

WOODSTOCK & BLADON *news*

April 2025

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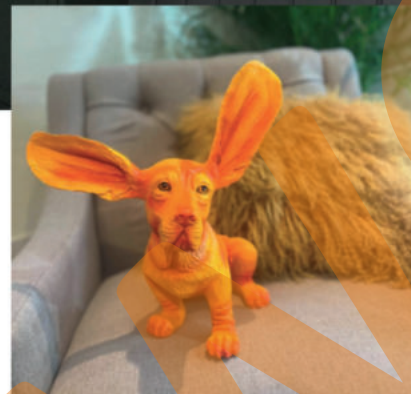
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Editorial

I'm writing this on a lovely sunny afternoon in Woodstock, having just come back from a few days away in Andalusia, Spain. It's a favourite part of the world for me because my mother was brought up there; and one can feel the passion, heat, and history as soon as one arrives - well, apart from a thunderstorm this time!

The similarities between Spain and Woodstock are striking. There is a lot of outdoor café life in both areas, and much music - in Spain, of course, the extraordinary Flamenco. But one of the huge differences is in the price of alcohol and coffee - how can it be at least 2 or 3 times more expensive here, and sadly getting pricier every day?

The Annual Town meeting was held while I was away, and you can read a full report starting on Page 15. It is a great shame that there seems to be an ever-increasing divide between the Council and the Town. I hope this can be resolved over time. Previously holding office as Mayor, I have inside knowledge and strong feelings; but as Editor, I am trying to be as objective as I can. It is important to represent impartially what is happening in town, and I am grateful for those who report on the meetings on behalf of Woodstock and Bladon News. I do, of course, welcome all opinions both as Letters and Articles. Previous reports have been archived at wobl.news/council-matters.

There is a new Arts Festival to look forward to in early May (see page 23), and VE Day celebrations both in Bladon (Sunday 4 May) and Woodstock (Saturday 10 May) - more details later. And there is a lovely article on the history of the Town Hall by Robert Edwards. Thanks to him, and many thanks again to our contributors, distributors, advertisers, and of course our readers and subscribers.

Nick Manby-Brown, Editor

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

Subscriptions

The magazine costs £2 per issue, or £20 per year.

It can be purchased locally at Blenheim Palace, Mary and Martin's Newsagent, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock Bookshop, Woodstock Grocers, and Wootton Stores. It can also be delivered to your door on a monthly basis - please contact Nick (editor@wobl.news) for Woodstock, or Lucy for Bladon.

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An online version can also be purchased. Please send an EMail to editor@wobl.news

Please do write for our magazine

Send your contributions to: editor@wobl.news

The next copy deadline is **Sunday 20 April 2025** for the May issue.

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

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Front Cover: The Crown by Rod Craig - more details on Page 36

Answers to the February/March Crossword - The landlord of The Bull in Woodstock in 1580 was 'Thomas Bradshaw'
Across: 1. Plate, 4. Stagehand, 8. Pitcher, 9. Snooker, 10. Summit, 13. Untrue, 14. Florida, 17. Stomach, 19. Refurb, 23. Tandem, 25. Brother, 26. Meaning, 27. Breakdown, 28. Rigid.
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Cricket on the South Lawn at Blenheim Palace



Woodstock's sporting secret

We have a cricket club and we play at one of the scenic and picturesque settings at Blenheim Palace, as featured in Brian Levison's Remarkable Cricket Grounds. Fresh from our successful tour to Scotland and beach cricket at the Ship at Elie, we have added to our fixtures with a match against the Royal Household at Windsor. In truth the majority of our fixtures are at home on Sundays on the South Lawn and played in the true spirit of friendly but competitive cricket. We usually have a waiting list for new opposition. The first cricket match recorded for Blenheim Park Cricket Club was against Exeter College in June 1846. We have contacted the college and have proposed a 180 year anniversary match in 2026.

We are keen to encourage and welcome new players and will be starting our pre-season nets on Sunday 6, 13, and 27 April, between 9 and 10am at Bartholomew Sports Centre, OX29 4AP

Please contact Malcolm West on for further details. malkwest@googlemail.com



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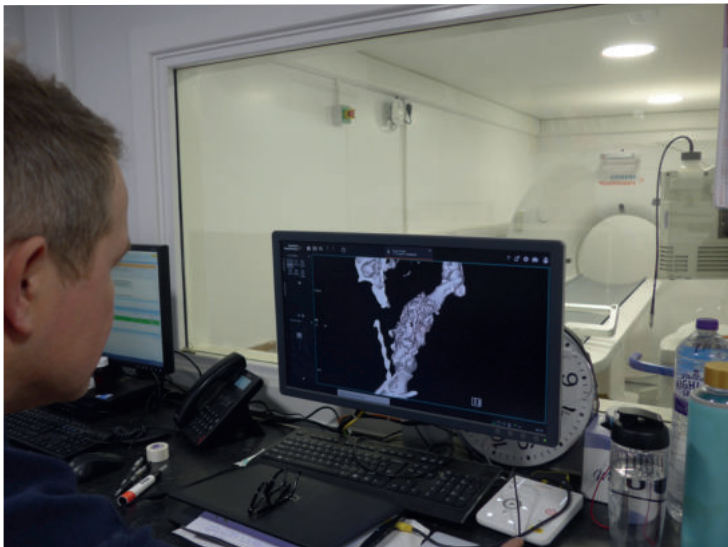
Vet Will Oldham in conversation with Leslee Holderness Rumsey



MediVet Will Oldham and head nurse Margaret

Changes include parking which should be much easier; the entrance is more spacious, with partitions separating cat and dog areas. Reptiles, birds and small animals perhaps take their pick on seating arrangements. There are now three consulting rooms instead of two but two have easier in/out access for patients experiencing difficult pet situations or bereavement. The cattery is soundproof and classical music is played as that has been found to relax cats. The kennels each have their own light so other dogs are not disturbed and there are facilities for large dogs, small dogs and dogs who are not friendly. There is an area for dentistry, a new room for X-rays and ultrasound and a special isolation facility for infectious or special needs animals. Ambient temperatures can now be maintained and there is 24 hour monitoring and there is a large area with an onsite lab and for surgical prep. The surgical theatre is larger and there is a brand new CT scanner with a special room to house it and a controls centre looking on to it. Having these upgrades means a lot for pet owners, not only in Woodstock but the services will also be available to veterinary practices as near as Freeland and as far as Wantage.

For many years, I have gone almost exclusively to the practice; initially when it was Parkview and then when it was taken on as a



The CT Scan Control Room

Not every small market town can claim to have a veterinary practice let alone a veterinary hospital. In Woodstock, many pet owners, myself included, feel lucky to have a 24 hour practice close to hand. Now, we are luckier than ever as Woodstock MediVet on Hensington Road has undergone a major renovation and is reappearing with a designation as a veterinary hospital, which is a special licensed accreditation. Not only can pet owners get the usual vet appointments, prescriptions, services, and supplies both in and out of hours but there is now specialist equipment onsite and special care amenities. I'm hoping you need not visit the vets for anything other than a routine purpose, but whenever you go, your animal will be in better care than ever and I think you will come away impressed by the new 'all dogs singing, all cats dancing' improvements.



Will Oldham & assistant Faith in the CT Room

Medivet facility. Over nearly 16 years one of my dogs was seen by Dimitar Mitev, from puppyhood to motherhood and more recently at the end of her days. To me having a vet that truly knows you and your pet makes a difference.

Dimitar was the primary branch vet and he remains as senior vet but handed the practice on three years ago to two experienced and impressive vets, Will Oldham and Cristian Murgu. Now with a full time staff of 27 including other senior vets, night vets, two senior nurses, general nurses, and admin staff, it is a bustling multi-national practice filled with languages and specialist knowledge in the care of cats, dogs, small animals, birds and reptiles. Woodstock is lucky to have this MediVet practice on its doorstep.



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Woodstock Town Hall and Sir William Chambers



Credit: John Banbury's family photo archive

In the 18th century the Borough Council bought lottery tickets in the vain hope of raising money for a new town hall. When this failed the 4th Duke of Marlborough, whose arms are on the Market Place facade, paid for the building. The 1766 foundation stone, first laid in the cellar, can now be seen in the foyer.

Originally the ground floor was open to the street and functioned as the meat market. The fire engine lived where the billiard shop now stands. Then in 1898 the market space was enclosed to create the Mayor's Parlour, aka the Council Chamber, and the town library which is now the Town Clerk's office.

Originally the Borough Council and the magistrates' court were in the assembly room upstairs.

When Peter Blake was Mayor he dreamed of turning the grand stone vaulted cellar into a Germanic beer cellar but he was thwarted by fire regulations. These same restrictions place a limit of forty people in the Assembly Room. That is why the old drill hall in New Road was fitted out as the larger Community Centre. Brian Cable the architect and Mayor worked hard to add a fire escape so that greater use could be made of the Town Hall but his proposals all fell foul of costs or of listed building rules.

Our Town Hall was the first public building designed by Sir William Chambers. Who was Sir William?

Born in Gothenberg of Scottish parents, he joined the Swedish East India Company as a young man and sailed on four voyages to China. On these trips he became wealthy by trading on his own account. He was then able to live comfortably while training as an architect in Paris and Rome where he made important friendships with the young English heirs to titles and money on the grand tour. This led to commissions to build stately homes and then to employment at Kew by Princess Augusta the Dowager Princess of Wales and to a post as architectural tutor to her son the future George III. The Pagoda, one of twenty buildings that he designed for Kew, was based on his study of Chinese architecture.

When his pupil became the King, Chambers was promoted to be the Surveyor General and Comptroller of the King's Works.



Credit: John Banbury's family photo archive

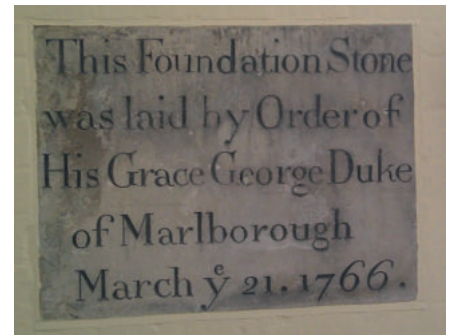
Woodstock Town Hall was Sir William's first public building. He soon went on to design Somerset House, his masterwork on the banks of the Thames. Somerset House was built to contain Government offices including the Public Record Office and the Royal Academy. The first president of this institution was Sir Joshua Reynolds (whose portrait of the 4th Duke hangs in the Mayor's Parlour) but it was Chambers who in 1768 wrote to the King and gained his agreement to the creation of the Academy.

At Blenheim Palace Chambers made changes to the interior, built the New Bridge at the Bladon end of the Park and erected Bernini's fountain and the Temple of Diana where Sir Winston Churchill famously proposed to Clementine.

With his great rival Robert Adam, Sir William had become one of the two most successful and influential architects of his generation. The stonework of Woodstock Town Hall is clearly copied in the appearance of Somerset House where the rooms that he designed for the Royal Academy are now occupied by the art galleries of Courtauld Institute for the history of art.

Many of the Stately Homes built by Sir William have been destroyed but one of his lasting memorials is the four ton Coronation Coach used by all monarchs since George III.

Robert Edwards



Litter Heroes of Woodstock - Loving Where We Live



After a call for action, I want to ask for a big 'SHOUT-OUT' to all our Litter Heroes in Woodstock who came along to the Annual Litter Pick on the 22nd March. The heroes included Dr Robert Edwards who initiated the community litter pick some years ago and never fails to support. In addition, Marlborough School students took action during their school week and at the time of writing, Woodstock Primary were planning their litter pick; Duke of Edinburgh students, taking part in their bronze assignments for volunteering, cleared streets on several occasions during the autumn, winter and early spring; 3 generations from our local Perdiswell Farm joined in, and by the time you read this, staff from Blenheim will have completed their annual litter pick on the main roads around Woodstock and Bladon. I can't leave out the individuals who got in touch and cleared where they live and also the local businesses that are looking after their shop fronts, etc. Thanks to all the volunteers who made a difference to where we all live, work and play.

Litter picking is more satisfying than you'd imagine - a couple of hours at most - instant results and occasionally new friends. Our community coming together in this way can lead to a ripple effect by cultivating a shared sense of purpose through physical activity as well as social interaction; it can improve wellbeing, raise your mood and reduce loneliness; and removing glass and general waste creates a safer community for everyone but especially so for children and dogs.

Not everyone it seems loves where we live. While the level of rubbish thrown from cars around our town is shocking; sadly we're not surprised. Even though this area was cleared last year, we collected at least 40 bags of rubbish along Banbury Road (up to the Wootton road, B4027) and Shipton Road (from Marlborough up to the A4095). We found a lot of broken glass and bottles that had been tossed from cars that has the potential to injure, trap and kill wildlife (sadly, there was evidence of this) and plenty of cans and food-wrappings. A whole set of tyres had been thrown into the woodland on Shipton, a large fish tank and fly-tipping of household rubbish off Banbury/Sansom's Lane and an armchair dumped in the Water Meadow. Thanks to UBICO (our local waste collectors) who promptly collected the rubbish bags and fly-tipping. Our EMail is sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com.

Hilary Brown, Sustainable Woodstock

Letters to the Editor

Botley West and aircraft safety

I am pleased that Oxford Airport and RAF Brize Norton have expressed concerns about a solar industrial site in proximity to their runways. I have a different but complementary perspective having been on site at two fatal air crashes on Bladon Heath. One followed an aborted landing, whilst the other occurred soon after takeoff. On the first occasion I attempted to enter the aircraft amidst a sea of leaking fuel but was advised to step away when the airport fire truck arrived. When safety was established the Ambulance Officer asked me to determine whether the pilot or passengers could be resuscitated. Sadly they had already succumbed to chest and head injuries though I doubt the deaths were immediate.

When I reached the second crash in a field close to my home the cockpit was ablaze and it was clear that there were no survivors. Such events are rare but when they do occur the emergency services need rapid access to the site. Oxford Airport has one of the busiest flight schools in the country whilst Brize Norton may one day be involved in conflict. If so, damaged military aircraft may attempt to land safely. Thus my point is rather simple. Should aircraft crash land in a sea of solar panels, timely rescue will not be possible. Nor can misjudged or aborted landings be made safely in a conglomerate of metal and glass. I suspect the airports would rather not express these dismal concerns but who in their right minds would create additional danger. There is only one answer to that question!

Professor Stephen Westaby, Bladon.

PS: Since submitting this letter there has been news that Schiphol, Holland's principal commercial airport, has been forced to shut down a main runway at certain times of the day when the sun is shining, through glare from nearby solar panels. Obviously this is to avoid danger to approaching aircraft which may also accrue from heat and air turbulence. These risks have been known about for some time, so as a bioengineer(PhD) as well as a surgeon, I am dismayed that it has not been raised by Botley West in their consultation process. Why risk a civil disaster for yet more solar panels? Should we accept the consultation process as valid, and do we have a government prepared to take these aspects seriously? They acknowledge that only one percent of UK land needs to be committed to solar so why devastate a huge area of agricultural and green belt land between two busy airports?

Editors Note: Professor Westaby performed more than 12,000 heart operations on both adults and children and achieved the world's longest survivor with any type of artificial heart.

He published 350 scientific papers and 14 textbooks, three of which were on major injuries. From Oxford he promoted the development of regional trauma centres for the UK with air ambulance retrieval. His books for the public, 'Fragile Lives, The Knife's Edge, The Trauma Chronicles and Surgeons, Saints and Psychopaths', have been translated into many languages.

Please send letters to editor@wobl.news.
The deadline for the May issue is
Sunday 20 April

Wootton Village Hall Talks

Our next speaker at 7.30pm on Friday 11 April is **Andy Symanowski**, a director and animator who has worked for over 25 years at Aardman Animations in Bristol - with the company winning an unrivalled three Oscars and seven BAFTAs for animation.

His early days were learning the craft animating Morph before earning a role on the iconic feature film Chicken Run (2000), which became a milestone not only for Aardman but also for the animation industry world at large.

Since then, Andy has played a key role in animating many of Aardman's beloved stop-motion features, including Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005), The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists (2012), Shaun the Sheep Movie (2015), Early Man (2018), A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon (2019), Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget (2023), and most recently Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl (2024), which drew an audience of millions on BBC One on Christmas Day. It was recently nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe - and won a BAFTA.

Throughout these films, Andy's dedication to the craft has helped bring these larger-than-life characters to vivid, humorous life. Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005) film is the second highest-grossing stop-motion animated film, outgrossed only by Chicken Run (2000).

Beyond his animation work, Andy has also stepped up to the role of Director, Animation Director and Supervising Animator in projects such as the Shaun the Sheep TV series, The Epic Adventures of Morph, Very Small Creatures, and Wallace & Gromit World of Inventions.

Entry is £10 in cash - and includes free food. Wine and soft drinks are available for a modest donation. (Children over 16 welcome). Cards can be used to buy speakers' books. To reserve seats, please contact us through our website www.woottontalks.co.uk

Woodstock & District u3a

Another excellent speaker at the u3a meeting in March when Robert Brewer told us stories of the filming world and his experiences as a Supportive Artist (film/ tv extra). Robert spoke of the level of detail to which this artistic world works and the fascination and fun experienced since he first registered, by dint of sending in a photo in response to a local advertisement. A question of timing, and if the face fits, as well as learning to say 'rhubarb and custard' silently and many times over.

On 3rd April we have Janine Kilroe with 'A photographer's Tale - 30 years in the business'.

We meet at 1.45 for 2pm at St Hugh's, Hensington Road, with a fee for non-members at £2 to include tea and biscuit. Apart from the monthly speaker meetings, interest groups develop accordingly to demand and the willingness of a member to run the group. Please see our website for updated information. There is a requirement for membership after an initial taster. www.woodstocku3a.uk. Our membership year commences 1 April leading into the AGM on 1 May.

We would like to develop some more foreign language groups to add to our popular French Discussion, but really need native speakers to be involved. Could you volunteer for a session once or twice a month? We must have many local gifted foreign language speakers. Please do make contact via the website or come along to a meeting and see what we are about.

Sue Blackshaw, Chair, Woodstock & District u3a



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Woodstock Literature Society

Review of February's talk by Professor Jonathan Thacker
'From Stage to Page: The Literary Journey of Miguel de Cervantes'



Don Quixote is the best known and most iconic work in Spanish literature and Professor Thacker gave his audience a wide ranging, detailed and immensely enjoyable introduction to

the life of Cervantes and the writing of Don Quixote, the foundation of the modern novel. Largely self-taught, and after spells as a servant, a soldier and tax collector, Cervantes was imprisoned 3 times before emerging as a dramatist later in life. His plays were those of the neo-classical tradition. By the end of the 16th century however the pre-eminent playwright in Spain was Lope de Vega, 15 years younger than Cervantes, writing in a different style and someone more in tune with the new policies and religious attitudes of the Spanish court. Not attracted to other prose genres and out of step with contemporary Spanish drama, Cervantes sought something new, and Professor Thacker set out deftly and with humour how he found that new form.

Like most readers of the time Cervantes had read the chivalric romances - stories with the knight as hero, valiantly striving to right wrongs, worshipping a high born lady, ending in marriage and always in an exotic, unfamiliar distant past. Cervantes used this format for Don Quixote, a parodic take on the chivalric romance, a parody of the unbelievable knights of chivalry but using a minor nobleman as the main character. In the tale Don Quixote reads popular fiction, becomes obsessed with it, and imagines himself one of the knights righting wrongs and reenacting the age of chivalry. The book is the story of 3 journeys by Don Quixote from his village, accompanied on the last 2 by Sancho Panza.

As the work proceeds Don Quixote becomes more than a parody however. Cervantes begins by writing



parody but then allows his characters to develop, which does not happen in the chivalric romances, making Don Quixote novelistic rather than romantic. The protagonist is made real, leading to the clash of the real world with the fantastic world; there are extensive dialogues between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza with Cervantes leaning heavily on his dramatic craft. Cervantes does not simply narrate events but explores the character's consciousness of being in the real world.

Don Quixote was enormously influential in the history of the novel, giving impetus to the likes of Diderot and Fielding and to features familiar to the readers of modern novels: the story within a story; the unreliable narrator; debate on the purpose of the novel and the role of fiction in all our lives.

Professor Thacker talked also of the way the novel in translation has been read as comic in the 17th and 18th Centuries, then taken more seriously after the Romantic Movement of the 19th Century. The talk ended with the reminder how much modern readers identify with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and a book that has something to say to us all.

Trevor Caldecott

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Woodstock Literature Society

Review of March's Talk. The Dictionary People: The Unsung Heroes Who Created the Oxford English Dictionary.



Dr Sarah Ogilvie's love and passion for words shone throughout her fascinating talk on the people behind the largest dictionary in the world. It was the result of probably the first global crowd sourcing project. The 'founding fathers', Richard Trench, Herbert Coleridge and Frederick Furnivall were led by James Murray, the first and to-date the longest serving editor of the Oxford English Dictionary. They must have known it would be an epic project from the outset in 1858, but the anticipated 2 years stretched to 10 and then 70 years to reach publication of the first edition in 1928.

The OED is diachronic, giving the first ever use of a word to its latest use, in effect a word's biography. James Murray took the radical step of inviting anyone and everyone worldwide to submit words on a slip of paper 4" x 6" with local words verifiable in printed sources. Not everyone followed the rules, one entry was written on the back of a Harrods Chocolate Bar wrapper! There had been resistance to the inclusion of foreign words in an English dictionary, but Murray said the validation of a foreign word was its use in England. He kept meticulous records and took care to acknowledge every contributor.

The response was overwhelming, filling the house until Ada, James' wife, put her foot down, enough was enough. A scriptorium was built in the garden, effectively a large, glorified shed, where the team worked surrounded by boxes of slips for sorting. James' eleven children were brought in to assist. So much mail was being delivered to 78 Banbury Road that a red pillar box was placed outside the house. Dr Ogilvie observed that the processes are broadly the same today with slips being recorded by an Editor working with assistants - there are 2 million slips stored alphabetically in the basement of OUP.

Dr Ogilvie shared the most wonderful piece of serendipity. A bureaucratic delay with a visa

application left her with time to spare so she went to one of her favourite places, the basement of the OUP to look through the archives where she discovered James Murray's annotated address book containing 3,000 names, hidden in a battered box. It revealed most submissions were not from professionals but autodidactics from all walks of life, from around the globe (alas none from Woodstock); 10% of the contributions came from America and 500 were sent in by women at a time when they had very limited opportunities for further education.

This discovery triggered Dr Ogilvie's curiosity about the people behind the names, and so her book took shape, having 26 chapters from A-Z. It opens with 'A for Archeology', telling the story of Margaret Murray, an archaeologist in Calcutta and concludes with 'Z for Zealots', featuring James Murray, who died without knowing whether his work would be published.

There was so much to enjoy in this talk. Dr Ogilvie elaborated on a selection of chapters, which certainly left the audience wanting more!

Julia Johnson

The next Woodstock Literature Society talk will be on Tuesday, 22nd April at 8.00pm in the St Hugh's Centre, Hensington Road, when Dr Laura Varnam will give her talk 'New Light on Daphne du Maurier'. For further information: www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk

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Woodstock Town Council Meetings

24th February (ETC)

Councillors present: Cllrs Banbury, Cooper, Connolly, Grant, Parnes, Poskitt, Spencer-Churchill, and Williams, plus the Town Clerk, Valentin Lavdakov. Four members of the public attended.

Cllr Grant brought to everyones attention the paragraph at the top of the agenda which states that members of the public must understand that if they do not want to be recorded, they should not attend the meeting as the Chairman cannot ensure that members of the public will not be recorded.

Cllr Grant announced that Cllr Mathieu Lancaster (formally known as Matthew Parkinson) has resigned from the WTC, having already moved out of the area to a new job. Grateful thanks for his service to Woodstock as a Councillor will be minuted.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Addis, Szabados and Wheatley.

One member of the public spoke during the public participation session. Susan Cave asked why the Christmas lights which were not illuminated at Christmas time, are still hanging up in the trees? She thought it was odd a) that they were not put on and b) that they are still in the trees and she wondered why? No answer was forthcoming from Councillors. Mrs Cave was told that to get a response to her question, she should email the Clerk direct.

A response to six Planning Applications were considered, all went forward, with no objection from the Council.

The final item on the Agenda was Staffing. This was considered a confidential matter, and so the members of the public were asked to leave at 7.17pm.

Annie Cripps

11th March 2025

10 councillors and 10 members of the public attended the meeting. The audio of the meeting was recorded.

Two members of the public spoke. I asked about the structural survey that has been carried out on the Community Centre roof with respect to installing solar panels. The Mayor told me this would be discussed in the next Council meeting. I also informed the Council of the annual town litter pick taking place on 22nd March. John Brimble asked why the Annual Town Meeting, taking place on 25th March, had not been advertised. The Mayor replied that notices would be going on the town noticeboards the following day.

During the Mayor’s report Councillor Spencer-

Churchill mentioned he had a small local charity with funding of £25K for Woodstock and Bladon. The Clerk reported that local groups had been contacted regarding reports they wish to submit for the Annual Town Meeting. Suggested agenda items were the doctors’ surgery, parking, flooding and sewage and Botley West Solar Farm. Councillor Poskitt suggested that bus shelters should be included. A meeting is scheduled for 24th March with Satswana, the Council’s data protection adviser. A GDPR audit is included and will take place in the Town Hall.

County and District reports were not included in the meeting pack. County Councillor Andy Graham was however invited to the Council table to report on the doctors’ surgery. The strategic group, including the doctors, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Blenheim, Councillor Graham and Calum Miller MP will next meet on 27th March to discuss their findings. Blenheim has paid for a feasibility study of the suggested surgery footprint at 2 possible sites – the new Banbury Road development and the Owen Mumford site which is up for sale. A third option is the proposed housing development on the Cherwell District site. West Oxfordshire District Council has however objected to this development. It will be a commercial decision on the building by Blenheim but also taking into account the Woodstock community. A further report will come after the meeting on the 27th. Councillor Williams said they were not being told anything, the feasibility study by Osmond Tricks was not being made public and the Town Council were not being involved in the discussions. Councillor Graham explained it was the strategic group that would be making the decisions, Councillor Williams argued it was not for the doctors to determine what is best for the town. Councillor Cooper was disappointed with Blenheim, again promoting the old police station site in Hensington Road. Councillor Parnes asked what reasons were given by the ICB to reject the old police station site. Councillor Graham replied that the doctors and ICB had said quite categorically that they were not going to fund the site. At this point the meeting was made open to the public for questions. Resident Stan Scott, part of the Council’s surgery working group, said local democracy had failed as Woodstock Town Council were not involved or informed and asked for a timeline. Councillor Graham said there should be a timeline after the meeting on 27th. He added that it is not the District Council’s responsibility to build a new surgery although in his opinion the lack of provision for health care in the District Council’s 2018 local plan was a mistake.

Under Finance, the current balance of the Town Council’s account is £433,275.22.

Councillor Wheatley offered to join and chair the Environment Working Group. The Mayor reported

that the cemetery work was finished and looked good and the purchase of new benches was agreed. A quote was accepted to remove the steps at the town end of the Old Woodstock Line, this entrance now being closed.

A £4K budget was agreed for the upcoming VE Day celebrations, taking place on 10th May, with Blenheim supplying the traffic stewards.

A report and recommendations on the Council’s grants wards was presented and accepted with a total of £2400 being provided by the Council to various local groups.

A clothes collection bank for the Thames Valley Air Ambulance was agreed for a 6 week trial, to hopefully be placed in the Hensington Road car park.

Councillors Poskitt, Grant and Williams agreed to work on a record of significance for former mayor and honorary townsman Nigel Clifford MBE who, among his many achievements was the driving force behind the embroidered panels in the Town Hall.

Councillor Wheatley discussed the Land Use Consultation framework, a Government document encouraging residents and Councils to submit their views on land use in the next 10 years.

Finally it was agreed that the recent grant given to the Town Council for town improvements by West Oxfordshire District Council should be spent on repairing the cobles around the Town Hall and replacing some windows at a cost of just under £14K in total.

N.B. I previously stated that the Mayor had taken the minutes at the Town/Blenheim Dialogue meeting on 11th February. Apologies, it was in fact Councillor Williams. Unfortunately these minutes cannot be released in draft form or a report given of the meeting by the Council, we will have to wait until the next Town/Blenheim Dialogue meeting.

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

Graham Brown

20th March (ETC)

Seven Councillors and two members of the public attended. Apologies were received from Cllrs Addis, Spencer-Churchill, Parnes, Banbury. Two members of the public attended; there were no statements made under Public Participation.

The Mayor reported that the Woodstock Town Council vacancy following the resignation of Mathieu Lancaster (Matthew Parkinson) will be filled by election, to take place on 1st May as there are already

County Council elections due to be held on that day. Also regarding the Mayor's Charity, she had arranged for an exhibition of Woodcraft in Woodstock by The West Oxon Wood Turners Association, in the Mayor's Parlour between 10 to 1pm.

The Council had no objection to any of the four applications considered.

The Draft Risk Assessment Document for 2024-25 discussed. Suggested amendments included:

- There should be no single bank deposit/investment of more than £85,000 in any one institution.
- The section re Newsletter could be deleted as there was no longer a WTC newsletter.
- Safety regulations for individuals accessing the Town Hall roof were tightened up.

All amendments were agreed and signed off ready for the Audit.

Work could now start on the Risk Assessment for 2025-26.

HM Land Registry discussion documents were marked Private, and it was therefore agreed that discussion should be moved to the confidential part of the meeting where the public are excluded.

The public section of the meeting closed at 7.17pm.

Annie Cripps

Annual Town Meeting

25th March 2025, Community Centre, 7.30 pm.

The Mayor, Cllr Ann Grant, chaired the meeting, helped by Deputy Mayor Cllr Williams and the Town Clerk Valentin Lavdakov. Five other town councillors were present including District Cllrs Elizabeth Poskitt and Julian Cooper together with Cllr Andy Graham from Oxfordshire County Council, Dominic Hare from Blenheim and Inspector Chris Ball from Thames Valley Police. The meeting was well attended and recorded by the Council’s OWL device. The suggested agenda was adopted although as one resident later said it would have been better to have had questions from the floor after each agenda item not at the end. The minutes from the meetings of 26th March 2024 and 21st November 2024 were circulated and confirmed.

The Mayor announced that there is currently one vacancy on the Town Council to be elected on 1st May - 2nd April is the deadline for nominations. The Mayor thanked Karen Howe, who had worked on the Town Council as Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer and recently resigned, for her hard work on the Town Council.

There were four invited speakers.

County Cllr Andy Graham began, giving a review of

his year working on behalf of Woodstock. Cllr Graham has been active on the strategic group working towards a new doctors' surgery for Woodstock, with the next meeting taking place on 27th March. Cllr Graham sits on the Woodstock Traffic Advisory Group and has been active in support of Woodstock's Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Project (LCWIP) which will be decided in May/June this year. A consultation on tweaking the new parking scheme in Woodstock has been agreed and changes will be implemented in the summer. He worked with Stagecoach to ensure the S7 did not go through the town centre and reverted to turning past Old Woodstock as before. Banbury Road will be resurfaced in May and repairs to the town centre pavements will be carried out in May and June following a review.

Cllr Julian Cooper reported for the District Council. Cllr Cooper spoke of the government plans to abolish County and District Councils and replace them with unitary Councils but details of when and what will happen are vague. A report reviewing Publica has shown it more economical to bring the majority of Council services back in house. West Oxfordshire District Council has lodged a very strong objection to the building of 450 homes on land adjacent to Park View, in Cherwell District Council. Regarding Botley West Solar Farm, the District's Development Control Committee has sent a strongly worded comment on the proposal plans as they currently stand, raising many concerns. The District Council has set up a Community Benefits Group with representatives from town and parish councils affected by the development, if approved. The District Council supports the 20 mph speed limit through Woodstock and Bladon.

Inspector Chris Ball from Thames Valley Police spoke next, saying crime is low in Woodstock, one of the safest places in West Oxfordshire. There has been a 26% reduction in crime. There is now a sergeant and PC in Woodstock together with the PCSO. A CCTV camera will soon be installed in the Market Square. A Thames Valley Police survey is open, closing 6th April, asking for residents to set their own priorities for the police to target in their area.

Dominic Hare, the CEO of Blenheim Palace was the final invited speaker. Dominic was pleased that the Town/Palace dialogue meetings had restarted. Blenheim are involved in discussions about a new doctors' surgery which will be raised later in this meeting. Last year was a good year for the Palace, especially the high profile European Summit that took place in July and thanked everyone for their support and understanding. Visitor numbers have increased and scaffolding on the Palace is part of the £2 million two year reroofing project. The later phases of the Park View housing development are under way and the Hill Rise development entrance is complete with

work starting soon. S106 has been signed for the Banbury Road development and detailed planning consent will take about a year to complete. Dominic acknowledged the parking issues near the Palace for the Christmas event and said parking enforcement is an option. A beacon will be lit in the grounds on Thursday 8th May at 9.30pm to mark VE Day.

New Doctors' Surgery. Our Member of Parliament, Calum Miller, was unable to attend the meeting due to voting commitments but a statement from him was read by Cllr Williams. Over the year Calum has met with health, rail and energy secretaries to discuss local issues. Regarding the surgery, he has brought together the relevant parties and currently a Project Initiation Document (PID), paid for by Blenheim, is being reviewed. He assured us that the Town Council and residents would be kept informed.

Parking. The Mayor said she had received complaints about the new parking arrangements in Woodstock and that it had not improved business but caused lots of displaced parking.

Flooding and Sewage. This referred to Bens Close where residents are still not back in their homes. The Mayor asked Dominic for a comment as Blenheim had responded by digging relief channels behind the houses. The problem had come from flooding from the road side.

Botley West Solar Farm. The only comment was from Cllr Poskitt who said the Town Council had submitted a response to the consultation.

Questions from the Floor. (Apologies, I did not hear all the names of those that spoke, some were not given).

Hilary Brown from Sustainable Woodstock urged everyone to push for a better deal on Community Benefit from Botley West Solar Farm if it is given the go ahead. The current offering, as noted by Calum Miller, is pathetic given the size and proximity to housing. Please write to Calum Miller. Cllr Poskitt spoke of the group referred to previously by Cllr Cooper.

Anthony Glees spoke on several issues. He requested that the telephone number of the community police officer be made visible at the Town Hall. He questioned the Council on their public participation policy, emails not being answered and their bunker atmosphere signage at the Town Hall. Anthony asked why the S106 Committee had been dissolved by this Council and that the recent tree pollarding was a disgrace. He also considered community benefit from Botley West a bribe as the opposition to the project was clear. The Mayor replied that there had been some uncomfortable issues at the Town Hall so signage was necessary. The Mayor continued that there was no S106 committee, it coming under finance at Council

meetings and that the tree pollarding was down to Oxfordshire County Council. The Mayor added that the public do not have a right to speak at Council meetings and that the Clerk is not obliged to record the public participation in the minutes. Dominic Hare considered not negotiating on community benefit would be a tactical mistake, it is not intended as a diversion - you can say yes or no to Botley West but negotiate community benefit separately. Cllr Graham added the tree cutting policy needs to be reviewed.

A resident spoke to say they were surprised that Woodstock Town Council not being included in the doctors' surgery meetings. The surgery is at capacity and she would like an answer to the question when will the patient list close? Woodstock and surrounding areas have increasing populations. Feedback from these meetings was requested to be made public.

Cllr John Banbury asked Dominic for a safe path from Hill Rise to town avoiding the lorries and heavy traffic on the main road, especially with the new development being built. John asked for a path inside the estate wall. Dominic said he would look into it and referred to the paths already built by Blenheim linking Bladon and Long Hanborough, Woodstock and Bladon and Bladon and Cassington.

Andy Mills asked if there had been any answers from Thames Water and the Environment Agency with respect to the flooding in Bens Close. Cllr Williams said residents and Calum Miller had approached Thames Water but had received no response.

Former Councillor Meg Manson appreciated the removal of the generator from outside of the Feathers Hotel but asked for a street light nearby to be replaced. For the Blenheim Christmas Lights event, Meg asked Dominic if the shuttle bus to the airport for parking could be returned. Dominic said this was not possible but was doing everything possible to encourage visitors to park on site. The Mayor commented that displaced parking was a nightmare, especially on Brook Hill and Glyme Close. Councillor Graham suggested a survey could be done at times when there is an issue. He said that it was now possible to park in the town centre and shoppers were coming back to Woodstock.

Dr Robert Edwards explained that the trees in town had been pollarded for over 100 years.

Tom Harvey commented on the bank balance of the Town Council being £406K, an increase of £250K over last year and what are the Council planning to spend this money on? The Mayor gave no reply to this question.

A resident commented that the West Oxfordshire District car park off Hensington Road has an 11 hour time limit but no one is monitoring it. Councillor

Cooper said that West Oxfordshire was reviewing their car parks.

A resident asked why the crime figures reported by Inspector Ball had fallen. Inspector Ball replied that it was a number of initiatives including reducing farm machinery theft, knife action and working to reduce domestic violence.

A resident commented that some of the trees in town still had lights in them. She also referred to Botley West Solar Farm and action by NIMBYS and that there were pros to the project in producing green energy but reducing the size should be considered.

A resident asked why there was not solar on the houses in Park View? Dominic replied that no one was doing this in 2017 and he wished they had. Many houses in the final phases of Park View have solar and air-source heat pumps and the new planned developments will have both.

John Brimble explained he was one of the instigators of the town parking scheme. He said there are 300 parking spaces in town and that the new system is increasing churn of traffic and is better for business. The Hensington Road car park is a problem as it fills early in the morning possibly due to the employees from town parking there and commuters using it for travelling to Oxford.

A resident requested the new Councillors share their views which the two that were present did. Barry Wheatley said he wanted value for money and was particularly interested in the Environment Working Group. Maurice Connolly said he was enjoying being on the Council, also interested in the Environment Working Group and also the new surgery and S106 money from Blenheim developments. He asked Dominic if Blenheim had bought the Owen Mumford site, Dominic replied that he could not comment and that Blenheim does not determine where S106 money is used.

Stan Scott said that the town should fight for the doctors' surgery to be on the old police station site off of Hensington Road. Cllr Cooper replied that it is the preferred site in the opinion of the Town Council. Cllr Poskitt said that this site was proposed in 2016 when a new surgery was last discussed but the funding was not available. She hoped that there would be another solution shortly.

A resident referred to the recent dispute between a town councillor and the Town Council and asked if the costs to be paid by the Councillor have been paid. The Mayor gave no reply to this question.

The Mayor then ended the meeting at approximately 8.45pm and thanked everyone for coming.

Graham Brown

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Legal 500, 2024



How to Avoid Costly Probate

You've spent your life working, saving, and accumulating nice things - your home, your car, your stash of fine wines, and that utterly pointless collection of commemorative coins you once thought might be worth something. Then, when you finally pop your clogs, your family should simply inherit everything and get on with their lives, right?

Well, yes - but only if you actually do something about it now. Ignore it and instead of a smooth inheritance, your loved ones will be staring into a bureaucratic abyss, unsure where your liabilities begin or end, how to report your tax, or even where the hell your Will is - if you bothered to make one.

Probate is the tedious legal process of proving a Will's validity, sorting out assets, and settling debts after someone's death. Essentially, it's paperwork hell - but necessary.

So, let's avoid making probate unnecessarily expensive. Here are four simple steps to ensure your estate doesn't turn into a legal and financial black hole.

1. Make a Will (Seriously, Just Do It)

The simplest way to cut probate costs and speed up the whole process is to make a Will. Without a will, your estate falls under the delightful rules of intestacy, meaning the government decides who gets what. And trust me, they're not interested in efficiency.

A properly written will means your assets are distributed faster, fewer legal disputes arise, and you won't end up paying thousands in legal fees just to sort out who gets your collection of antique golf clubs.

And before you think, "I'll just scribble something on a napkin" - don't. Get it done properly by a solicitor. It's money well spent.

2. Talk to Your Family and Executors

You can meticulously plan your estate, dodge as much tax as legally possible, and leave behind a watertight Will and still your probate can be costly. Why? Because families erupt into all-out war when there are surprises.

Your executors are the ones who'll be doing the admin of your estate. Your beneficiaries are the ones getting your stuff. If you don't tell both who's getting what and why then expect tears, tantrums, and years of awkward Christmas dinners. A simple honest conversation now means no one is blindsided by your decisions later. Plus, your executor will actually know what to do (rather than learning on the job badly), and you reduce the risk of fights, resentment, and eye-watering legal bills.

3. Get Organised

Executors have a tough enough job without having to

play Sherlock Holmes with your finances. If you don't fancy your family spending months on a treasure hunt for your assets (or debts), then get your paperwork in order. Keep everything they will need after you die - your Will, bank statements, mortgage details, life insurance policies, investments, and any outstanding debts - in one safe place. This isn't just about making things easy; it's about avoiding a bureaucratic circus that could see probate drag on forever.

4. Keep It Updated

Now, just because you've stuffed everything into a folder once doesn't mean you're done. Keep it updated at least once a year. Nobody wants to wade through a stack of decade-old bank statements from an account you closed years ago or - worse - find out you had a secret offshore fund only after probate is wrapped up. A little regular maintenance means your executor won't be blindsided by a financial mess that could delay probate.

The Bottom Line

Probate is an expensive, slow-moving bureaucratic process, but with a bit of planning, you can avoid the worst of it. Make a Will, tell your executors and beneficiaries what to expect and keep your paperwork organised and up to date. Yes, all this requires effort and conversations about estate planning can be uncomfortable, but a quick chat now could save your family thousands in solicitor fees later.

And if all else fails? Well, you could always take the ultimate tax-saving approach and spend it all before you go.

Who's up for a luxury cruise?



Anna Boucher, Senior Associate

Anna Boucher is an inheritance tax, wills and probate specialist solicitor at The Burnside Partnership (Combe office). Each month, Anna will share helpful tips on inheritance law, mixing humour with practical advice. If you have any follow-up questions, you can email her at anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com or call the Combe office on 01865 987781 and ask for her secretary, Bev.

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

Next Monthly Talk at The Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock at 7.30pm on Wednesday 7th May
St Frideswide and the Early History of Christ Church

Speaker: Ruth Buckley, Local Historian and volunteer Guide, Christ Church

This illustrated talk will cover the authenticity of St Frideswide as the founder of Oxford, plus the history of the Saxon monastery and of the Norman priory on the site of Christ Church.

Membership of The Friends 2025-2026
Our new Membership year starts in April together with another stimulating programme of monthly talks organised by the Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum. Membership gives you free access all our talks which take place in the Museum in Woodstock but are also available on ZOOM. Non-members are very welcome at these events for a fee of £5 payable on the evening. If you are interested in History generally or would like to learn more about Oxfordshire, these talks are for you! Details of Membership and our full 2025-2026 programme are on our website.
www.friendsoftom.org.uk. Do check it out!

The Oxfordshire Museum

Michael Black: Chisel, Wood, Stone
This new exhibition is all about the life and works of sculptor Michael Black.
Saturday 15 March to Sunday 1 June - Free Entry
Michael Black, who carved the Emperors' Heads outside the Sheldonian Theatre in Broad Street, lived and worked from Oxford throughout his career. As a talented sculptor he received notable public commissions, exhibited artwork at prestigious galleries, and restored the stonework of churches, colleges and other buildings across Oxford.

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum Children's Creative Writing Competition 2025
This competition is an opportunity for you to share your creative writing skills. The competition is open to all young people between the ages of 7 and 11 who live within 10 miles of The Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. Your writing should also include a drawing or illustration of the object that your story is focusing on. The best pieces will be selected to be judged by our expert judging panel and one piece will be selected as overall winner.

The person who has created this piece will be awarded a prize of £50 in cash and have their name engraved upon a trophy.

For more information or to request an application form please email:
oxfordshire.museum@oxfordshire.gov.uk

History Hunters
Our popular History Hunters kids club is taking place on Wednesday 9 April and will be all about the Romans! We also have an exciting collection of other activities and craft sessions planned throughout the Easter Holidays. For our full schedule please visit our website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museumworkshops.

The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 9th April 2025

The Transformation of English Country Towns in the 18th century: Society, Art, Architecture and Travel
From the late 17th century towns and cathedral cities grew in size and prosperity, bringing in gentry from the surrounding countryside. To entertain the leisured classes, theatres and assembly rooms were built, subscription libraries started and racecourses set up. Gentry families increasingly owned a house in their local town, where they could spend the winter, shop, attend concerts, and see their friends. In the 19th century some towns became industrialised and lost their charm, others still have some of their 18th century attractions.

About the speaker:
Caroline Knight is an architectural historian, trained at the Courtauld Institute of Art and specialising in 16th to 18th century English and Scottish architecture. Lecturer at the V&A on year courses and short courses, and lecturer for the Arts Society, the Art Fund, and for the Royal Oak Foundation in the US. She has researched and written a history of Kensington Palace. Contributed to a book on the Cecil family and has written several articles on architectural and social history and the history of travel. Wrote London's Country Houses (2009). Contributed a chapter to a history of the Royal Academy (Yale, 2018).

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. Numbers are no longer restricted, but booking is recommended to reserve a place. Bookings can be made via the website or please contact Lisa Etheridge on 07918 180895 for a booking form. Non-members are welcome (space permitting) at a charge of £10.

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

Updates on 'Botley West'

Registration Closed - What Next?

Huge thanks to the many hundreds of you who have registered as 'Interested Parties' and sent your comments in to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). A few people reported problems in the final days - we can only assume this was because so many were being sent at that time! - but hope you persevered and were successful. Please let us know if you were not able to register.

PINS will now examine what has been submitted and set the timetable for the examination itself. We will keep you informed as soon as dates and details are published. All the Relevant Registrations will also be published in due course.

If you registered as an Interested Party you will be invited to the Preliminary Meeting - likely to be in May. And - importantly - you are now able:

- to send any further comments through the 'Have your say' form on the project information page of the PINS website (you need to give your interested party reference number)
- to be invited to attend and speak at examination meetings
- to request to attend any accompanied site inspections
- to hear about progress of the application

We are confident that there have been a great number of registrations and are now asking for an equally impressive response to our next request - please read on!

COMPLETE THE SURVEYS AND SEND YOUR PHOTOS

We are now gathering and preparing evidence which will be used to show how this proposal, if built, would affect local residents' amenity and quality of life. This information will be submitted by SBW to PINS and also to West Oxfordshire District Council to use in their Local Impact Report - an important element at the Examination stage.

We are asking for your help in two important ways: Firstly, please complete two SHORT surveys here: <https://stopbotleywest.com/surveys>:

- On the impact on your "lived experience" (Residential Amenity) and
- On your use of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the area.

We hope that everyone will do this - all individuals in your household, local friends and neighbours, visiting friends or family.

Secondly, please send in photos or videos showing the proximity of solar panels to your house (if you live close to the boundary) or to any PROW that you use in the area. Please remember to tell us the location and email them to feedback@stopbotleywest.com

THANK YOU: FOR SPEAKING UP
Visit stopbotleywest.com home page and select 'Get Regular Updates'. We will keep you informed with a direct link to this form whenever there is a new instruction or deadline from PINS regarding examination topics. This is the easiest and most efficient way to make sure your additional comments are seen and considered by the Examining Authority.

And - even if you didn't register as an Interested Party with PINS - we still want to hear from you.

PLEASE HELP WITH A DONATION
Please join us and make a donation to our fighting fund via stopbotleywest.com If you are in a position to make a significant donation please contact our Chair: alex.rogers@stopbotleywest.com to arrange a personal meeting.

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Tennis: Woodstock Tennis Club

It's been an exciting winter for Woodstock Tennis Club. The installation of court lighting in September now enables tennis of all kinds - social play, team practice and group and individual coaching - to continue right through the year. And it's been a successful winter, too. Woodstock has eight teams competing at weekends in the Oxfordshire League, and this Winter season has seen three of the eight - the Men's B, Ladies B and Ladies D - win promotion from their divisions, two more had near-misses, and their Men's team playing on Wednesdays won the county's Midweek League.

But Woodstock's club isn't just about competitive team tennis. Social play is thriving, too, with popular sessions three times each week, and there's an excellent coaching programme for both adults and juniors. The club's delightful setting near the heart of the town, and its artificial grass courts which are great for play all the year round, make it a very appealing place to be.

With spring in the air and the summer season about to start, new members of all ages and abilities are always welcome to join the town's friendly club. For all the details of what's on offer at Woodstock Tennis Club, and how to join, go to <https://wbtc.org.uk/>



WOBL Visit to the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility

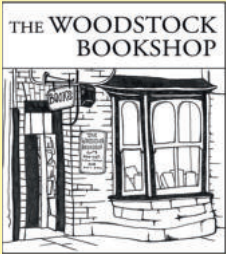
10am on Thursday 19 June 2025

The facility began operation in 2014 and is permitted to treat 378,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste each year. It diverts at least 95% of Oxfordshire's residual municipal waste away from landfill and generates enough electricity to power the equivalent of over 80 thousand homes.

This will be a very interesting visit, which we will write up for those who are unable to come. Half the spaces have now been allocated so we have space for another seven. It is a walking visit, and there are some restrictions - for example everyone has to wear a boiler suit and steel capped shoes (supplied by ERF).

Please send me your request to come via an EMail to editor@wobl.news

Meme of the Month



THE WOODSTOCK BOOKSHOP FESTIVAL

Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th May 2025

Friday May 2nd 8 to 11pm; Poetry in the Pub; The Crown Pub OX20 1TE; Tickets £10

Poet **Patrick McGuinness** is Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Oxford University. Patrick is also a critic, novelist, and poet. He will perform his own poetry and lead an Open Mic Session introducing poets from around the County including **Esther Lay**, Rector of Wootton, Glympton and Kidlington Parishes.

Saturday May 3rd 10am to 12 noon; Children's Festival; St Hughs Hall OX20 1JL; FREE

Writer and musician **Phil Freizinger** will introduce his books about the *Sweet Zombie Horse* through interactive singing and dancing with audience participation greatly encouraged. Local writer **Denise Beaumont** will present her books about *Alice the Palace Postwoman* using creative language and interactive formats to stimulate children's imagination.

Saturday May 3rd 2pm to 4.30pm; Science Festival; Woodstock Town Hall; Tickets £10

A group of world-leading scientists come together to share their work and their ideas. **Professor Denis Noble**, Oxford University, is a physiologist and a pioneer of systems biology who developed the world's first virtual heart in the 1960s. His books challenge the foundations of current biological sciences and question the central dogma of genetic determinism. **Professor Robin Choudhury**, Oxford University, is fascinated by the heart and in his book *The Beating Heart* he discusses how it has been represented over time and across cultures. **Professor Ian Goldin** is a leader in interdisciplinary research into critical global challenges and was the founding Director of Oxford's Martin School. **Professor Nicky Clayton**, Department of Psychology at Cambridge University, has made major contributions to the study of animal cognition as well as cognitive development in children. **Professor Jason Chin**, the Founding Director of the Generative Biology Institute at the Ellison Institute of Technology in Oxford, has made fundamental advances in synthetic biology.

Saturday May 3rd 7pm to 10pm; Musical Poetry; Woodstock Town Hall; Tickets £10 (incl. wine)

Spend an evening with poet **Chris Tutton** who will perform from his own work poems around the notion of love, loss, identity and communication. He will be accompanied by multi-award-winning Belgian harpist **Lise Vandersmissen**. The evening will be introduced by the Rector of Woodstock and Bladen, **Rev Sarah Bourne**. Sarah has a special interest in the arts and music, and we are delighted to welcome her to the festival.

Sunday May 4th 2 pm- 4.30 pm; An Afternoon of Drama; St Hughs Hall OX20 1JL; Tickets £10

Leading English actor **Ben Lamb**, known for his role as the Duke of Buckingham in Julian Fellow's *The Gilded Age* and for films such as *The White Queen*, *Divergent*, *Now You See Me 2*, and *The Christmas Prince*, will perform readings from a number of writers and poets alongside students from the Oxford School of Drama. Join us as the talented young actors, still in training, remind us that words have the power to spark imagination and transport us to places we've never been. The OSD is based just outside Woodstock with alumni that include **Claire Foy** (*The Crown*) and **Richard Gadd** (*Baby Reindeer*). Come and meet the next generation of actors as they bring words to life.

Sunday May 4th 7pm to 11pm; Music in the Pub; The Kings Arms OX20 1SU; Tickets £10

Mandolirium features musicians **Rod Craig** and **John Somerscales**, who share a passion for the mandolin, and John Corlett on upright bass, They will take you on a musical journey through Celtic music, bluegrass, ragtime, swingtime and more, showcasing the mandolin and the guitar in all their glory and versatility. They will be joined by jazz pianist **Richard Belmont** in what promises to be an evening of wonderful music.

Tickets available from The Woodstock Bookshop; by phone, in person, or by email
Woodstock Bookshop, 23 Oxford Street, Woodstock, Oxon, OX20 1TH
Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm; Sunday 11am - 5pm
info@woodstockbookshop.co.uk - 01993 812760

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Oxfordshire & Home Counties

We're having our say on Botley West



Existing aerial view from Blenheim Palace to the south east



Indicative extent of Botley West solar panels (aerial view to the south east from the Palace)

Local councils and residents have made their views clear about Botley West

The national Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will now have been able to gauge the strength of feeling surrounding the huge Botley West Solar Farm development proposed for (mainly) Blenheim land in our locality.

PINS has acknowledged receipt of no less than 1,115 Relevant Representations (RRs) from organisations or persons wanting to register as Interested Parties in the upcoming Examination of the Botley West proposal. Overwhelmingly most of these RRs seem to oppose the development or are strongly critical of it. You can read them yourself under National Infrastructure Projects / Botley West / Relevant Representations on the Planning Inspectorate website (where you can also see the Palace's own RR).

The stated grounds for criticism are varied and numerous and not all of them will be selected as principal issues by the four Inspectors designated for the Examination. They include potential 'harm to a number of highly designated heritage assets' - this from Historic England, a Statutory Consultee and therefore carrying weight. The most significant of these assets is, of course, the UNESCO World Heritage Site Blenheim Palace itself!

Many of the RRs complain of the 'severe and unacceptable impact' that the development would have on the 'wider landscape setting' of the Palace (World Heritage UK) and of the numerous other heritage assets that would be adversely affected by the sprawling 3,500-acre project.

Among the many other issues objected to is the choice of location for Botley West. As the Gardens Trust puts it, 'the choice of national energy sites is currently unplanned and opportunistic'. Seventy per cent of Botley West would sit on land designated as Green Belt, another issue drawing strong feelings from many Interested Parties. Other issues include questions regarding the site's vast scale; its deliverability; its adverse impact on historic footpaths and woodlands; the consequent de-commissioning of farm land and the loss of food production; its proximity to human settlements; potential damage to soil quality; possible water run-off, flood and contamination risk; likely adverse impacts on bio-diversity and wildlife; the dangers of 'glint and glare' to pilots, train and car drivers; the ethical sourcing of the nearly two million solar panels; concerns over the practicality of their decommissioning after the 42 year life of the project; and even the resulting denial of useful mineral extraction.

However, uppermost in the Inspectors' mind will necessarily be the requirement for them to pursue Net Zero and the National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) which came into force in January last year, and specifically to follow energy policy on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) - of which BWSF is one. The Inspectors will be balancing against this the avoidance of unacceptable harm to heritage assets and other relevant concerns, many of which are highlighted in the RRs submitted.

They are facing quite a task. As well as national organisations, many local authorities and bodies have also sent in RRs, including West Oxfordshire District Council whose advice will be closely noted; the fifteen local parishes affected by Botley West; the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS); the indefatigable Stop Botley West (through their solicitors, Marrons); London Oxford Airport; the Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign (which I chair); and over a thousand local businesses and members of the public.

We are undoubtedly having our say. The Relevant Representations give a fascinating insight into the disturbances created and passions stirred when a proposal is made to site what would be Europe's largest solar farm so close to human habitation and adjacent to so many ancient buildings, historic villages, protected sites, cherished footpaths, and beloved landscapes.

Giles Lewis

Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone, How I loved the sunshine we had and being able to get into the garden for some tidying up and cutting the lawn but hey ho, it has changed and as I write this report it has turned very cold again.

Monday 11 March was our AGM meeting which went very smoothly. Our chairperson, secretary, treasurer and programme secretary were all willing to stand again for another year. Which was wonderful and we have also two floater members on the committee who deal with the raffle and sales table. Myself and another member have now stepped down from the committee after many years' services on it. We were thanked for all our input and hard work over the years. Apart from the committee we also have members who deal with the Flower Arranger magazine and serve the coffee and tea at each meeting. We all work together making our meetings happy and friendly. After the AGM we had a short break for coffee/tea brownies and cookies. Following this we welcomed our speaker Simone Squire with her title 'More than a slab of chocolate'. It certainly was that as Simone was born in Belgium and married an English gentleman but returns many times to her home country. She told us many stories of her life in Belgium, the different regions and its history touching of course on the town of Bruges for its chocolates! We also learnt about the different beers produced and drunk in Belgium. It was a very pleasant and entertaining talk.

Our next meeting is on Monday 14 April when we welcome Renate Petrauskiene, who is a demonstrator in training with her title 'Blossoms of Unity'. We look forward very much to supporting her on her way to her final exams.

If you would like to know further details about the Club, please now contact Ann on 07701 000977. We meet in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park, Woodstock on the second Monday of the month. Meetings start at 7pm. Subscriptions are £42 for the year and visitors £10 which includes a raffle ticket.

Margaret Lang

Bladon Snippets from the Past

Yes, three general stores in Bladon plus daily delivery to the doorstep, milk and sometimes bread. This bounty coupled with the Oil Man. So many households 60 years ago had paraffin stoves for general heat - Aladdin was a particular favourite.

Another three - mixed farms: Manor, Rectory, and Home Farms with farmers Devonshire, Mobey, and Crawford in place.

Mary F. Sitch

News from Bladon Parish Council

Your Parish Council Needs YOU!

Bladon Parish Council is looking to co-opt a qualified volunteer to fill a recent vacancy on the council. We are looking for candidates who are interested in what is going on in the community and would like to have a say in Bladon's current and future development. Whether it's an interest in what is happening with Botley West, or planning matters and housing developments on all sides of the village, road safety, community events, budgeting, working alongside Blenheim, or upgrading the Recreation Ground facilities, your involvement is key to making and keeping Bladon such a lovely place to live.

Bladon Parish Council consists of six councillors and a part-time, paid Clerk. We have an average age of 45-ish, come from diverse backgrounds, and are looking for anyone who could bring a little extra to our team. PC meetings are held on the second Thursday evening of the month except in August and December. They are efficiently run, and usually last around an hour, with a minimum of a couple of hours or so of other work required between meetings.

If you have an interest in local matters and think you can help, please contact the Clerk at clerk@bladon-pc.gov.uk or visit our website at bladon-pc.gov.uk for an application and more information.

Friends of St. Martin's Church, Bladon

Wine Tasting Event

The Friends of St. Martin's Church, Bladon is a charity which supports repairs and renovations to the church and Church Room so that village groups and organisations such as the Toddler's Group and the Community lunches can enjoy the facilities which contribute to Village life. The Friends made a major contribution to the the servicing and repairs to the Church Clock which is a focal timepiece for all the village.

The Friends are holding a Wine Tasting Event on Friday the 11th of April 2025 from 7.00 pm to raise funds so it is able to continue to support the village. The Wine tasting will consist of three types of wine, namely Red, White and Rose and attendees will be invited to guess the types of wines. Nibbles will be provided during the evening. The price for the event is £10.00per person and tickets are available from: Chris Corser 01993 813071, Mollie Hance 01993 811354 and Robin Jones 01993 811484.

We look forward to see in you on the 11th of April.

Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

One of my great joys in moving to Woodstock is discovering the close relationship which exists between the various churches of Woodstock and Bladon. Ecumenism is a form of reconciliation where different denominations of churches work together and share what unites them, and the ecumenical movement has existed for more than 100 years. There are a number of well-known ecumenical communities such as Taizé in France, Corrymeela in Northern Ireland and Iona (an island off the Scottish west coast) and these all attract pilgrims and visitors to pray together and to work for peace and social justice in a Christian context. The Churches Together in England (CTE) movement unites Christians from a broad spectrum of churches, and its mission is all about sharing the love of God in our local communities.

Here in Woodstock and Bladon, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches meet regularly for shared events and worship. The ministers also have monthly meetings to pray together and to plan how we can best meet the needs of our local community. We had an uplifting service at the Baptist Church to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the middle of January. As we approach the beginning of Lent in early March, we plan to run a shared weekly Lent course which will reflect on the nature of friendship and how this is revealed to us in the Bible. The course will run for five weeks, with the same session held at various times of day in different church locations (see flyer). All are most welcome to attend any of the groups, and we hope this will provide the opportunity to forge new and stronger friendships between individuals and within Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together.

Revd Sarah Bourne,
Rector of Woodstock and Bladon

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davidwlord@hotmail.co.uk

Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

With Easter Sunday being the 20th April this year it quite common to hear people comment, 'Easter is late this year isn't it!'

Easter is, of course, the very definition of a movable feast. Its date is determined by the full moon, the most infallible method of calculating worldwide dates before universal calendars. Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on, or after, the spring equinox. Hence the date moving. Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between the 22nd March and the 25th April.

Those of us in church communities get a little bit confused by the switching of the dates of Easter each year, so it's unsurprising that folks who are not part of church communities get even more confused!

However, God was never confused about the timing of Easter. Easter was never early or late for God. In Romans 5:6, Paul writes, "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us." (New Living Translation)

God got the timing of Easter spot on, and our celebration of Easter, Christ crucified and risen, is an annual reminder of God's perfect timing.

So, maybe, when someone says to you Easter is late this year, you can say maybe it is at exactly the right time!

Revd. Andy Mills
Minister, Woodstock Baptist Church

Christian Aid in Bladon 2025

Christian Aid will be 80 in May! This year Christian Aid week is the 11th to 17th May, giving 7 days to make a difference for those living in extreme poverty and those fighting injustice throughout the world.

Bladon has always been very supportive and generous, and last year we raised over £2,000.

During Christian Aid week we shall be delivering those familiar red envelopes which can be returned to a Drop Off point if you wish to give. You will also receive an invitation to our **Afternoon Tea Party**, which will be held on Saturday 17th May between 2 to 4pm in the garden of John and Helen Stevenson, Manor Farmhouse, Manor Road. There will be a Cake Stall, Plant Stall, tea and cake, and one or two surprises along with a raffle.

If you can offer help on the day or donations, please ring 01993 811171 or 01993 813071.

Keep the date and thank you!

Woodstock Exhibition Foundation

(Grants for Woodstock young people)

450 years ago: Elizabeth I Progress

On Monday 30 June Dr Alexandra Gajda of Jesus College, Oxford will give a talk called 'Elizabeth I on Progress: Performance, Politics and Popularity' in St. Mary Magdalen Church, Woodstock. The event celebrates the queen's five week stay in Woodstock Palace in 1575. Why did she stay so long?

Before Elizabeth I reached Woodstock on her 1575 Progress she visited Kenilworth Castle, which she had given to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester early in her reign. When Elizabeth came to the throne, Dudley was one of her favourites. She made him Master of the Horse, giving him responsible for organising the annual Progresses and regular access to the queen.

Dudley's name had been regularly linked romantically with the queen, especially at the start of her reign, despite Dudley being already married. The discovery of his wife's body at the foot of a flight of stairs in Cumnor, Oxfordshire meant Dudley became free to marry again. However, suspicious circumstances noted in the Coroner's report made marriage impossible.

It is thought that 15 years later Dudley again sought to win the queen's hand in marriage. He extravagantly entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle for 19 days from 9 July. He had built a tower block specifically for her private lodgings with superb views over the castle's parkland, which stretched 20 miles from the castle walls. A block of lodgings was constructed joining the tower to the medieval hall and chambers as well as a stable block, a tilt yard and a new gatehouse to make a grand entrance to the castle.

A special garden with stone carvings, obelisks, spheres and white bears was created for Elizabeth, which has been restored in recent years by English Heritage. Elizabeth liked birdsong, so there was a great aviary decorated with painted gems.

Entertainment included a pageant on arrival, music, dancing, fireworks, vast feasts, deer hunting, plays, music recitals, plays and water pageants.

This 1575 visit to Kenilworth became a legend even in its own day. A 1580s tapestry depicting the events today hangs at Baddesley Clinton (National Trust).

The climax at the end of the visit was to be a masque, to be staged on a site several miles from Kenilworth on the last day of Elizabeth's stay. In it Diana, chaste goddess of hunting, debates with Juno, the wife of the King of Gods, whether one of Diana's favourite nymphs, Zabeta, should be allowed to marry or remain a virgin. Zabeta was a thinly-disguised Elizabeth. In the event rain prevented the performance taking place.



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester unknown artist about 1275



Kenilworth Castle in 1620 from a fresco painting in Newnham Padox

Leicester had shortened verses written overnight, to be recited to Elizabeth as she travelled to her next stop on her Progress with a plea that she remained at Kenilworth for a while longer, but to no avail.

Some historians think that a few weeks later Elizabeth extended her stay at nearby Woodstock in the hope that Leicester would follow and continue to woo her.

What happened at Woodstock Palace will be in next month's article.

Frank Collingwood

Spring Exhibition

ECHOES OF THE LANDSCAPE



JON EARNEY SCULPTURE
ROD CRAIG PAINTINGS

14-21 APRIL 2025

NO 14 GALLERY MARKET STREET WOODSTOCK
OPEN EACH DAY 10AM-5PM

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

Woodstock in Bloom

Our Annual General Meeting was held on 21 March. Elizabeth Poskitt was elected as Chair, Ruth Sutherland as Vice Chair and Robert Edwards as Secretary.

We are delighted to have been joined during this year by Susan Ilson and Gary Szabadoz.

The dry garden in front of the Community Centre has been raised to a higher level than ever before by Philippa Rumary and Mark Cooper.

We have admired the results of Jenny Atkinson’s work in the Churchyard and of John Banbury and his helpers at the Museum and at the Memorial Garden in Hensington Road.

Theft. The tulips generously provided by the Blenheim Palace Gardens will flower shortly. I am sad to report that some of the bulbs on Market Place have been excavated and stolen and not on this occasion by squirrels.

At the end of May the tulips will be followed by pelargoniums (aka geraniums) and trailing lobelia - these are the volunteers who will look after them: Stephen Pix, Susan Ilson, Elizabeth Poskitt, Ruth Sutherland, Jane Carlin, David Carrington and family, Brian Jennings and Ian Leslie.

The oak half barrels beside the old school in Oxford Road are deteriorating and we will replace them with custom built structures to match those on Market Place in the Autumn.

Robert Edwards

Girlguiding Woodstock

Gold! Silver! Bronze!

We’ve presented awards to Rainbows and Brownies this term - well done everyone.

Hannah received her 5 year leadership award, presented to her at the Oxfordshire Gang Show where she was performing. We have 6 leaders within our Woodstock units with many years of volunteering between us.

With summer approaching, we’re looking forward to getting outside with camp in the summer, a challenge hike at Easter and evenings out in the community.

Our Trefoil group are celebrating their 5th birthday - we had one meeting before the covid lock downs so started in a different way.

Trefoil is for anyone age 18 + so come along and see what we get up to.

Girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk

Woodstock Probus Club

At our March meeting we had a very good Talk by Liz Woolley on 'Lord Nuffield’s generosity to Oxford Colleges'. He made several large donations to different colleges leading up to the foundation of his own named college. We heard how he wanted engineering and science to be the focus but was thwarted by the University Authorities. The original construction plans were also much debated but his view prevailed on this and particularly on the Tower which we will all be looking at more closely when next passing.

Our monthly meetings take place in the Parish Church and after the Talk we enjoy a good 2 course lunch prepared in Woodstock by Eloise at EP Caterers.

We enjoyed our Tour of the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum that has some fascinating things to look at including an early picture of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire light infantry leading the charge as Napoleon’s Republican Guard retreat at The Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Quite a storied history of the two county regiments, the other one being the Queen’s Own Oxfordshire Hussars.

For our next outing, we will be taking off to the RAF Museum at Hendon which has numerous hangers to explore and a flight simulator, not sure if it is a Sopwith By-Plane or Eurofighter Typhoon. All will be revealed next month.

Michael Bowles, Past President

Bladon Gardens Society

Guest Speaker Event

The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

17th April 2025 7.30 pm

Tim Walker

Former Director of
Oxford Botanical Garden

“The Healing Power of Plants”



£2.00 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: £12 Visitors to monthly meetings £2

The Woodstock Society

Speaker: Graham Clifton

Subject: Working with Church Bells



Former Master of the Oxford
Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Maker, repairer and ringer of Church
Bells

Time and venue:

Monday 14th April 2025 at 8 pm.

St Mary Magdalene Church,
Park Street, Woodstock. OX20 1SJ.

Visitors’ fee: £8.00

Please see www.woodstocksociety.org for further
information on membership and this season’s programme

Wake Up To Woodstock

Supporting local businesses and our
community

Wake Up to Woodstock (WUTW) is dedicated to strengthening our town’s business community by creating connections and promoting Woodstock as a thriving place to visit.

Through partnerships with Experience Oxfordshire, Cotswold Tours, OXLEP, and Blenheim Palace, we help showcase the town’s boutique shops, award-winning hotels, restaurants, and cultural landmarks.

Our business social and networking mixer events provide valuable opportunities for local entrepreneurs and businesses to meet, collaborate and grow, supported by a social media presence that highlights our members.

We’re proud to play a role in Woodstock’s cherished events, including the Woodstock Festive Fayre, A Night of a Thousand Candles, and other local favourites, Woodstock Live and Salon Privé. Beyond attracting visitors, these events enhance community spirit and connection which is important for us all.

As we continue to grow, Wake Up to Woodstock remains committed to supporting businesses, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring Woodstock is a great place to live, visit, and work.

If you’re a business within the OX20 postcode, and you’d like to become a part of our growing community, drop Vicki and the team a line at info@wutw.co.uk or visit www.wutw.co.uk for more information.

We look forward to welcoming you.



GOLF DAY

We are thinking of organising a Woodstock and Bladon News GOLF DAY

This will probably take place sometime in September and will include prizes and trophies

Please EMail editor@wobl.news to register an interest

GOLF DAY

St Mary Magdalene Churchyard



Three new benches, soon to be installed, have been donated to the churchyard so that one can sit and enjoy this beautiful, tranquil green space in the centre of the busy town.

The churchyard has been developed, with the aid of volunteers, to be eco friendly, to encourage wild life and biodiversity and to be enjoyed by all.

There are nesting birds, 2 colonies of rare wild bees, ground bees, 4 kinds of bat, squirrels and hedgehogs. Over two hundred native wild flowers have been recorded there, 4 of which are rare and listed endangered, also 59 species of lichen, including one having previously only been recorded in the U.K. in one other site.



Many shrubs and trees have been planted. They take in carbon dioxide, provide shade and shelter and absorb pollution from the atmosphere, so very valuable with so much traffic in Woodstock. Many are native and they have been chosen for their blossom, to attract insects, and for their fruit, to feed birds and mammals.

The churchyard is a very beautiful place at any time of year and a great public asset, so when you are next in town do make time to wander round to enjoy nature and the beauty and peace to be found there.

Jenny Atkinson



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Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums (with the Historic Cycle Collection)

150 years ago the Penny Farthing ruled

April marks the start of the summer season with heritage bus rides on the first and third Sundays in each month until the end of September.

Easter is late this year with Easter Sunday falling on 20 April. We shall be having our popular Easter Chick Hunt again with the chicks hidden in different places in the museum on Easter Sunday and Monday. Also the Easter Bunny will be around to entertain our younger visitors. Older visitors may like to visit our Historic Cycle Collection on the mezzanine floor in the Morris Motors Museum.



The Haynes & Jefferis Ariel

In 1870 the Boneshakers were replaced by the high-wheeled Ordinary bicycle, later renamed as the Penny Farthing, which began a 16 year reign. About 200,000 Ordinaries were built before it in turn was superseded by the Safety bicycle, which was very like modern bikes.

Whilst the Boneshaker was made of wood with wooden spokes in the wheels, a crank and pedals on the front wheel, the Ordinary had a metal frame. Initially the wooden spokes were replaced by a single cord threaded back and forth between the wheel rim and the hub. The wheel was tensioned by two bars. The pictured Ariel Ordinary bicycle and patented on 11 August 1870 by an Englishman, James Starley, who was christened by his peers ‘the father of the cycle trade’. It was made under licence by Haynes and Jefferis and remained in production for nearly ten years. Previously most bicycle development had been in France, but the Franco Prussian war diverted the attention of the French, and English inventors came to the fore.

A disadvantage of the tension wheel was that if the wheel went backwards, tension was lost. It was not

long before James Starley patented designs for individual rigid metal spoking systems for the Ordinary’s wheels, which could be tensioned individually. Other improvements included front and rear brakes, pedals and bearings. The machines were made free-running and lighter. Standard machines weighed 23 kg or less whilst racing machines were even lighter down to 11 kg.

Club riders were very competitive, out in all weathers competing to ride longer and longer distances with faster and faster times. The racing Ordinary in our collection has a tubular frame and drop handlebars so it was aerodynamic! Ordinaries still did not have chains, so the pedals were directly attached to the front wheel. The larger the wheel, the further the rider went on a single turn of the pedals - and the faster. The limit to the size of the front wheel was the rider’s inside leg.

Over five hundred firms made Ordinaries with Coventry at the centre of the industry. However, at the end of the 1870s companies were experimenting with a chain linking the pedals to the back wheel. In 1884 JK Starley and William Sutton started to manufacture the Rover Safety bicycle which soon caught on and the days of the Penny Farthing were numbered, although enthusiasts continued to race them for many years.

Frank Collingwood

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The Marlborough C of E School

Ski Trip to Artesina, Italy - A Fantastic Adventure!



During the February half term, a group of our students embarked on an unforgettable ski trip to Artesina, Italy. From the moment we arrived, the students demonstrated exceptional behaviour, a positive attitude, and an impressive level of effort, making the trip a huge success.



Each day on the slopes, the students embraced the challenges of skiing with enthusiasm, determination, and resilience. Whether they were complete beginners or more experienced skiers, everyone made incredible progress, gaining confidence and improving their skills under the guidance of expert instructors. It was inspiring to see their teamwork, encouragement, and perseverance as they tackled new runs and refined their techniques.

Beyond skiing, the trip was packed with exciting activities. A highlight was the visit to the Caves of Bossea, where students explored stunning underground rock formations and learned about the cave's fascinating history and geology. Another thrilling experience was snow tubing, where everyone enjoyed racing down the slopes in inflatable tubes - an activity filled with laughter and excitement!



Overall, the trip was an amazing experience, and we are incredibly proud of all the students for their excellent behaviour, enthusiasm, and willingness to step out of their comfort zones. A huge thank you to the staff and instructors who made this adventure possible!

The School Ski Trip Team

Outstanding results at The Marlborough School!

This week saw the final publication of what is known as our 'validated' data from last year's exams. This takes into account the national data across all schools. Our KS4 (GCSE) outcomes and progress are officially rated as 'significantly above national', with outcomes in Humanities, Science and Languages in the top 10% in the country. The performance of our pupils in the Sixth Form (A Levels) is astounding: our A Level Average Points Score is "significantly above national" and in the top 5% of schools in the country, whilst our Value Added score - the progress our pupils make - is "significantly above national" and in the top 2% of schools in the country.

The journey for our pupils is massive - from joining us at KS2 with levels on or around national average, to achieving results which outperform the vast majority of all state schools, including Grammar schools, single sex schools and those who select on ability. We are not a school that puts up banners and signs about 'record results', as we know that our school cannot be judged by outcomes alone, but sometimes it is worth reminding ourselves just how well we do, year after year. As we know, outstanding results are not an end in themselves, but mean more opportunities, more choice and a better chance of a high quality destination in what is an increasingly competitive context. This data reflects the vision of our school, which is to be academically outstanding alongside producing fully rounded, mature young men and women, of whom we are very proud of.

Sarah Fitchett

Woodstock CE Primary School

Key Stage 1 Visit to Blenheim Palace for a Royal Day Out

On Friday, the children in Key Stage 1 enjoyed a special trip to Blenheim Palace, where they took part in various activities to enhance their learning about Kings and Queens throughout history. They explored the Palace, searching for clues about the monarchy, and made connections between the Royal Family across different time periods. The children also participated in engaging workshops led by the Palace's Education Team. It was an unforgettable day, and teachers were proud to share how much the children already knew, impressing the Blenheim staff with their knowledge of royal history.



Prior to their visit to Blenheim Palace, the Oxfordshire Museum came into school and ran workshops for each of the Key Stage 1 classes. They looked at photographs of Coronations through time, coins that feature Kings and Queens and other significant artefacts that are linked with the Royal Family. The workshop was brilliant with lots of new learning for everyone, including the grown-ups. Thank you to both Blenheim Palace and the Oxfordshire Museum for providing our children with such memorable learning experiences that were bespoke to their history curriculum.

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West Oxfordshire Schools Sports Hall Athletics Event

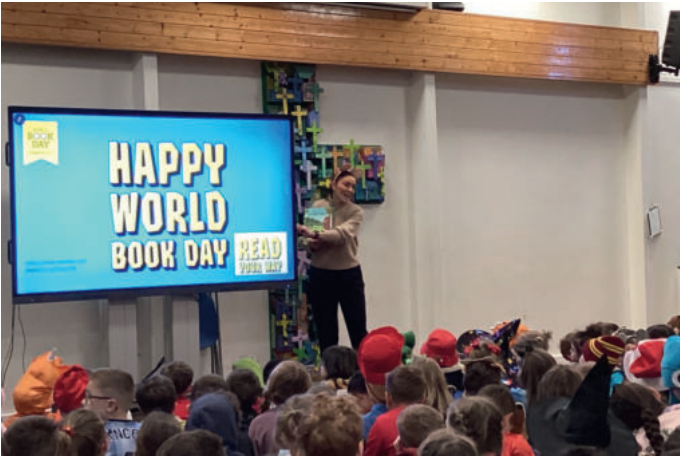
The children in Years 5&6 who won the Woodstock Partnership Sports Hall Athletics event a few weeks ago, went through to the West Oxfordshire finals last week. Children from the Woodstock, Witney, Eynsham, Carterton and Burford Partnership came together to compete in the final. Our team of athletes



really stepped it up and worked hard as a team which very much paid off - they were awarded the title of West Oxfordshire winners! Thank you to Mr McKay and Mrs Leslie for supporting the school team. Well done to all of the children who participated; as always, they did an excellent job of representing the school.

World Book Day

World Book Day celebrations at Woodstock CE Primary School is always a wonderful day to really nurture the children's love of reading, story and books. There was an array of wonderfully creative outfits from the children and the staff. Children across the school had opportunities to read with different



children across the school, the Woodstock Book Shop came in to give the children an opportunity to exchange their book tokens for a book and there were some amazing activities taking part across the school. The day ended with a book sale organised by the Pupil's Parliament and supported by the PTA.

Please do support local businesses by visiting The Woodstock Book Shop!

Anna Poole

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This month's front cover

My humble apologies to Vincent Van Gogh

Walking past the Crown one evening, Van Gogh's wonderful painting Café Terrace at Night came to mind. I thought it would be fun and a fitting tribute to produce something loosely after his style.

Rod Craig



Karatoon Korner



Panniers

Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon

With the arrival of spring, it is good to see more people in Bladon and Woodstock out on their bikes, cycling to the shops or to work, or just for pleasure. I have definitely noticed an uptick on the A44 cycle path between Woodstock and Oxford.

As more housing estates are approved all over the county - including around Woodstock - the need for people to be able to make local journeys without a car will become ever more obvious.

In a recent article for the Oxford Clarion, Olly Glover, the MP for Didcot and Wantage, said that travel alternatives such as better public transport and more cycling and walking infrastructure, will be key to tackling rising road congestion.

While housing targets are endlessly discussed, he says, targets are neither set nor monitored to the same degree for the public services and amenities needed to support larger populations.

He adds: "Where progress has been minimal, at the very best, is on creating high-quality and continuous walking and cycling routes. As is the case nationally, walking and cycling rates have not improved in Oxfordshire, despite a temporary surge during the pandemic."



There are plans for **controlled crossing points** to connect the cycle route across **Bladon roundabout**

In Woodstock and Bladon we will, hopefully, see such rates improve thanks to the ongoing **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**. The county council also has a **Woodstock Greenway** project to improve the walking/cycling route into Oxford. One or both of these initiatives should result in at least one new crossing on the A44 in Woodstock, linking to the shared-use path, as well as controlled crossings at Bladon roundabout.

Although getting around Woodstock and Bladon by bicycle can, at times, be challenging, the direction of travel is at least optimistic. Happy cycling!

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

Regular Events

This is a new section where regular events will be listed. If you would like your event included here, please send an email to editor@wobl.news.

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

The Friends hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On

Kings Arms / Mandolirium

Listen to our local group in our local pub, usually every third Thursday at 6.30pm
Next dates - April 10th and May 1st and 22nd.

Singing for Fun

This takes place at St Mary Magdalene Church every 1st Monday of the month at 2pm

St Mary Magdalene Church coffee morning

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

The Crown

Live music every Friday nights from 7.30pm

Woodstock Lunch Club

Lunches are held in the Community Centre every 2nd Wednesday

Woodstock 50+ Cinema Club

This Club shows films on the fourth Friday of every month at the Woodstock Methodist Church.

Woodstock Jazz

These events are usually monthly, on the last Friday of each month. The actual events will be listed in the What's On section.

Woodstock Literature Society

This well established society hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in the What's On section

Woodstock and District u3a

All events are listed in What's OnSt

Wootton Village Hall Talks

These take place monthly, and will be listed in What's On



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What's On

For the latest information, please click on the Events link at www.wobl.news.

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

Tuesday 08 Apr 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Natural History Society - Talk
Lorenzo Fornasari: Birds of Italy: European insights and Milan's avian wonders
St Hugh's Centre

Monday 14 Apr 2025, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk
Graham Clifton: Working with Church Bells
St Mary Magdalene

Saturday 26 Apr 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
The BHQ (Ben Holder Quartet): Certainly one of Europe's most exciting Jazz music performers
St Hugh's Centre

Friday 02 May 2025,

The Woodstock Bookshop - Festival
6 events over 3 days - see details in Bookshop
Various locations

Wednesday 07 May 2025, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk
St Frideswide and the Early History of Christ Church. Speaker: Ruth Buckley, Local Historian and volunteer Guide, Christ Church
Oxfordshire Museum

Tuesday 13 May 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Natural History Society - Talk
Sue Burge: Medicinal plants and magic
St Hugh's Centre

Monday 19 May 2025, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk
Michael Parker: Psychoanalytic Thinking in the NHS & Prison Service
St Mary Magdalene

Friday 30 May 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
Simon Spillet: Fast, Furious AND full of melody
St Hugh's Centre

Friday 27 Jun 2025, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
Lily Dior in Concert: One of the finest voices in British Jazz Today
St Hugh's Centre

Thursday 31 July 2025

British Transplant Games Opening Ceremony
Starts in Woodstock Town Centre and athletes parade to Blenheim Palace

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 August

Woodstock Live

STOP PRESS

Blenheim Palace Golden Toilet: The BBC showed a 30 minute film on 17 March about the theft, as part of their *Scams and Scandals* series. It is available to view on BBC iPlayer.

Council Elections: Assuming that there are more than one candidate putting their name forward, there will an election for both the County Council and the Town Council on Tuesday 1 May 2025. Please don't forget to vote.

Council Matters: Woodstock and Bladon News has been reporting on Council meetings since at least 2022, and they are now all available to view on our website.

Ducks: Hats off to the residents and volunteers who have trained the ducks back to Blenheim. Hopefully they will be safer there.

Low Carbon Hub Petition. Please look out for the petition coming early April that is demanding a fairer deal for communities impacted by the Botley West Solar Farm.

WOBL: The next issue will be a May issue and will be published on Friday 2 May 2025.

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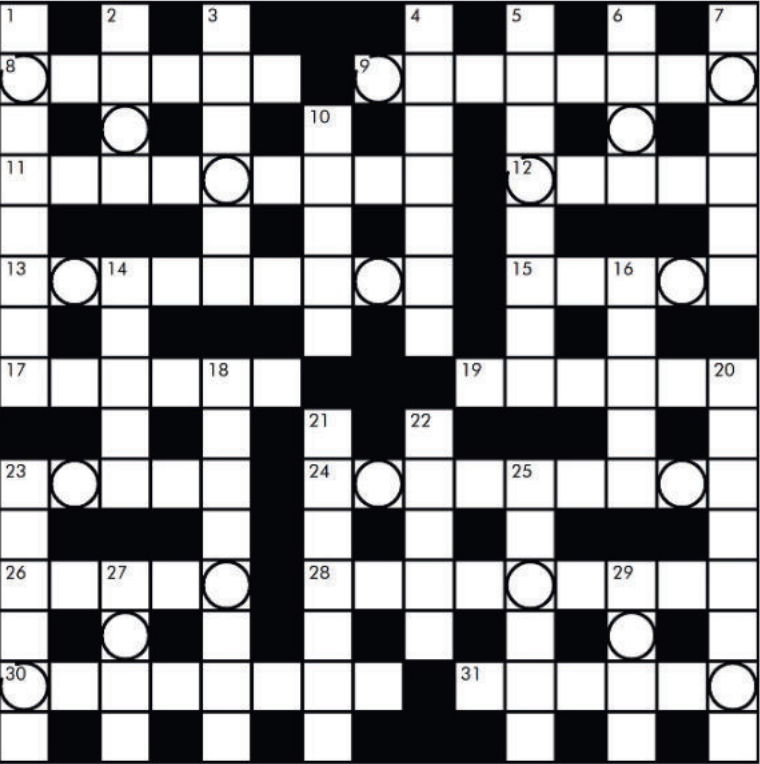
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Solve the clues to this straight crossword. Read through the letters in the marked squares to reveal who was commemorated by a recent full peal of the Bladon Church bells?



Puzzle courtesy of the



- Across
- 8. Unchanging
 - 9. Trespasser
 - 11. Necessary
 - 12. Establish
 - 13. High-heeled shoes
 - 15. Inclement
 - 17. Grave, earnest
 - 19. Feverish
 - 23. Contempt
 - 24. Book of synonyms
 - 26. Item of furniture
 - 28. Woollen face mask
 - 30. Contractual ambiguity
 - 31. Batter, pound

- Down
- 1. Evaluates
 - 2. Statutes
 - 3. Quick glimpse
 - 4. Unceasing
 - 5. Maintain
 - 6. Ready for print
 - 7. Sport award
 - 10. Ski run
 - 14. Ice house
 - 16. Bury
 - 18. Sovereigns
 - 20. Nonchalantly
 - 21. Whiskers
 - 22. Respond
 - 23. Unhealthy
 - 25. Accumulate
 - 27. Nautical cry
 - 29. Intentions

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