

# WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

July 2026

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# OLD WOODSTOCK MOCK MAYOR 2026

Join us for a day of fun, tradition,  
and community spirit!

 3pm-10pm, Saturday, 11th July  
 2026 Woodstock Town Square

On the day there will be:

-  Children's games and face painting
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## Editorial

I am finding it hard to believe that this Editorial - the last for the current year - is the twentieth that I have written.

I must begin by thanking you, readers and subscribers, for your support in buying WOBL. The print run of 625 copies means that actual readership will be well over a thousand copies. And of course I must also thank our advertisers for their valued support; and all our wonderful contributors, deliverers, and back-stage experts, too.

We have been lucky to have plenty of 'themed' articles, such as the series of Burnside legal and JLDA building articles, the new Woodstock Literary Connections, Portrait of the Month, WOBL Around The World, and many more. We will be starting a regular 'Me and My Pet' article, and I am very open to new ideas from anyone who feels so inspired.

I am particularly proud of the twenty covers we have published, and very grateful to the talented artists who have allowed their images to be used. Please write to me if you feel that you have been missed.

And please also make contact if you feel you can help in any way. We particularly need more contributions for the Letters page, which I feel should be an important part of a local magazine. There are many issues for us to get involved with, some large and some small, but all of significance in a local community. There is no shortage of controversial topics that would benefit from open (and polite!) discussion; such as Botley West, the Town Council, Potholes, the Post Office, Parking, Housing and Planning, Doctor's Surgery, etc, etc. It's not always easy to put your head above the parapet, but do please let us have more letters - and let's not always leave it to the same people to write. If you're really concerned about anonymity, we can always say 'name withheld'.

I wish everyone a lovely summer, and look forward to seeing you all again for the August/September issue due out in mid August

**Nick Manby-Brown, Editor**

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## Subscriptions

The magazine costs £2 per issue, or £20 per year, and the price remains the same as the previous year.

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 first issue for next year will be titled August/September, and copy deadline is **Sunday 2 August 2026**, for publication on Friday 14 August.

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

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

The front cover is from a series of photographs featuring Woodstock by Diana (Di) Woodhouse, a member of Artists in Woodstock.

# Going, going, and (almost) gone?

## Is Woodstock Post Office under threat?

Woodstock is fortunate to have in its midst an invaluable community asset in the form of Woodstock Post Office, currently competently run by Rana and Swarn Lally, aided by the lovely 'Linda of the Post Office' behind its counter.

Rana and Swarn have contributed to our Woodstock community in this manner (and more), for some 22 years. Up until now they have lived in the flat above the shop. As such, the flat could be seen as important ancillary accommodation for the Post Office tenants, and indeed there is no independent entrance to it, given the high level of security which Royal Mail insists upon for the premises overall. An entrance via the garage would not be available because the garage is needed by the commercial premises and is included within them. The Landlord for the shop - and for the integral flat above it - is Woodstock Town Council, whose property agent is Breckon & Breckon.

The leases for both the shop and the flat (which are separate), were due to expire in March 2033 but there is a break clause within them allowing the tenants to give notice to terminate that lease in **March 2028**. This is the crucial date which is not a very long time away. The clock is ticking.

Both the shop and the flat were to have regular rent reviews, one of which happened earlier this year. This is where the problems begin for Woodstock.

There is nothing unusual in tenants having to face rent reviews every few years. The issue of concern is more to do with the extent of the uplift in the valuation advised by Breckon & Breckon and the totally unreasonable pressure it places upon the Post Office tenants.

The suggestion was that the going rental rate for both the flat and shop together should be about £38,700 pa. This would mean a possible rental uplift of almost 90% over and above the current rent which Rana and Swarn have been paying until now. To my mind, that's a huge increase. It would be unsustainable for our Postmaster and Postmistress. Furthermore, the agent's valuation fails to take into account the inherent value to Woodstock, that having a local Post Office provides. **A Post Office is a vital community asset, and a lifeline for many residents and businesses.** The rent rises imposed by previous town councils always reflected this added value.

Quite suddenly, the Town Council has decided to operate in a totally different (to my mind, high-handed) manner, greatly to the detriment of the community it claims to represent. At a time of a cost

of living crisis in this country and overall international political uncertainty, the possibility of such a massive and unsustainable uplift in rent resulted in Rana and Swarn suggesting a compromise to our Councillors; namely, that they would no longer rent the flat but instead, would commute daily to Woodstock from Slough. They felt they could manage this arrangement, but only until the Post Office break clause in the commercial lease could be exercised by them (i.e. in March 2028), which would then end their tenancy.

In the interim, Royal Mail would require notice of the termination of the Post Office to be given in advance of March 2028. In practice this means notice to terminate the Post Office in Woodstock will have to be given around the middle of next year. Once this happens, Royal Mail would begin to remove its postal equipment from the premises and the slow demise of an essential community asset for Woodstock and its outlying communities will have begun.

### Our post office will cease to exist as such from 25 March 2028.

Woodstock Post Office is undeniably invaluable for the services it provides our community - and those of many surrounding villages. The list of these postal services is extensive: not just stamps. It also provides facilities for Post Office card accounts, cash deposits and withdrawals (NB we no longer have a bank here), bill payments, charging electricity key and gas cards, mobile phone top ups, car tax payments and multiple other services. Quite apart from all this, having a Post Office in town attracts other visitors here to use our pubs and cafes, and to shop in general. In effect, the Post Office is a community hub. We are at serious risk of losing this facility in the very near future.

To my mind, not enough thought has been given to the longer term implications of these latest proposals and the result that removing the Post Office would have on Woodstock and wider communities.

For example, how is it proposed that separate access be given to the flat above the shop, if the intention by the Town Council now is to let this out separately to the commercial premises beneath it? It has to have this entirely separate access in order to satisfy the security requirements of Royal Mail. There is none presently. The garage, quite clearly, would need to be retained for the tenant of the commercial premises. It is also part of that original Post Office lease. So how is it proposed that the flat is accessed independently? It can't be, with the present layout. The alternative is to keep the flat empty - with no rent to the Council - until March 2028. That makes little sense.

This is not the only difficulty. Any future tenant of the commercial premises is extremely likely also to require the flat above the shop. If the flat is not vacant

(even if it could be separately accessed) when the Post Office itself is yielded up, this is going to make it harder to find a suitable commercial tenant, let alone someone qualified as a Postmaster/mistress. Given the horrific and ongoing injustice of the Horizon scandal, these wonderful people who serve our community are not easily found. This makes the eventual loss of our Post Office even more likely if Woodstock councillors persist in their current actions.

So where do we go from here? How on earth has it come to this? How is it that such a significant and important decision involving a critical town amenity was taken by a mere handful of town councillors (just 5!) and behind closed doors (would you believe?!) on 16 June? Where is the common sense in all of this? Where is the judgement and thought behind this monumental decision? Where is the transparency and openness that this Council professes to espouse?

Instead I sense only shortsightedness and a failure to attach enough significance to the added non-monetary value which the Post Office service offers Woodstock people and our surrounding area. Of course the flat is ancillary to the Post Office. Certainly this has to be retained as such. Post office operatives should be given every encouragement to continue that service for all the benefit it provides for its customers far and wide, and indeed also for all our local businesses.

Over and above everything else, Woodstock must not lose its Post Office. Our Town Council, which is meant to represent its electors, must bend over backwards (and more) if need be, to ensure this cannot happen now, or ever. That is where the focus needs to be for the sake of both our residential and business communities. That is where the mandate for Town Councillors must be. This must be their legacy for our town and the means whereby Woodstock Town Council regains some of the respect it has lost as a result of such disastrous decision making in this matter.

Action by all our Town Councillors is demanded urgently to rectify this impending disaster. Woodstock cannot and must not lose its Post Office in some 18 months time. As I said, **the clock is already ticking.**

Jo Lamb

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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](mailto:Dihughes1986@gmail.com) - 07769 110258  
Chairman, Blenheim Park Cricket Club



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# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

## Woodstock Post Office

I remain deeply concerned by the actions of Woodstock Town Council, whose role is to represent the interests of the people of Woodstock.

As many of you will now be aware, a resolution of sorts has been reached regarding the Post Office. Rana and Swarn Lally have been allowed to continue running the Post Office, with a rent increase of £2,000, which appears reasonable. However, they have been required to vacate the flat above the premises, for which they currently pay a separate annual. The Council intends to re-let the flat at a higher market rate.

In practical terms, this means that Rana and Swarn will have to commute daily from Slough in order to open and operate the Post Office. I have spoken regularly with Rana throughout this process and he is understandably upset by the situation. He has told me that they intend to continue until their lease expires in 2028, after which they will leave.

Rana has also informed me that one councillor told him that if he was unhappy with the situation, he should simply walk away, and that a 'community shop' would replace the Post Office. What exactly a community shop is, and whether it could provide the same services, is an open question.

It is important to remember that the Lally family are not living in the flat rent-free. While the rent may be below full market value, this arrangement helps support the operation of a vital community service. Post Offices are not highly profitable businesses, and their value to a town extends far beyond financial return.

There are a number of concerns surrounding this decision, and I believe we need greater transparency and public discussion. Most importantly, we need to ensure that the flat remains affordable for whoever operates the Post Office in the future. If we fail to do so, there is a real risk that Woodstock could lose this essential service when the current lease ends in 2028.

I would therefore like to propose the formation of an action group to discuss and coordinate our response. We collected more than 250 signatures in just a few hours - imagine what could be achieved with an organised team of volunteers.

Some points for discussion include:

### 1. Attendance and Decision-Making

Only five of the eleven councillors were present to vote on this matter at the meeting on 16 June. Given the significance of the decision, many residents may wish to understand how such an important issue was determined by less than half the Council.

### 2. Lack of Public Transparency

Decisions were made behind closed doors, meaning that neither the public nor the Lally family had the opportunity to present their views. While some financial matters understandably require confidentiality, many residents will question whether this issue warranted such secrecy when so much is at stake for the community. The Council should openly explain the reasoning behind its decision in a calm and transparent manner so that residents can properly understand and discuss it.

### 3. The Future of the Post Office

The flat should form part of the overall Post Office package in order to make the role attractive and sustainable for future operators. This does not mean providing accommodation free of charge, but rather recognising it as a community asset and pricing it accordingly. Without such support, it may prove extremely difficult to attract future operators, and Woodstock could permanently lose its Post Office after 2028.

### 4. Community Action

We should organise a carefully planned petition and make it available in public locations throughout the town. This could be supported by a door-to-door campaign to ensure that as many residents as possible have the opportunity to express their views.

### 5. A Volunteer Committee

Finally, I propose establishing a committee of volunteers to coordinate efforts, share information, and engage constructively with the Council. I would be more than willing to be involved. I propose we have a meeting to discuss action. Please reply to melanieking62@gmail.com if you would like to be involved in the action group or just want to express support.

Please take this opportunity to express your concerns to Woodstock Town Council in writing and ask for a clear explanation of the decisions that have been made. There may be valid reasons why an emergency meeting was called when six members of the council were absent, why discussions took place behind closed doors, and why the public was not consulted on such an important matter. However, these reasons should be openly explained to the residents whom the council serves.

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of local government. As a resident, you have every right to understand how decisions are being made, particularly when they affect valued community services.

Make your voice heard. Ask questions, seek clarification, and request openness from those elected to represent the people of Woodstock. Transparency is not a privilege - it is a right.

Melanie King

Dear Editor,

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

WOBL readers may remember this headline from the letter I wrote for the February/March 2026 edition. The headline was based on the Town Council Staff and Administration budget for 2026/27 being agreed at £210,500 (mainly increasing staff payroll) versus the 2024/25 actual of £101,000, whilst cutting the mere £5,000 previously allocated for Town Projects together with reductions to other services.

What Council taxpayers might not know is that our precept was increased and the budget also presented rent increases on Council owned properties of £37,000 (+25%). Without these increases in income, it would not have been possible for the Council to come close to a balanced budget.

It now appears that proposed rent increases were not agreed with all the tenants. As WOBL readers may be aware, the owners of Woodstock Post Office (a Council owned property) have, they say, received a letter proposing to put up their rent from the current '£20,500 to approximately £38,700'. Not surprisingly, they are challenging the reasonableness of a £18,200 increase, and their letter to Councillors has been circulated on Facebook.

It is beyond comprehension that our Council would assume, with as I understand it no prior discussion, that a Post Office could ever afford such an increase regardless of the market valuation provided by the Council's Agent. As the letter from Rana and Swarn (the owners of the Post office) makes clear, it puts the business at risk of closure and a valuable asset to our community could be gone for ever. What is equally incomprehensible to me is that having presented and agreed a budget to spend an additional £109,500 on Staff and Administration, the same Council would risk the closure of a Post office by proposing an additional rent of £18,200 from the owners.

For me, it is yet another example of a Council which prioritises spending on itself and not the residents it serves. Please readers, if you can, attend Council meetings to see for yourself how our representatives act on our behalf.

Chris Coe

Dear Editor,

## The Church Clock

What is happening to the St Mary Magdalene Church Tower Clock which appears to have stopped at 11.10 for a very long time and is no longer striking the hour?

We are particularly concerned to find that this historic clock has not been in working order for many months. It is an important part of the Town's heritage yet appears neglected. When living nearby we so enjoyed the chimes and the catchy musical tunes that could be heard throughout the Town. Something must be done to restore this historic asset.

Graham and Jennie Candy

# Wootton Talks

Our next speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 3 July is **Nicky Shaw**, the multi-award winning international set and costume designer working mainly in opera, but also in theatre, musicals, television and film.

She has designed productions for all leading opera companies in the UK, including Royal Opera House, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Opera and Garsington Opera (she also created the dress that Louise Alder wore in the second half of the 2025 Last Night of the Proms)

Nicky has also worked extensively in Europe, including with Royal Danish Opera, Royal Swedish Opera, Komische Oper in Berlin, Frankfurt Oper, Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, and Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, as well as productions in Seoul, South Korea

She has collaborated on many critically-acclaimed productions with international opera directors including Orpha Phelan on *La Cenerentola* with Irish National Opera; and *DeadMan Walking* with Royal Danish Opera

Nicky has also worked with Annilese Miskimmon (currently Artistic Director at English National Opera), on *Madama Butterfly* at Glyndebourne, *Semele* with Garsington Opera, *Jenufa* with Royal Swedish Opera, Danish National Opera and Scottish Opera - plus *La Traviata* with Scottish Opera; *Don Quichotte* with Danish National Opera and Buxton Opera Festival and also *The Magic Flute*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Coronation of Poppea*.

Entry at St Mary's Church is £10 in cash - and includes free food. Children over 16 welcome. Modest donation for drinks. Cards can be used to buy speakers' books. (Upgraded sound-system plus toilet facilities available). More details on our website [www.woottontalks.co.uk](http://www.woottontalks.co.uk).

To reserve seats, please contact us through our website

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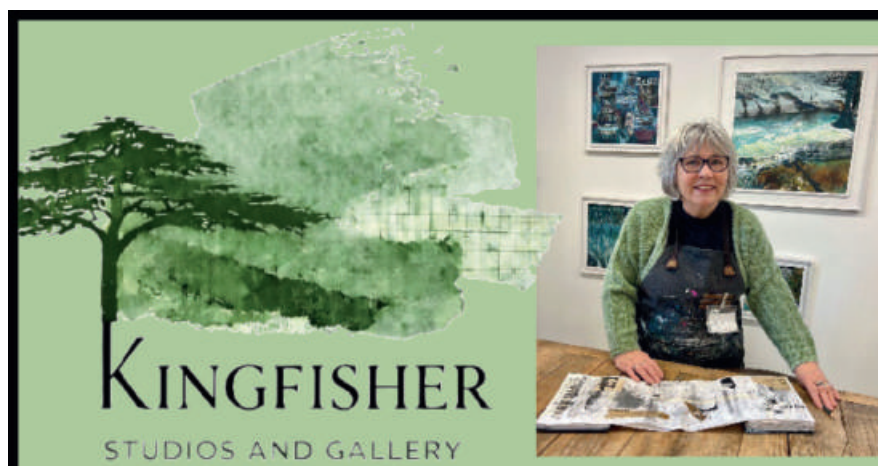


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**PANTON DESIGN**  
Office 1  
17 Market Street  
Woodstock  
Oxfordshire  
OX20 1SU

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m: 07801 258899  
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## WOBL Around The World



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

The Editor is working on WOBL outside his hotel room whilst watching the sunset over the Indian Ocean

And here he is, having a head massage after a hair cut in Sri Lanka

Graham, landlord of the Bird in Hand, Henley-on-Thames  
Antony, co-owner of The Boxing Hare, at Alcudia, Mallorca  
Happy chance meeting with Woodstock residents Katie and Rachel, at Lords Bar, Negombo, Sri Lanka

NMB and Tim Mathews outside Jetwing Blue Hotel, Negombo, Sri Lanka

David and Charlie in Port d'Andratx, Mallorca

Claire, Helen, and Penelope in Port d'Andratx, Mallorca

# Council Matters

Woodstock and Bladon News has reported on Council meetings since at least 2022. All reports are available to view on our website: [wobl.news/council-matters](http://wobl.news/council-matters). Policy for the magazine, as always, is to endeavour to remain professional, balanced, and accurate.

This month we report on two Town Council meetings and one Extraordinary Town Council meeting.

For three issues now, at the end of the regular reports from Town Council meetings space has consistently been offered to OCC, WODC, our MP, and our own WTC to communicate with our readers in the magazine. All parties but the Town Council have taken up the offer. The Town Council has now missed these three opportunities to address our readers.

For copy in this July issue, the Editor emailed an invitation to both the Clerk and the Mayor. No reply was received from either.

## Woodstock Town Council

### Town Council Meeting on 26 May 2026

7 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The OWL recording device was on the table.

**Public Participation:** 2 members of the public spoke. Hilary Brown spoke about **community benefit** from renewable energy projects. Sustainable Woodstock is encouraging its readers to complete an Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) consultation, also on the Town Council's agenda for the meeting. There are many renewable projects in the pipeline and OCC are keen to establish a framework to encourage developers to contribute towards community benefit and how this should be managed locally. Following, Rana Lally who, together with Swarn, has operated the **Post Office in Woodstock** for 22 years spoke regarding their rent increase. Woodstock Town Council owns the building and their property agents have increased the annual rent from £20,500 to £38,700, an increase of nearly 90% which is not affordable and would probably result in the Post Office closing. Rana asked if the rent could be kept at the current level until September 2028 when the current contract expires. The Council did not respond.

**Planning:** There were no objections to planning applications on Oxford Street, Hensington Road, Blackberry Way and Shipton Road. The Clerk had received 10 emails from Park View residents objecting to road plans through the **proposed extended development of Park View** and concerns about parking and bus routes. Councillor Wheatley took on board these objections and will include them

in the Town Council's objections to the development to Cherwell District Council. The Clerk will write to Cherwell District Council to see if a Woodstock Town Councillor can speak at their planning meeting, also highlighting the need for S106 development money for the community to be given to Woodstock (in West Oxfordshire District Council).

Owen Wilson from the **Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service** gave a presentation. He was very pleased that the station was not closing in Woodstock and thanked the Council for their support. Owen explained that training and retention of volunteers was difficult in Woodstock. 4 trained firefighters are required for a fire engine to be dispatched and these are not always available. Owen wanted to work with the Town Council to recruit more volunteers in Woodstock.

**Mayor and Clerk Reports:** The new mayor, Councillor Sarah Williams, thanked Councillor Grant for her help and reported that **Woodstock surgery** would be sending out letters to residents who are not using the surgery so they might be removed from their list. The Clerk referred to the audit report included in the agenda and asked if the Council should continue with the same auditors, the response being yes. The Council can proceed with co-option for the **Councillor vacancy** on the Town Council and the position is currently being advertised.

**County and District Councillors reports:** County Councillor Andy Graham reported a change of leader of the County Council, it is now Councillor Tim Bearder. OCC are working on an investment plan for monies coming from the congestion charge. The Park and Rides around Oxford will continue to be free until August. OCC is continuing to invest more in pothole repairs and resurfacing. There will be an autumn consultation regarding the **complete closure of the A44** outside of the Black Prince to allow cabling work for the Hill Rise development. District Councillors Poskitt and Massie (newly elected following the retirement of Councillor Cooper) reported on two consultations, the first on community benefits from renewable energy schemes, the second on West Oxfordshire District Council's local plan, relating to climate change action, improving biodiversity and housing. Councillor Poskitt made reference to **solar panels** being installed on Charlbury Community Centre, funding coming from Section 106, where developers provide funding to mitigate the impact of new developments.

**Finance:** The current balance is £407,783.

**Pothole and Street Works Crisis:** Councillor Wheatley offered to write a further letter in response to the Department of Transport's reply which he felt did not address the current state of our highways and the Government's responsibility.

**New Doctors' Surgery:** the Mayor reported on a recent meeting with Calum Miller MP who gave a number of undertakings including equality, traffic, transport access, costs and parking. From the Town and Palace Dialogue meeting held on 11th May, it became apparent that the proposed surgery on the former Owen Mumford site **may not require a full planning application** and could proceed as permitted development or as a change of use. If this was the case the Town Council and public would not be consulted and unable to raise any concerns. The District Council will determine whether planning permission is required. An amended letter to Calum Miller will be sent together with one to Councillor Liz Leffman, executive member for planning at the District Council.

**Christmas lights:** The Clerk has been asked to contact companies to ask for display suggestions and quotes. Wake Up to Woodstock are no longer able to organise the display of small trees on buildings in the town centre and the Council are to consider taking this over. Unspecified reserves would need to be used to cover the additional cost.

**Lawn Cemetery:** Works needed were discussed including the paths in the original part of the cemetery in need of relaying and the front wall being in poor condition. Also the lychgate roof has now been replaced. 5 new benches are also now in place.

**Oxfordshire County Council public consultations:** Two were discussed. Cadogan Park area double yellow lines - Councillor Poskitt suggested extending the lines at the corner of Plane Tree Way. Councillor Wheatley presented the second consultation regarding Community Benefit payments from future renewable energy projects and how these would be administered. Councillor Wheatley will propose a response for the next Council meeting.

**Tree debris:** Councillor Grant reported that following the removal of a tree adjacent to the Brook Hill flood channel, debris was left in the channel which may lead to flooding in the area. The Council agreed that WODC be asked to clear the channel completely.

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

**Graham Brown**

### Town Council Meeting on 9 June 2026

7 councillors and 11 members of the public attended the meeting. The Clerk was unable to attend, and Councillor Grant took the minutes.

**Public Participation:** Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock spoke about the screening of the People's Emergency Briefing. This is a documentary film that is being shown around the

country to encourage discussion about the **Climate and Nature crisis** and based on the recent National Emergency Briefing. Hilary encouraged all to go to a screening and put pressure on our MP to call the Government to hold a prime-time TV screening. **Annie Cripps** asked the Council if it would consider **individual microphones** for Councillors as it can be particularly difficult to hear certain Councillors when sitting in the public area. **Ed Creasey** reported to the Council that he had secured money from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to address the problems of **flooding in the Water Meadows** which can be used to repair river banks and clear the trash screen. He thanked the Councillors responsible for the Water Meadows for their support. Ed confirmed that the trash screen at the A44 end of the Water Meadows that becomes blocked and leads to flooding is **the responsibility of the Town Council**. He has written many times to the Council, including a petition from 42 residents, but has had no response. Ed asked for a response as it is the polite thing to do. Sadly, as is the current format of public participation, the Mayor would not allow any comments from the Councillors.

**Planning:** there were no objections to the applications from the Star with no comment on the change of use proposed. There were also no objections to applications from Mavor Close and Bear Close. The Council agreed on a **proposed bus gate** between the Park View development and the proposed adjacent development on land south of Perdiswell Farm.

**Mayor and Clerk Reports:** The Mayor reported that a member of the public had been offensive toward a member of the Council staff and that this was not acceptable and the staff have the full support of the Council. Regarding the **Post Office**, the Council is not seeking to double the rent, this is the figure proposed by the Council's property agents and negotiations are ongoing before it comes before the Council. A **parking working group** was suggested as retailers are complaining their trade is being impacted by the parking situation in Woodstock. Councillor Cooper questioned the need for the parking working group as the Traffic Advisory Committee can address this. Councillor Grant suggested another parking survey. The motion for the parking working group was defeated. Councillor Dawson supported the idea of using **microphones to be used** at Council meetings and asked the cost. The Clerk's report also referred to Councillors not speaking up at meetings impacting the accuracy and completeness of minutes. The Clerk asked Councillors to speak clearly and at sufficient volume.

**County and District Councillors reports:** County Councillor Andy Graham was not able to attend the meeting. West Oxfordshire District Councillors

Poskitt and Massie reported that branches had been cleared in the drainage gully on Brook Hill and that the remaining logs were above the flood plain. Councillor Grant added that nothing should be in the drainage channel and would meet with Councillor Massie. The swimming pool open season is May 23rd to 30th August with heating from 20th July.

**Finance:** Several entries were incorrect or not complete. The reconciliation (balances) was said to be correct. The Council voted to approve the finances. The current balance is £407,783.14.

**AGAR:** The Annual Governance and Accountability Return, a statutory annual financial and governance document demonstrating current and transparent use of public funds, was passed for external audit. This is available to the public.

**Tree Works:** A tree inspection report from Dowdeswell Forestry was presented where trees throughout the 7 sites with Council responsibility had been assessed. **Trees listed as high priority**, found in the Water Meadows, The Old Woodstock Line and New Road Playground, should be dealt with within a month. Two quotes for the high and medium priority work were received, Councillor Poskitt noted the very different prices, the cheaper of the two was chosen. Councillor Dawson noted that the budget would need to be increased for next year to cover these costs.

**OCC Formal Consultations:** Councillor Poskitt will write to OCC to extend the double yellow lines at the cross roads of Plane Tree Way and Flemmings Road. Councillor Wheatley was thanked for his detailed response to the Community Benefit for Renewables consultation.

**Pothole and Street Works Crisis:** Draft letters to both the Department of Transport and OCC Highways proposed by Councillor Wheatley were approved.

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

**Graham Brown**

**Extraordinary Town Council Meeting on 16 June 2026**

5 Councillors were present, with the Clerk in attendance.

7 members of the public also attended.

**Prior to the meeting:** Five members of the public had hoped to have the opportunity to speak on the Budgens application but were informed that there is no public participation slot in Extraordinary Town Council Meetings and therefore would not be heard.

**Planning:** The two applications pertaining to **11 Hill Rise** were considered together although the Reference

Number 26/01294/HHD had already been granted but not proceeded with. The second application Reference Number 17/00781/HHD Noted that no objections had been received from Neighbours. The Council noted no objections

**2 Chaucers Lane:** Concern was expressed re neighbours now being over looked with the proposed replacement of opaque glass and the proposal that the window would now open. With that objection noted, there were no further objections.

**Application for new premises licence for Budgens Park View:** Discussion focussed on the proposed opening hours of the proposed store with Councillors considering that 11pm closing time was too late for a residential area.

**Confidential:** There followed a proposal for the press and public to be excluded from the meeting while Councillors received a report from the property agent, due to the delicate nature of this report. Councillors had not received a copy of the report and therefore some considered that they were not in a position to judge whether the contents were confidential or not.

Cllr Grant reminded all that although WODC had no such limitation on the discussion of potentially confidential documents in their meetings, the Woodstock Town Council was following the advice of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for reasons of GDPR, to protect the identities of individuals. Confidential reports were not circulated in advance for the same reason; in case they were stolen from a car or property or lost. The proposal to exclude the press and public from the discussion of the Property Agent's report was eventually passed, with three councillors in favour, one against and one abstention.

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

**Annie Cripps**

**Council Matters**

**Recordings of Town Council Meetings**

As previously reported, the Town Council has regrettably not taken advantage of this magazine's offer to talk to Woodstock residents.

Fortunately, the magazine has reported on council meetings since 2022. Since November 2024, we have also made legal recordings to assist in our reporting. With the new interest in Council Matters; it is now time to make them publicly available. They can be viewed (some are audio only) at <https://www.youtube.com/@WoodstockCouncilMatters>

**Portrait of the Month - Birgit Pederson**



Birgit Pederson came to England at sixteen on a school trip, returned at eighteen as an au pair, married her childhood sweetheart at twenty-one, and never quite left. "We spread our wings," she laughs, "and suddenly it was our silver wedding anniversary." She is 89 now, and tells anyone who asks without a moment's hesitation.

For over thirty years Birgit ran Coiffure of Copenhagen and the Scandinavian Gift Shop, a place people describe as less a shop and more a club, bringing a touch of Nordic warmth and style to Woodstock that people have never quite forgotten. "I still meet people wearing a piece of jewellery or a scarf they bought from me."

Now settled near Blenheim Palace, her front garden as her daughters call it, Birgit is Woodstock's unofficial Danish Embassy, a small flag outside marking her door. She founded the Merry Widows Club in 2004, nine friends who decided to get on with life together after loss. They are two now. One of the originals, Adriane Young, died recently at 101.

Birgit has three daughters, a little buggy for the lake, a garden full of birds, and no intention of going anywhere. "I shall end my days here," she says, then catches herself. "I'm happy here. That's what I meant."

*Portrait of Birgit Pederson taken by fine art portrait photographer, Pippa Hetherington.*



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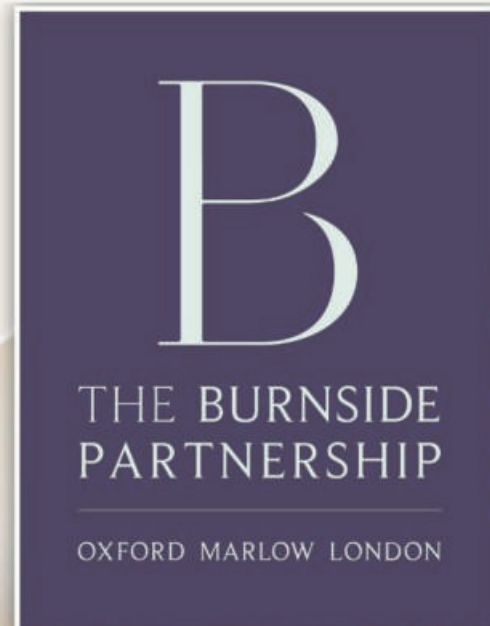
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## A Tale of Two Spaces

Woodstock citizens surely applaud WOBL's concern for the greening of Woodstock's public spaces, as seen in its recent support for the St Mary Magdalene Churchyard, now flourishing again.

Currently, WOBL's readers might like to reflect on a different tale of spaces in Woodstock, actually a tale of two adjacent spaces in the Hensington Road.



*The Memorial Garden*

One is of ex-wasteland, the old Hensington House Memorial Garden, but now totally transformed thanks to the amazing efforts of John Banbury and his helpers. It is now cared for by Woodstock Chapel Trust, on the site of the former Hensington House Chapel, part of the old Victorian Workhouse. 'Beautiful' does not begin to describe it.



*The derelict old Library site*

The second story is also one of wasteland, but in this case totally untransformed, left by Oxfordshire County Council to become a pointless derelict space, reminding some of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. To be honest, it would be better as a carpark than the scrubland it is now. OCC's uselessness is a scandal which illustrates how a local authority makes changes for the worse (like pulling down the Library) but only rarely for the better. Perhaps OCC will ask John Banbury for his thoughts.

Anthony Glees

## Wake Up To Woodstock



Running a business in Woodstock brings a unique mix of opportunity and challenge. The town benefits from a strong identity, a thriving visitor economy and a loyal local community, yet many independent businesses still face the

reality of balancing visibility, marketing and growth alongside the demands of day-to-day operations.

That is where being part of a local business network can make a difference.

Wake Up to Woodstock is a not-for-profit association run by local business owners, with a simple aim: to connect and support businesses across Woodstock and Bladon.

The main benefits of membership is collective visibility. Members can feature in the highly valued Blenheim Palace e-shot, helping businesses reach a wider audience, alongside coordinated social media, shared business news and a listing within the Wake Up to Woodstock online directory.

Connection is equally important. This month, businesses came together for the latest Wake Up to Woodstock Summer Mixer, hosted at Alex's Creperie, a vibrant food business and WUTW member, launched in 2025. It provided an opportunity for local business owners to meet, make new connections and strengthen existing relationships.

Open to both members and non-members, networking mixers create a welcoming environment where businesses can exchange experiences, generate referrals and explore collaborations. Several networking events take place throughout the year, culminating in the popular Christmas mixer event at Blenheim Palace, which rounds off the year festively!

Beyond networking, Wake Up to Woodstock works with partners including Experience Oxfordshire to help raise the profile of Woodstock and ensure local businesses are represented in wider conversations around tourism, events and economic development.

Membership is open to any business with an OX20 postcode, whether customer-facing or behind the scenes, long-established or newly launched. The association reflects the diversity of Woodstock's business community and provides a simple way for businesses to stay informed, connected and visible.

To find out more, visit [www.wutw.co.uk](http://www.wutw.co.uk) or email [info@wutw.co.uk](mailto:info@wutw.co.uk).



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Turn up the volume on reading this summer with a FREE children's reading challenge at your local Oxfordshire library!

From 4 July to 5 September, children across Oxfordshire can collect stickers and rewards as they enjoy reading library books.

The Summer Reading Challenge 2026: Read to the Beat, in partnership with Universal Music Group UK, celebrates the joy of reading with a theme inspired by music. It's the National Year of Reading, so make reading part of your summer adventures!

Children who finish the Challenge at an Oxfordshire library will receive a medal, a certificate and entry into a prize draw. Under 4s can take part in a mini challenge with their own special collector's folder and stickers.



Read to the Beat! Illustrations by Henry Woodgate, Illustrations and logo © The Reading Agency 2026

Look out for fantastic new books and activities at your library. Find out more at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/summer-reading-challenge](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/summer-reading-challenge) and go to [summerreadingchallenge.org.uk](http://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk) for more fun!



## Nature Matters

July holds the warmth and ease of high summer, a time when the countryside feels open, generous, and full of steady activity. Vegetation is at its fullest now, with tall grasses rippling in the breeze and wildflowers creating bright, shifting mosaics across meadows and banks.



Marbled white butterfly on Knapweed - photograph by Ulrich Knoll

Knapweed, scabious, meadowsweet, and thistles remain prominent, and they are joined by yarrow, lady's bedstraw, betony, wild marjoram, and patches of self-heal scattered through shorter turf. Their flowers draw in a wide range of insects - bees working methodically, hoverflies darting with sharp precision, and beetles clambering over petals in quiet determination. Along hedgerows and the edges of woodland, bramble flowers offer rich nectar, while shady spots hold the cool minty scent of water mint near damp ground and streams.

Butterflies reach their greatest diversity. Meadow browns, gatekeepers, ringlets, red admirals, and small tortoiseshells remain abundant, but marbled whites drift over grassland, while commas, peacocks, and painted ladies bask on warm paths. Over ponds and slow streams, banded demoiselles flicker iridescent green and blue, and broad-bodied chasers patrol in looping circuits, their wings catching the light.

Birdsong has quietened, but the countryside is far from silent. Yellowhammers call their familiar "little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheese" phrases from hedgerow tops, and goldfinches gather in loose groups to feed on ripening seed heads. Mixed family groups of blue tits, great tits, and long-tailed tits move through thickets and hedges, and possibly our gardens - their soft calls giving them away long before they are seen.

Mammals make the most of long, warm evenings. Brown hares move through fields with easy, measured bounds. Roe deer browse quietly along the margins of woodland, often appearing suddenly and pausing in alert stillness. Field voles and bank voles dart between tussocks, following narrow, well-worn runs.

As dusk falls, bats emerge to forage, tracing confident paths along hedges, meadows, and waterways. Near streams and rivers, the life of the water continues at its own pace. Small fish rise to drifting insects, and water boatmen, pond skaters, and the occasional diving beetle animate the surface. Dragonflies skim low over the water, and on warm evenings their silhouettes appear briefly against the reflections.

Seed heads develop across meadows, the first sign of the gradual shift towards late summer. Blackberries begin to colour on sunny banks, offering early rewards to birds, mammals, and any passer-by who notices their quiet ripening.

July carries an assured, unhurried character. It is a month that encourages steady wandering, a warm appreciation of the varied life around us, and a sense of ease in the countryside at one of its richest points in the year.

### Mayfly Dun

## Panniers

Dozens of youngsters from all over the county braved one of the hottest days of the year to tackle a cycling obstacle course at the Marlborough School playing fields in June.



The course - run by the Witney-based Windrush Bike Project - was just one of the activities at the Year 7 Inclusive Sports Day. The children showed off their cycling skills, weaving in and out of cones, riding over jumps and underneath a limbo bar.

Many of the riders recognised the Windrush Bike Project instructors from the Bikeability courses that they had taken in Years 5 and 6.

The bike project is a great resource for anyone interested in cycling in West Oxfordshire. It runs a thriving community bike workshop in Corn Street, Witney, and offers cycle training for all ages and levels of ability. A Wheels for All session is held every Saturday at Wood Green School in Witney with bikes that are adapted for disabilities. The project also sells second hand bikes and has a "bike library" so that anyone without a cycle can still be included in rides and training.

Enjoy a great summer of cycling!

**David Walker is a qualified Bikeability instructor**

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Sustainable Woodstock

Jeremy Clarkson: right and wrong

Some WOBL readers may have noticed West Oxfordshire’s most famous farmer admitting climate change is now real due to drought and deluges to have hit his pastures in recent years. It’s a few decades and quite a few anti-green articles late, but Jeremy Clarkson’s recognition of the facts should be welcomed. It highlights the extreme pressure farmers around Woodstock and Bladon face from extreme weather. They are on the climate frontline, 24/7. Where Jezza was wrong though was his assertion that ‘there’s nothing I can do about it’. It’s easy to feel in the face of our mad world we have no agency or means to respond. It’s also complete balderdash.

The onus is - yes - on governments of major polluters around the world to do their bit. But as voters, consumers and local citizens we can all do our bit to make the world, the UK, England, Oxfordshire, Woodstock and Bladon a better place to live. This fact lies at the heart of the work Sustainable Woodstock does to hold our MP and local councillors to account, restore degraded landscapes in and around the town, lay hedges, plant trees, build insect hotels, pick litter and drink beer in the Crown every 8 weeks (all welcome). It’s perhaps too much to expect Jeremy to sign up to SWOO, but residents (and non-residents) are very welcome to join our ranks. We live in a stunning part of the world and a place we have the power and skills to protect. Come join us! sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com

Ed King, Chair, Sustainable Woodstock



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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.

Late June, July, and August Fixtures

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|-------------|------|------------------|
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| Sun 5 July  | Home | Cricketers Club  |
| Sun 12 July | Home | Checkendon       |
| Wed 15 July | Home | Supporters Event |
| Sun 19 July | Home | Eynsham          |
| Sun 26 July | Home | Islip            |
| Sun 2 Aug   | Home | Elmhurst         |
| Sun 9 Aug   | Home | Steeple Aston    |
| Sun 16 Aug  | Away | Littlewick Green |
| Sun 30 Aug  | Away | Bibury           |

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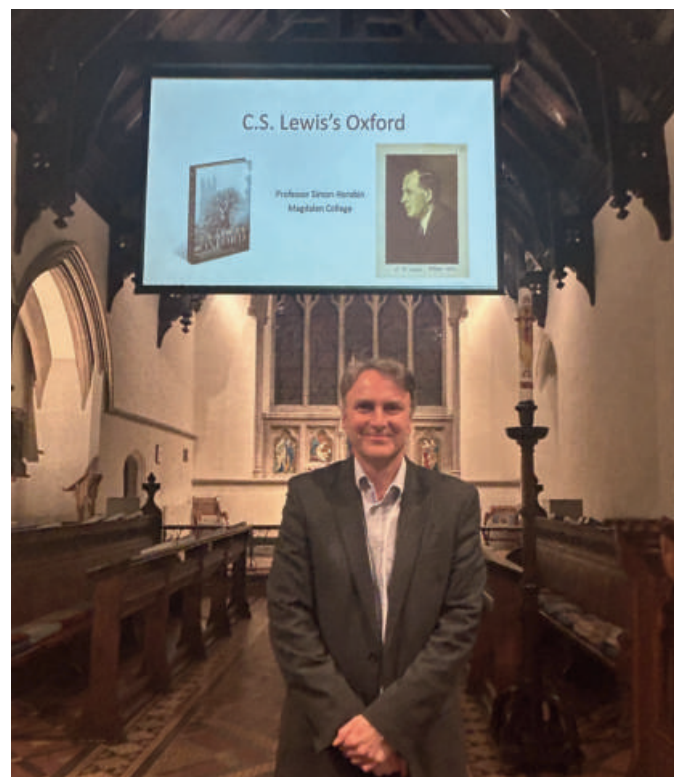
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## Woodstock Literature Society

**Review of a talk on Wednesday 20 May 2026  
By Professor Simon Horobin  
From Oxford to Narnia: the Worlds of  
C.S. Lewis**

Following our summer party in May, we enjoyed a fascinating talk by Professor Simon Horobin on C.S. Lewis. As a Fellow of Magdalen College, he has a keen interest in Lewis, who was a Fellow of the same College.



*Professor Simon Horobin*

Lewis was born in Belfast, arriving in Oxford in 1917, where his studies in 'Greats' (Classics) were soon interrupted by being called to serve in the closing stages of the war. Returning to Oxford, he gained a double first, and it was clear that he would pursue an academic career, which he achieved by taking a degree in the newly established School of English and becoming a Fellow at Magdalen College, where he remained for the next 30 years.

Lewis' sitting room at Magdalen, overlooking the deer park, became a hub for lively discussion, sometimes with undergraduates in tutorials - although he found students like John Betjeman irritatingly idle! - but also in long evening sessions with fellow academics. He joined and set up several societies which met at Magdalen and elsewhere, where in addition to debate members would share chapters from their current writings.

The most famous of these clubs, of course, was the wittily titled Inklings, who met at the Eagle and Child

pub in St Giles weekly to share their current work. Lewis was by this time a close friend of J.R.R. Tolkien, and it was in this setting, wreathed in pipe smoke and beer mugs in hand, that new chapters from *The Hobbit* and *The Narnia Chronicles* were shared and discussed.

What is extraordinary is how a highly educated academic with no children of his own came to write children's fantasy fiction. One answer, of course, is that the Narnia books are Christian allegories, and Lewis was a devout Christian convert who wrote many books exploring faith, such as *The Screwtape Letters*. Professor Horobin also pointed out that Tolkien and Lewis shared a passion for early northern European mythology which sat quite comfortably with their Christian faith, with many evil creatures from these early texts finding their way into their fantasy tales.

Perhaps the real answer is that Lewis, with his eccentricities and passionate enthusiasms, remained fundamentally a child at heart? He was also a kind and thoughtful man: during WW2 he corresponded with a former student interred in a prison camp, sending him an ambitious reading list which he imagined the prisoner could access! A wonderful mixture of the humane and the other-worldly.

If you'd like to find out more, Professor Horobin's book *C.S. Lewis's Oxford* is recommended.

Anne Handsley

### OXFORD BUS MUSEUM



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## Woodstock Literature Society

**Review of a talk on Tuesday 16 June 2026  
by Professor Seamus Perry:  
"W.H. Auden: Early and Late"**

We were delighted to welcome back our Woodstock neighbour Professor Seamus Perry, soon to be installed as Master of Balliol, this time to talk about the development of W.H. Auden's thinking and poetry.



*Professor Perry pointing out Auden, the youngest of three brothers.*

Professor Perry has a particular interest in political poetry, and certainly the younger Auden's work was very much influenced by the rise of Fascism in the 1930's. He had earlier been drawn to T.S. Eliot's depiction of the moral wasteland following the first World War, and he shared the leftwing views of Oxford friends like Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood and Louis Macniece. After his experience in Spain during the Civil War, he wrote *Spain*, partly to raise funds for medical relief work in that country, but later came to despise the easy rhetoric of this early work. Indeed, Auden was in the habit of adding derogatory comments about his work when signing copies for fans.

*Musée des Beaux Arts*, one of his most famous poems, took a more nuanced view of human experience, noting how humdrum human life continues regardless as Icarus falls into the sea in Breughel's famous painting. And in his later poem *The Shield of Achilles*, Auden rejects all ideas of the nobility of warfare; in place of "ritual pieties" following war, the true horror of mankind's capacity for cruelty is depicted. Declared unfit for military service, Auden left Europe for the United States in 1939, and later took US citizenship, saying that he chose to live there because it was a rootless country.

Auden was a complex and fascinating man, and his oeuvre is equally vast and varied, but this talk gave us an insightful glimpse into the subject. Professor Perry is currently writing a biography of Auden, and provided us with some surprising snippets: for instance, as a young man, Auden was fascinated by science and engineering, and in fact began studying Natural Sciences at Oxford before switching to the new subject of English Language and Literature. It was also interesting to be introduced to a late poem called *Moon Landing*, an enterprise he concludes "would not have occurred to women/ To think worthwhile".

We are fortunate to have recordings of Auden reading some of his own poetry, and you could hear a pin drop as the audience listened to the poet reading some of his own work. Many thanks to Professor Perry for sharing some of his extensive knowledge of Auden, whom he sees as the foremost English poet of the 20th century, in such a stimulating talk. We look forward very much to reading Professor Perry's biography of Auden.

Anne Handsley



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# Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

On Sunday 2 August we shall be holding a special event at the museum, when we shall have lots of visiting coaches and buses from the 1950s and 1960s. We shall try to recreate the atmosphere in Gloucester Green Coach Station in its heyday.

At the end of May the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a temporary reduction in the VAT rate on museum admission charges from 20% to 5% until 31 August, and we have therefore reduced our entrance fees for the period.

The Morris Bullnose Club visited the museum on 10 May. It brought a fine collection of 20 Morris vehicles, most of which were Bullnoses.



The first five vehicles to arrive.

From the left they date from 1924, 1928, 1924, 1926 and 1926. All the cars in the lineup are bullnoses and were built in the Cowley factory. William Morris reluctantly dropped the distinctive radiator design in 1926 because, as car engines became more powerful, they needed more cooling, which the bullnose design could not provide.



1928 Morris Commercial light ton van, PX 9155

The 1928 Morris Commercial light ton van in the picture, PX 9155, is a rare survivor. Only four are known to be in preservation in the UK out of just over 3,000 that were made by William Morris at his Soho Works in Birmingham between 1926 and 1930.

PX 91255 was first sold to EW White Funeral Directors of Chichester. It was originally painted yellow, which seems an odd colour for a hearse. The van’s current owner thinks that it may have been used for transporting wood and completed coffins rather than at funeral services!

Matt Harris acquired the vehicle in 2023 and takes it to shows and classic car runs. It is insured for any driver over 25. Matt allows young people to drive it hoping that they will get interested in old cars. He keeps restoration to a minimum to preserve original features. However, the van now has a starting motor, so the starting handle is seldom used.

Some of the 60 members of the Morris Bullnose Club went round the museum and enjoyed it. We provided tea, coffee and biscuits in the back of the café for the party. The visit was a great success, and they are considering returning for their next Annual General Meeting!

Frank Collingwood

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**Bladon Gardens Society**  
Guest Speaker Event  
*The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon*  
**16th July 2026 7.30 pm**  
**Tim Walker**  
Former Director of Oxford Botanic Garden  
“Summer-The Missing Season”



£3.00 entry for non members. Doors open at 7.00pm for Tea and Coffee  
Parking is difficult in Church Street and we must leave space for the Speaker. The school has given permission to park in the playground for meetings.  
Access to this is from Grove Road.  
Bladon Gardens Society Membership details  
Annual Subscription: £15; Visitors to monthly meetings £5

## Keep It Local

There are few sounds more closely associated with the ideal of an English town or village than the melodious peal of church bells ringing out. They are part of our heritage and provide the soundtrack to our historic moments and community celebrations: they announce the weekly Parish Eucharist, call out to mark weddings, or toll for funerals. During the Second World War, bells were silenced and were only to ring out if there was a German invasion.

Bell ringing has a long and fascinating history. However, it is a dying art and we can no longer take this typically English sound for granted. Fewer and fewer people are taking up bell ringing in no small part, due to the fact that church communities are getting older. But I suspect that, if the bells stopped ringing, we’d feel the loss of these wordless, musical and deeply expressive community announcements.

I was lucky enough to chat to Malcolm Fairbairn, who’s a bell ringer at St Mary Magdalene in Woodstock and through his joy and enthusiasm for his hobby, he made me aware of a whole new world. Malcolm’s been ringing bells for decades here and in Oxford. When you become a bell ringer not only do you join a group of local people who share the same interest, you become part of a worldwide society. Whether you holiday in Jersey or Australia local bell ringers will welcome you to their towers, and show you around their neighbourhoods.

There are schemes to try and get young people interested in bell ringing. For example a church in Abingdon works with a local school, to give students the chance to try bell ringing and learn more about it.

If you’d like to give it a try, you can join Malcolm and the ringers every Thursday at 19:30 and... learn the ropes! If you’d like to find out more, please email [stmmwoodstock@gmail.com](mailto:stmmwoodstock@gmail.com)

Vanessa Ayres

## Updates on ‘Botley West’

**Applicant’s request for more time refused!**  
Last month we advised our supporters to watch out for the Applicant’s (PVDP) answers to the questions asked by the Secretary of State (SoS) in April 2026. The questions were detailed and varied and included:

- landscape and visual impacts
- residential visual amenity
- heritage impacts
- ecological matters
- flood risk and hydrology
- aviation safety
- agricultural land quality
- site selection and alternatives
- grid connection arrangements

All of these matters were previously raised by Stop Botley West (SBW), our supporters and other interested parties during the Examination which concluded in November 2025.

PVDP recently sent a letter to the SoS requesting an extension of nearly 4 months to 25 September to complete the work required to answer the 70+ questions.

The SoS replied and refused any extension, giving PVDP just one more day to submit what they could by the original deadline of 9 June.

This was a very interesting development and not good news for PVDP!

### What happens next?

The answers that PVDP and others submitted to the SoS were published on 11 June.

Visit [stopbotleywest.com](http://stopbotleywest.com) to: register for updates, read the answers and get the latest news on the application and decision.

Interested parties including SBW and our supporters can respond and comment on the SoS’s questions and PVDP’s answers. This may be your **final opportunity** to ‘Have your Say’.

Please submit your comments (by 16 July) to the SoS at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero via the Planning Inspectorate by email only to: [BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

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Woodstock Literary  
Connections  
Michael Place, Librarian in Woodstock  
Interviewed in Woodstock by Judd Flogdell



Michael Place, Woodstock Librarian

Whilst in the library recently, to collect a book I'd reserved, I thought it would be great to interview our friendly and efficient librarian, Michael Place (whose official title is Peripatetic Customer Service Adviser).

**JF:** To begin with, tell us a little about yourself; where you're from and your background?  
**MP:** I'm from Manhattan in Kansas, and studied secondary education at University there. After that I moved to study Ancient History, Archaeology and Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Following on from that I progressed into working with library collections.

**JF:** For how long, and how did you come to be working in Woodstock Library?  
**MP:** My wife found new employment with the University, and as a result we have been here in Oxfordshire for almost five years, when I started working for Oxfordshire Library Services. That includes time spent in Woodstock, Bicester, Cowley, and Oxford Westgate Libraries.

**JF:** Tell us about a favourite book or books from your schooldays?  
**MP:** In my early schooldays my favourites were William Golding's Lord of the Flies, and Orwell's 1984. At university, reading De Officiis by Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius' Meditations helped greatly to shape who I am. Here in the UK, I love to read everything by Terry Pratchett.

**JF:** What changes have been introduced in our library, or libraries during your time?  
**MP:** We, as a service, have been making a concerted effort to have meaningful conversations with people to improve the physical and mental well-being of people in Oxfordshire.

Also, we will be adapting The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge, an annual, nationwide library scheme which will be running slightly differently this year with more opportunities to complete the challenge. It runs between 4th July - 5th September, and the focus, as always, is to get more young people into libraries and reading.

**JF:** I imagine that the internet has changed our use of reference books, which reference books are most frequently used, and are books such as cookery books still borrowed?

**MP:** There is a small stock of reference books in Woodstock, but they are stocked across other Oxfordshire libraries too. A reader's library card entitles them to free access of Encyclopaedia Britannica online and free access to newspapers, magazines, library e-books and audio books. Amongst non-fiction books, cookery books are still popular, as are those about art and crafts, and Social Science.

**JF:** Could you tell us some facts or stats about the books in Woodstock Library – such as which writers/novels are most popular?  
**MP:** In the year 2025-26 Woodstock library issued 21,300 books, and around 13,000 visits. Junior fiction are probably the most frequently borrowed type of books. It is not uncommon to have 40 or more names on a waiting reservation list. New books by major writers, such as Richard Osman, can see a reservation list which is up to 150 names long! Overall, Oxfordshire Library Services had 2m visitors to the library, 3.5m loans, and over 19,000 meaningful conversations last year.

**JF:** What about children's books and activities for younger readers?  
**MP:** Children's books are categorised slightly differently, and sorted by type from picture books, board books, early readers, categorised by level of difficulty, graphic books etc, according to age category. Of these, our picture books are absolutely the most popular, but our early readers see a fair amount of use as well.

For activities, Rhyme Time happens every Friday at 10.30am, and Story Time on Tuesdays at 4.00pm. In addition, we have occasional activities during school holidays. Being located inside the Oxfordshire Museum we have the added bonus of activities co-ordinated alongside what they offer.

**JF:** Which genre or type of books do you enjoy in your leisure time?  
**MP:** I do enjoy a bit of history non-fiction, but most of my reading at present consists of 'How to...' and parenting books.

**JF:** Are you familiar with the 2004 film The Day After Tomorrow, in one part of which, a group of people are stranded in a library, and are forced to burn the books in a fire to keep warm and stay alive? If in that predicament, which book would you save until last?  
**MP:** I would hang onto the SAS Survival Handbook for as long as possible, in order to get out of that situation!

Curate's Log



By the time you are reading this, I will have been ordained priest. It feels both exciting and humbling to reach this point, and it has prompted me to reflect on my first year as a curate, serving as a deacon.

A few weeks ago, I preached a sermon about the Holy Spirit's job description. It was a light-hearted way of exploring a serious question: what exactly does the Holy Spirit do? The answer, of course, is that the Spirit is constantly at work – nudging, guiding, encouraging, connecting people, and often appearing in what we might simply call coincidence.

As I look back over the past year, I realise that my own "job description" as a deacon has felt a little like that. Many people are unsure of the difference between a deacon and a priest, and that's understandable. Traditionally, a deacon's role is to be a bridge between the church and the wider community. Looking back, much of my year has been spent doing exactly that: meeting people, sharing conversations over coffee, visiting schools, supporting community groups, listening to stories, and discovering the many ways God is already at work in people's lives.

One of the greatest privileges has been noticing those moments that seem accidental but somehow turn out to be exactly what was needed. A chance conversation, an unexpected meeting, a word of encouragement offered at just the right moment. I have come to believe that the Holy Spirit often works quietly through these ordinary encounters.

Although I am now a priest, that part of my calling does not disappear. I hope I will always remain a bridge-builder and community listener. Priesthood builds on those foundations rather than replacing them.

One of the most visible differences is that I can now preside at Holy Communion. That feels particularly significant to me because Communion has fascinated me ever since I was a child. I can remember sitting in church, craning my neck to see what was happening at the altar. Some might call that curiosity; others might simply call it being nosy! I was always desperate to know what all the actions meant and why this meal mattered so much.

Years later, I still find myself drawn to that same mystery. The difference is that now I have the extraordinary privilege of standing at the altar myself, taking bread and wine and sharing in that ancient act of worship that has nourished Christians for generations.

I will be presiding and preaching at my first Sunday services as a priest on Sunday 5th July: at 8.00am and 11.00am at St Mary Magdalene, and at 9.30am in Bladon. Whether you are a regular worshipper, have not been to church for a while, or are simply curious about what happens, you would be very welcome to come and join us.

As one chapter closes and another begins, I find myself grateful for all the conversations, encounters and relationships of the past year, and excited to discover where the Holy Spirit might lead next.

With every blessing, Gemma

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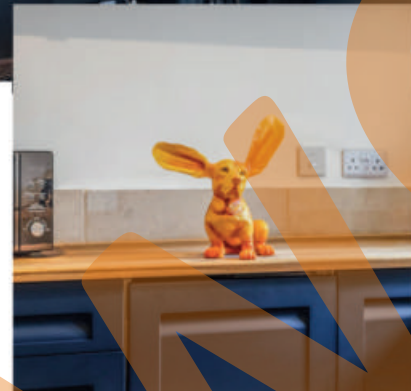
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## FEASTOCK 2026

On a balmy Saturday in June, 58 Woodstock residents picked up their envelopes, put on some comfy shoes and set off across town for another Feastock, our annual safari supper and, one of my fave events of the year.



I have been involved since the beginning, when Fin Williams brought the idea to Woodstock from her home village in Devon. Five years on, it has become a much-loved tradition that perfectly captures what I love most about Woodstock - fun, food, fizz, and a community that is always willing to welcome new people.

The format is sociable and not without complexity to orchestrate! We all met at St Hugh's Hall for a glass of bubbly, generously provided by our sponsors, Breckon & Breckon, before setting off to different homes across Woodstock. Guests visit one house for a starter, another for a main course and a third for dessert, meeting a different group of people at each stop before ending the evening together at The Crown.

What I love most is that Feastock nudges people out of their usual social circles. New residents meet long-time Woodstock families. People who have lived here all their lives get to know newcomers. Friendships are formed, ideas are exchanged and conversations happen that simply wouldn't otherwise take place.

It is also, if I'm being completely honest, the perfect event for someone like me. I love bringing people together. I am endlessly curious about other people's lives. OK, I am highly nosy! Feastock gives me the entirely legitimate opportunity to have a peek inside some of Woodstock's most interesting homes while sharing a meal with people I might never otherwise meet.

Each year, we raise money through ticket sales, with half going to the West Oxfordshire Food Bank and the remainder supporting another local cause. This year we were delighted to support Sustainable Woodstock.

The evening wouldn't happen without our hosts, many of whom open their homes to complete strangers for the first time. Nor would it happen without the volunteers

who help organise it. Nic Lacey, Heather Fletcher and I take on the main load but countless people jump in. Special thanks must also go to Breckon & Breckon for their continued support, and to Steve Eaton-Evans whose Trump impersonation promotional skit had me howling with laughter. You can see it on our social media pages. I defy you not to laugh.

For me, Feastock is a reminder that community isn't something that just exists. It is something we create together, one shared meal, one conversation and one open front door at a time.

We'll be back next year. If you'd like to join us, follow Feastock on Instagram (feastock\_woodstock) to keep up to date.

Caroline Parkes

## Bladon Snippets from the Past

Village roads in Bladon - one road was known by several names and there was a great deal of aggravation as to which should be officially confirmed.

Grigg's Hill led up to the Green which was then a hard, tarmac surface already used as a contested parking place. Following a threatening episode involving a spade the Parish Council decided to grass it over and rail it off. Some knew it as Lion Hill.

Mary F. Sitch

## Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

On 6 June the club had a coach to the Windsor Flower Festival, which was lovely, but the weather was not very kind to us. On 14 July we welcome Andrew Key with his title 'May to September'. This is the first time we will meet Andrew, so we are all looking forward to his demonstration.

Between 9 and 12 July the Club plus three other Oxfordshire Flower Clubs are staging a Flower Festival at the Soldiers Museum in Woodstock. The title is 'Battlefields to Bloom'. It will be open from 10am to 5pm each of those days. Please go along and enjoy the beautiful arrangements interpreting different areas of this special museum.

The Club meets on the second Monday of each month at the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park Woodstock. The meetings start at 7pm and visitors or new members are always welcome. Please contact me if you would like any further information about the club on 01865 376587.

Margaret Lang

# The Marlborough C of E School

**Berlin Trip:** At 3:30am Friday, 1st May, a rather sleepy coachful of students and teachers departed the Marlborough School set for Heathrow. Thirty five GCSE History and German students, joined by Mr Moss, Miss Soame, Miss Cox, and Miss Sheridan, set off for our annual Berlin trip.

After touching down in Berlin, we headed first to drop our things at the hostel before travelling by train to the nearby town of Oranienburg, the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Students explored and reflected on the site, before heading back into the heart of Berlin. Here, we tried currywurst at the famous Curry 36 before heading back to our hostel for a rest.

Day 2 in Berlin was all about the museums. We started at the DDR museum, an interactive look at daily life for East Germans under Communist rule. After a quick pit stop for an iconic German pretzel, we then headed for the East Side Gallery, a collection of murals on the longest surviving section of the Berlin Wall. Next, we set out for the Topography of Terror museum, which details the repression under the Nazis. Finally, we visited the Jewish Museum, the largest in Europe, to learn about the history of Jews in Germany from the Middle Ages to the present. At last, we went to the Berlin Mall, for a food court dinner and a bit of shopping.

Day 3 featured Mr Moss' Great Walking Tour of Berlin. And what a walk it was! Clocking in at 16 miles on a 30+ day, we saw a huge number of historical sites, memorials, and political buildings: the SDP headquarters, Potsdamer Platz, the Soviet War Memorial, the Tiergarten, Checkpoint Charlie, Moltkebrücke Bridge, the Brandenburg Gate, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Reichstag... Hot, footsore, and hungry, we ended the day at a Biergarten, where the hot pretzels and self-service cold drinks revived us. At last, we headed back to the hostel for our last sleep of the trip.

Day 4 began with a walk to Tempelhof Airport, a gigantic Nazi-era airport that has now been repurposed as a public park. We visited the exhibition and then walked around the premises. Finally, we headed back to the hostel, grabbed our bags, and boarded the train for Berlin Airport, arriving back in Woodstock sleepy but full of the buzz of the trip. The Berlin trip is a fantastic opportunity for our GCSE historians to develop their knowledge of the Weimar and Nazi Germany and Superpower Relations courses, and for our GCSE Linguists to practice their German in the real world.

**Ms Sheridan (History & English Teacher)**

**Charity Week update:** You may remember reading about our annual Charity Week which was held back in March. We are incredibly proud and overjoyed to confirm the total amount raised from this year's Charity Week was £17,005.87 - a phenomenal result and the most we have ever raised!! Events throughout the week included the spectacular musical 'Battle of the Bands' event; Soak the Teacher; tuck shops; and the annual Fun Run around Blenheim Palace, among many others.



*Charity Week 'Soak the Teacher'*

Every single penny raised will make a huge difference to running our community events such as our Senior Citizen Christmas Party, and supporting this year's three chosen charities: Seesaw (local), Oxford Children's Hospital (national), and Save the Children (international).



*Charity Week Tuckshop*

A huge thank you to our parents, carers and families, who donated and supported their children during the week, and to each and every one of our students who truly lived out our school values of Respect, Perseverance, and Ambition, showcasing the very best of our school. The money you have helped raise will genuinely change lives for the better.

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

# Woodstock CE Primary School Curriculum Updates and News

**Year 6 on Residential: Rock UK, Northampton**  
Our Year 6 pupils enjoyed an exciting residential visit to the Rock UK Centre, where they took part in a wide range of adventurous activities, including abseiling, raft building, kayaking, mountain biking and zip lining. Although the weather was certainly mixed, it did nothing to dampen the children's enthusiasm or determination. There were plenty of muddy boots, soggy clothes and tired faces, but even more smiles, laughter and unforgettable experiences. The trip provided countless opportunities for the children to challenge themselves, build confidence and create lasting memories with their friends.

Staff were incredibly proud of the way the children embraced new experiences, supported one another and represented our school so positively throughout the week. Their resilience, teamwork and excellent behaviour were a credit to both them and their families.

## Woodstock Enterprise Week and Summer BBQ: Friday 3 July

Excitement is already building as we prepare for our forthcoming Enterprise Week, where every class will become a team of young entrepreneurs!

Throughout the week, pupils will work together to design and develop their own business ideas, creating products and planning how to market and sell them. The children have already come up with some fantastic ideas and big plans are well underway. Enterprise Week provides a wonderful opportunity for pupils to develop creativity, teamwork, problem-solving and financial skills while having plenty of fun along the way.



The culmination of all their hard work will be at our Summer Fete and BBQ, where the products created by each class will be available to purchase. This is going to be a fantastic chance to celebrate the children's innovation and enterprise.

We warmly invite all members of our community to join us on Friday 3 July from 4.00pm to 6.30pm. As well as enjoying the Summer Fete and BBQ, visitors will have the opportunity to meet our pupils, staff and

families and experience the warm and welcoming spirit of our school.

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, neighbour, former pupil or friend of the school, we hope you will come along to support our young entrepreneurs and enjoy a wonderful afternoon together.

**Anna Poole, Curriculum Lead**

# Bladon Primary School Take One Picture Project

This year, the whole school participated in the Take One Picture program, which is run by The National Gallery. Every year the gallery selects a focus painting from their collection to inspire cross-curricular learning in classrooms across the country.

The selected painting for this year was A Regatta on the Grand Canal by Antonia Cantaletto. Across all the classes the children were amazed by the size and detail of the painting. The children were encouraged to use a variety of medias to respond to the painting and teachers were required to document their class's journey. It was brilliant to see how each class had created an entirely unique project from using the same stimulus, when we brought them together in a mini exhibition at school! The classes at Bladon created a collaborative jellyfish sculpture from recycled materials to highlight the impact of tourism on the canal, added modern features to the original painting to emphasise the changes in Venice, made flags to wave at a regatta and worked together to make a beautiful silk painting to represent Bladon on the Grand Canal!

Once the projects are submitted, a team from the National Gallery selects around 30 pieces to exhibit in London. Acorn Class (mixed Reception and Year 1) are thrilled to share that their 'Bloom of Jellyfish' has been chosen and some of their project will be on display at The Roden Centre for Creative Learning until 31 August! Well done Acorn Class!

**Ellie Jenkins**

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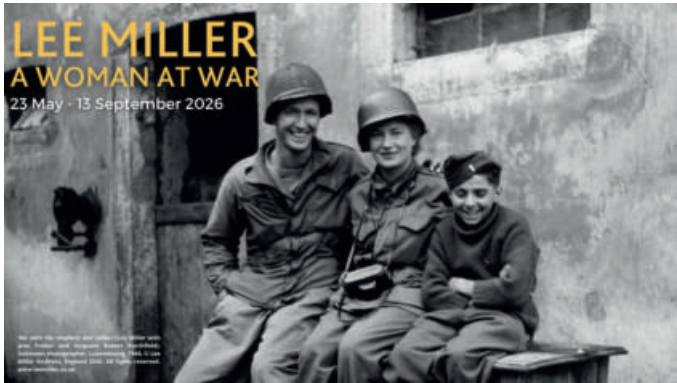
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# Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (SOFO)

## Review of Lee Miller: A Woman at War

Whether you’ve an interest in the history of the Second World War, in war photography and journalism, in women and art, or the history of women in wartime, SOFO, the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock, has a really wonderful exhibition for you, exploring the wartime work of Elizabeth ‘Lee’ Miller, Lady Penrose (1907-77). Don’t miss it!



Lee’s first career was actually as a model but she had been taught photography by her father, a keen amateur photographer, and photojournalism soon became her chosen profession. She left the USA for Paris in 1929 where she immersed herself in its modern art, and also embarked on an important if stormy relationship with Man Ray, the celebrated photographer and surrealist artist. As part of Man Ray’s artistic circle, which included Picasso and Cocteau, she acquired the perceptive and interpretative eye of an artist, seeing the remarkable in the everyday. It was in Paris in 1937 that she met, and then married, Roland Penrose, the British art critic. Her life story was turned into a film (‘Kate’ 2023, starring Kate Winslett).

When German bombs blitzed London in 1940, Lee became an official war photojournalist for Vogue Magazine (not normally associated with the brutality of war) and this exhibition at SOFO is the product of a carefully curated selection of prints from an archive of 60,000 negatives and 20,000 photos, stored in the attic of the Penrose’s home in Sussex and discovered on Lee’s death by her two children.

Lee’s war saw her accredited as a photojournalist to the US forces for Condé Nast. As a woman, she was forbidden to work directly in combat zones but she did get caught up in the Battle for St Malo in 1944, and recorded the bitter warfighting there. The photos she took behind the lines, as the US and UK forces fought their way into Hitler’s Reich, are as stark as they are moving and are a unique and beautiful set of images of this, the first ‘total war’ in history, not least as it affected Europe’s women and children.

Lee was one of the very first people to take photos of the liberated Nazi concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald and write about the horrors she saw: she begged an initially reluctant Vogue to publish her photostory (‘I implore you to believe this is true’, she wrote of ‘the sight of blue and white tatters shrouding the bestial deaths of starved and maimed men and women’ and (correctly) realised she was providing lasting proof of what the Germans had done so that they and their ilk could never deny it.

But there are uplifting photos here too: the bright face of a young woman released from the Gestapo torture gaol in Cologne, the focused look on the face of a Polish female RAF Spitfire pilot, brave nurses in field and military hospitals, including some at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford (where wounded service personnel were treated) as well as haunting images of shamed women with shaven heads, paraded in Paris for ‘associating’ with Germans and nurses.

SOFO is also displaying some of Lee’s world-famous keynote shots: there’s one of Lee in the bathtub of Hitler’s Munich flat in the Prinzregentenstrasse, defiantly ‘washing the dirt of Dachau off her body’, - and just see Lee lolling on Eva Braun’s bed in the pretty suburban villa the Fuehrer had gifted his future wife. It’s as if Lee were saying ‘now look who won in the end’.

Anthony Glees, SOFO Trustee

## Review of talk by Brigadier Ben Barry, International Institute for Strategic Studies. 'The Rise and Fall of the British Army' on 13 June 2026



We in Europe currently face a greater threat to our security than at any time since the Second World War. We are at grave risk from Putin’s war in Ukraine and his aggressive intentions towards the Baltic Republics and to the UK and Norway directly, via the High North. Prior to Trump’s second term, Britain and its European NATO allies believed they could rely on the USA and the NATO treaty to keep us safe from Russia. Now, virtually every day, Trump, Vance and Hegseth tell us this is no longer the case, and that we must look to defend ourselves.

This was the context for Ben Barry’s very timely and deeply chilling analysis at SOFO of the current condition of the British army, the subject of his acclaimed new book *The Rise and Fall of the British Army*. Barry reminded us of stanza 2 of the National Anthem (‘scatter our enemies, frustrate their knavish tricks’) pointing out that it is largely the the army’s job to scatter our enemies.

The trouble, Barry said, is that with a size of 75,000 and falling, our army cannot do what it did even two generations ago. Then we were able to defend West Germany, keep the peace in Northern Ireland, remove Argentinian troops from the Falklands, intervene to stop the slaughter of Muslims in the former Yugoslavia and protect Sierra Leone. From what Barry called our ‘high water mark’ in 2003, we had moved to a scenario of reduced funding and cuts. By the time of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military planning was already deteriorating thanks to politicians trying to spend the defence budget (‘the peace dividend’) on other things. ‘The old concept of tank battles in Europe’s landmass is over’ Boris Johnson insisted (loudly) as European leaders let Putin take Crimea from Ukraine. Brexiters insisted there would be no more war in Europe. Six years later, in his attempt to obliterate Ukraine, Putin launched that war in Europe.

If we were attacked by Russia today, Barry said, we could fight back for just seven days. In 1990 we could muster 152,000 trained troops. Now, with an army of 75,000 personnel, we could no longer deploy to the front a heavily armed, fully trained brigade (30,000 men), let alone an entire army corps (100,000 men). The Royal Navy, Barry pointed out, was in an even worse condition than the army, with our creaking Vanguard submarines needing constant repair. Yet our intelligence services tell us Putin could decide to attack our Baltic NATO allies within three years (he knows how weak we were).

In Barry’s view, we need to find the necessary cash to defend ourselves whilst understanding that we need a whole new set of defensive weapons, such as drones exploiting AI-led technology.

Anthony Glees, SOFO Trustee

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# Play facilities in Woodstock

## An update

There is a small group of volunteers from within our community trying to bring new and upgraded play facilities to our town. We thought you might like an update on the latest news!

## Skatepark

We kicked things off on 21 May when we took a group of children to Blenheim Palace where they met and spoke to Calum Miller MP, senior representatives from Blenheim and Pye, the Headmaster of Marlborough School, and a number of local councillors. They talked about what they want for play provision for our growing town. Blenheim Estates has agreed to a feasibility study for a skatepark on the proposed development to the east of Park View. We are actively working on a range of proposals for them to consider. Merilyn Davies, Community Lead for Blenheim, has also agreed to cover the cost of a 'pop up' skatepark, hopefully to be hosted at The Marlborough School in October. More to follow - watch this space!

## Hill Rise

Unfortunately, this playground will close from 3 August due to construction work. Having heard concern about this, Blenheim Estates offered to push the closure back to September. allowing the play area to stay open during the summer holidays.

The Town Council has refused this offer as they will not have insurance or inspection services in place. It is unclear whether all Councillors were made aware of this opportunity and what efforts were made to put temporary cover in place to keep the play area available for children this summer.

## New Road

We are very keen to see the playground and equipment completely overhauled. At a recent consultation event with children from Woodstock CE Primary School we asked what they would want to see in a newly revamped playground. We have shared the output of this session with Woodstock Town Council so that it can be passed to the companies from whom they are seeking quotes. This work will need to be funded - we are actively considering means of fundraising for this project.

## Get involved!

We are only just starting. If you would like to be kept informed about developments, please follow us on Instagram or Facebook at Woodstock Community Skatepark! If you have ideas and would like to get involved in events, publicity, fundraising or anything else, drop us a line at [woodstockcommunityskatepark@gmail.com](mailto:woodstockcommunityskatepark@gmail.com)

Sam Dawson



## 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 email [suzanne.morgan@porthaven.co.uk](mailto:suzanne.morgan@porthaven.co.uk)

Lincroft Meadow Care Home, The Moors, Kidlington OX5 2AA

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## Cutting a Dash on Woodstock Town Square

One Monday evening in June, how lovely to see a large group of Morris Dancers and musicians arriving to perform for the interested spectators. They consisted of teams from Kirtlington, Wolvercote, and the Mason's Apron Morris team from North Leigh who had come together to dance 'somewhere different'.



*The Wolvercote team in front of The Star Inn*

Some of the dancers wore traditional clogs with metal strips tapping and clattering on the square, whilst others wore 21st century trainers for comfort. Their different, coloured and decorated costumes added to the quintessential, English tradition as they danced with handkerchiefs, sticks and bells to rhythmic folk tunes played on accordion, fiddles, pipes and drums.



*The Masons Aprons Team taking a rest*



*'Chairing the Feathers' by William Nicholson*

Memories of the 1970s TV show, The Two Ronnies sprung to mind for me. However, the scene brought back to mind the portraits painted by one-time Woodstock resident, William Nicholson, who painted dancers from Eynsham outside the Hensington Gates to Blenheim Palace at the beginning of the 20th century. These two paintings were photographed during a recent Nicholson exhibition in Chichester.

Whether watching the dancers on the square, surrounded by historic buildings and bathed in evening light, or looking at the Nicholson paintings in an art gallery, reminds me how lucky we are to have such a rich heritage.

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# Woodstock & District u3a

Our AGM was held on 7 May 2026. This was followed by a talk given by Mandy Massam from Oxfordshire Age UK on the prevention of scams.

Scams are received online, via the phone and WhatsApp. They are very clever, so you need to be vigilant and suspicious of everything.

Mandy provided us with contact details for the various different forms of scams. If someone is selling things on your doorstep, the advice is not to answer the door or engage in conversation with them. Phone the police on 101 or 999 if in any danger. Any texts received about an undelivered parcel asking for your bank details, report by forwarding to 7726 then delete and block the number. Calls received asking for your bank details, in particular your 3-digit security code. Call your bank on 159.

This was an extremely interesting and informative talk. Mandy supplied us with an information pack containing so lots of useful information and telephone numbers.

Our speaker for June was John Wilford who entertained us with stories about his 30 years as a sound engineer and tour manager working with well-known artists and musicians. John started in working life repairing Television in an electrical repair shop. Someone brought in a Marshall Amplifier to be repaired, from this John drove a van and helped to repair the band's equipment. John progressed to Road manager and sound engineer, working with many well-known artists such as the Rolling Stones, Black Sabbath and Meat Loaf. John has written a book about his experiences *Soundman* by John 'Wilf' Wilford a Journey Though Rock'n'roll Sound.

On 2 July our talk is entitled 'Dogs for Good - Assistance Dogs. Carol Shearman will tell us about assistance dogs as she works for the charity Dogs for Good, based in Banbury. This is a UK based charity training dogs to assist adults and children with physical and learning disabilities, children with autism and adults with dementia. Visitors £3.00 to include tea/coffee and biscuits.

Book Group 1 have just finished reading *For Thy Great Pain Have Mercy on My Little Pain* by Victoria Mackenzie. This is a story about Julian of Norwich who was a medieval anchoress and lived for 30 years in a cell attached to St Julian's Church in Norwich. The group had an extremely interesting discussion about this book. Our book for July is *Tin Man* by Sarah Winman.

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.woostocku3a.uk](http://www.woostocku3a.uk). We would be delighted to hear from you.

# The Oxfordshire Museum

440 Theatre Presents A Midsummer Night's Dream



Saturday 11 July 7-9pm: Whether you're a Shakespeare lover or brand new to his plays, this production brims with warmth, laughter, and unexpected surprises. It's a summer dream brought vividly - and hilariously - to life.

Advance tickets available: <https://wegottickets.com/event/686120>

**Oxfordshire Folklore Exhibition - Timeless Tales**  
Discover the stories that have shaped Oxfordshire for generations. This exhibition explores the county's rich folklore through tales of superstition, tradition and mythology, all rooted in local landscapes and communities.

Whether you're interested in local history, curious about old beliefs, or simply enjoy a good story, this exhibition offers a chance to see Oxfordshire in a new way - and perhaps leave inspired to seek out more folklore hidden in familiar places.

Exhibition open Saturday 18 July to Sunday 6 September. Free entry.

**Creative Writing for Children: Folk-lorious Fun!**  
Friday 21 August: Inspired by the Folklore Exhibition and folklore traditions from Oxfordshire, get ready to create your very own folktale using drawing, writing and pure imagination! The workshop is being run by playwright Flis Tattersall and booking is required. Ideal for age 7 +

# Friends of The Oxfordshire Museum

## Summer Events

Our Monthly talks are free to Members and are also available on Zoom. Visitors welcome - £5 per talk. Talks take place in the Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

**Wednesday 1 July 7.30pm**

Folklore - the Oxfordshire Museum Summer Exhibition.

**Speakers:** Angie Bolton and Nicole Perry-Bradford, Curators, Oxfordshire Museum service

An introduction to the Folklore' exhibition - exploring the curious tales, traditions and mythologies of the county.

## Members' trips

**Wednesday 8 July**

Baroque Walking Tour of Oxford

A new walking tour with an Oxford tour guide and we are fortunate to be the first to take part. Reputedly, Oxford has the finest selection of Baroque buildings only bettered by London.

Cost £10.00 pp Book by Monday 6 July

**Tuesday 8 September**

A visit to historic Christ Church and Cathedral, Oxford

A guided tour, followed by a 'Queen Tea' in the impressive great hall which featured in Harry Potter films.

Cost £34.50 pp. Book by 18 August

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum Annual Membership: £20 (single) £30 (double). For an application form and full details of all our activities and benefits, see our website: [www.friendsoftom.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftom.org.uk)

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**Christian Aid Week**

A big THANK YOU to everyone who helped Bladon raise £1500 for Christian Aid this year.



**HORATIO'S GARDEN**  
Improving the lives of everyone affected by spinal injury

At the Plant Sale on 30 May at 23 Oxford Road, Woodstock, in aid of Horatio's Garden, the organisers are pleased to report that the sum of £1,650 was raised towards the creation of more gardens for use by hospitalised patients suffering spinal injury as a part of the rehabilitation process.

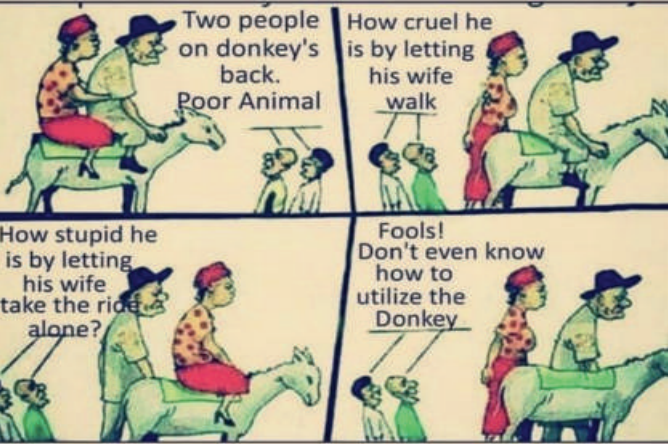
**The answers to the Crossword on Page 38 of this issue are:**

Across: 1. odyssey, 5. crowbar, 9. dojo, 10. Moses, 11. link, 12. Carlisle, 14. resist, 15. dangle, 16. hospital, 18. faithful, 21. create, 23. amuses, 25. nobleman, 26. trim, 27. panic, 28. axle, 29. adverts, 30. century.

Down: 2. diorama, 3. spotlight, 4. en masse, 6. resorts, 7. wales, 8. amnesia, 13. echelon, 17. inelegant, 19. admired, 20. fusspot, 21. cubicle, 22. trailer, 24. Somme.

**Meme of the Month**

**People will always have something to say**



**That's our society** 😐



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**The answers to the Italian History Quiz on Page 38 of this issue are:**

- 1861
- Charlemagne
- Naples
- Rubicon
- Venice
- Vatican City
- Knocked Italy out of the 1966 World Cup
- Michelangelo
- Garibaldi
- Medici

**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**

**Crickets 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**

**Saturday 04 Jul 2026, 19:00**  
Woodstock Exhibition Foundation - Talk  
Prof Janina Ramirez: From Lady Godiva to the Foundations of Spain: How Legendary women prop up Nations.  
St Mary Magdalene

**Friday 10 Jul 2026, 19:30**  
Woodstock Music Society - Concert  
Feel The Spirit: Karl Jenkins, Edward Elgar, and John Rutter  
St Mary Magdalene

**Saturday 11 Jul 2026, 15:30**  
Old Woodstock Mock Mayor - Event  
The Annual Mock Mayor Elections  
Town Square

**Saturday 11 Jul 2026, 19:00**  
Oxfordshire Museum - Theatre  
440 Theatre Presents 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'  
Oxfordshire Museum

**Thursday 16 Jul 2026, 19:30**  
Bladon Gardens Society - Talk  
Timothy Walker, former director of Oxford Botanic Garden: Summer - The Missing Season  
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

**Saturday 25 Jul 2026, 19:00**  
Friends of St Martins - Concert  
Bladon Community Choirs: Choral Concert with Katherine Macaulay  
St Martins Church, Bladon

**Friday 31 Jul 2026, 19:30**  
Woodstock Jazz - Music  
Greg Abate + Alex Steele Trio: One of the finest from USA, Greg is the stuff of legend!  
St Hugh's Centre

**Friday 28 Aug 2026, 19:30**  
Woodstock Jazz - Music  
Krissy Mathews & Stuart Maxwell Quartet: A Blues Special  
St Hugh's Centre

**Friday 28 Aug 2026, 18:00**  
Woodstock Live - Festival  
3 days of Music in the Town Square  
Woodstock Various Locations

**Wednesday 02 Sep 2026, 19:30**  
Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk  
Nigel Leavy: Oxfordshire: the Silicon Valley of Formula 1  
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

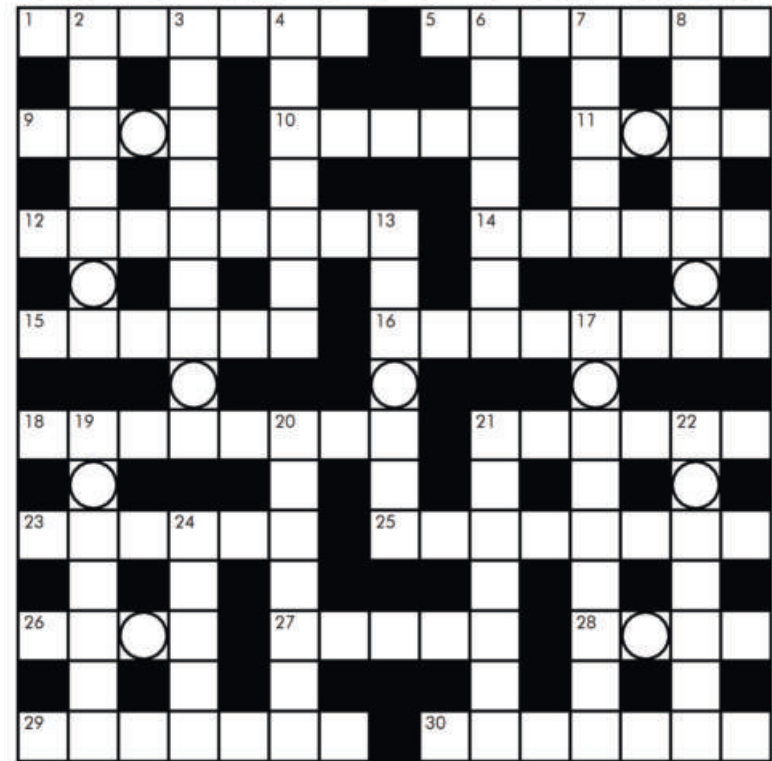
**Tuesday 22 Sep 2026, 20:00**  
Woodstock Literature Society - Talk  
Professor Jennifer Yee: 'Proust and the Visual Arts'  
St Mary Magdalene

QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

This month, the questions are all about Italian History. Answers can be found on Page 36.

- 1. In what year was reunification, or Risorgimento, of the state of Italy completed?
- 2. On Christmas Day 800AD, in Rome, who was crowned by Pope Leo III, Emperor of The Holy Roman Empire?
- 3. In which city was the Margarita pizza first served, allegedly named after Queen Margarita, who apparently liked it because it featured the colours of the Italian flag?
- 4. In January 49BC, uttering the words “Alea Iacta est,” translated as “The die is cast,” Julius Caesar led his legion across which river, in defiance of The Roman Senate, precipitating a civil war? Thankfully, for him, he was victorious, as this act of defiance was a capital offence.
- 5. Which Italian City State and centre of commerce was the backdrop for a Shakespearean play, famous for a court scene debating the payment of a debt, in the form of “a pound of flesh?”
- 6. On February 11th 1929, Prime Minister Benito Mussolini and Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Gaspari signed the Lateran Treaty, officially creating the world’s smallest nation state, known by what name?
- 7. Pak Doo-Ik is commemorated by cast iron stud marks in a Middlesbrough lawn, marking what sad event in Italian history?
- 8. Standing seventeen feet and carved from a single block of Marble, the famous statue of David resides within The Galleria dell’Accademia, Florence. Who was its illustrious sculptor?
- 9. Who, wearing a red shirt and riding a white horse, was an instrumental figure in Italian unification?
- 10. Which Florentine family financed the building of Saint Peter’s Basilica?

Solve the clues to this straight crossword. Read through the letters in the marked squares to reveal the final performer at the 1969 Woodstock festival.



- Across

  - 1. Long journey
  - 5. Prying tool
  - 9. Martial arts centre
  - 10. Biblical saviour
  - 11. Connection
  - 12. Cumbrian city
  - 14. Oppose, defy
  - 15. Hang freely
  - 16. Infirmary
  - 18. Loyal
  - 21. Produce
  - 23. Entertains
  - 25. Aristocrat
  - 26. Cut back
  - 27. Fret, freak out
  - 28. Wheel shaft
  - 29. Public promotions
  - 30. 100 years
- Down

  - 2. 3D scene
  - 3. Projecting theatre lamp
  - 4. Together (2,5)
  - 6. Holiday complexes
  - 7. British nation
  - 8. Memory loss
  - 13. Rank, status
  - 17. Lacking in grace
  - 19. Looked up to
  - 20. Worrier
  - 21. Booth, stall
  - 22. Movie advert
  - 24. French river

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On tour from USA, Greg is an alto saxophonist of great distinction! He was a member of Ray Charles' last small ensemble and since then he's played all of the top venues in USA and Europe. He'll be at our Woodstock Jazz Club to create some very 'hot' live jazz. A firm favourite with jazz lovers across the UK, we can't wait to hear him.

GREG ABATE - Sax /Flute  
ALEX STEELE - Piano  
EUAN PALMER - Drums  
PAUL JEFFERIES - Double Bass

Tickets £22.00 from Website  
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# WHAT'S ON

## JUNE

Blenheim Palace Flower Show .....19th - 21st June

Blenheim Palace Festival.....27th June - 4th July

## JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

Life Through a Royal Lens Exhibition.....12th July - 27th September

Dinosaurs Are Forever.....11th August - 1st November

Salon Privé.....2nd - 6th September

Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials.....17th - 20th September

## OCTOBER / NOVEMBER / DECEMBER

Dogfest.....3rd - 4th October

Haunted Half Term.....24th October - 1st November

Halloween at Blenheim Palace.....22nd October - 1st November

Christmas at Blenheim Palace.....13th November - 3rd January

## EXPERIENCES FOR 2026 and 2027

Family Treasures 2026 .....open until November

Beyond the Silver Screen Film Exhibition 2027 .....Spring 2027

