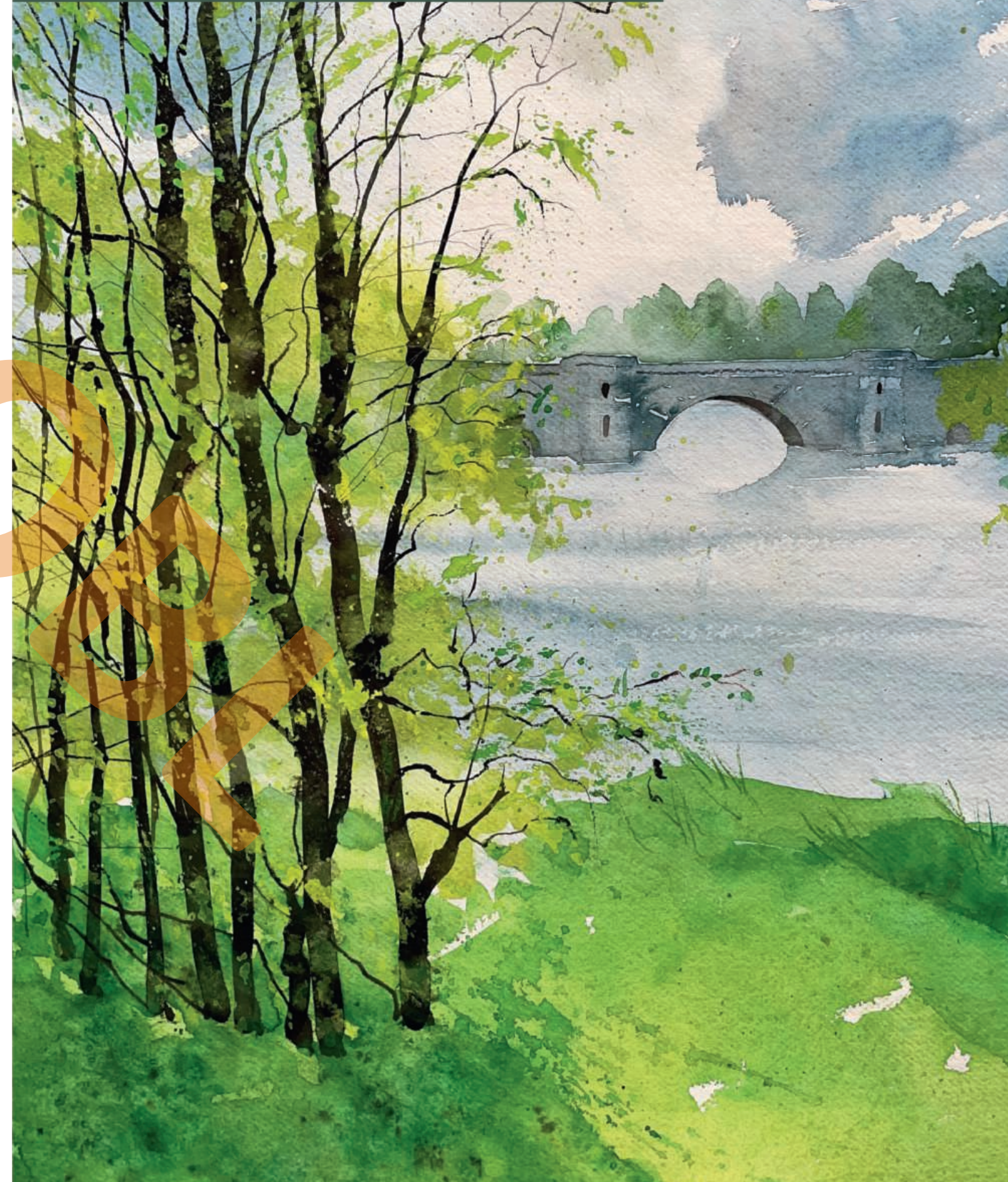


WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

August/September 2026

£2.50





Editorial

What a summer. For those who like the heat, I hope you will credit me with bringing weather from the Sri Lankan winter with me on my return to the UK. For those who find the heat difficult to bear, then conversely, it's not my fault!

The WOBL format for this upcoming year is going to be very similar to previous years. We are confident we will continue to find splendid artwork for our front covers; do please contact me if you would like your artwork or photograph to be considered. Having kept the cover price at £2 for at least 4 years, we feel that an increase to £2.50 is reasonable. We are pleased to be able to produce the magazine in full colour at that price, and I hope you are pleased with it too, whether as a reader or a contributor - or both.

I am also proud and very happy to host the new 'Town Diary' which is launched in this magazine on Page 36. The aim is to help all those wonderful event organisers manage their diaries, avoiding scheduling conflicts and publicising their events. As you will read, we now have two administrators for this section. Volunteers are incredibly important to the success of this magazine.

On this subject, we are looking for a new Town Council reporter for Council meetings, owing to the successful co-option of Annie Cripps to the Town Council on 21 July. I wish Annie every success with her new role, and thank her for her balanced reports over the last few years. Please let me know if you would like to fill her place - it will probably only involve four or five evenings a year, and a bit of writing. Perhaps a chance for a budding young journalist?

We are starting a new column, 'In the Garden' which I expect to generate lots of interest and discussion in our *Letters* page. Some of you may be sad that I'm dropping my 'Meme of the Month', but perhaps not so many of you - otherwise I wouldn't be dropping it! The Quiz and the Crossword will continue, and I am grateful to those who provide this copy.

Indeed, and as ever, thank you everyone.

Nick Manby-Brown, Editor

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This month's cover painting is 'Walking on Sunshine' and is one of several new pieces by Rod Craig in the Summer Exhibition at Iona House Gallery until the end of August.

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Subscriptions

The magazine cover price is £2.50, or £25 annually.

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 unable to accept payment by cheque.

For those 20 or so kind folk who have already paid £20 for this upcoming year's subscription, please pay the extra £5 if you want - but rest assured, your delivery is guaranteed whatever.

Please write for our magazine

Send your contributions to: editor@wobl.news

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

The next issue will be an October one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 13 September 2026**, for publication on Friday 25th.

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.

Home Library Service

Would you like to borrow library books but are unable to visit the library for any reason? If you're finding it difficult to get to a library, the Home Library Service may be able to help.

The Home Library Service is run by Oxfordshire County Council and serves 830 customers across the county. With the help of volunteers, it looks after and delivers books and audio-visual items to those who struggle to physically visit a library due to their personal circumstances. The service is completely free of charge to customers, many of whom are elderly or housebound, and it can also be used on a short-term basis following illness or hospitalisation. Those with carer responsibilities are also welcome to apply.

How it works: Contact us to discuss the kind of Books, Large Print/Regular Print, DVDs, Audio Books on CD, Music CD or DVDs, that you like to read or enjoy. We can then arrange for a library volunteer to deliver these to you in your home. Our volunteers are DBS checked, wear an identification badge and provide a helpful and friendly service. Whenever possible, we try and arrange for the same volunteer to visit you each time. Your library materials will be delivered and collected every 3 weeks. The Home Library Service is free of charge, and there is no charge for requests or late returns.

To register for this service or for further information call your local library or telephone the Home Library Service on 01865 810259 or email homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Singing for Fun

Important announcement

Woodstock Singing for Fun group will be at a new venue with a new regular date from September. We are moving to Woodstock Baptist Church (in the High Street, between Brothertons and the opticians), and changing our date from the first Monday to the first Friday of the month. So our first session in the Baptist Church will be on Friday 4 September at 2pm, and then every first Friday of the month after that.

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Oxfordshire & Home Counties

Bladon Gardens Society

Guest Speaker Event

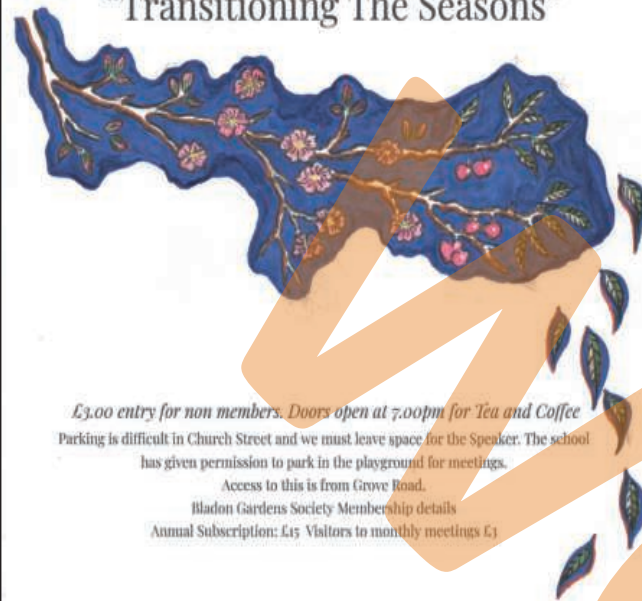
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

20th August 2026 7.30 pm

Avril Hughes

Local garden owner, expert plantswoman and Galanthophile

"Transitioning The Seasons"



£3.00 entry for non members. Doors open at 7.00pm for Tea and Coffee
Parking is difficult in Church Street and we must leave space for the Speaker. The school has given permission to park in the playground for meetings.
Access to this is from Grove Road.
Bladon Gardens Society Membership details
Annual Subscription: £15 Visitors to monthly meetings £3



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Wootton Talks

Our 155th Talk is at 7.30 pm on Friday 18 September when the speaker is **Adrian Cox**, the National Trust archaeologist who has carried out extensive work on many sites, including the Uffington White Horse, in Oxfordshire.

The horse is a prehistoric hill construction 360 feet long, formed from deep trenches filled with crushed white chalk. It is the oldest by far of the white horse figures in Britain and for 3,000 years it has been jealously guarded as a masterpiece of minimalism art. It inspired other white horses in the country but they all have an entirely different design.

On Friday 9 October, we welcome **Ian Firth**, a leading bridge engineer working on structures around the world, including the Severn Crossing, three bridges in Hong Kong, West Gate Bridge in Melbourne and the Erskine Bridge in Scotland. He was also appointed as special advisor for the proposed Strait of Messina Bridge linking mainland Italy with Sicily. When built, it would have a main span of 3,300 metres with 399-metre towers, making it the longest single-span suspension bridge in the world.

At our summer Talk in July, **Nicky Shaw**, the renowned opera set and costume designer, gave an insight into the intense collaboration, within a strict budget, involved in bringing a show to its first performance.

Nicky detailed the creation of her sets for the Glyndebourne premiere of *The Railway Children*, with music by Mark-Anthony Turnage and libretto by Rachael Hewer. It is an adaptation of the 1906 children's book of the same name by Edith Nesbitt.

She gave an insight into the creation of scale-models showing the sets and the key position of the singers, as well as the appearance of the train giving an illusion of movement, in addition to the three children climbing the hill.

Nicky also detailed the sensational dress she created for the soprano Louise Alder at the Last Night of the Proms last September, which featured a vibrant Union Flag while she sang *I Could Have Danced All Night*, among several songs - and brought the house down.

The evening raised £570 for the Ukraine Appeal, giving a total of £30,500 since Putin's invasion of Ukraine in March 2022. Many thanks to our supporters.

Entry at St Mary's Church is £10 in cash - and includes free food. Children over 16 welcome. To reserve seats, please contact us through our website www.woottontalks.co.uk.

Andy Morgan 01993 813016

Bladon Gardens Society

Guest Speaker Event

The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

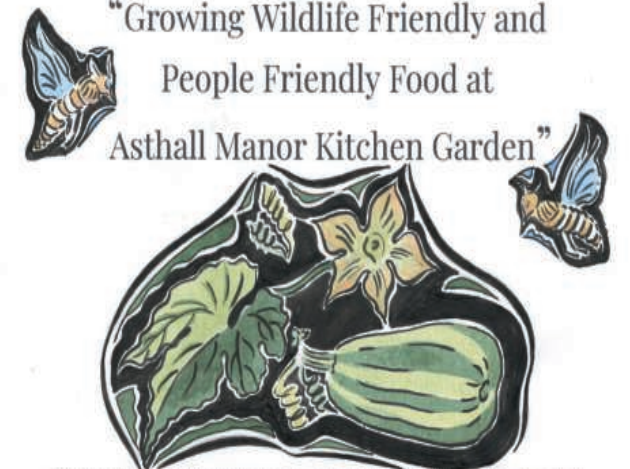
17th September 2026 7.30 pm

Tim Mitchell

Lead Grower at Asthall Manor kitchen garden

"Growing Wildlife Friendly and
People Friendly Food at

Asthall Manor Kitchen Garden"



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

OXFORD BUS MUSEUM



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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Town Diary

On Saturday 11 July, the Woodstock Music Society was obliged to cancel its long-awaited summer evening concert due to a clash with the Mock Mayor event. This had moved to the town centre following the closure of the Black Price pub where it had taken place in earlier years.

The amplified sound of live music in the town square would have interfered too much with the concert in the church. So, however many people enjoyed the Mock Mayor event, a considerable number of others lost the anticipated pleasure of their evening concert. This was not even the only clash on that date as a professional repertory theatre company offered an evening performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the garden of the Oxfordshire Museum.

So, it is with heartfelt gratitude that I can now say that in response to my concerns about this problem the editor of this magazine has launched an interactive 'What's On' calendar via the WOBL website. This will enable anyone organising an event to enter the relevant details, and even more importantly to double-check for clashes with other events on the same date. Those societies which organise an annual calendar of events will be able to enter a full year's events together. This umbrella framework will greatly improve the efficiency of the town as a cultural and social hub.

Woodstock is a vibrant and busy town, and the first thought any organiser of any type of event should be about the other likely events on any day or evening. This welcome overarching structure will be an invaluable addition to the websites of all the main Woodstock societies which provide more detailed accounts of their activities. The Music Society, the Woodstock Literature Society, the Woodstock Society and now also the Woodstock Bookshop, have all extended to each other the courtesy of checking their future events to avoid competing for audiences, many of whose members would like to support all of these events and not be forced to choose between them.

The new WOBL facility will supplement these websites and facilitate the process of diary management for all local events organisers. Now it is over to all of you who run events to check the diary and make your entries!

Many congratulations and thanks to our WOBL editor, Nick Manby-Brown, for setting up this important community facility, a new era successor to the late physical Town Diary which disappeared some years ago.

Linda Glees

Dear Editor,

An unexpected turn of events

We're on our way from Orpington to a family wedding in the Cotswolds. Halfway up the M25 I realise I've left the suit carrier for tomorrow's event at home. Half out of embarrassment, but especially knowing that anxiety can be infectious, I decided to keep quiet until after an unscheduled but delightful visit en route with a grandson in Woodstock.

So then straight into town looking for charity shops. Most are closed. "Sorry too hot, we're closed". A man in his mid-thirties is killing time waiting for schools to finish; he needs to pick up his eight-year-old daughter.

He bumps into us again and asks what's happening. He hears the story. "You know what, something like that once happened to me. I think I can help. I have a suit at home which should fit."

Initially he asked us to come to his home that evening; instead, four hours later, he arrives at the hotel with it, recently dry-cleaned complete with shirt and tie. I offer profuse thanks and ask how to return it.

"Just leave it at hotel reception. I think they may know me. I'm sure they won't mind." He's assistant manager at a nearby hotel.

It's indeed a perfect fit and evokes plenty of complimentary comments next day.

There is still something called kindness around!

Paul du Plessis, Orpington

Dear Editor

Woodstock Town Council

Last night's Town Council meeting was a shambles! The venue had to be moved upstairs due to lack of space, because of the large public presence (which I am sure was expected). Once the meeting was in progress it was extremely hard for the public to hear what was being said by councillors, and there was totally ineffective control from the chair.

The presentation of a petition signed by a huge number of Woodstock residents (including me) concerning the future of the Post Office showed great support for our present postmaster and an admirable concern and willingness to roll up sleeves and get something done by those volunteers who orchestrated it, but the future of the Post Office was never going to be influenced by such action. The Post Office itself will no doubt decide whether there is a business case to have a presence in Woodstock in future or not, and if the answer to that is yes (which is by no means certain) then where it should be located. In light of the recent history of the Post Office nationally it may be difficult to find a suitable postmaster or

postmistress willing to take it on, but that is not the concern of the Town Council as landlords for the current building housing the Post Office.

The real reason why so many people turned up to the meeting on 21 July was the frustration and despair felt by so many at the secretiveness, non-transparency and unwillingness to answer perfectly legitimate questions from council tax payers on the part of the Council. Councillors are democratically elected to represent our interests and to manage the town on our behalf but it appears that they will not engage or explain their actions, nor properly account for how they are spending money raised primarily through council tax and rent receipts from properties belonging to the town.

Woodstock Town Council has been nothing short of dysfunctional for many years, and it is high time it faced up to its responsibilities and accounted for its actions and expenditure in a proper fashion. Goodwill from the public will not last indefinitely if the council continues to be self protective, secretive and downright antagonistic towards the council tax payers who elect it. It is admirable to stand for election to public office, but having made that commitment councillors must be willing to answer for their actions and must be seen to listen to the public and to act in the best interests of the town. Failure to do so will eventually result in far worse disruption than was in evidence at last night's meeting.

We can only hope the next Town Council meeting is better prepared for and chaired in a more orderly fashion, and the perfectly legitimate concerns of the public are handled sensitively and sensibly at the meeting rather than being kicked down the line to another time yet again.

Zandra Houston

Dear Editor,

The Post Office

I attended the recent Town Hall meeting to discuss the future of Woodstock's Post Office, and what I witnessed left a lasting impression on me.

The meeting was attended by a remarkable cross-section of our community. Young and old, local residents, business owners and families came together because they understood the importance of preserving this vital service. What moved me most, however, was seeing people who clearly faced significant physical challenges making every effort to be there. Some struggled to walk, others arrived in wheelchairs, and several were in poor health. Yet they felt so strongly about the future of our Post Office that they made the journey to lend their support.

Their presence spoke louder than any speech. It was a powerful reminder that the Post Office is far

more than a place to post letters or collect parcels. For many, it is a lifeline: a place to access banking services, collect pensions, seek advice, meet familiar faces and maintain a sense of independence and dignity.

A community should be judged not only by the beauty of its buildings, but also by how it cares for those who are most vulnerable. If people with limited mobility and poor health are willing to leave the comfort of their homes to defend this service, surely that alone tells us how essential it is.

The future of our Post Office should not be viewed simply as a commercial decision. It is about protecting the heart of our community. Once such a service is lost, it is rarely restored, and the people who suffer most are often those with the fewest alternatives.

I sincerely hope that those responsible will listen to the clear message from the people of Woodstock and the surrounding villages. The extraordinary attendance at the Town Hall meeting demonstrated not only the value of the Post Office, but also the strength, compassion and unity of our community.

Let us work together to ensure that this invaluable service remains at the heart of Woodstock for generations to come.

Dr Farzin Rahmani-Shirazi

Dear Editor,

How safe are Woodstock Town Council finances?

How can we know? We only know what they choose to share with us.

However, every year residents of a parish have a legal right to inspect documents relating to the finances of the town or parish council to satisfy themselves of the accuracy of what is reported. Concerns can be raised with an external auditor for independent review.

The public right to review the unaudited AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) is laid out in a couple of legal rulings and lasts for a specified 6-week period - for WTC, this was 11th June to 23rd July 2026.

I exercised my rights to see certain documents this year.

1. The public is required to give reasonable notice to exercise this legal right. I gave notice of more than 3 weeks to Woodstock Town Council and offered 5 possible dates. Not a single one of my dates was accepted. Alternatives offered were too short, gave notice of only 6 working hours, or were on dates when the Clerk had already been told in writing I would be out of the country. Only one date offered to me was possible - a

30min appointment that was clearly going to be too short. My offer to come in early or stay later was ignored.

2. Many of the documents are missing. It is concerning to learn that WTC does not have copies of legal documents - such as leases on some properties that it owns. This has been known for some years, but is not logged in the 53 page Risk Register or minuted as an action to follow up following the review on 20th Jan 2026. How many key contracts cannot be found? Does WTC have a list that all Councillors are aware of, and what has it done over the past few years to rectify the situation?

Despite giving Woodstock Town Council the reasonable notice required, I was unable to see all the documents which are available within the formal review period. I have asked if I can see the missing documents when they are found - this has not been agreed.

I have flagged both these concerns to the External Auditor for their review.

Sam Dawson

Dear Editor,

A New Budgens approved for Park View

I am reporting on the outcome of the meeting to discuss the application for a licence to sell alcohol at the new Budgens to be sited at Park View on the afternoon of 30 July at the Council Chambers in Witney. The licence has been approved for 6am-9pm on a daily basis. The new owner is currently jointly running a similar successful store in North Leigh.

Much of the objections discussed were unsurprisingly concerned with potential nuisance to Park View residents. The new owner stated that he wants to serve and work with the community of Park View. Staff will be trained on licensing requirements and there will be CCTV in operation.

Given concerns over the length of the opening hours it was reassuring to be told that deliveries should not be expected at unreasonable times of the day.

Nina Becket, Park View Residents Group

Dear Editor,

Woodstock Post Office

A friend has kindly forwarded part of the Woodstock & Bladon News which includes items about Woodstock Post Office. I find it personally ironic that I was born on 25th March 1952 and the flat over the Post Office was my first home. In your piece about possible closure you mention a date of 25th March 2028, 76 years to the day I arrived there.

During my father's time as Sub-Postmaster there were two counter staff, five postmen with bicycles

and one mail van, covering Woodstock, five villages and several hamlets. My mother was the first to run the stationery and gift shop adjacent to the Post Office.

My brother, Graham, and I left Woodstock when our parents, Stanley and Hilda Jones, moved back to Oxford and a Mr Coates took over as Sub-Postmaster. We actually swapped homes as we moved into Mr & Mrs Coates' house and they moved into the Post Office flat.

My father was also involved with Woodstock Town Council during his time as Sub-Postmaster and, as the saying goes, would be turning in his grave to know what is being proposed.

In your News there is also a letter from Graham and Jennie Candy regarding St Mary Magdalene Church Tower clock which we could see from the flat windows. My mother was very involved with the Church and I was baptised there.

Although I doubt there is anyone in Woodstock now who would remember the Jones family from the 50s and 60s I truly hope that the Town Council will have a complete rethink. The Post Office is an essential community asset to the people of Woodstock and the flat above is essential to the Sub-Postmaster or Postmistress.

I now live in a small village which has been able to retain Post Office services in the village shop. This is invaluable to the village residents, as it offers banking services together with numerous courier despatch and collection points.

I sincerely hope that Woodstock can retain its Post Office and Rana and Swarn Lally can continue to live in the flat above.

Jude Awdry

GOLF DAY

Now organised for:



Friday 18 September
at Heythrop Park Resort Golf Club

Please Email editor@wobl.news
to book your entry

GOLF DAY

Introducing GLEAM

A New Community Group for the Woodstock Water Meadows

A new community group has launched in Woodstock with one clear purpose: to help restore the Water Meadows that run through the heart of our town. GLEAM (the Glyme Local Environment Action Movement), has been formed as a Community Interest Company, and has raised funding to deliver its aims, so the group is ready to turn plans into action.

GLEAM takes its name partly from the river itself. The name 'Glyme' is thought to derive from the Brittonic for 'bright stream', which we feel is fitting for a group working to keep the water flowing clean and clear.

The vision is simple: one meadow, repaired, safe, and loved. A place Woodstock is proud of and uses every day.

Our first priority is practical: repairing and stabilising the riverbanks and improving the culvert trash screen so it needs less frequent manual clearing. Both projects are backed by an Oxfordshire County Council Flood Management grant. GLEAM doesn't own the land. Our vision is to increase funding, coordinate stakeholders, and bring in the expertise that helps the landowners deliver the works the community needs.

Alongside the physical repair work sits a companion project called 'In Our Meadow'. This is the community side of the coin. Our vision is to bring residents, families, and local schools into the life of the meadows through walks, art, exercise, mindfulness, citizen science, and volunteering.

Founder Ed Creasey, a longtime Brook Hill resident, has spent years helping maintain the site informally. "This isn't about pointing fingers," he says. "It's about giving Woodstock's meadows the consistent, practical care they deserve, and giving residents a resource they can use and be proud of."

You can find out more, follow progress, and get involved at gleamwoodstock.org.uk.

Ed Creasey



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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. Policy for the magazine, as always, is to endeavour to remain professional, balanced, and accurate.

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

For over a year 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. This month it is again the turn of OCC's Cllr Andy Graham.

Recordings of Town Council Meetings

As reported in the July issue, recordings of Town Council meetings since November 2024 are now publicly viewable on YouTube. They can be viewed (some are audio only) at <https://www.youtube.com/@WoodstockCouncilMatters>

Woodstock Town Council

Extraordinary Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 30 June 2026

Six members of the Council were in attendance, along with two members of the public.

There were just three Agenda items, all under **Planning**.

1. Three Applications relating to 11 Park Street Woodstock received no objection, subject to their being submitted to the WODC Conservation Officer for approval.
2. No objection was made to Woodstock Church of England Primary School's New Premises Licence.
3. A Report was received from the Clerk on the Terms of Reference of the **Urgent Planning Committee** ("UPC"), the purpose of which is to enable prompt submission of the Council's comments on urgent planning matters via the WODC planning application portal or directly to the relevant Planning Officer by email. The Clerk's recommendation for amendment of the Terms of Reference had been to include within the ambit of the UPC urgent licensing applications.

The discussion which ensued concerned principally the meaning of "large" applications, as these are specifically excluded from the ambit of the Terms of Reference. It was agreed to amend the Terms of Reference by including "and licensing" in the appropriate paragraph.

The meeting ended at 7.10pm.

Tony McHugh

Woodstock Town Council

Town Council Meeting on 21 July 2026

Nine Councillors were present, including the Mayor, Councillor Williams, presiding. Approximately fifty members of the Public attended.

As the Mayor's Parlour was too small to accommodate the large number of attendees, the meeting was moved to the **Assembly Room** upstairs. A few residents decided not to risk the stairs or overload the chair lift and left. In consequence of the move, the meeting started ten minutes late, at 7.10pm.

Co-Option

The Councillors voted on the **co-option** to fill a casual vacancy on the Council from 2 nominations and a secret ballot was held. **Annie Cripps** was elected, and took her place on the Council.

Public Participation

Three members of the Public had notified their wish to speak, Jo Lamb, John Brimble and Chris Coe. All spoke about the possible closure of the **Woodstock Post Office**, its value to the community, the reasons advanced by the Council for a proposed increase of 88% in the rent, and the financial decision-making of the Council. John Brimble presented a Petition to the Mayor, with 1,688 signatories, all opposed to the proposed increase in the rent and possible closure of the Post Office. The Mayor said the Petition would be brought before the Council's September meeting. Members of the Public called out for an immediate discussion and decision by the Council. The Mayor refused this request, and there followed a chaotic scene, which included much shouting from the floor, the Mayor arguing with a member of the Public as to her power to exclude members of the Public from the meeting, the Mayor adjourning the meeting twice, only to reconvene it minutes later, Old Woodstock resident Stan Smith rising to tell the protesters that they were "acting like a mob", the Mayor attempting to explain that the Council were in ongoing negotiations with the Post Office's Tenant and that the matter was therefore "confidential", and members of the Public shouting out that the Council were "hiding behind" that confidentiality. Chris Coe also spoke about the risks of Item 14 on the Agenda, with allocation of **Council spending** from the Reserves.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

When the meeting was reconvened, the Council considered the Minutes of three previous meetings, amidst continued loud comments from the floor, aimed at what were perceived to be trivial **grammatical amendments** to the Minutes, as opposed to the importance of the future of the **Post Office**. Councillor Cooper intervened to say that not one of the Councillors wanted the Post Office to close. The Mayor then read out a section of the

Minutes of the Confidential part of the Town Council meeting of 16 June 2026, to the effect that the Council had agreed to allow the Tenant to relinquish the tenancy of the residential flat at 2, Park Street; and also to allow the Tenant to continue to occupy the retail premises at the Tenant's proposed rent per annum for the next two years until the break clause in 2028.

Planning

Councillors raised no objection to three **planning applications**, one of these being for the installation of an air source pump which they agreed to leave to West Oxford District Council to decide.

Mayor's Report

The Mayor expressed her thanks to the Clerk for his valiant work in the face of recent demands; and she also thanked the Town Hall staff for their work whilst the Council was without a caretaker.

County Councillor's Report

County Councillor Andy Graham reported that a reduction in the speed limit from 50 to 40 was being considered for the road from the town to the Bladon roundabout. Also, the street lighting in parts of the town was going to be looked at with relevant local residents. On Local Government Reform, Andy said the Minister had approved three administrative options for the delivery of services. There will be elections next May, but meanwhile the new Government may have an input to make. In response to a question from a Councillor concerning the **library**, Andy said he had a meeting coming up with relevant officers to look at the question. After Andy Graham had left the meeting, Councillor Grant raised the matter of the flooding in Brook Hill, and the removal of a tree there. Councillor Connolly agreed with her concern, and said we must not let this situation arise again.

VAT

A Report had been circulated. Councillors were informed that a final Report was still awaited. It was agreed that the Council should proceed with registration but subject to what the final report might say.

Community Centre

It was agreed that a working group should be formed to look at all the relevant issues with the roof, not just the possible installation of solar panels. It was noted that there is probably asbestos in the roof. A motion was passed to find out if there is indeed asbestos in the roof.

Christmas Lights

Councillors agreed to accept the lower of the quotes which had been received, and to leave the question of small trees to next year. The Council had heard too late from Wake Up To Woodstock to be able to write

to all the businesses in the town to seek permission to install small trees on the outside of their premises.

Having been extended by fifteen minutes to finish the business of the Agenda, outstanding Agenda items of Pothole Safety, New Doctors' Surgery and Parking were deferred, and the public were asked to leave at 9.15pm to allow the Council to go into confidential session, where items on the **Community Centre Fire Escape Door, Staff Matters, and Property Matters** would be discussed.

Tony McHugh

Public Participation at the Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 21 July 2026

Editors Note: The Council allows 5 members of the public to speak before Town Council meetings in a section called 'Public Participation'. The rules were changed towards the beginning of this Council's term about 2 years ago, to allow items to be discussed that were not on the Agenda for that meeting. The meeting is now suspended at the beginning of this section, and the Council now only gives the most cursory summary of what was discussed in their published Minutes. Readers can read our reporter's understanding of what was said, but as there was so much public interest at this meeting (over 50 members of the public attending), the magazine has decided to print the public speeches. This was previously done in October 2024 - see Page 14 and 15.

Speaker 1 - Jo Lamb

Save our town centre post office!

“Woodstock will die if it loses its post office in the town centre”

This remark was made recently by a retailer in Market Street ; such is the value placed on its services by Woodstock's business and residential community.

But the continuance of our post office in its central location is threatened from about the middle of next year, because of the way the latest rent review has been handled by our town council.

The current post office tenants have been serving our community for 23 years. Their leases of the post office and its upstairs flat are not due to expire until 2033. There was every reason for them to hope that this year's rent reviews would be similar to those conducted in previous years. These had always recognised the “added value” which a centralised post office provided.

Tragically, these hopes have been dashed. Woodstock Town Council demanded a staggering 88% increase in rent for the shop and its accommodation this year. It had unilaterally decided to remove the “value added” concession in such a way that the tenants

could no longer afford to keep the business going until the end of their lease. Neither could they afford to live in the flat above the shop. This is an unsustainable position for them to endure, particularly whilst negotiations were continuing during the distressing circumstances of illness and now the very recent death of their son.

One remedy for this mess perhaps, failing all else, would be the grant of 2 new leases ending in 2033, on more acceptable and affordable terms, which recognised the value added element the central post office provides everyone locally.

If the Council declines to think again but instead, continues its current path, Woodstock is the loser in the longer term. Not only does the post office provide multiple services to us all, it acts as a reason for others to visit the town to shop here and enjoy our pubs and restaurants.

Apart from the surgery, the central post office is the most important business in Woodstock. When the location of the GP surgery was being considered, a town meeting was held to discuss that issue, even though in actual fact, the Council had no power whatsoever over its outcome.

By contrast, the Council does have power to decide what happens to the post office because it owns the building...but it does so on behalf of the local electorate. It has a democratic responsibility to allow people an opportunity to express their views on this important facility. There should at least be a public meeting organised. Such important decisions should not be taken behind closed doors in secret by a mere handful of Councillors with no public consultation whatsoever. Yet this is exactly what has been happening. Surely this is an indefensible and morally suspect approach?

I repeat: Woodstock needs its post office (including its upstairs flat) in the centre of town. In order to accommodate this there has to be a rent adjustment overall to reflect the add on value a central post office provides every sector of our community. Woodstock Town Council must bend over backwards to ensure this local service remains here over the long term.

Thank you!

Speaker 2 - John Brimble

Madam Mayor and Councillors, I am here to reveal to you the uncommonly high number of signatures that we have received. First, I want to tell you the procedure that I intend to follow. This recognises that in this public session nothing is recorded about what anyone says. I intend to do my best to encourage the councillors to agree through you and with the Town Clerk to include what I'm going to say within your minutes and to do that I propose when I have read out what I'm going to present you with, I shall, without

words, once reconvened, approach you, if I may, and the Town Clerk, and give you a copy of what I'm going to read out.

So, this is to the Woodstock Town Council, Mayor Councillor Sarah Williams, and also as a side thing to your Town Clerk, because I know you'd like everything to go through the Town Clerk.

I formally present to you and through yourself to the Town Councillors, a record of the result of the petition below, conducted along each Woodstock Street over the last two weeks.

This is the petition wording:

"WOODSTOCK POST OFFICE IS AT RISK!

We the undersigned, as residents and business owners of Woodstock and the surrounding area, hereby call on Woodstock Town Council to ensure by every means that Woodstock continues to have a post office in the present premises with affordable, integrated and subsidised living accommodation in the town centre for the long term benefits of all our residents and businesses."

Please confirm in the reconvened meeting the following number of signatures and that you will record this in the minutes for this meeting.

The number of valid signatures recorded - 1688. All names, postcodes and signatures are kept as a record. Should any councillor want to see, but not copy, 94 sheets, they are available from our record.

John Brimble and Jo Lamb signed this, on behalf of the 1,688 signees, including, for which I thank them wholeheartedly, 22 volunteer collectors, dated the 21st of July, 2026.

May I approach you? Thank you for hearing us.

Speaker 3 - Chris Coe

I too could have talked about the risk to our Post Office by the decisions and actions of a small number of Councillors, but others are better prepared to do this. I will, instead, turn to financial decision making.

When the Council discussed the 2025/26 budget, three Councillors commented that, and I quote, "the budget process was not transparent", "the independent auditors should be asked to review the budget process" and "the statutory rules were not followed". Despite this, at the third attempt, the budget was passed.

The budget more than doubled the 2024/25 actual spend on Staff and Administration adding an extra £109,500 of expenditure, whilst at the same time cutting service provisions to the community in order, I would assume, to get a broadly balanced budget.

Councillors are being asked tonight, at Item 14, to spend monies from the reserves. In the proposal

before you, expenditure that was budgeted at £79,000 now has a suggested spend of £212,000, an additional £133,000 above the budget. There is then a further unbudgeted proposal to spend £34,000.

There will always be the need for planned capital expenditure and, inevitably, expenditure on unforeseen items. Most residents might, however, see a parallel between the additional budgeted expenditure on Staff and Administration of £109,500 and the proposal before Councillors tonight to spend £133,000 from reserves. This expenditure is on items which should have had an adequate budget in the first place but were reduced, I would suggest, to balance income and expenditure at the time of the original budget.

Given comments about the failures in the original budget process, I would ask that Councillors do not accept the proposal in front of them at Item 14. Spending from reserves on items underbudgeted by £133,000 should not be agreed without due scrutiny of both the original budget and the proposal before you. I ask this in the interests of your taxpayers and this community.

Thank you.

A local glimpse



Each edition we will be including a page from the sketchbook of Woodstock artist John Somerscales depicting Woodstock, Bladon, and Blenheim. See if you can work out his location?

Oxfordshire County Council
Report from Cllr Andy Graham

Local Government Reorganisation

July was dominated by the Government's decision on local government reorganisation. Oxfordshire County Council continued planning for the transition to unitary government while maintaining frontline services. Work is now focused on ensuring continuity of services for residents throughout the transition.

Whilst there was some disappointment with the governments choice of a three unitary councils which would see a greater Oxford, Woodstock would become part of what is called a North Oxford council effectively combining Cherwell and West Oxfordshire to deliver all services from May 2028

In the meantime all existing councils will deliver existing services until that date.

However elections for the new unitary will take place next May 2027 to form the shadow authority

Play Area to be kept open in Old Woodstock

Great to report a reprieve to keep the play area open in Old Woodstock by the late intervention of Pye Homes for the remainder of the Summer holidays so that our children can use the facility. My additional thanks to the Campaign for the protection of Old Woodstock who asked me to assist.

Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group

Pleased to report Positive progress is being made on improving the A44 junction at Judd's Garage. A funded scheme is being developed, including proposed traffic signals, a pedestrian crossing phase and an extended right-turn lane. Before public consultation, Oxfordshire County Council will engage with local businesses, Blenheim, Wootton Parish Council and other stakeholders to help refine the final design before it is implemented in 2027.

Street Lighting

More news on street lighting and residents input into the appropriate lighting in the centre of our historic town will be reported in a future edition.

New Library

This will also be reported on in the near future as talks of a new library for Woodstock which I continue to request are well overdue.

Bus Travel

I'm pleased that children and young people can ride free on buses throughout August in Oxfordshire and the park n ride facilities remains excellent value, keeping our improved air quality in Oxford.

Thanks to everyone for your continued positive support.

Andy Graham

Woodstock & District u3a

Our speaker for July was about 'Dogs for Good - Assistance Dogs'. This charity is based in Banbury and is a UK based charity training dogs to assist adults and children with physical and learning disabilities, children with autism and adults with dementia.

Carol Shearman demonstrated through various videos how the charity brings people and dogs together to make life possible. The assistance dogs are trained to provide both practical and emotional support, helping people to access the world around them and live fuller and more independent lives, each partnership is carefully matched and supported to ensure that both the person and dog thrive together.

We were fortunate enough to have a visit from a 14 month golden retriever who is currently in training. He was extremely well behaved and not fazed by the number of people in the room.

On 6 August we will have had our Annual Social. This is an opportunity for our groups to put together exhibitions showing what they have been up to in the past 12 months. The Art Group display their excellent work, the Recorder Group will play, and we will hear a short play read by the Play Reading Group. Tea and cake will be provided.

The Walking Group met at the Old Shed near Enstone, where we had a beautiful walk along a woodland trail. There were gorgeous view of the surrounding countryside and welcome shade under the canopy of trees. After the walk we enjoyed delicious homemade cakes and tea in the café.

The Historic Churches Group visited St Andrew's Church in Oddington near Islip in June. St Andrew's dates back to the 10th century when a Cistercian Monastery was founded in Oddington. There are many historical features in the church, a medieval bell



frame, bells dating back to 1600's and a Preaching Cross in the churchyard.

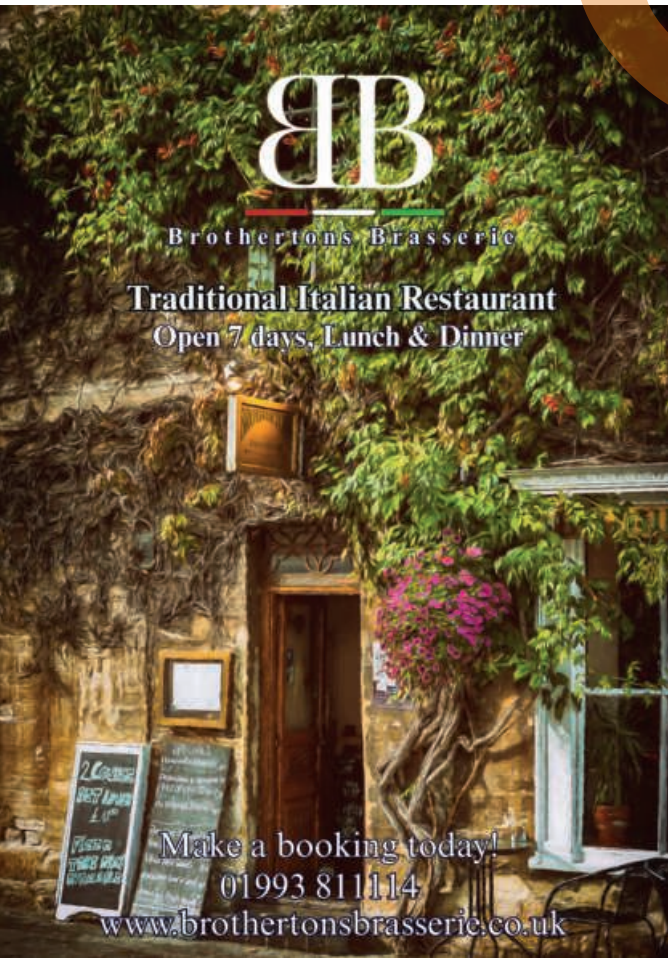
There is a unique connection with the Māori community through Makereti Papakura, who was a Māori Princess and lived in the village. She is buried in the churchyard.

In 2025 the University of Oxford awarded a posthumous degree to Makereti Papakura. This was in relation to her studies of the Māori customs, which she completed in 1930, but as she died suddenly the same year, she did not receive her degree.

The stained-glass window in the Lady Chapel was installed in 2025 and is the work of Jude Tarrant. The theme is The Creation, depicted by the wildlife of Otmoor.

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at St Hugh's Centre, Hensington Road, at 2.15pm for a 2.30 pm 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.woodstocku3a.uk. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Sian Wallworth



Portrait of the Month - Ewan Macfarlane



There's a particular kind of gravity to Ewan Macfarlane. He's spent a lifetime falling in love with art again and again. While taking his portrait it was hard not to get distracted by the Lichtenstein lithograph and Warhol screen print flanking him. Good company for a man who grew up in a house full of music and painting where a cubist Lord of the Rings scene bought by his grandparents in 1950s Edinburgh watched over his childhood and now hangs quietly treasured on his own bedroom wall. That painting still shapes how he sees his work today: not as ownership but as custodianship. A brief grateful stewardship of things that existed long before him and will outlast him too.

After years shaping galleries across Oxford and the Midlands Ewan found his way back to Woodstock, taking over the gallery from his late friend Dave and from Beth, whom he quietly supported through grief long before he ever thought of taking the reins himself. After two years of running it in their memory, he has now transitioned the gallery to his own name.

Ask him what he loves about Woodstock and before he mentions the stone or the setting, he talks about the people. The friendships built shop to shop, the sense of belonging to something bigger than himself. That same warmth carries into the quiet moments too, when he loves taking his greyhound Sam for a walk through the Palace grounds.

Portrait of Ewan MacFarlane taken by fine art portrait photographer, Pippa Hetherington.





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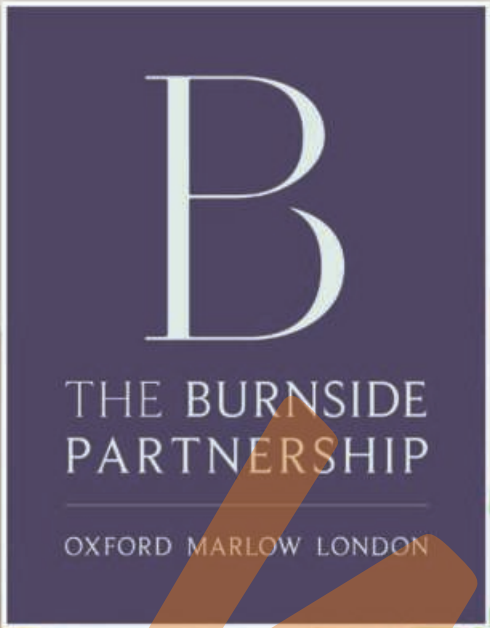
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Nature Matters

August and September

Late summer is one of the most rewarding times of the year in the countryside. August and September bring warmth, colour, and abundance, while the changing character of the landscape offers something new with each passing week. Long days still encourage walks along footpaths, beside streams, and through open countryside, where wildlife remains active and the signs of the season are all around.



Blackberries ripening in a late-summer hedgerow. Photo: Annie Spratt

In August, meadows are rich with grasses and seed heads, while knapweed, thistles, and scabious continue to attract butterflies and bees. Peacocks, painted ladies, red admirals, and small tortoiseshells drift across sunny banks, and the steady chirping of grasshoppers and crickets provides a familiar soundtrack to warm afternoons and lingering evenings. Along the River Glyme and other streams, dragonflies patrol stretches of open water with remarkable speed and agility, while damselflies linger among waterside vegetation.

The hedgerows are equally full of life. Blackberries begin to ripen among the brambles, tempting birds, mammals, and human foragers alike. Elderberries darken, rosehips brighten, and hawthorn berries redden, adding colour to field boundaries and country lanes. Above fields and gardens, swallows sweep gracefully through the air in pursuit of insects, while young birds move through hedgerows and scrub in lively family groups, taking advantage of the season's abundance.

As September arrives, the countryside takes on a slightly different character. Harvested fields open up wider views across the landscape, while hedgerows become laden with fruit. Blackberries are often at their best, and the first fallen leaves begin to appear beneath woodland edges and along quiet lanes. Early mornings can bring a touch of mist over low ground

and water meadows, while dew highlights spiders' webs stretched between grasses and shrubs.

Bird migration becomes more noticeable during September. Swallows gather in larger flocks before departing south, and skeins of geese may occasionally be seen or heard moving overhead. Many resident birds remain active in hedgerows and gardens, feeding on berries and seeds as autumn approaches.

Yet September often provides some of the finest days of the year. Warm sunshine, clear skies, and mellow light give the countryside a distinctive character. The intensity of high summer softens, but the landscape remains full of colour and wildlife. Together, August and September form a season of abundance, when meadows, hedgerows, rivers, and woodlands offer a rich variety of sights and experiences for anyone enjoying the Oxfordshire countryside.

Mayfly Dun

Wake up to Woodstock



Wake up to Woodstock (WUTW) welcomed businesses to another successful networking mixer last month, hosted by business member Alex's Creperie on Park View.

The informal summers evening brought people together, to catch up and make new connections, in the delightful surroundings of one of Woodstock's most popular cafes.



A special highlight was a Woodstock Warblers performance, a local singing group led by WUTW's Chair, Nickie, which added a real sense of community and was enjoyed by all.

Networking events are one of the key benefits of WUTW membership, helping businesses build valuable relationships while supporting the town's thriving independent business community.

Visit wutw.co.uk for more information.

Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museum

A Grand Day Out on 2 August was our most successful 2026 event so far. 180 visitors came to see our recreation of Gloucester Green bus and coach station in the golden era of bus and coach travel before most people owned their own car. Restored vehicles often have interesting histories.



EYA 923 observation coach

EYA 923 was new in 1939 when it was owned by Blue Motors of Minehead. The coach was the first to reach the Devon village of Lynmouth on 16 August 1952 to evacuate villagers after a catastrophic flash flood caused by 9 inches (229 mm) of torrential rain falling on Exmoor within 24 hours on August 15–16. The resulting wall of water and debris claimed 34 lives and destroyed over 100 buildings. The coach took survivors to a cinema in Minehead.

It is an observation coach with large windows and ceiling lights so passengers could look up as well as sideways. The coachwork was by Harrington with a large fin at the back. The coach was used for day tours to local attractions such as the Valley of the Rocks, Exmoor and Dartmeet. On Saturdays it would have worked ‘on hire to Royal Blue’ as a relief express coach to/from Exeter, where passengers might have changed onto a coach going to Gloucester Green.

Bristol Commercial Vehicles was a vehicle manufacturer located in Bristol, England. Most production was of buses but trucks and railbus chassis were also built. Two 1950 ‘Queen Mary’ full-front body came on 2 August. PTW 110 is ex Eastern National and NAE 3 was new to Bristol Tramways and used on long distance ‘Bristol Greyhound’ services to London before the M4 was built. In the mid-1950s I remember catching a Greyhound like this from Winscombe near Weston Super Mare to London’s Victoria coach station via Wells, Devizes, Marlborough, where there was a lunch stop and passengers could connect to other services, Swindon, Gloucester Green in Oxford for another break and High Wycombe. This daily journey took all day.



CXX 171 was built for London Transport’s Green Line services and entered service at Hitchen garage in June 1936 as T448. It still carries the brackets for the destination boards which all Green Line coaches had attached to their sides. However, the coach was under-powered so was relegated to bus work in the country area in the green livery into which it was restored 18 months ago. In 1939 the coach was converted into an ambulance for the duration of the Second World War. At the end of the war it returned to country bus services in Surrey, probably from Addleston garage. It was withdrawn in 1952 and is now on permanent display at the London Bus Museum.

On Sunday 30 and Bank Holiday Monday 31 August we have Scalextric displays when adults and children can bring their own cars and operate the displays (under supervision!).

Frank Collingwood



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Blenheim Park Cricket Club

Blenheim Park Cricket Club vs Exeter College, Oxford - 28 June 2026

The origins of cricket at Blenheim are lost in the mists of time, and are likely to remain so. But there is some evidence suggesting that organised cricket was being played there as early as the middle of the nineteenth century.

A copy of a scorecard emerged in recent years of a game played at the Palace on Friday 12th June 1846, with Blenheim Park Cricket Club hosting a team from Exeter College, Oxford. We can presume that the hosting team consisted mostly of people employed to work on the Palace estate, although the one home player from that match that can be traced with any certainty is Frank Bowcher Wright, a talented cricketer who had represented Oxford University in his youth. By 1846 he was thirty-eight years old and serving as curate at Church Hanborough. The students included among their number the twenty-year-old Charles du Cane, later MP for North Essex, and later still Governor of Tasmania.



The Blenheim Park team before the match

The match was one-sided, with scores low even by the standards of the era. Exeter were dismissed for a pitiful 15 runs in their first innings, with Wright taking eight wickets, all of them bowled. Blenheim Park responded with 175, after which the students were rolled over for 69 in their second knock, giving the home team a win by an innings and 91 runs. Du Cane bagged a pair, a fact unlikely to have featured in his reminiscences of college years when lording over Government House in Hobart decades later.

When the scorecard of that match was discovered a few years ago, it was resolved to mark the 180th anniversary with a return fixture, and with no record of the teams having met in the interim, it might mark the longest gap between matches of the same opponents in cricketing history.

So it was that, on 28th June 2026, a troupe of blazered students strode purposefully onto the South

Lawn - remarkably early for students on a weekend - presumably itching to avenge the heavy defeat suffered by their scholarly forebears. Cordialities were exchanged, photos were taken in a variety of fetching poses, and the home side were asked to bat by the toss-winning Exeter College captain.



The two teams after the post-match presentations

Unlike the previous game, this match was played as a limited-overs affair, and the hosts ran up an imposing 268-8 off their allotted 50 overs, with Finn Spearman contributing a superb, undefeated 134, the highest individual innings for the club in many years.

The students’ reply began well, with Talha Siddiq punishing any wayward bowling, but he couldn’t find colleagues to keep him company for long, and when he fell to the persevering septuagenarian Nigel Walker for a splendid 94, the innings petered out for 227, with Walker and Rohan Gupta each bagging three wickets.

Thus, Blenheim Park maintained their 100% record in the fixture, and repaired in good spirits to the Back Lane Tavern, looking forward to the next centoctogesimal anniversary match, in 2206.

Result:
Blenheim Park CC 268
F Spearman 134*; T Macfarlane 3-51

Exeter College CC 227
T Siddiq 94; N Walker 3-41, R Gupta 3-44
BPCC won by 41 runs

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The Woodstock Bookshop

Take a dip



With the 2026 heatwave set to rival scorching temperatures in the fabled summer of 1976, many of us will have sought out opportunities for a cooling dip - be it in a pool, a lake or river (if we can find a clean one!) or the sea. You may even have hijacked the children's paddling pool or jumped into the bath.

On the most sweltering days, concentrating can be hard. Reading a full-length book might seem too much to ask of a heat-fogged brain.

But if you're not in the mood for a long swim, this might be the perfect moment for a quick dip. Dive into a collection of stories or poems and come up feeling refreshed and energised.

A great starting point for a foray into short-form fiction is The Reading Agency's pocket-size collection, *All Around the World*. An absolute bargain at just £1, it contains seven stories from Booker Prize winning authors including Anne Enright, David Szalay, Yoko Ogawa and the selecting editor, Roddy Doyle. Linked by a loose theme of parents and children, these short pieces share a power possessed by all memorable stories - of suggesting far more than is printed on the page. Often starting with a commonplace object such as a child's buggy or a strawberry shortcake, they grow by increments into powerful narratives of love, loss, fear, loneliness, memory and connection - universal experiences that resonate with the international origins of the tales. All human life is here, at a fraction of the price of an iced tea!

For rapid immersion, sometimes nothing beats a beautiful or thought-provoking poem. Rupi Kaur's second collection, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, makes ideal summer reading, with its focus on growth, strength and renewal. Or sample the insights and images of acclaimed Oxford poet Kieron Winn in his volume *No Time*, which includes this description of a Woodstock landscape in the poem 'In Blenheim Park': 'Pointillist light-cells in the River Glyme / Dazzle then melt into the Great Lake's glaze'.

All these books and many more summer reads are available from The Woodstock Bookshop. Check out our window display for further inspiration!

Bladon Community Choir

Concert Review - Saturday 25 July

Considering that the Bladon Community Choir was giving its first ever public performance last Saturday in St Martins Church, Bladon, this was a remarkably strong performance.

Numbering only 12 singers, they produced a focussed and often powerful sound. Under the direction of organist Maria Razumowskaya, Professor of Music Performance at Oxford University and St Martins, Bladon, they tackled and delivered a challenging repertoire, notably the five negro spirituals from Michael Tippett's 'Child of Our Time'. For these and other items they were joined by Katherine Macaulay, a young welsh soprano currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Her clear and impeccable soprano soared above the ensemble, lending the whole a thrilling emotional power.

Two other notable additions to the choir were Irish baritone Jonny Reynolds, MA graduate of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, who enriched the choir's bass section, notably in a beautiful account of Rachmaninov's Bogoroditse Devo, and the Rev Sarah Bourne, who provided a stunning virtuoso oboe solo to a choral arrangement of Handel's 'Where'er you walk' from the Opera, Semele.

The musical items were interspersed with a varied selection of poetry read by members of the choir and the village which were well-liked by the audience. Altogether this was a very satisfying evening.

Going forward, the choir welcomes new members from Bladon and the surrounding area - for more information, please contact Professor Maria Razumowskaya (maria.razumovskaya@googlemail.com).

John Parker

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In the Garden

This month has all been about watering and wildfires. The lawn has gone brown and does not need mowing and the plants are crying out for a drink.

I recently moved house and on the advice of a neighbour started burning all the packing paper which was stacked up in scores of bin liners littering the lawn. It was not until I turned on the News that night and saw the waves of wildfires around the Continent that I thought it better to stop!

However, the boxes and the paper have gone now, and I am left with my pots. I have always liked the mixture of agapanthus and lily. They are both so intricate and delicate and they are both flowering now and make a wonderful combination.



Lily and Agapanthus

I seem to have inherited some beautifully sharp pink wild sweet pea and a rather prolific purple ornamental thistle, however I shall not be doing any of my own planting until autumn, when the weather is cooler and the plants have a better chance of surviving.

There are some wild, lilac and black poppies growing outside my house, which have seeded. On the advice of Jenny I waited until the seed pods had turned brown and shook the pods to see if the seeds were ready. I gave Jenny some for the churchyard and will let the others self-seed to decorate the front of my house with a bit of wildlife.

Sophie McCallum

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Bridewell Gardens

Open Day - Sunday 6 September, 11am to 4pm

Bridewell Gardens, a mental health recovery service based in a beautiful walled garden in Wilcote, is delighted to welcome visitors for our 2026 Open Day. The vineyard and walled garden will be open, offering a rare chance to explore this peaceful corner of West Oxfordshire.

What to Expect

Visitors are invited to wander through the vineyard, gardens, discovering the plants, produce, and wildlife that thrive here. Bridewell’s own produce will be on sale, including our acclaimed sparkling wine made from grapes grown on site. You’ll also find a wide selection of plants propagated by gardeners as part of their day to day recovery activities.

Our pop up café will be serving refreshments, or you’re welcome to bring a picnic to enjoy among the vines. Children can explore the gardens, spot dragonflies by the pond, and count the chickens roaming the vineyard. Dogs on leads are very welcome.

Staff and volunteers will be on hand throughout the day to talk about Bridewell’s work, the recovery service, and how the community can support what we do. Many visitors tell us that Bridewell’s sense of sanctuary becomes clear the moment they step inside the walls.

At our June Open Day we welcomed nearly 400 people, with countless comments about the warmth, welcome, and calm felt across the site. We’d love you to experience it for yourself this September - Bridewell makes sense once you visit.

Entry

We suggest a £5 donation per person to support our work.

Address

Bridewell Gardens, The Walled Garden, Wilcote, Oxfordshire, OX7 3DT. (Please check a map before travelling - sat navs are not always reliable.)

About Bridewell Gardens

Bridewell is, in the words of a former gardener, "a small mental health charity with muddy paths, patient people, growing things - and absolutely no pressure to pretend everything’s fine when it isn’t."

We support adults recovering from serious mental ill health through therapeutic gardening and land based activities. Working outdoors, season by season, helps people rebuild confidence, routine, social connection, and a sense of purpose. Many gardeners also receive support to return to employment, volunteering, or further study.

A day of joy, a community of love

The Revd Gemma Ferrier and Nick Sheard on Friday 24 July 2026



Curate's Log



By the time you are reading this, Nick and I will have celebrated our wedding at the end of July. Thank you to everyone who came from Woodstock, Bladon and much further afield to celebrate with us. It became far more than a wedding; it felt like a wonderful community event, bringing together family, friends, neighbours and church communities. There was laughter, conversation, eating, dancing and, above all, love. Seeing St Mary Magdalene Church used in so many different ways was a real joy - from the solemnity of our marriage service to dancing to an 80s band later that evening. The churchyard, too, came alive as people sat together among the gravestones, sharing food and stories. It was a beautiful reminder of what Christians call the communion of saints: that the Church embraces both the living and those who have gone before us. As we celebrated a new beginning, we did so surrounded by generations whose lives and faith have shaped this place.

Thankfully, unlike the wedding at Cana in John's Gospel, we didn't run out of wine! We chose that passage as one of our wedding readings because, beneath the miracle, it is really a story about relationships, community and the quiet ways God works through ordinary people.

The miracle begins not with Jesus, but with his mother. She notices a problem before anyone else does. The wine has run out, and she quietly steps in. I love that. So much of love begins with simply noticing, seeing when someone is anxious, lonely, overwhelmed, or in need of encouragement and doing something about it.

Then there is Jesus. At first, he seems reluctant to act, yet his mother has complete confidence in him. She has watched him grow up and knows who he is becoming. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give another person is to believe in them before they fully believe in themselves.

Her words to the servants are wonderfully simple: "Do whatever he tells you." They have no idea what is about to happen. They simply fill enormous jars with water and trust Jesus enough to take the next step. Life can often be like this. We rarely know exactly where the path ahead will lead. We are simply invited to keep taking the next step.

The steward tastes the wine and declares, "You have saved the best until now." Those words strike me as being full of hope. They remind us that God's story is always moving forward, always creating something new. Whatever stage of life we find ourselves in, there is always the possibility that the best is not behind us but still to come.

Looking back on our own wedding, what I will remember most is not the flowers, the dress or even the fact that we didn't run out of wine! It is the people: laughter filling the church, conversations in the churchyard, dancing beneath an ancient roof, and a community gathered together in love.

Perhaps that is what the Church is at its best. Not simply a building, but people sharing life together—celebrating joyful moments, supporting one another through difficult ones, gathering week by week in worship, and finding friendship around a cup of tea. Our wedding was one joyful expression of that community, but I see it every Sunday and throughout the week in Woodstock and Bladon.

Perhaps that's why Jesus chose a wedding for his first miracle. He began not in a palace or a temple, but in the middle of a celebration where people were brought together in love. I like to think that whenever people gather in kindness, generosity and love, God is quietly at work, still turning the ordinary into something extraordinary.

With every blessing, Gemma

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Silence is not golden

Thank you to Graham and Jennie Candy for their letter last month where he asks what has happened about the town clock situated in the tower of St Mary Magdalene Church. The clock dates from 1792 and also is used as the trigger for the carillon for the same date that plays different tunes each day, 4 times a day. More information can be found in a book called "Woodstock its building and people" for those that do not already have a copy it is available in the Woodstock bookshop and the Museum giftshop.

The clock has been regularly maintained by Smiths of Derby, we think for virtually all of its life. The town council has paid for the regular servicing of the clock for years. A couple of years ago the clock was going fast and the mechanism which stops that happening had worn out. The town council paid for half of that and the PCC of St Mary Magdalene paid for the other half. (The PCC is the committee that manages the church and gets no money from the national CofE and no money from the government and is a registered charity). It is an interesting gadget which holds the pendulum back and stops it working for a short while till the time is correct when it releases the pendulum.



The clock mechanism needs removal for full overhaul

In the last 18 months the clock has had 3 additional visits by Smiths of Derby for when things have gone wrong, ie not kept time and being too slow or stopped. These recent visits were paid by the PCC

The Town Council received a report from Smiths of Derby in July last year stating that the mechanisms had worn out and now needed a complete overhaul. In addition the automatic winding mechanism is also worn out and that needs replacing. This work will

entail taking the mechanism out and back to their workshops for a couple of months. The quote was for £20,790 including VAT. Because this is a clock of significant importance we will probably need a Horology expert oversight in order to obtain the permissions we need to work on this clock. I am estimating we will need some increase for inflation for when the work occurs, there will be some preliminaries (insurance and possibly access equipment) and also some contingency. All in all that then comes to almost £30,000.



The 1792 clock makers' inscription

The PCC have spent the last 4 years raising money from its congregation and our local community to replace the roof which was successfully finished last year. The roof and the solar were completed within the budget. The PCC felt that we just needed a break from asking for money for building projects. In addition, a clock that does not work, does not affect our services, use of the building or the rest of our support for the community like the bereavement café etc, apart from the civic services particularly that held at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

Discussions have been held with Woodstock Town Council since September last year for them to meet the costs for this Civic asset which is part of our heritage and enjoyed by the people of Woodstock and our visitors. WTC have so far declined to meet these costs, hence the clock always reads 11:10.

We are hopeful that WTC will provide substantial support but in the meantime are looking into grant options and have responded to many people wishing to get this fixed by setting up an online giving system - the link is <https://givealittle.co/c/clockrepair> or in the wall safe to the left as you go into church, just mark it for the clock.

Aidan Salter, Treasurer, St Mary Magdalene PCC

Updates on ‘Botley West’

A huge Thank You

This month we start with a huge thank you to everyone who has stood with us to fight against Botley West Solar Farm.

We have been raising objections for four years, and your unwavering support has been the lifeblood of the Stop Botley West campaign.

So many people have given their time, energy, money and resources along the way to help protect our communities, agricultural land, wildlife and heritage landscapes.

Our strength has always come from your diverse and relentless efforts, including:

- Delivering leaflets to thousands of homes across Oxfordshire to spread the word
- Putting up placards and signs that made our opposition highly visible
- Attending community events, rallies and public hearings in massive numbers - and appearing on TV and radio - to explain why this is the wrong scheme in the wrong place
- Writing to MPs and Councillors - and visiting Parliament - to ensure local political pressure never wavered

- Engaging with the developer’s consultation ‘efforts’
- Responding to the Examination and the Secretary of State with vital local evidence and objections

The crucial 16th July deadline for responses to the Secretary of State has now passed.

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to every single person who engaged in the journey up to and including the final intense consultation phase; sending in responses to challenge the developer's incorrect, vague and often missing information.

What happens next?

We are now waiting for the Secretary of State to make a final decision (or otherwise) regarding the Development Consent Order.

The deadline for a decision is 10 September 2026.

Our wonderful community has done everything possible to stand up to this massive 1,418-hectare project (the size of Heathrow Airport).

For further updates as we enter the final stretch of this campaign please visit stopbotleywest.com

You can still register for updates and get the latest news on the application and decision.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Woodstock Probus Club

We had a very interesting tour of the Ocado facility near Bicester for our June meeting. I think it is not too much of an exaggeration to say we were stunned by the level of sophistication of their delivery system. The highlight was the Rubik Cube where trollies whizz around at breakneck speed but pass and stop with a few mm of each other. The system is controlled from Sofia - don't ask why but it works. (For interest, Sofia is the highest capital in Europe after Madrid at a height of 550m).

Our speaker in June was Brenda Gatwicke talking about her 'Work in Ukraine'. She is an amazing woman who gave us a good insight into everyday living in the area of Ukraine she has visited several times for humanitarian reasons. On the plus side, they are very keen on Chess. Capuccino may be cheap- somewhere between 50p and £1 but living is hard especially for old people. Pensions are small - about £84 per month. She talked of the hardship that many people are experiencing - the fact that schooling is underground and kids are missing out. There are many amputees. People live in dread of the next attack though there is an app for your phone to alert you to the next drone attack. She described some of the drones Russia is using. One was the Iranian Shahed drone, powered by a rear-mounted propeller. It is relatively slow (about 100mph) so Russia launches scores of these at night when they are less likely to be shot down.

Our July outing was to Chavenage House. Some might know this from Poldark days but for many it was a revelation. We had an extended tour of the house by very well informed and amusing guides, two of whom were the owners. As pointed out by our guide, when Poldark rides out of the gates and turns left he is immediately on the Cornish coast, but if you do that by car it will take you several hours. (Chavenage represents Poldark's Cornish home Trenwith).

It feels like there should be a few ghosts here, and indeed our guides did point out the spooky nature of the house. One is said to be the ghost of Charles I, who comes minus his head. The then owner, Col Stephens, did under pressure, agree to the regicide. However, he was too ill to travel to London to sign, and so his name did not appear on the list of those who signed the death warrant. This was fortunate for Col. Stephens as all signatories were severely punished when Charles II came to the throne. The house is full of interesting artefacts and you can see why it appeals to film makers.

We ended our tour with an afternoon tea in the courtyard. A most enjoyable day out.

Alan Holder, Past President

Panniers

I am writing this while travelling in Europe and - it might come as little surprise - in all of the five countries we have travelled through, cycling infrastructure is in advance of what we have in the UK.



The results of this are clear to see - more people of all ages cycling and fewer cars on the road. Perhaps the most noticeable difference on the continent is that cycle lanes in towns and cities join up easily so riders rarely have to share space with cars.

We are already campaigning for something similar in Woodstock - a network of routes linking existing and planned residential areas - Park View, Hensington Estate, Randolph Ave, Banbury Road, Brook Hill and Hill Rise - together with the primary and Marlborough schools.

Hopefully one day, our community can also enjoy the benefits that such infrastructure brings.

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



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The Marlborough C of E School

Year 13 Leavers' Celebration at Blenheim Palace

On 23 June, Year 13 arrived at Blenheim Palace for their evening of dinner and celebrations, to reflect on an amazing two years of hard work and success. Pupils arrived at 6.30pm, with parents gathering to talk and take photos, and lots of exciting arrivals in lovely cars, and with amazing outfits!

Everybody attending then moved through to the Italian Terrace for welcome drinks, followed by a two course meal in the beautiful Orangery. The sun was shining, and the students looked wonderful. On the tables there were little mementoes for each student; a handwritten postcard, a self-portrait tea towel, and a Year 13 Cookbook, all created by and for the whole cohort.

There were speeches from Nick and Sophie in Year 13, and from Mr Hanlon, Ms Jones and Mr Gavin. The master of ceremonies was Freddy, who welcomed everybody and made sure that timings ran smoothly. There was also an incredible musical performance from Anna and Matilda. The atmosphere and feeling of community was magical, and really epitomised the experience of being part of our Marlborough family. It was a night to remember!

Year 11 Leavers' Event - Class of 2026!

19 June marked an unforgettable evening as the Year 11 Leavers' Prom took centre stage. It was an evening filled with pure warmth, laughter, friendship, and celebration, creating memories that will last a lifetime for all those involved.

Family and friends gathered in delight to witness students arrive in style, each making a grand entrance in a wonderfully varied array of vehicles. From sleek sports cars to timeless classics, stylish limousines, and even a tractor pulling a trailer, the arrivals set the tone for an evening filled with surprises and delights.

The MEC was transformed into the perfect party setting with a sleek gold and black theme throughout. Staff were on hand at the mocktail station providing flavourful refreshments, whilst our very own Mr Minton and Mr Smith showcased their talents as DJs for the evening. We were delighted to welcome back from last year's prom a pizza truck, serving delicious homemade pizza, and an ice cream truck, providing the perfect sweet treat on a warm summer's evening!

For the staff and parents alike, witnessing the students stepping out of their usual routines and into the spotlight of this special night was a heartwarming experience - the most perfect occasion to mark the end of exams and, for some, their journey with The Marlborough School. For those students not returning for Sixth Form, we will miss you dearly and wish you all the very best for the future. You will always be a

part of our Marlborough family. We are exceptionally proud of each and every member of our Year 11 cohort!

Year 7 Residential to Hill End

On Wednesday 1 July, 174 Year 7 students scampered into the MEC - some with bags far larger than themselves, others with bags concerningly small - as they prepared for the much-awaited Year 7 Residential. Once registers were taken, we boarded the buses with eager anticipation mounting as students tucked into their Haribo.



Year 7 students celebrating 100 years of Hill End

We arrived at Hill End and began our activities with the usual Ambition, Respect, and Perseverance that Marlborough students always show. They demonstrated Respect while helping each other during team-building activities and the challenge trail, Perseverance during the 5K hike with its incredible views, and Ambition during den building and bushcraft. Over the three days, they also enjoyed a wide range of other activities, including orienteering, Ultimate Frisbee, and Capture the Flag.

The first night coincided with the England football match. We managed to get a live stream working, and while football fans packed into the barn to watch, others enjoyed their downtime. We imagine the students' celebrations could be heard all the way back at school! A game of Sardines in the evening wore off any remaining energy before we headed to the bell tents and dorms for a warm cup of hot chocolate and a bedtime story. The next day, we continued our rotation of activities. In the evening, we played a game where students had to find hidden teachers, solve a riddle from each, and work out the mystery word.

Friday rolled around, and we had time for two last activities before some very tired students and even more tired teachers made their way back to school. The journey back was much quieter than the way there, with everyone beaming with pride about what they had accomplished, having made lifelong memories... and still munching on their Haribo!

Our students had a fantastic time and truly let their light shine. The residential is an incredible trip where everyone comes together, makes new friends, and genuinely strengthens the Marlborough Family.

Yarnton Netball Club

Yarnton Netball Club has been established for over 20 years, originally as Kidlington Netball Club, but mainly centred at the outdoor floodlight court in Rutten Lane, Yarnton. During that time the club has flourished and now runs up to three adult league teams, as well as Youth, U15, U13 and U11; plus weekly recreational sessions for the lower primary school ages. The emphasis always on enjoyment outdoors with growing skills and fitness.

Club sessions run on Tuesdays at Rutten Lane, Yarnton for the new season commencing in August. Seniors 7.30pm until 9pm, with school years 10-13 preceding at 6.15pm to 7.15pm. The younger age groups meet on Wednesday evenings - school years 4-6 are 3.30-4.30pm, with years 7-9 at 4.40-5.40pm. For updated information on all age-groups, please make contact at yarntonnetballclub@outlook.com or yarntonyouthnetball@gmail.com or via Facebook. Local recreational/league netball is just fun and brilliant to be involved in - do get in touch. New members always welcome throughout the year.

When Netball was invited into the Commonwealth Games in 1998 this was a huge step forward for the game. Netball had mostly only been played by Commonwealth countries. Since then Australia and

New Zealand have been the top contenders with England, Jamaica and South Africa hot on their heels. The excitement of England eventually winning Gold in Australia in 2018 still resonates - I was lucky enough to be there; it was magical.

The 23rd Games in Glasgow just concluded and saw great excitement as England played New Zealand in one semi-final, with Australia against Jamaica in the other. However, there were two big upsets as New Zealand beat England (61-54), and Jamaica won through in the dying seconds (46-45) which meant that Australia were unable to contest the final for the first time ever. The Gold medal was taken by New Zealand with a cat and mouse game until they stole away from Jamaica in the last quarter with a result of 56-48. Congratulations to the Kiwis. Australia won through against England and took the Bronze. Massive skills and great enjoyment all round. Next time England.

Forty-five countries now appear in the World Ranking list. World Netball and Australia are leading the bid to get netball included in the Olympics to be hosted by Brisbane in 2032 - please link to <https://netball.sport/back-the-bid/> to pledge your vote to the bid. Better still come down to the Yarnton Netball club and get involved.

Sue Blackshaw



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Keep It Local

The Oxfordshire Museum

Woodstock is home to the Oxfordshire Museum, a regional museum housing treasures that help to record and tell the story of our county's history.

The museum has been supported for more than 30 years by the Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum. Their annual subscriptions and individual donations have helped purchase and conserve objects for the museum, host temporary exhibitions, develop the building's facilities and sponsor educational events for children.

One exciting initiative, launched in 2025 and repeated this year, is the Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum Creative Writing competition, open to children between 7 to 11 years old. For this competition, primary school children can write a fictional story about an item of their choice in the museum. Those who are 11 and older, and live in Oxfordshire, have the option of showcasing their talent by submitting an entry to the museum's Open Art Competition.

The theme of this year's Open Art Competition is "Celebration" to dovetail with the museum's 60th anniversary celebration in October. Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum will be able to attend a talk celebrating the museum - part of its monthly talks programme.

If you would like to join the Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum and benefit from monthly evening talks, invitations to private views, discounts and much more, please see details in the following article.

Vanessa Ayres

Friends of The Oxfordshire Museum

There is no talk in August but the Museum's Summer Exhibition will be running throughout the month. It is free to all. 'Timeless Tales - Oxfordshire's Folkloric Myths and Traditions'

Members' Events this Autumn

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

Wednesday 2 September

Oxfordshire : the Silicon Valley of Formula 1

Our speaker Nigel Leavy will tell us how his qualifications and career led to his involvement in Formula 1- as a main board director of a F1 team and other motor sport related consultancy. From its early days post war to the present day, he will cover teams,

personalities and locations past and present, plus the economic impact on the area.

This is an Oxfordshire talk with a difference!

Wednesday 7 October

Celebrating 60 years of the Oxfordshire Museum

Speaker Jemma Davey, Museum Services Manager

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

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum (SOFO)

What's On - August and September

Lee Miller: A Woman at War

There's still time to catch this summer's headline exhibition featuring 33 wartime photographs by Vogue model, surrealist photographer and photojournalist, Lee Miller. See stunning images from the 1940s, from her first snaps for British Vogue - taken at Oxford's Churchill Hospital - to following US troops into the war in Europe.

Now open alongside the Lee Miller exhibition is a mini-exhibition by museum volunteers, Capturing Conflict which looks at the tools of war correspondents like Lee, from the Crimean War to the Falklands. Admissions apply - see www.sofo.org.uk.

Women at War with Dr Kate Vigurs

7pm, Wednesday 19 August 2026

Fresh from Chalke Valley History Festival, historian and author Kate Vigurs presents a two-part talk, looking at trailblazing women like Lee Miller who covered the events of the Second World War as they happened. In the second part, she'll uncover the stories of women who dropped into Occupied France, following their journeys from recruits to SOE secret agents. Tickets: £15

An Evening with Ami Bouhassane - Lee Miller: A Woman at War

7pm Thursday 3 September 2026

Author and co-director of Farleys House & Gallery, Ami Bouhassane, joins us to discuss the life and legacy of her grandmother - Lee Miller. Tickets: £15.

Woodstock's 'Last Night of the Proms'

7pm, Saturday 26 September 2026

This year's concert with the Waterloo Band & Bugles of The Rifles at St Mary Magdalene Church aims to bring a taste of The Last Night of the Proms to Woodstock. Tickets: £12

The History Forum

Online presentations by history professionals

The History Forum Enters Its Fourth Year with a Captivating New Season of Talks

Founded by local author and social historian Melanie King, The History Forum is about to embark on its fourth year of exploring the past in fascinating and accessible talks. Running from September to April, this online series features illustrated presentations by esteemed historians and experts, streamed via Zoom at 7 pm on Sunday evenings.

Our speakers - leading voices in their fields from the UK, the US, and Canada - cover an extraordinary range of historical topics.

Season 4, series 11 is launching on Sunday 6 September 2026, promises to be thought-provoking and interesting talks. Topics include:

- A virtual tour of subterranean London
- The art of espionage from camera bras to shaved heads
- Life and death on India's North West Frontier
- Cleopatra - history and fake news
- Hidden Ice Houses in Britain
- The History of Briggens House Forgery Unit in World War II



Among our expert speakers:

- Dr. Anna Speyart, historian and researcher working on the science and technology of freezing in early modern Europe. Her talk covers the consumption of ices in the Medici Palace in Florence.
- Professor James Crossland from Liverpool John Moores University shares the life of Robert Bruce Lockhart the unofficial British 'agent' in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.
- Dr. Simon Wenham will unravel the origins of poverty, pestilence and public health in Victorian Britain.
- Dr. Ross King returns to tell the gripping story of Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul.

Participants can choose between signing up for a 10-talk series - at a reduced rate - or paying individually for the sessions they wish to attend. If you miss a live event, don't worry: most presentations are available as recordings for up to seven days afterward (unless otherwise specified).

To sign up for Season 4 (Series 11) or to learn more about The History Forum, visit: www.melaniekingbooks.com/the-history-forum/

Join us in uncovering the hidden corners, big questions, and unforgettable stories that history has to offer.





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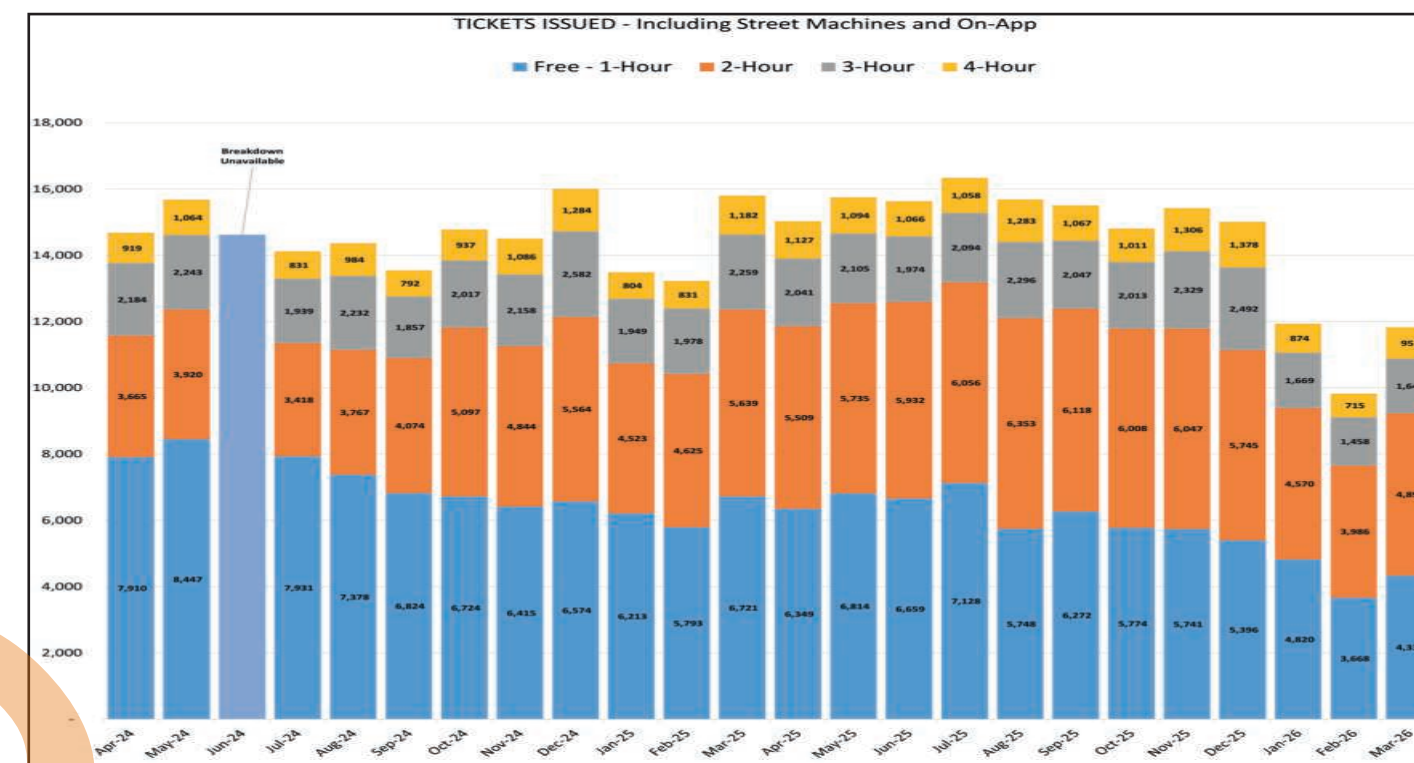
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Woodstock - Parking Numbers

In the June issue (Page 31), we published an article from a resident who had requested information from Oxfordshire County Council about the revenue received from the Woodstock parking meters.

He then requested the number of tickets sold, and the results are illustrated below.

Any thoughts or comments, please write a letter to editor@wobl.news.



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Girlguiding Woodstock

Have you seen our new uniforms? We're so excited - rainbow stripes, brownie, beanies, guide gilets, leader t-shirt - so many awesome things.

Our year ended with fun with the whole district at a special evening at Blenheim Adventure Play. Thank you Blenheim and Sophie.

There's been badges, awards, fun and a very special award for Rozz, one of our leaders who received an Oxfordshire Lozenge in recognition of everything she does for us.

Some of our units are full and have waiting lists, some gave spaces now, some need more volunteers and every one of them welcome new members.

Our volunteer leaders are aged 18+ and help run weekly meetings, get training and support and have a fab new uniform to wear! Woodstock Brownies are looking for more volunteers to join their team in the coming year as numbers grow. If this sounds like something you would like to do then email us for more information:
girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk

Rainbows for girls age 4-7
Brownies for girls age 7-10
Guides for girls age 10-14
Young Leaders for girls age 14-18
Adult volunteering for 18+
Trefoil Guild for anyone age 18+

Lorraine Wing

Macmillan Coffee Morning

Gwen Mason will be holding her 29th annual coffee morning on Friday 25 September 2026 at 12 Plane Tree Way, from 10.00 am till Noon.

There will be a raffle and Bring and Buy. Do come and join myself and my regular helpers.

Cancer Research Christmas cards will be on sale.

Tel. 811473 for any enquiries.

Bladon Snippets from the Past

A wave of Painted Lady butterflies is reported to be coming to the UK.

This also happened about 30 years ago. The field at the top of Heath Lane which bordered the woods was covered with large thistles in full bloom which the butterflies targeted.

Such a sight I recall ... a sea of blue covered in white and orange.

Mary F. Sith

Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone what a breath of fresh air Andrew Key was when he came to visit us on 13 July. His demonstration title was May to September, and he used all the wonderful flowers that are available throughout those months. The quality of his flowers and foliage which he used in his arrangements were beautiful. He brought his wife with him and together with their humour it made for a wonderful entertaining evening.

Our meeting on 3 August will be for members only as it is our summer social when we enjoy lots of lovely food and entertainment. And then on 14 September we will be welcoming Elaine Hale with her title 'Rhythm and Roots'. Elaine is new to us, so we look forward to meeting her.

On 12 October we have a workshop evening with Chris Pearce who is a highly qualified flower arranger. We look forward to learning something new, and then on 2 December at the Exeter Hall Kidlington, we are having an Open meeting with Lee Berrill with the title 'Christmas All Wrapped Up'. Tickets for this event will be available in September.

We meet in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park, Woodstock and our meetings start at 7pm. Visitors are always welcome but if you wish to know more about us, please call me on 01865 376587.

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The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 9 September 2026
The Nation's Mantelpiece, a History of the National Gallery in Ten Paintings

Founded in 1824, the National Gallery in London's Trafalgar Square houses one of the world's finest collections of European paintings, including such favourites as Jan Van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Marriage', Sandro Botticelli's 'Venus and Mars', John Constable's 'Cornfield' and Vincent Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'. In contrast to its peers, however, this institution did not begin its life as a royal collection: the Gallery was founded by parliament and remains reliant on public funding. This lecture uses highlights from the NG's collection to show how our vision of the 'ideal' art collection has evolved over time, along with ideas of the kinds of people the Gallery was supposed to serve.

2024 marked the bicentenary of our Gallery. NG200 was celebrated by a two-year, nation-wide programme of exhibitions and a new official history - which the National Gallery asked me to write for them. My talk tells the history of the gallery in ten paintings. Why did we buy this painting at that time? How has our taste in masterpieces changed, along with the ways we display them?

About the speaker:

Jonathan Conlin is a historian and author particularly interested in the history of great museums/collectors. All his talks draw on his own research, allowing him to take audiences behind the scenes: sharing the surprise discoveries as well as the questions that we still haven't been able to answer. In 2024 he wrote the National Gallery's official bicentenary history, and appeared alongside Claudia Winkleman and Michael Palin in My National Gallery, a film about the National Gallery, shown on ITV and in over 300 UK cinemas.

Previous books include a biography of the oil baron and art collector Calouste Gulbenkian and a comparative history of Paris and London. He also teaches, as Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton. Born in New York, he studied History and Modern Languages at Oxford, subsequently moving to the Courtauld Institute and Cambridge for his MA and PhD.

This hybrid lecture will be held at the Warwick Hall, Church Green, Burford, OX18 4RZ at 11am and via Zoom. Please be seated by 10.50 for notices of upcoming events. Booking is recommended: to reserve a place book online (www.theartsocietycotswolds.org.uk) or contact Lisa Etheridge on 07918 180895 for a booking form. Non-members are welcome (space permitting) at a charge of £10.

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Poetry Corner

Growing light
In diurnal steps advancing,
unstoppable, the sun swells out
advancing on it builds and builds,
filling the cracks in doors, the sills,
brightening on its way straight through
a quarter-open door to fill
the house, each room, each corner of
its very being, lit all through
in early summer's fierce bright light
lit through and stretching far into
each crevice, warming, drawing on
the summer crops into warm air
cooled hearts into a glowing rise
unstopping racing with the dawn
as blackbirds sing in cherry trees
swifts overhead now swoop down low
riding waves of summer breezes
arriving fresh each time they come
to raise an inner glint of light
so lift a sullen mood off ground
until brown grass, crisp leaves are lit
in wildfires' uncontrolled, fanned hit.
Mason Beah ©

The answers to the Crossword on Page 38 are:

T	O	L	E	R	A	T	E			R	E	H	A	S	H
	R		R		L		N			A		E		E	
P	A	R	A	D	E		T	H	I	N	N	E	R	S	
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I	N	S	E	R	T		E	S	T	I	M	A	T	E	

The answers to the Oxfordshire Beer and Brewery Quiz on Page 38 of this issue are:

- 1. Yabba Dabba Doo
- 2. A hare
- 3. MGB
- 4. Loose Cannon
- 5. Wild Boar
- 6. Henley Brewery (Brakspear)
- 7. Hobgoblin
- 8. Royal Blenheim
- 9. Steam
- 10. The Killingworth Castle

The Town Diary

A new community resource

Once upon a time, as the fairy tale starts, there was a Town Diary held in the Town Hall, and organisers would go and check what else was happening before they booked their own events. Sadly, this lapsed as time moved on, but technology has advanced in the meantime.

Woodstock and Bladon News is very proud to announce the launch of a new online Town Diary. The idea is that every organisation has permission to add and amend their own events - they will be able to add their own copy and photographs, and also links to their own website. As soon as an event is added, it is viewable on WOBL's website at <https://wobl.news/events/>.

The Town Diary has two administrators at the moment - myself and Oli Lanestead. The data is exported to the printed 'Whats On' at the time of going to press, but all changes, additions, and cancellations will be seen immediately on our website.

If any organisation wants to join the site, please email editor@wobl.news. At the moment, we only have room for 'cultural' events. We have asked Blenheim Palace to join the diary, as it is obviously important that Woodstock and Bladon event organisers are aware of possible large events at Blenheim Palace that may affect their own plans.

We are excited at this new initiative, and we hope everyone will soon be using it regularly.

Nick Manby-Brown

STOP PRESS

Post Office Petition: The final number of signatures on the petition, once the last sheets were collected, was 1,725. (It was announced at the TC meeting on Tuesday 21 July as 1,688).

Rosamund Drive Play Area: As from early August, Woodstock Town Council is no longer responsible for the maintenance or management of the playground at Rosamund Drive. Responsibility for the playground now rests with the Blenheim Estate.

Next Woodstock Town Council Monthly Meeting: This will take place at 7pm on Tuesday 1 September 2026.

Salon Privé: Sadly, it is confirmed that the drive through town will not be happening this year.

The Game Fair: Is returning to Blenheim Palace next year, between 23 and 25 July 2027.

Regular Events

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 Woodstock Baptist Church, at 2pm on the 1st Friday of the month. Note new venue and day of month.

The Crown

Live music every Friday night from 7.30pm

Woodstock Jazz

Usually on the last Friday of the month at St Hughs

Social

Bereavement Cafe

The 3rd Friday of every month between 3 and 5pm at St Mary Magdalene Church

Ladies Coffee Morning

The last Tuesday of every month between 10am and 12noon at 10 High Street, Woodstock

Methodist Coffee Club

The Coffee Club meets every Thursday morning 10.30am to 12 noon in Woodstock Methodist Hall.

St Mary Magdalene Church coffee morning

First Saturday of the month between 10am and 12noon. All proceeds to our local food bank

Veterans' Coffee & Chat at the Museum

Between 10am and 12 noon every fourth Thursday of the month at SOFO

Woodstock Lunch Club

Lunches are held in the Community Centre every other Wednesday at 12 noon.

Woodstock Stroke Club

Every other Tuesday between 10.15am and 1pm at the Community Centre

Sport

Cricket at Blenheim Palace

The local team play on the South Lawn at Blenheim Palace most Sundays during the summer

Woodstock Bowls Club

The outdoor season runs from April to September and the indoor season from October to March.

Yarnton Netball Club

Netball outdoors at Rutten Lane, Yarnton - Seniors on Tuesday evenings, Juniors on Wednesdays.

What's On

The following events are correct at the time of going to press. In order to see a fuller and more up-to-date listing, please visit <https://wobl.news/events/>

Wednesday 19 August 2026, 19:00

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum
Women at War - Talk with Dr Kate Vigurs

Thursday 20 August 2026, 19:30

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk
Avril Hughes, "Transitioning the Seasons"
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

Tuesday 25 August 2026, 11:30

Woodstock Town Hall
WLS Open Book Group: Family Lexicon by Natalia Ginsburg

Friday 28 to Sunday 30 August

Woodstock Town Square
Woodstock Live - Festival

Friday 28 August 2026, 19:30

St Hughs Centre
Woodstock Jazz (Blues Special)

Wednesday 02 Sept 2026, 19:30

The Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum
Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk

Thursday 03 Sept 2026, 19:00

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum
An Evening with Ami Bouhassane and Lee Miller: A Woman at War

Saturday 05 Sept 2026

Blenheim Palace
Salon Prive Supercar Weekend

Thursday 17 Sept 2026, 19:30

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk
Tim Mitchell, "Growing Wildlife Friendly & People Friendly Food"
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 Sept 2026

Blenheim Palace
International Horse Trials

Tuesday 22 Sept 2026, 20:00

St Mary Magdalene Church
WLS Talk by Prof Jennifer Yee - Proust and the Visual Arts

Friday 25 Sept 2026, 19:30

St Hughs Centre
Woodstock Jazz (Bryan Corbett 4Tet)

Saturday 03 Oct 2026

Blenheim Palace DogFest

Saturday 17 Oct 2026, 19:00

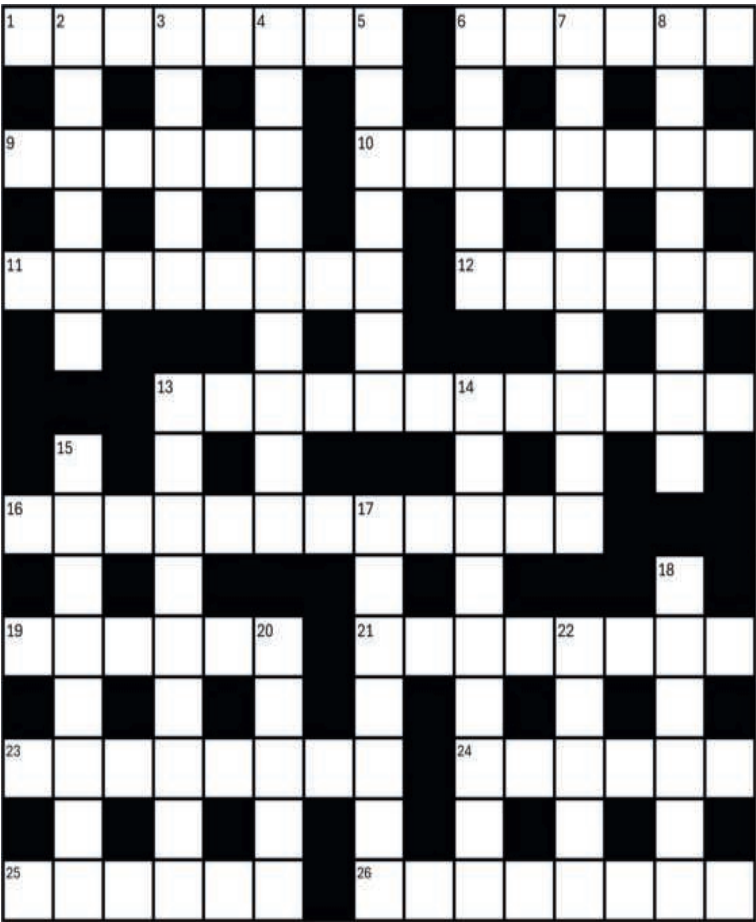
St Mary Magdalene Church
CJ Ensemble Concert

QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

This month the quiz is on Oxfordshire Beer and Breweries. Answers can be found on Page 36.

- 1. Which flagship beer from Little Ox Brewery in Freeland takes its name from a famous prehistoric cartoon character's most famous tagline?
- 2. Some Oxford pubs, for example, The Bear, still display the four tiled plaque of Halls, who, until the 1920's supplied around 300 local pubs from their brewery in Park End Street. What animal features on those plaques?
- 3. In 1977, Morland's Brewery in Abingdon made Old Speckled Hen, a beer initially available only in half pint bottles, to commemorate 25 years of building which iconic car?
- 4. Which Abingdon Brewery takes its name from a term used to describe someone who dangerously acts on impulse, derived from the consequences of a gun on a warship breaking free of the ropes binding it down?
- 5. The Oxford Brewery, in Horspath, brews a signature bitter, named Scholar, inspired by the legend that an Oxford University Fellow choked a rampaging wild animal with his book of Aristotle's "Philosophy." An image of that animal is the Brewery's emblem, but what is it?
- 6. John Mortimer wrote about "Paradise Postponed," where you could drink Simcox's Bitter at The Abbot's Head in Rapstone Fanner, or the less salubrious surroundings of The Badger in Scurfield. Which riverside Oxfordshire Brewery masqueraded as the home of Simcox's bitter
- 7. Which Rich ruby ale, named by Wychwood Brewery founder Paddy Glenny, carried the advertising tagline, "What's the matter lagerboy, afraid you might taste something?"
- 8. Which St Ebbes pub is The Brewery Tap of Faringdon's White Horse Brewery?
- 9. Hook Norton, dating back to 1849, is a traditional Victorian tower Brewery, with beer production falling from floor to floor, which, until 2006 was powered by what type of engine?
- 10. Morland Brewery only became part of Oxfordshire in 1974 and most of the tied houses were in Berkshire. Which pub, with an OX20 postcode, was the most northern one in the Morland Estate?

Woody's Cryptic Crossword No 005



- Across**

 - 1 Put up with real muddle in satchel (8)
 - 6 Concerning a stew, use it again (6)
 - 9 Show off standard notes (6)
 - 10 Brush cleaner and slimming aids maybe? (8)
 - 11 Oblivious, ran to gin cocktail (8)
 - 12 Old canvas measure (6)
 - 13 Dad had engine changed for secret motive (6,6)
 - 16 Textile workers ground absorbent clay (7,6)
 - 19 Party tales with no beginning (6)
 - 21 See 4d
 - 23 Set off to go out socially around school (8)
 - 24 Rubber time points right (6)
 - 25 Introduce Queen in this month (6)
 - 26 Guess I'm in a sort of car (8)
- Down**

 - 2 Colour for Angels to wear (6)
 - 3 Age to show inspiration (5)
 - 4, 21 Here, dental tax rage upset historic crown wearer (9-3-5)
 - 5 Authorise label (7)
 - 6 Increase beams heard (5)
 - 7 Very rare layers precede choppers (4,5)
 - 8 Confused ear needs love song (8)
 - 13 Perfect drive results in this (4-2-3)
 - 14 Transformed game, enter in unison (9)
 - 15 A pure one altered pole for example (8)
 - 17 Over the top was a waterway we hear (7)
 - 18 Ability of ancient heavy weight (6)
 - 20 Hush after holding arrow (5)
 - 22 Honest Male's domain (5)

Friday
28th August

Krissy Matthews & Stuart
Maxwell Quartet



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