effortlessly with a side-ways twist of their tail.

Insects are increasingly active. Butterflies such as orange-tip, speckled wood and holly blue drift along sunny edges, while near water, dragonflies begin their patrols. Along streams, the first mayfly hatches take place - brief, delicate emergences that bring sudden movement to the water's surface as fish rise to feed.

As evening draws in, the pace softens. Bats flicker into view, tracing quick, silent paths through the dusk, and the day settles into a gentle stillness.

May has a quiet sense of completeness - not hurried, not yet at summer's height, but full of promise. It is a time to pause, to notice, and to enjoy the small details that make this month so rewarding.

Mayfly Dun

WOOTTON TALKS

Our speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 8 May is **Steven Parissien**, the eminent cultural historian, who has written sixteen books. Steven, a former Director of Compton Verney, in Warwickshire, 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 in Manchester's city centre and the Edwardian Baroque Electric Cinema in Notting Hill, one of the country's oldest working cinemas - as well as Norman Foster's Gherkin in the City.

Details of the speaker on Friday 5 June to be announced shortly.

On Friday 3 July, we are pleased to welcome **Nicky Shaw**, leading set and costume designer on major operas, musicals and plays around the world.

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.

Andy Morgan (01993 813016)

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Curate's Log



Time is a curious thing. In the world around us, it is marked by headlines, deadlines, and the relentless rhythm of the news cycle. It can often feel as though we are carried from one troubling story to the next, with little space to breathe, let alone hope.

But the Church keeps time differently. While much of the world has packed Easter away with the chocolate wrappers, the Church is still celebrating. Contrary to popular belief, Easter is not just a single day, but a whole season - fifty days of joy stretching all the way to Pentecost on 24 May. In fact, Easter is the high point of the Church year, the great celebration around which everything else turns.

We are perhaps more familiar with Lent: forty days of reflection, fasting, and preparation. Yet Lent is not the destination - it is the journey. Easter is the feast at the end of it. And unlike Lent, the feast lasts longer than the fast. That in itself is a quiet but powerful message.

In a world that can feel overshadowed by sorrow and uncertainty, the Church deliberately chooses to hold on to joy a little longer. Rather than moving on too quickly, this season invites us to pause and notice signs of new life, hope, and fresh beginnings around

us. It's a reminder that even when things seem bleak, change and renewal are still possible - and worth holding onto.

So if the news feels heavy, take heart: it is still Easter. The fasting is over. The alleluias have returned. And the celebration continues.

There is more joy in God's calendar than we sometimes remember - and more hope, too.

With every blessing, **Revd Gemma Ferrier**

Christian Aid Week in Bladon

This year Christian Aid is raising funds which will be targeted at the humanitarian aid so badly needed in the Middle East.

Bladon has been generous in its support in the past and we hope this year will be no exception. Envelopes will be delivered to every house in Bladon and we hope that you will give generously and then deposit the envelope either in the box provided at the White House Pub or bring it along **on 16 May to the Church Room when there will be coffee, tea and biscuits, a cake stall, a plant stall, cards and tombola from 10am to 12pm.** The funds raised by this event will be added to the house to house collection. Last year well over £1,000 was raised and as the need is so much greater this year, we hope to raise a similar sum.

Blenheim Park Cricket Club



Blenheim Park is a unique cricket club and they play locally in Woodstock on the beautiful South Lawn directly in front of the Palace. As a club, we not only welcome all cricket supporters but anyone wanting a fun day out with their family. A perfect place for a family picnic or to enjoy a glass or two in the sunshine.

We thank our VPs and sponsors for their support and welcome them in watching any of our games or to just come along and enjoy the fantastic cricket teas, provided by local caterers.

If you are interested, as a new player or as a vice president, please contact David Hughes on dihughes1986@gmail.com or call 07769 110258.

May and June Fixtures

Sun 03 May	Home	Club celebration game
Sun 10 May	Home	Minster Lovell CC
Sun 17 May	Home	Royal Household CC
Wed 24 May	Home	Littlewick Green CC
Sun 31 May	Home	West Wittering CC
Sun 7 Jun	Away	Turville CC
Sun 14 Jun	Home	Bibury CC
Sun 21 Jun	Home	Isis CC
Wed 24 Jun	Away	Middleton Stoney CC
Sun 28 Jun	Home	Exeter College

Please see website for latest up-to-date details

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St Mary Magdalene Churchyard

At the Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 20 January, a decision was made to transfer the responsibility of maintaining the closed churchyard from the Town Council to West Oxfordshire District Council. This unsettling decision was made without any consultation with outside parties, and especially the team of volunteers that have cared for the upkeep of this beautiful Churchyard for over 14 years.

But the decision has been made, and with luck, locals and visitors alike will see no huge change. Because WODC have now said they will discuss future arrangements with Jenny and her team, supported by the formation of the 'Friends of Woodstock Churchyard' who will work to ensure the care of the Churchyard continues unchanged in the years to come. Why not become a 'friend'? There's no fee, just send an email to friendsofwoodstockchurchyard@gmail.com and leave your name and post code.

We decided to produce this double page spread to celebrate this wonderful open space, and to publicly thank Jenny Atkinson and her team for all they do. Thanks to Anthony Glee for the photographs showing the spring flowers.



Closed Churchyard

There has been considerable consternation and questioning as to why WODC have now taken responsibility for St Mary Magdalene Churchyard in Woodstock. Here is the explanation.

When burials no longer take place in a churchyard, the churchyard is designated **closed** even though the strewing of the ashes of the Departed may continue.

Our churchyard was closed by Order in Council at a Privy Council meeting at Osborne House in the presence of Queen Victoria in 1856.

This meant that the land remains owned by the church, but the responsibility for the trees, church-owned boundaries (in our case only the wall along Rectory Lane) and grass mowing can, from Legislation passed in 1976, become the legal responsibility of the local council, if the PCC so request.

Until now, the grass mowing has been paid for by the Town Council, but the cost of caring for everything else has been born by the church, in large part, by donations held in a restricted fund.

Many of the trees are now old and last year an old hawthorn fell across the church boundary wall onto Rectory Lane which could have caused a very serious accident. More trees had to be felled in that area as a safety precaution. Financial help from the Town Council was asked for this but got no response. It was at this point that the church requested that the Town Council formally accept responsibility for the maintenance and health and safety of the churchyard as set out in the legislation. After protracted discussions this was agreed. The Town Council then, unexpectedly, chose to transfer this responsibility to WODC.

Jenny Atkinson

Woodstock Literature Society

On 21 March Dr Daniela Omlor gave a talk on *The Spanish Civil War and Beyond*, looking at three Spanish novels published over the last 60 or so years. Dr Omlor began by outlining the history. In three years of war about half a million people were killed, and similar numbers displaced, with multiple war crimes. This was followed by 35 years of fascist dictatorship. When Franco died there was a general amnesty, political prisoners were released, and Spain became a liberal democracy. But the scars were deep, as always in civil wars. Three novels showed this in different ways.



Dr Daniela Omlor

Ana Maria Matute's novel *The Island* was published in 1959, when censorship still applied. It shows a girl going through adolescence on an island (Mallorca, though it isn't named) while the civil war rages on the mainland and other conflicts blaze up on the island. The novel is partly about growing up and losing innocence, but the war is never far away. Boys on the island fight their own battles. The slaughter of the island's Jews in the seventeenth century provides a historical parallel to the suffering in the war. Persecution keeps repeating itself in different forms, although the novel's liveliness keeps us engaged.

Javier Marias' novel *All Souls* (1989) is set in Oxford and follows the adventures of a young Spanish lecturer and his eccentric colleagues: not immediately relevant to the civil war. But Marias himself had been affected by the war (his father, an active Republican, was at one time on the death list) and his characters show some of the traumatic impacts of war. They are not what they seem (one academic may be a

spymaster, the college porter lives his mental life in different times), they always have to be careful what they say, and many of them (especially the narrator's mistress) have a tragic history. It is very funny in parts (e.g. the chaos at a college dinner) but death and deception are never far away.

Amnesties, however necessary, leave a lingering worry that the truth is never properly told and the victims never properly mourned. Javier Cercas's novel *Soldiers of Salamis* (2001) deals with this. It shows a journalist trying to establish what actually happened when a Falangist prisoner miraculously escaped a firing squad in the last weeks of the war. He eventually finds (or thinks he finds) the aged former soldier who let his enemy live. But the old man never admits to it: for him there are no heroes, only the many dead. Perhaps the journalist is only perpetuating a myth: 'Reality always ends up betraying us'.

It was an interesting talk, which attracted a good audience, many of whom bought the books: they are all well worth reading, and translations of all the novels are available in paperback.

Steven Bliss

Woodstock Literature Society Summer Events

Enjoy our Summer Party in the lovely churchyard of St Mary Magdalene with sparkling wine and canapes on **Wednesday 20 May** from 7.15pm to be followed by a talk by Professor Simon Horobin on *The Worlds of C.S. Lewis: From Oxford to Narnia*. Visitors welcome: £15 at door

On **Tuesday 16 June** at 8pm at the St Hugh's Centre, Professor Seamus Perry, Master-Elect of Balliol College, and biographer of Auden, will give a talk on *W.H. Auden: Early and Late* in which he will examine the Oxford beginning and end of Auden's career. Visitors welcome: £10 at door

For more information contact: enquiries@woodstocklitsoc.com or website: www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk



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Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

On the first May Bank Holiday weekend there will be a display of model railways at the museum on Sunday 3 and Monday 4 provided by the Oxford & District Model Railway Club and other enthusiasts. There will be regular bus rides from the museum each day. A great day out for all the family - and quite inexpensive!

Morris Day is on Bank Holiday Monday 25 May, when our newly restored 1948 Morris 10 Series M will emerge from the workshop. We are also expecting a lot of visiting Morris's cars. So, the museum car park and yard will be full. As a result, there will be no free car parking in the museum grounds.

On the outbreak of the First World War, the War Office took over direction of the manufacture of all motor vehicles.

From March 1915 until 1917 Daimler Y type chassis were built to be used as army lorries. The lorries usually had an open, canvas covered cab and a fixed side timber body, typical of military cargo vehicles of the period. The contemporary photo shows one.



WW1 Y type Lorry

The chassis was actually built for Daimler by the Associated Equipment Company (AEC) at its Walthamstow factory using Daimler's famous sleeve-valve engine. AEC had built 8,821 by the Armistice in 1918. But suddenly, the War Office no longer needed so many lorries!

Many returned from France to a huge dump at Slough. Demobbed soldiers came back without jobs; a number used their severance pay to buy one of the lorries and convert it, by removing the military body and replacing it with a bus body. Some became single-deckers, some double-deckers and some charabancs.

They were also bought to form the basis of many UK bus fleets. Oxford bought 43. Several of these vehicles remained in service until 1935; however, the majority were sold again during the early 1930s to be converted back into lorries.



Y type chassis on display in the museum

We have a number of Y type chassis in the museum. The Y type had a high ground clearance so bus passengers had to 'climb' aboard. The pictured one is in the area where we show how manufacturers reduced the height of double-deckers over the decades so that the buses could get under the low Oxford railway bridges.

Other examples in the collection are under our open top 1916 double-decker and our unrestored country bus from the 1920s. Each chassis has six solid tyres and each one cost £1,000 in 2000. Bus Restoration is an expensive business.

Frank Collingwood

Morris Motors Museum

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Artweeks in Woodstock 2026

9 to 17 May

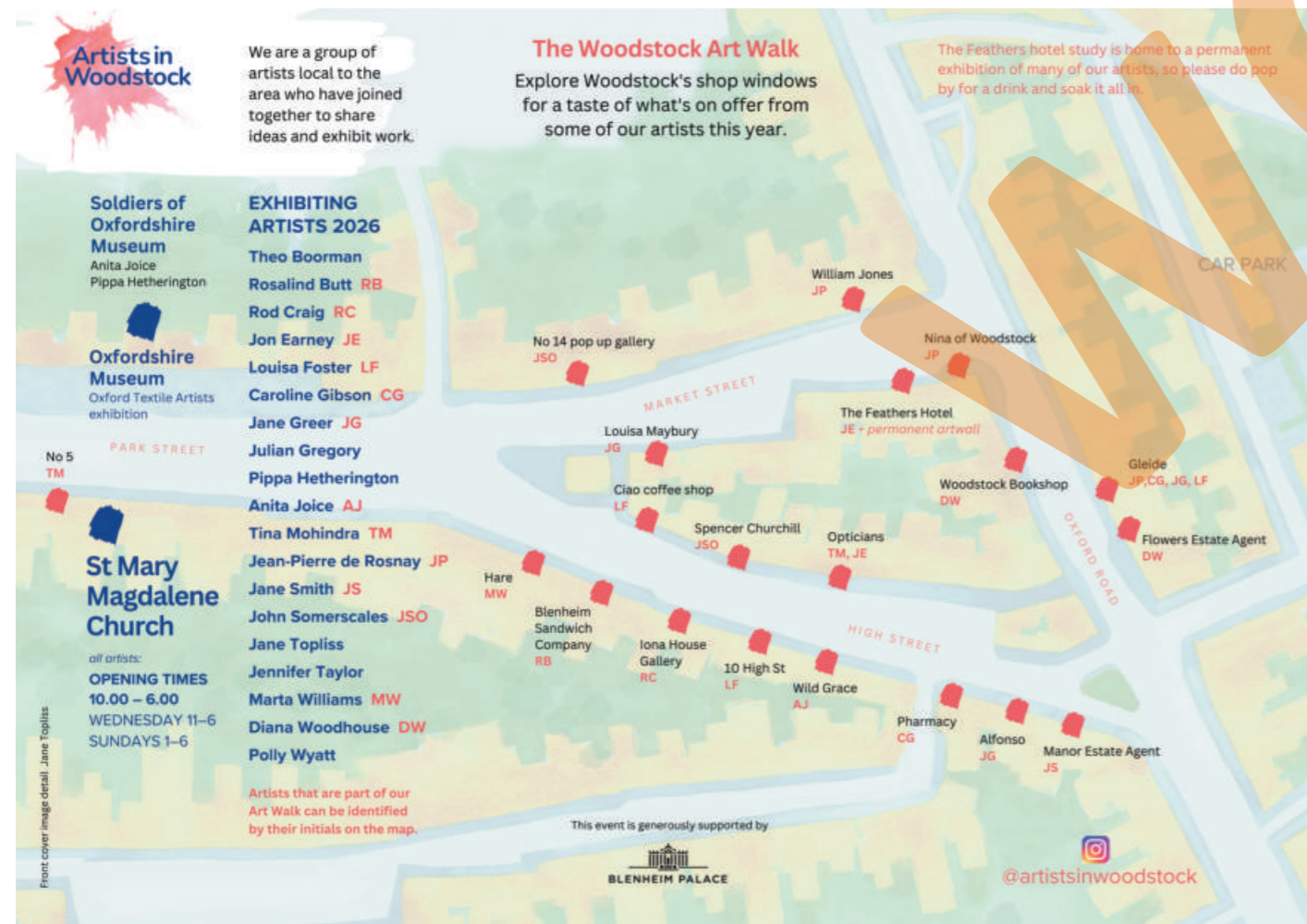
It's approaching Artweeks time for Woodstock and this May will again see nineteen artists exhibiting in various venues around the town. There will be several different mediums for people to enjoy including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, ceramics, floristry and litho printing. A town trail will be available for locating the artworks which can be found in shop windows, and many town venues listed in the map below. The artists are also planning to stage workshops, demonstrations and live music!

This year, we will be staging a special charity concert in the church: CONCERT FOR ROSIE in memory of a late member of the Woodstock Artists group: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-GB/ticketing/concert-for-rosie>

Artweeks in Woodstock runs from 9 to 17 May, 10am-6pm daily, Wednesday 11am-6pm and 1-6pm on Sundays in the church.

Oxfordshire Artweeks in Charlbury

Charlbury is a prime destination with 16 artists exhibiting at venues around the idyllic town as part of the festival. They offer a diverse selection of artwork, textiles, jewellery, sculpture, ceramics and more in studios, gardens, cottages, and St Mary's Church. Trail maps are available and plenty of places to eat and drink in the town.



Updates on 'Botley West'

More Consultation Opportunities as Miliband delays decision

In late March, Ed Miliband, the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department for Energy and Net Zero (DESNEZ), announced that he has delayed a decision on the proposed Botley West solar power station from 10 May to 10 September 2026.

The announcement of a **four-month delay** means that there will be further opportunities for public consultation on Photovoltaic Development Partners (PVDP)'s controversial application for a Development Consent Order. It also raises significant questions about the effectiveness and relevance of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) planning process.

As Calum Miller, MP for Bicester and Woodstock, put it in a letter to Miliband's department: "Why has the Department decided to extend the timetable in order to seek further information from the applicant (PVDP), rather than refusing the application on the basis of the material already before it?"

Background to the delayed decision

In its announcement, DESNEZ said that the additional four months are needed to enable the Department "to seek further information from the applicant with sufficient time to allow for consideration of this information by other interested parties." This means that the Department has recognised that there are a number of important questions that PVDP has still **not answered**, despite an examination process lasting for more than a year.

As Calum Miller put it: "This is not a case in which concerns have emerged suddenly... throughout the examination there were repeated and serious questions about the adequacy of the applicant's work... the Examining Authority itself was openly critical." Calum's criticism **echoes the concerns** about the adequacy of the NSIP planning process that Stop Botley West (SBW), our local authorities and many other interested parties have been voicing for some time.

Given the seriousness of these concerns, it is worth noting that **Botley West is the first and only solar application on which Miliband has delayed making a decision** since taking up office in July 2024 - while at least ten others have been approved without further challenges.

MP calls for rejection, not delay

Calum Miller summed up his views with the following statement: "The Botley West delay speaks volumes. Ministers have kicked the decision down the road because they still need more information from the developer and more time for others to consider it.

"After a process this long, that is a damning reflection on the quality of the application and suggests the Planning Inspectorate recommended against it. **Ministers should have rejected it** and told PVDP to come back with a better scheme, not given them more time."

Prof Alex Rogers, SBW chair, commented: "It became clear during the Examination phase that the Planning Inspectorate team was not satisfied with a number of PVDP's responses to requests for further information. We **welcome** the Secretary of State's decision to seek further information from the Applicant, and to allow sufficient time for consideration by interested parties such as the Stop Botley West community group."

What happens next?

The Department for Energy and Net Zero (DESNZ) announced that they would send out a request for further information to PVDP after Easter, and publish the details on the Planning Inspectorate's Project Information Page. PVDP's responses will be published in the same place. There could then be further requests from DESNZ addressed to specific bodies or people.

DESNZ requested further information on 14 April.

There are over 70 questions, mainly addressed to the Applicant PVDP, and nearly all have been asked before during the examination but not satisfactorily answered. You can read these by visiting stopbotleywest.com

Interested parties including SBW and our supporters can respond and comment on DESNZ's questions and/or PVDP's answers. **Watch out** for the Applicant's answers (due by 9 June) which will be displayed on the same site.

Please submit your comments to SoS Ed Miliband (by 9 June) at the Department for Energy and Net Zero via the Planning Inspectorate using email: BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Visit stopbotleywest.com to learn more, to request regular updates and get the latest news on the application and decision.



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Woodstock Literary Connections

Melanie King, writer. Interviewed in Woodstock by Judd Floddell



Melanie King

Melanie King is known to many as a friendly, familiar face around town and has published several books: the most recent being *The Secret History of English Spas*.

JF: To set the scene, tell us something about your earlier life, and how long you have lived in Woodstock for?

MK: I was born in a military hospital in Hampshire. My Dad had a lifelong career with the RAF, so my parents moved around different places in England. As a result, my sister and I moved schools several times, where we were often the new faces in the classroom. There wasn't a National Curriculum then, so I was often catching up on different subject areas. As a result, I think my childhood shaped me to be a writer and to be confident. I have lived in Woodstock since 2002.

JF: Do you ever publish under your maiden name ... or use a pseudonym?

MK: No - but I was a journalist for a newspaper in Bangkok, Thailand before I was married, so published under my maiden name then.

JF: There must be a lot of research behind your books, that takes you far afield. Do you maintain a rhythm for producing a book, or have you been surprised by the speed or difficulty in which different drafts and manuscripts come together?

MK: I love research; it is the writing part that is very hard and I'm sure most writers would say that. The most difficult for me was putting together the English Spas book, following the history chronologically, but it was hard to find a central thread to follow. I'm delighted when I get 'Eureka!' moments - such as researching my book on female spies. Whilst in Florence, I managed to identify the building where the British-Canadian spy had been living when she was in Florence.

JF: You are an accomplished speaker, having spoken at a variety of Literary Festivals - tell us how you feel about speaking to an audience and which events stand out in your memory?

MK: Sometimes, I'm a little nervous, but being well-prepared and having written notes helps. I get more nervous about being interviewed, especially if it's live! For instance on BBC Radio Oxford many years ago, I was asked a basic question about my book *The Dying Game*, and I could not remember the answer. Fortunately, the radio presenter came to my aid and moved swiftly on to say something else about the detail in the book.

I do love people coming up to me after a talk, especially where they have an anecdote related to something I've said - such as memories of the past, which in turn may spark further research for me in related areas.

JF: Your career has seen you publish several books, more recently with Bodleian Publishing. How did this come about, and how has your career as a writer evolved over the years?

MK: I began my writing career in 2004 after a varied career. My books with Bodleian Publishing may have been through my literary agent at the time, or through a chance conversation. However, Samuel Fanous, the head of Bodleian Publishing, is now a friend too.

Now I've developed more as a social historian, and started a series of online talks in 2023 called the History Forum for which I invite history professionals to give talks. It attracts an audience including both locals and people from across the UK, Europe and North America. Also, I have a Facebook and Instagram account that I use for photos and interesting history facts.

JF: What advice might you offer to future, new writers?

MK: Keep going and never give up. Keep writing and send it off, or publish it on the Internet to get noticed. If it's non-fiction, have a strong idea, look at the market and see if a publisher will be able to sell it. Don't give up the day job, but look at other things to do alongside the writing, such as giving talks or teaching.

JF: If you were on a desert island what would be your favourite book to have there with you, and why would you choose this?

MK: One that sticks out is *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* by Samuel Johnson, about a restless, young man who wants to explore the world. It is a novella, but I have read it many times, and it can be interpreted in lots of different ways. It is a positive book, and if I was on a desert island I would take that.

Find out more about Melanie's books, talks and Instagram account www.melaniekingbooks.com.

Judd Floddell

Woodstock Bookshop Festival

The Early May Bank Holiday weekend celebrates the second year of the Woodstock Bookshop Festival (1-3 May). Run by bookshop staff and local volunteers, the festival in its current format is a vibrant mix of fiction, poetry, science, the arts, family-friendly events, and superb music. Events take place in a variety of town-centre venues, including our splendid Town Hall, the Oxfordshire Museum, Hampers Delicatessen, St Mary Magdalene Church and St Hugh's Centre. The team at The Woodstock Bookshop are grateful to all these neighbours for their support, as well as to everyone in the local community who has helped with planning, organising and taking part.

In hosting a literary festival, The Woodstock Bookshop is proud to join a vigorous tradition dating back to the first Cheltenham Literature Festival in 1949. Literary festivals throughout the UK have proliferated in intervening decades and now run from Faversham in February to Folkestone in November. Their popularity owes much to the lively atmosphere generated by creative energy and a shared love of books, knowledge and reading - plus, of course, the stimulating and entertaining experience of listening to authors, researchers and illustrators talk live about their work.

This year's Festival begins on the evening of Friday 1 May with poetry led by local poet Esther Lay. On Saturday 2 May there will be a bonanza of children's and family events, including readings by best-selling children's author Anna Kemp, craft activities led by Denise Beaumont of *Alice the Palace Postwoman* fame, and a chance for older children to hear exciting *Propellor Man* tales with authors Gerard Lewis and Lizzie Shannon-Little. Saturday afternoon offers a deep dive into science with field-leading speakers on topics such as proteins, plant genomes and medical advances in heart and brain conditions. Take your seat in the Town Hall to hear more!

For fans of crime fiction, Saturday evening has a treat in store, as celebrated local authors Cara Hunter and Simon Mason join forces with new crime writer Anna Beer. On the afternoon of Sunday 3 May a performance by Oxford School of Drama is followed by interviews with distinguished local authors Melanie and Ross King. To round off the festival with a dose of beautiful classical music, on Sunday evening Maria Razumovskaya will perform piano pieces by Franz Schubert.

Tickets are available from www.ticketsource.co.uk, via our website www.woodstockbookshop.co.uk, or on the door (subject to availability). We look forward to welcoming you!

WOODSTOCK BOOKSHOP FESTIVAL		
Fri 01 MAY	POETRY IN THE CAFE HOSTED BY ESTHER LAY JD BRATTEN OPEN MIC	HAMPERS DELICATESSEN 31-33 OXFORD STREET WOODSTOCK OX20 1TH 6-8.30 PM £10 INC. WINE/SOFT DRINK
Sat 02 MAY	CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL ANNA KEMP DENISE BEAUMONT GERARD LEWIS and LIZZIE SHANNON-LITTLE	ST HUGH'S CENTRE HENNINGTON ROAD WOODSTOCK OX20 1JL 10 AM-1PM £5 PER FAMILY
Sat 02 MAY	SCIENCE FESTIVAL PROF JON DOYE DR LIJA LEITCH PROF YUJIA ZHANG 4 th SPEAKER TBC	WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL MARKET PLACE WOODSTOCK OX20 1SL 2.30-5.30 PM £10 INC. WINE/SOFT DRINK
Sat 02 MAY	A WOODSTOCK EVENING OF CRIME and WINE CARA HUNTER SIMON MASON ANNA BEER	WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL MARKET PLACE WOODSTOCK OX20 1SL 7-10 PM £10 INC. WINE/SOFT DRINK
Sun 03 MAY	OXFORD SCHOOL OF DRAMA and LITERARY DISCUSSIONS WITH MELANIE and ROSS KING	THE OXFORDSHIRE MUSEUM PARK STREET WOODSTOCK OX20 1SN 2-5 PM £10 INC. TEA & CAKE
Sun 03 MAY	MUSIC IN ST MARY MAGDALENE MARIA RAZUMOVSKAYA PERFORMS SCHUBERT	ST MARY MAGDALENE PARK STREET WOODSTOCK OX20 1SJ 7-9.30 PM £10 INC. WINE/SOFT DRINK

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The Marlborough C of E School

The Marlborough School Charity Week

Week commencing 23rd March saw our annual Charity Week, a much anticipated event in the school calendar where the whole school comes together to fundraise for three worthy charities. This year, our nominated charities were Seesaw (local), Oxford Children's Hospital (national), and Save the Children (International).

Students took part in plenty of fun activities throughout the week including break time tuck shops, the ever popular 'Soak the teacher', and 'Battle of the Bands' - a spectacular musical evening with the top three bands winning the opportunity to play at this year's popular 'Woodstock Live' event. One of the highlights to Charity week is our fun run around Blenheim Palace; unfortunately, due to the high winds and the closure of Blenheim Palace, the run could not take place on the date originally planned. However, in true Marlborough style, our students showed fantastic resilience, and the fun run took place upon return to school following the Easter holidays. A huge thank you to all of our students who took part in the week's activities and truly lived out our school values of respect, perseverance and ambition. We also extend our thanks to the whole Marlborough school community for their donations and support. The money you have helped us raise will genuinely change lives for the better. Further details on the total amount raised will be shared very soon.

The Marlborough School Charity Week - Baking Competition



Baking competition entries

This was the first year we had a baking competition as part of Charity Week and the students rose to the occasion. This event was a true celebration of our school community, throughout the competition, we saw incredible ambition in the complex recipes chosen, and a great deal of perseverance - especially from those who had to navigate the occasional collapsed sponge or tricky icing! Most importantly, the respect shown by all participants for one another's work made this a truly joyful event.

Well done to everyone who participated! Your hard work made this one of the most delicious events of the year. We then sold the entries at the cake sale. A full write up of the competition, winners and categories, will be available in The Marlborough News, due to be published at the end of this term

Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Gold Practice Expedition



DofE Gold Practice Expedition

Following the DofE Gold Practice Expedition in March, Year 12 student Lizzie shares her personal reflections on the experience:

The Duke of Edinburgh's award is a fantastic opportunity for young people to develop existing interests, learn new skills and meet new people. Possibly the most challenging part of the award is the expedition: a 4-day camping and hiking adventure through the countryside that puts to test a person's physical and mental stamina. On the 2nd of March, four teams of Year 12's ventured to Wales to complete their practice in preparation for the qualifying expedition in June.

On a bright, cold Monday morning, twenty-one Year 12's arrived in Hay-on-Wye, eager to set out and explore. Each student was fully equipped with all the hiking and camping essentials: Maps and compasses, outdoor gear, and several tents per team - not to mention enough food and the equipment needed to cook up much-needed meals for the entire trip.

During the following days, the routine was simple yet challenging. After waking up at first light, breakfast was prepared, tents taken down and the day's route puzzled over in advance. Working together, teams navigated public footpaths, open access land and bridleways across rocky, wet and steep terrain.

However, the views from the top of the mountains made every painful step infinitely worth it: the beauty of the Welsh countryside's rolling hills and sweeping valleys have no parallel. By the end, with aching feet, sore shoulders and exhausted minds, the students stumbled to the finishing point, rightly proud of themselves yet excited to go home.

A huge thank you to all the instructors, teachers and parents for making this experience possible for our young people. By Lizzie R (Year 12)

Bladon Primary School

Visits and Trips



This term, the children at Bladon C of E Primary School have enjoyed visiting a range of places in the local area to support their learning across the wider curriculum.

Blenheim Palace kindly granted Acorns Class permission to walk through the grounds to reach the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. In History, the children have been learning about a significant event that happened in nearby Stonesfield. They were very interested to hear about the exciting discoveries of fossilised footprints and pieces of jawbone belonging to Megalosaurus and they had great fun imagining what the local area would have looked like in prehistoric times! Acorn Class took part in a workshop, run by Sonia from the museum and explored the Dinosaur Garden to learn about how fossils are formed. A real highlight was being able to act like a palaeontologist to handle and explore a range of fossils!

Chestnut Class had a fantastic visit to Chedworth Roman Villa to support their History learning. The children were really engaged and enthusiastic during the visit and it was a wonderful way to bring their learning about the Romans to life in an inspiring setting. The children were pleased to have the opportunity to ask experts questions to deepen their knowledge of the Romans.

As a part of their Music curriculum, Orchard Class have taken part in a series of workshops with Ali from Oxford Opera. At the end of their unit of learning the children joined other schools and choirs to perform in the magnificent Sheldonian Theatre! The children commented on how wonderful it felt to learn songs in different languages, to sing with a large group and perform alongside a full orchestra led by a conductor! A big thank you to Oxford Opera and Cotswolds Arts Through Schools for funding and providing this amazing experience for our Year 6 pupils!

Ellie Jenkins

WOODSTOCK TENNIS CLUB WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ALL WEATHER SURFACE

AFTER DARK LIGHTING (WINTER)

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Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone - how lovely it is to see all the spring flowers appearing everywhere - how it lifts one's spirits.

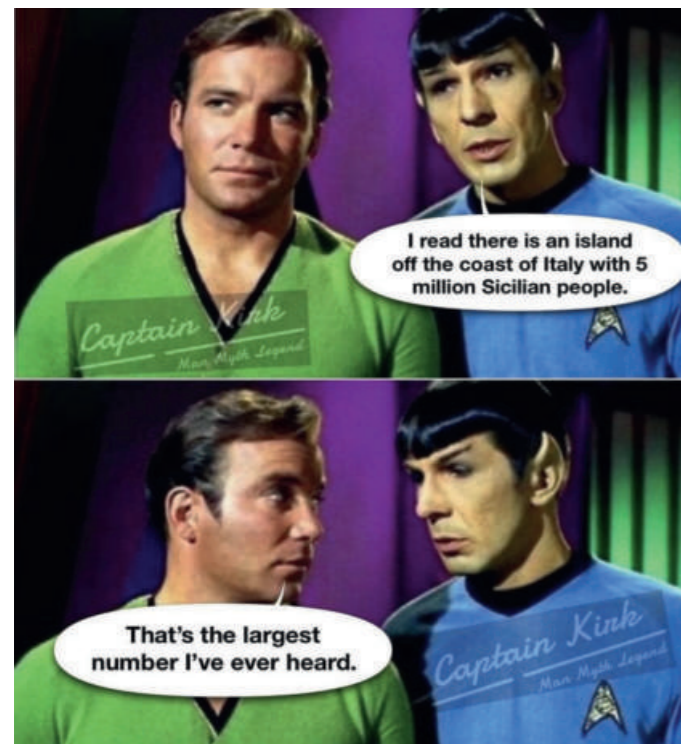
On 13 April we welcomed the return of Gill McGregor, this time with her title 'Floral Artistry and Flair'. Gill truly demonstrated her title. She wowed us with some wonderful arrangements each containing beautiful foliage. She showed us several ways of folding aspidistra and cordyline leaves, using them in the arrangements, to make them more interesting.

On 11 May we have a new demonstrator to us, Sharon Badger with her title 'A New Lease of Life'. Our next meeting after this is the outing to Windsor Flower Show. At this moment in time the coach is full, and we do have a waiting list. It should be a wonderful day out. And on 13 July we will welcome Andrew Key, another new demonstrator to us with his title 'May to September'.

Our Programme Secretary has done a wonderful job on the programme this year all thanks to his hard work and dedication. If you would like to join us at any of these meetings we would be delighted to see you. We meet on the second Monday of the month in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park, Woodstock and the meetings start at 7pm. Subscription for the year is £45 and visitors are £10. If you would like to know any more information about us, please contact me on 01865 376587.

Margaret Lang

Meme of the Month



Panniers

Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon



Shared-use paths should be a respectful, safe environment for all users

"Share the Space, Drop your Pace" is a campaign by the Canal & River Trust to encourage respectful sharing of narrow towpaths by cyclists and pedestrians. And it is a motto that we can all follow wherever, and however, we are travelling.

The Highway Code's hierarchy of road users prioritises the most vulnerable - pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders - at the top and places the greatest responsibility for safety on drivers of larger, more dangerous vehicles. It aims to protect those at highest risk and does not remove the need for everyone to behave responsibly.

With summer here, the shared-use paths around Woodstock will be busier than ever, so those of us who cycle need to put the safety of pedestrians first. Slow down, and take extra care. Be aware that those whose hearing is impaired or who are wearing headphones might not hear your approach.

On holiday in Germany a few years ago I came across a road safety campaign with a slogan that translated as "Kindness widens the way". So let's all practise some respect and consideration on our travels. Happy everyday cycling!

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

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Oxfordshire & Home Counties

Keep It Local

For a small town, Woodstock has an impressive number of clubs and societies that satisfy a wide range of interests. This is a town where it's hard to get bored as there's something to do every day. Perhaps less well-known, but still important, is the Woodstock Stroke Club which welcomes stroke survivors, their carers and partners. While hospitals help survivors with medical assessments and therapists can guide them to healing activities, the Stroke Club is a haven. Survivors can relax among people who've had similar experiences. They can share stories with people who understand what they've been through and discuss how they are navigating life.

Stroke Club members meet every Tuesday, mid-morning. Twice a month the club meets at the Woodstock Community Centre, where members can enjoy talks on subjects ranging from 'Remembrance (The Great War)' to 'Village Hand Tools'. On the other two weeks, they meet at a local garden centre. A simple lunch is provided, including pudding ...

... which brings me to the subject of ice cream, or 'gelato'. Our local Gelateria Alfonso has won Best Food Product or Producer at the Cotswold Life Food & Drink Awards 2025. I've always loved their ice cream, not least the fact that you can get half scoops which makes me feel a little healthier! Their win, however, prompted me to find out a bit more about them and I was interested to learn that their founder, Lewis, is from Rome and came to the UK to study chemistry.

Lewis wanted to bring part of the culture that he so loves to the UK and that is how Gelateria Alfonso was born. His wonderful flavours are based on those of his home country, enhanced with locally sourced ingredients and inspired by insights from his chemistry studies. And, when temperatures are a bit low for eating ice cream, you can always sample their delicious coffee from a local roastery.

If you'd like to find out more about the Woodstock Stroke Club call 07432 704 042 or email mikeshipway71@gmail.com

Cheers, Vanessa Ayres

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Saturday 9th May 2026

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Bladon Gardens Society

Guest Speaker Event

The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

21st May 2026 7.30 pm

Jude Barrett

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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



Little Ones at Lincroft

Join us here at Lincroft Meadow on the 2nd Friday of the month at 10.30am for our intergenerational toddler group. Little ones are invited to enjoy stories, singing and plenty of playtime with our residents.

Attendance is free but booking is required.
To RSVP call 01865 950500 or
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Woodstock Probus Club

The speaker for March was Nicole Perry-Bradford who talked about the Oxfordshire Museum Service. They have well over 100,000 objects covering social history and archaeology stretching back to the palaeolithic times. (The Palaeolithic Age, or Old Stone Age, was a prehistoric period from roughly 3.3 million to 11,650 years ago). The museum service also have several properties - the best known is probably Fletcher's House but there is also Swalcliffe barn north of Banbury, (which Probus visited relatively recently), the Bishop's Palace in Witney, and their resource centre south of Witney (which Probus visited a few years ago).

Nicole covered many interesting aspects of Oxfordshire history. I comment on just a few here. The origins of the Oxford fire service date back to 1654, when the Oxford corporation purchased its first fire engine. By 1661, the service had four engines, and three men were subsequently paid £1 a year to maintain them.

She reminded us of the remarkable 18th century polished steelwork for which Woodstock was once famous. It was reputedly made from horseshoe nails reworked to make delicate faceted studs, cut like diamonds and highly polished. Cut-steel short swords were particularly sought after - unfortunately steel


production folded in the face of competition from the Birmingham manufacturers.

Witney blankets were supplied to Wellington's armies during the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), providing essential gear for soldiers in the conflict. This military demand created a significant boom for the town's manufacturers. The blankets were also used extensively in the first world war.

In 1970, the sculptor Michael Black was commissioned to create 17 replacements for the Emperor's Heads outside the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford. The original heads which dated back to the 1660's, were replaced in 1860's, and then again in the 1970's. An exhibition of Michael Black's work was recently held in Fletchers House, including his iconic white ox, used in May Day celebrations.

We have also had a couple of outings. On the 12th March there was a visit to the British Motor Museum, at Gaydon with lunch afterwards and on 11 April we visited the museum at Brize Norton. Readers might remember that in June 2025, activists from the group Palestine Action breached RAF Brize Norton, sprayed red paint into the engines of two Airbus Voyager aircraft causing extensive damage. Special security was in place for our visit but we all entered and left without incident.

David Anderson, Past President



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Blenheim Park Cricket Club – Players & Vice Presidents Wanted for 2026

Blenheim Park Cricket Club, based in Woodstock and playing on the South Lawn at Blenheim Palace, is looking to welcome new players for the 2026 season.

With strong local roots and a history on the South Lawn dating back to the 1950s, the club offers friendly cricket in a unique setting.

We are also seeking support through our annual Vice Presidency (£100), which helps fund the running of the club. Vice Presidents are recognised on our website and fixture card.

If you are local and would like to get involved as a player or vice president, please get in touch.

Dave Hughes - Dihughes1986@gmail.com - 07769 110258
 Chairman, Blenheim Park Cricket Club

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Woodstock & District u3a

Our speaker for April was Dave Thornhill who spoke to us about flooding and climate change. Dave runs Yarnton Flood Defence. Dave explained the different types of flooding and how infrastructure and nature-based solutions can help improve this. He detailed what flooding and climate change mean for our communities and how we can prepare and adapt. Flooding is one of the most visible and immediate impacts of climate change in the UK. Dave also offered some practical advice on who to contact should a flood need to be reported.

There will be no speaker meeting in May due to our AGM taking place on 7 May.

The next speaker meeting will be on 4 June, when John Wilford, whose talk is entitled 'Soundman a journey through Rock and Roll'. John will speak about his 30 years as a sound engineer and tour manager and has worked with well known artists and musicians. Visitors £3.00 to include tea/coffee and biscuits.

The Scrabble Group, a recently formed group, with a full complement of eight players, got off to a great start in February. The sessions are held in a member's home which can accommodate eight players comfortably. We meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 10 am. Please contact the group coordinator

if you would like to be on the waiting list and if one of the regulars can't make it for any reason then you will be contacted and be most welcome to come along to join us for a one off session. We currently have a space for one new member. For further information please refer to our website: www.woostock u3a.uk.

The Welsh Conversation Group held its first meeting on 26 March. We were able to chat in Welsh over coffee and homemade Welsh cakes, help each other with grammar and pronunciation and share language books. If you are a Welsh speaker or want to improve your Welsh, please get in touch with us. The next conversation group will meet at 10.30 am on Thursday 23rd April in a member's house. All levels of ability in Welsh welcome.

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at St Hugh's Centre, Hensington Road, Woodstock, at 2pm for a 2.15 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 the website: www.woostock u3a.uk. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Sian Wallworth, Press Secretary


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Jill Cable

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Monday 18th May

Church of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock

7.30pm Meet & greet

8:00pm Guest Talk Begins

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programme please visit www.woodstockociety.org or email us
at info@woodstockociety.org

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

Bladon Snippets from the Past

Fifty years ago a deep blue Aubretia curtain adorned a Cotswold Stone wall in Heath Lane, Bladon. The Aubretia lives on but most of the wall has gone; removed to make parking space for residents.

What a Springtime treat for all to enjoy.

Mary F. Sitch

Regular Events

If you would like your event included here, please email 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.

If you would like your event included here, please email editor@wobl.news.

Friday 01 May 2026

The Woodstock Bookshop - Festival
6 events over 3 days - Friday 1 until Sunday 3 May
Various Venues

Wednesday 06 May 2026, 19:30

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

Friday 15 May 2026, 19:00

Artists in Woodstock - Music
Concert for Rosie: Music by Mandolirium and
Rosie's sister Susie B.
St Mary Magdalene

Monday 18 May 2026, 20:00

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

Wednesday 20 May 2026, 20:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk
From Oxford to Narnia - The Worlds of CS Lewis:
Professor Simon Horobin
St Mary Magdalene

Friday 22 May 2026, 00:00

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk
Jude Barrett: The Tradescants, Gardeners to
Charles I and Plant Collectors
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

Friday 29 May 2026, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
Dom Franks Quartet: Saxophonist Dom Franks
presents his 'Round Midnight' show
St Hugh's Centre

Wednesday 03 Jun 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk
Mark Davies: A Literary Waterways' Tour: flowing
words & 'liquid history'
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

Saturday 13 Jun 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

Tuesday 16 Jun 2026, 20:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk
Professor Seamus Perry: 'W.H. Auden: Early and
Late'
St Hugh's Centre

Friday 26 Jun 2026, 19:30

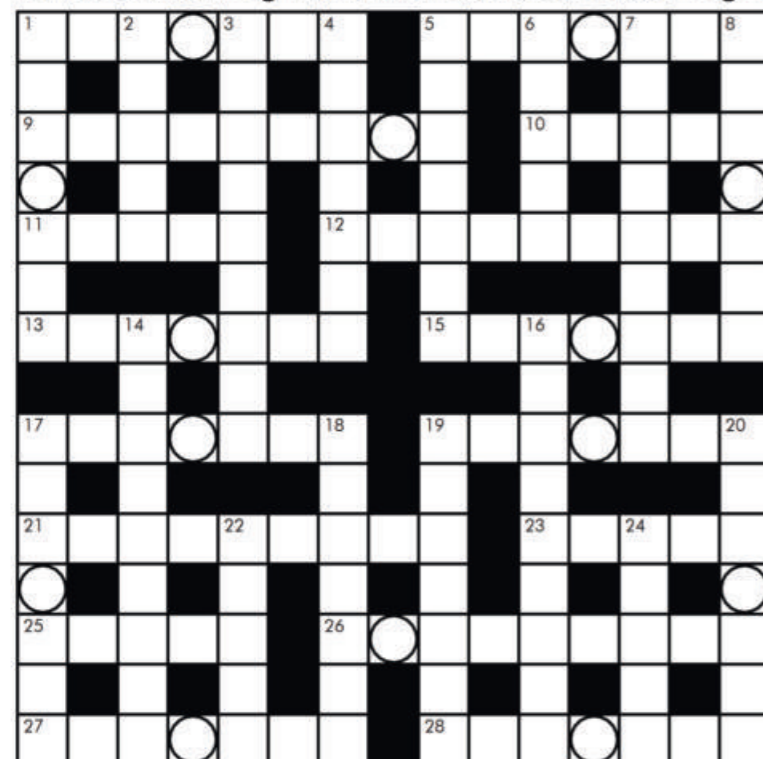
Woodstock Jazz - Music

QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

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

1. Peter Jay, Economist, former UK Ambassador to The USA and, in later life, resident of Woodstock, was the Son in Law of which UK Prime Minister, who, as a Junior Transport Minister in 1947, was responsible for putting Cats Eyes in Britain's roads?
2. Another Son-in-Law of a Woodstock resident has a penchant for a small Bolognese, and links Threadneedle Street to The Maple leaf. Who is he?
3. Son of Edward II, born at Woodstock Palace on June 15th 1330, Edward, known as The Black Prince, was a renowned Knight in The 100 years war, the price being that he was unable to outlive his father. Consequently, his son became which King of England?
4. Sam Eagle, a patriotic muppet, gave a nickname to which famous footballing resident of Woodstock?
5. She played Velvet, Cleo, and Martha, was renowned for her violet eyes and was often seen around Hollywood with Rock Hudson. Which golden age movie star might you have seen in the 1960s dripping diamonds and nibbling a sausage roll, while her husband played darts for the King's Head 2nd team?
6. Which Woodstock born footballer was part of a partnership which once bought Oxford United for £1?
7. Phil Selway, until recently relocating in 2023, lived for several years in Woodstock. An Oxford United fan, he appeared in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire as a member of a wizard Rock Band 'Weird Sisters' but with which globally successful band did he become famous?
8. Number 7 Market Place, Woodstock was latterly owned by which former footballer and hotelier, who died on the street outside the premises on December 23rd 2003?
9. Which iconic Woodstock and Bladon character once said, "I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals?"
10. There is a famous photograph of Jane Burkin, hanging onto the finger post in the centre of Woodstock, with The Punch Bowl Inn as a backdrop. It also features her partner, Serge Gainsborough, behind the wheel of a white Triumph GT6. Without any BBC radio play they spent 6 weeks at the top of the 1969 UK charts with which song?

Solve the clues to this straight crossword. Read through the letters in the marked squares to reveal something the Editor has been observing in Sri Lanka.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Across</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharpest 5. Angling 9. Flowering bush 10. Greek letter 11. Occasion 12. Musical group 13. Apparent 15. Clearly 17. Makes 19. Link up 21. Possible 23. Savoury taste sensation 25. Shoestrings 26. Sleuth 27. Spread apart 28. Sorrow | <p>Down</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accomplish 2. Excessive 3. Passing of a law 4. Harbour craft 5. Type of hat (4,3) 6. Kettle deposit 7. Helplessness 8. Grain store 14. Alike 16. Declared 17. Domed roofs 18. Slid; lost traction 19. Bowel disease 20. Arm muscles 22. Spiteful 24. Having life |
|---|---|

Why not join our FREE Daily Puzzle Club and take a look at our fantastic printed Puzzle Magazines? Just visit www.puzzlechallenge.co.uk to take part.



WOODSTOCK BOWLS CLUB
CADOGAN PARK, WOODSTOCK, OXFORDSHIRE, OX20 1UW

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www.woodstockbowls.co.uk 01993 812225

For those that don't know we are located at the end of Cadogan Park in Woodstock, next to New Road playground.

Bowls is played here all year round, indoors from September to April and outdoors from April to September. We welcome people of any age and ability to give it a go. We currently have around 90 members.

Our Open Day this year is on Sunday 17th May. We'd love to see you at some point in the day, however if you can't make that, feel free to pop along any Tuesday evening between 6pm and 8pm for what we call a 'roll-up'. First 3 roll-ups are free.

We have 10 indoor teams and would like to potentially expand this to 12 for the upcoming season starting in September so if you come along during the outdoor season and take to it we can if you wish look to get you involved for the indoor season. For further information please email declan.doran@btinternet.com.

KINGFISHER STUDIOS AND GALLERY

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