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Editorial

I'm writing this editorial from a comfy house in a lovely Melbourne suburb before going to see the Australian Open Real Tennis championship taking place in the centre of town about 30 minutes away.

I've been hearing about the cold and snow in Woodstock and feel a tad guilty about the 42C (107F) temperature forecast for Melbourne today. Cricket is very much in the news here, and I can see from my travels why Australia is so much better at it than us. Every town and suburb has wonderful sporting facilities with floodlit green spaces; and of course the weather helps.

I have met some of the 'barmy army' who turn out to be normal, friendly, and fun-loving professional people, nicknamed 'barmy' by the Australians as they come out to support England's cricketers, who rarely win.

As we all know, travel is a wonderful way to experience different lifestyles and I wanted to talk a bit about Australian public transport. Flights between the great distances here are cheaper than train travel in the UK. Trains, trams and buses, both in Perth and Brisbane, are capped at \$1 (50p) per journey. Melbourne is slightly more expensive, but public transport is free on the weekends. Two highlights were the \$1 fare from Fremantle to Perth Airport, and the catamarans on the Brisbane river capped at 50cents per journey.

Back to reality and this next issue of our magazine, which was easily edited from 12,000 miles away, thanks to ubiquitous WiFi. As well as the usual sections of local news, we have three new, regular pieces: 'Nature Matters', 'Keep It Local', and a new gardening section. Thank you to our new contributors.

On a sorrowful note, many of our readers will have been aware of the sad news of Ian Hudspeth's death after a long illness. He was well known, well respected, and well liked by all, and he will be greatly missed. We hope to feature an Obituary in the magazine next month.

Nick Manby-Brown, Editor

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Subscriptions

The magazine costs £2 per issue, or £20 per year, and the price will remain the same for 2025/2026.

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

For bank transfer, please pay to Woodstock and Bladon News Limited - 04-29-09 - 81754981, and use the first line of your address as the reference. We are sadly now unable to accept payment by cheque.

For those who haven't paid for this current year, please pay as soon as possible.

Please write for our magazine

Send your contributions to: editor@wobl.news

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

The next issue will be a February/March one, and copy deadline is **Sunday 15 February 2026**, for publication on Friday 27 February.

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

PLEASE NOTE: The answers to this month's quiz and crossword are on Page 28

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Bartholomew Players

The Government Inspector - A Review



The cast of 'The Government Inspector'

The Bartholomew Players' production of *The Government Inspector* (26–29 November 2025) was a vivid, ambitious and joyful celebration of what community theatre can achieve at its very best. Staged as part of the Players' 50th anniversary season, this larger-than-life adaptation of Gogol's classic satire perfectly showcased the creativity, commitment and camaraderie that define the group - and made a compelling case for why new members are always welcome.



John Petty collapses in a heap after drinking too much wine!

Adapted by Philip Goulding and directed by Gareth Hammond, the play transported audiences from its original nineteenth-century Russian setting to a colourful, chaotic vision of provincial Victorian England. From the moment the curtain rose on the striking green set and flamboyant costumes, it was clear this was not going to be a timid or muted production. Instead, the Players embraced bold design choices, strong physical comedy and direct engagement with the audience, creating a performance that was accessible, entertaining and full of energy.

At the heart of the story is a classic piece of farce: a case of mistaken identity that sends an entire town into a panic as corrupt officials attempt to hide their misdeeds from a man they believe to be a government inspector. The cast of thirteen took on eighteen roles,



The moment the townsfolk realise they've been duped! All photos credit: Cereta Drewett

demonstrating the flexibility, teamwork and enthusiasm that are hallmarks of the Bartholomew Players. Performances were colourful and committed across the board, with particularly memorable double acts and character pairings bringing out the humour and humanity in the script. The Mayor and his anxious entourage, the squabbling Robsons, and the outrageously flirtatious mother-and-daughter duo all delivered moments of warmth, laughter and theatrical flair.

Behind the scenes, the production was equally impressive. Despite challenges caused by illness - including the director stepping into an onstage role - the show was pulled together with professionalism and good humour. The versatile set, atmospheric lighting, effective use of music and thoughtfully detailed props all contributed to a cohesive and visually engaging experience. Costumes and hair design added to the sense of fun and exaggeration, reinforcing the 'larger than life' style that suited both the play and the company.

What truly stood out, however, was the sense of shared achievement. This was clearly a production made by people who enjoy working together, supporting one another and rising to challenges as a team. The Bartholomew Players' long history - fifty years of sustained, high-quality amateur theatre in a village setting, is something to celebrate, and *The Government Inspector* was a fitting tribute to that legacy.

For anyone considering joining the Bartholomew Players, this production offered a clear invitation: whether you are an experienced performer, new to acting, or interested in the many offstage roles that make theatre possible, you will find a welcoming, enthusiastic and creative community. With ambition, humour and heart, the Players are clearly ready for the next fifty years - and there is plenty of room for new faces to be part of the story.

Visit our website www.bartholomewplayers.co.uk or contact us at bart.players@gmail.com if you are interested in joining us.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Woodstock Public Toilets

How thrilled I was to see my maiden name in print in the November 2025 issue, in the article by Robert Edwards - Pauline Jerrams is a name I am proud to own. I will continue the story that Robert started.

On my part it took a lot of courage. After taking it through 3 Council meetings I was getting almost 100% support from the men. Not so the women - I was a single divorced woman. Albeit I had lots of support, I took a lot of flack especially from the local Catholic residents who were quite hostile.

Letters arrived, including one from a resident in Burford who was far from pleased and they were not needed in Burford! I must say it gave me great pleasure in my reply to report that throughout West Oxfordshire the most condoms sold were in Burford!

At that time the Public Health Officer for the WODC was Fred Swinson; he was being inundated with Parker Pens, a thank you from the condom company for achieving the most sales. Needless to say a pen never came in my direction.

Would I do it again? Yes I would it was the right thing to do.

This wasn't the only achievement while I was your Town and District Councillor. The Tourist Office was another example. Both of these are no longer around sadly.

It was a great honour and privilege to serve you for many years as your Councillor, for which I treasure.

Life goes on - I now live on the Algarve in Portugal, and I am as well known here as I was in Woodstock and Oxfordshire. It's just the same - if someone wants to know anything they are told to ask Pauline - "she will know".

To those who remember me, Best Regards

Pauline Jerrams

Dear Editor,

Where's all the money going?

I attended the Town Council meetings in both November and December. The budget for 26/27 was discussed on both occasions but could not be agreed as the numbers were so unclear.

The numbers presented in November were simply wrong - the Expenditure and Income totals did not even balance.

Those presented at the December meeting balanced - but it looked as if they had been made to do so by randomly removing spend from budget codes with no clear rationale behind it!

A more than doubling of staffing costs received no explanation or justification whatsoever. To the end of March 2024 the actuals incurred were £43,178. To the end of March 2025 this was £71,348 – a 65% increase. Why is the proposed budget to the end of March 27 a whopping £144,600? There may be a good explanation for this, but given that this amount is almost the entire precept for the town I think it bears further scrutiny.

The Internal Audit report from 12th November highlighted that WTC has no Reserves Policy (contrary to best practice) – this may be why, unless current expenditure is reviewed, the town will have spent all its reserves within the next two years.

In terms of income, despite the number of houses in the town increasing significantly over the past few years the precept has not increased. Why has WTC not asked for more money from WODC during each budget round to reflect these new houses?

There is over £200k being held by WTC in non-interest paying accounts - why? This should be producing additional income.

With a healthy precept (that should be increasing) and over £8m of property producing a regular income, WTC should be in a comfortable financial position. It feels more like a leaky bucket that is not being topped up by cash that is readily available to it!

I was relieved to note that Councillors Connolly and Poskitt refused to agree the proposed budget in December as they had some very significant questions about how it was put together. I hope they will continue to ask questions like mine above, until they get acceptable answers on our behalf.

Sam Dawson

Dear Editor,

Council planning to double spending on itself whilst cutting services

Those residents receiving information from Woodstock Town Council will today (Tuesday 6 January) have received the proposed budget for 2026/27 to be discussed at the Council meeting on Tuesday 13 January.

The 2026/27 proposal is to spend £207,000 on Staff and Administration (57% of the total spend) and £156,000 (43%) on the environment, property, grants etc. In the last financial year (2024/25) the equivalent figures were £101,000 (34%) and £193,000 (66%) respectively. At no time in the previous four years did the Council spend more than 36% of its expenditure on itself.

In comparison to 2024/25 the Council proposes to double the spend on itself (£207,000 v £101,000)

whilst cutting 'services' by £37,000 (£156,000 v £193,000). In addition to this flagrant breach of trust in what taxpayers would expect from their Council, reserves built up over many years are being spent (£109,000 is the projected deficit this financial year) without, as noted by the Auditor, a reserves policy being in place.

I am sure that attending Council Meetings is not high on most people's list of New Year Resolutions but please do try to give some time to hold your Council to account for what they are spending your taxes on.

Chris Coe

The Woodstock Bookshop



The evening of 15 November 2025 saw the first evening of what promises to be an exciting new collaboration between the Woodstock Bookshop and Woodstock's Hampers delicatessen. Local artist and musician Rod Craig came along to Hampers delicatessen to talk about his and co-author Peter Adamson's new book 'Blenheim: Reflections in Paint and Poetry', With evocative poems and text written by Peter and featuring more than fifty of Rod's beautiful watercolours alongside an informative introduction to the art of watercolour, this stunning book reflects on the natural beauty of Blenheim and its grounds.

Hampers and the Bookshop are close neighbours on Oxford Street in Woodstock and are delighted to begin what we hope will be a long and successful collaboration in bringing intimate literary evening events to Woodstock. Hampers in the evening was transformed by its wonderful staff from a vibrant busy daytime café into a relaxed atmospheric venue serving its usual exceptional nibbles and high-quality wine.

Look out for information on future events on our websites and see you in the New Year.

Happy New Year from all of us in the Bookshop and at Hampers.

<https://www.woodstockbookshop.co.uk>
<https://www.hampersfoodandwine.co.uk>

Bladon Gardens Society

Guest Speaker Event

The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

19th February 2026 7.30 pm

Helen Potts

"The Worshipful Company of Gardeners then and now. The history of a London Livery Company and its relevance in the 21st century"



£3.00 entry for non members

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

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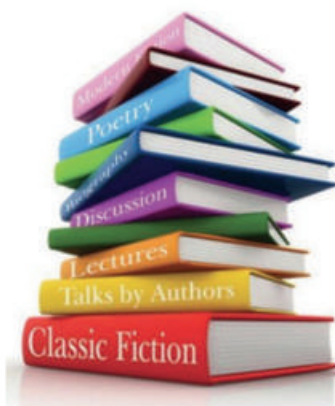
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Woodstock Literature Society

CALENDAR 2026

Saturday 17th January 3.00 p.m
Greek Tragedy in Performance
 Professor Laura Swift
 St Mary Magdalene Church.

Saturday 21st February 3.00 p.m
Going up-market:
The Theatre in the Jacobean period.
 Professor Emma Smith
 St Hugh's Centre.

Saturday 21st March 3.00 p.m
The Spanish Civil War and Beyond.
 Dr Daniela Omlor
 Woodstock Town Hall.

Tuesday 21st April 8.00 p.m
A Georgian Journey
 Carolyn Kirby
 St Hugh's Centre.

Wednesday 20th May 8.00 p.m
From Oxford to Narnia:
The Worlds of C S Lewis
 Professor Simon Horobin
 St Mary Magdalene Church.
 Preceded by our annual Summer
 Party at 7.15 p.m

Tuesday 16th June 8.00 p.m
W H Auden: Early and Late.
 Professor Seamus Heaney
 St Hugh's Centre

Tuesday 22nd September 8.00 p.m
Proust and the Visual Arts
 Professor Jennifer Yee
 St Mary Magdalene Church.

Saturday 24th October 3.00 p.m
Tales from Trent Park:
How Life Becomes Fiction
 Jane Thynne
 St Hugh's Centre.

Saturday 21st November 3.00 p.m
Elizabeth Gaskell:
Pioneering Novelist
 Dr David Grylls
 St Hugh's Centre.

Membership: £30 (join at any meeting)
Visitors: £10 (£15 for May Summer Party)
Further information:

enquiries@woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk
www.woodstockliteraturesociety.co.uk

Portrait of the Month - Mev Karaj



This month, we celebrate the energy, and dedication of Mev Karaj, a much-loved figure in Woodstock and the celebrated owner of Brothertons Brasserie, the town's vibrant Italian restaurant. For two decades, Mev has been a constant presence on the high street - a hardworking, charismatic individual whose passion for hospitality has helped shape the welcoming atmosphere Woodstock is known for.

"I moved to Woodstock about 20 years ago, and I really love it," Mev shares with his trademark enthusiasm. "The people are brilliant, so friendly and supportive. Over the years I've opened a few shops and businesses here, which probably shows just how much I enjoy this town."

For Mev, life in Woodstock is deeply intertwined with family. "My son goes to school here, and my daughter is still little. It feels beautiful to raise our kids in a community like this. Where could be better?" While he admits he doesn't get to wander the Blenheim grounds as often as he'd like because he's always busy at the restaurant, he loves that his wife takes the children there to explore and enjoy the landscape.

Brothertons Brasserie itself has become a cherished local hub. "People really love it, and the support has been fabulous," Mev says. His favourite season is summer, when tables spill out beside the Town Hall and the air fills with a relaxed, holiday-like mood. "People tell me, 'Mev, it feels like we're abroad here!'," and that's exactly the vibe I'm trying to bring."

Portrait by fine art photographer Pippa Hetherington

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Council Matters

Woodstock and Bladon News has reported on Council meetings since at least 2022, and all reports are available to view on our website - wobl.news/council-matters. The magazine endeavours to remain professional and accurate.

This month we report one Budget Town Council meeting and one monthly meeting. There was a Town Meeting about the Fire Station but we were not able to provide a report. The WODC contribution this month was written about the appeal by McCarthy Stone concerning the proposed retiremenet flats, but as we went to press, the inspector has made his decision. The Editor decided to keep the original report in as it shows the complexities of planning, with a brief PS about the decision.

Woodstock Town Council

Woodstock Town Council Budget Meeting Tuesday 25 November 2025

8 councillors and 5 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: There was no public participation on the agenda and it was not clear why.

Mayor and Clerk Reports: The Mayor thanked the volunteers for their work at the Remembrance service. A meeting regarding the potential Woodstock fire station closure will take place on 4th December at St Mary's church. The Clerk reported that there were no nominations for the vacancy on the town council and that a likely date for a new election would be 22nd January.

Planning: Applications for changes to the development on land north of Hill Rise were discussed and concerns had been raised and dealt with regarding crime prevention and ecology. Ongoing objections regarding sewage, flooding and health care provision were noted.

Environment: Councillor Muthoni was elected on to the Environment Working Group. It was agreed to fund the small Christmas trees on buildings in the town centre at a cost of £500.

Parking Restrictions Consultation - Cadogan Park: Councillor Parnes submitted a report to the Council regarding the above consultation highlighting several potential weaknesses and flaws. It was agreed to forward this report to Oxfordshire County Council.

Interim Internal Audit Report: A report was noted from the Local Council Consultancy, details can be found on the town council website.

Recommendations were noted by the Council and will be followed.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: The draft budget was presented for the next financial year, the details and figures can be found on the town council website. It was noted that the figures were incorrectly summed in the Corporate Property section. The budget, a prediction of expenses and income, will set the precept (the amount of money raised through Council Tax to fund the town council's services) for next year. The Mayor noted that Woodstock is a wealthy council due to its property portfolio and that this keeps the precept at a lower level. The Mayor also noted that the council did have a large amount of surplus money and that she thought that the precept did not need to increase. Councillor Connolly noted that the precept had not changed in 5 years - why had the precept not increased in line with inflation? From the current figures presented at the meeting, there will be a £119K deficit over this year which will be paid for from reserves. It was proposed that this deficit will be reduced to £63K next year. The draft budget was not accepted and it was agreed that it will be discussed further at the next Council meeting.

Other Business: There was no Confidential Session on the agenda but the Mayor introduced one. Councillor Cooper asked what it was regarding and the Mayor replied it was a very delicate issue regarding the audit. The Clerk added that it would be included in the minutes of the meeting. (From those minutes, the internal auditor had identified an error in HRMC Employment Allowance which the Council agreed to pay).

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

Town Meeting held at 7pm on Thursday 4 December 2025

This meeting was held at St Mary Magdalene Church and was convened by the Mayor to allow the town to discuss the possible proposed closure of the Woodstock Fire Station at Hensington Road. The magazine was not able to send anyone to report on this meeting.

Town Council meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 9 December 2025

6 councillors and 11 members of the public attended the meeting. It was not clear whether the OWL recording device was working.

Public Participation: 3 members of the public spoke. First, Sam Dawson thought that the proposed

2026/2027 Council budget was not in the interests of the residents of Woodstock. She urged the councillors not to approve the budget as it stood as the expenses far exceeded the income, noting that the reserves figure was incorrect and did not add up. To fund this year's shortfall money would be taken from the reserves and there is no policy on the reserves fund.

Second, Chris Coe spoke, also relating to the **draft budget**. The last 5 years have seen the reserves going from £153K to £405K. However, there is a funding deficit for this financial year of £109K and staff and administration costs have doubled this year. Chris urged the councillors to closely scrutinise the budget.

Finally, Michael Bowles noted that the service and repair of **St Mary Magdalene's clock** had not been discussed at **Council** since July. There has been no response to the **engineer's** quotation. The clock and carillon are important to the town and urged the **Council** to bring the **issue** to the **agenda** of the next meeting.

Planning: There were no objections to any of the planning items from 7 Hensington Road, land north of Hill Rise and 16 Oxford Street.

Reports from the Mayor and Clerk: The Mayor reported that the recent meeting regarding the closure of the fire station in Woodstock was informative and that all residents present were in favour of it remaining open.

The Clerk noted that the Council would need to register for representation at the Cherwell District Council local planning meeting in relation to the development plans to the south of Park View.

Reports from the County and District Councillors: County Councillor Andy Graham said he would be attending the Cherwell District Council's planning meeting for land south of Park View and would be objecting to the development. Councillor Graham noted that the changes at **Campsfield House Immigration Centre** were a Government directive and Woodstock Town Council would have been informed. He reassured the Council about the arrangements put in place. At the recent Doctors' surgery meeting figures from the district valuer were discussed and it was decided the key site for the new surgery will be the former **Owen Mumford site** off of Green Lane. As a result of complaints from Cadogan Park residents regarding parking, bollards have been put in place. Similarly, a scheme will be introduced in January for parking issues on Princes Ride and Flemings Road. Stan Scott from the public audience was then given permission to ask Councillor Graham a question about the proposed **fire station closure**. Councillor Graham said that he had not been involved in the countywide remodelling of the fire service. Councillor Parnes commented that the fire station

consultation document was flawed and data needed to be checked.

District Councillor Cooper remarked that West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) was engaged in the Government's plans for unitary local councils. **Elections** are likely in 2027 with the new unitary council in place in 2028. Similarly, WODC is in discussions regarding the creation of a new **Mayoral Strategic Authority** where a combination of unitary bodies in the Thames Valley area will be led by a single Mayor. There is a proposal for discussion that opposes the closure of the fire stations at Eynsham and Woodstock.

Parking: A complaint had been received by the Council from a resident regarding parking issues in Brook Hill, Green Lane and Glyme Close. The letter states that the introduction of residents-only parking zones has displaced a significant volume of vehicles into these areas creating serious safety and access problems. Councillor Cooper suggested this was referred to the Traffic Advisory Committee and the Mayor asked for it to be deferred to the January meeting of the Council.

A proposal from Councillor Parnes to request the suspension of the closing date for the Oxfordshire County Council consultation on parking restrictions in Cadogan Park was passed.

Environment: Various works to be carried out at the play areas at Rosamund Drive, New Road and Budds Close were approved by the Council.

Draft Budget for 2026/2027: There then followed another lengthy discussion on the draft budget. The Mayor repeated that the Council's budget must be set before the precept - the amount of money raised through Council Tax to fund the town Council's services. Councillors asked for more time to consider the figures and to ask for additional information. The Mayor said that Councillors had been asked to suggest projects to go into next year's budget but had not received any. Councillor Poskitt suggested reserves should be increased from £80K to £100K so the precept should be increased. Councillor Muthoni asked for the budget problems to be defined and explained. There was a proposal to defer the decision until the January meeting but Council voted against this. Councillor Connolly questioned why the Water Meadows budget had been reduced from £10K to £5K and was told by the Mayor it was the Clerk's decision as it is his job to set the budget. It was felt that Councillors had not had the opportunity to provide input into the budget.

The Mayor then suddenly closed the meeting, stating it was in her power to do so.

Graham Brown

West Oxfordshire District Council

This comes with our best wishes to all of you for a very happy, successful and healthy 2026.

The appeal against the refusal of the proposed 29 apartments at the Old Police Station site on Hensington Road took place in December. The hearing was unusual in lasting only two hours. Both sides agreed not to waste time going over arguments fully and clearly presented on line. On behalf of Woodstock Town Council (WTC), we stated residents' longstanding hopes for a doctors' surgery on the site. Such hopes seem no longer achievable but the proposal is overdevelopment of the site with building height and style inappropriate for this part of Woodstock. There would be unacceptable overlooking of some Bear Close homes. Oxfordshire Highways had accepted parking arrangements but we regard 20 parking spaces for 29 apartments (14 for two persons) seem insufficient, especially as the development will displace Feathers Hotel guests' cars permitted to use the site. This and pressure on a doctors' surgery already unable to take all the new residents from other Woodstock developments would significantly exacerbate Woodstock's infrastructural inadequacies.

Further, apartments on development sites already under construction in Woodstock and with Ryegrass 37 apartments almost completed, does Woodstock really need more seniors' apartments? What Woodstock needs is acceptably priced homes for young people and first home buyers who have real need to live in Woodstock. During the hearing we were told the developers had, only days before, lowered the residency age limit for the apartments to over 55, not over 65, and they had offered a contribution to 'affordable' homes the lack of which had been a major justification for WODC to refuse the application. WTC had employed professional advice prior to the hearing and their planning consultant re-iterated much the same points WTC made but very professionally, stressing the effect of the building on Bear Close residents.

The Inspector was very firm with the appellant's legal team pointing out that it was inappropriate to have produced some web-based documents on the morning of the appeal and insisting that the appellants produce another document she had previously requested, before Christmas not in the New Year as the appellants wished.

Decision is anticipated before the end of January. Whilst we sincerely hope this appeal is rejected, the decision is now entirely a matter for the Inspector.

WODC Cllrs Julian Cooper & Elizabeth Poskitt

PS This was written late at night on 4 January. At 7pm on 5 January we received the news that the appeal against the refusal for planning the 29 apartments block on the Old Police station site had been rejected by the Appeals' Inspector. So this is a somewhat unnecessary piece but it does highlight the process of appeal.

Cllrs Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt



Keep It Local

Tucked away in one of our quiet residential streets is the Woodstock Brewery. It specialises in traditional beers and takes its inspiration from the wildlife around us. Slightly further afield, up the road in Chipping Norton, scented, soy candles are poured by Stowsmiths, which also takes its cue from nature while considering its environmental footprint. Down in Wantage, woodturner Mick Curran crafts beautiful and thoughtful gifts from reclaimed and repurposed wood.

These represent just a tiny sample of the incredible, local, artisanal talent on display at the Woodstock Festive Fayre that took place before Christmas. Spread across three venues, St. Mary Magdalen's Church, The Oxfordshire Museum and The Soldiers of Oxford Museum, the fayre was bustling with activity: customers, who were excited to be able to find fun and unique Christmas gifts; and enthusiastic stallholders, who were delighted to talk about their businesses.

When January comes around, I love to take advantage of the sales and finding a great bargain is one of the best feelings! There are few better ways to get the things you need at a price you can afford. But the Fayre made me reconsider how I will shop in 2026 and who I'll buy from. There are so many creative and innovative people on our doorstep making things they are passionate about and want to share with others. It's more than just a job. Quality and ethics are high on the list. Take Helen's Local Honey in Banbury. She's a tutor, teaching people how to look after bees. She also sells single-batch honey. No chance of artificial ingredients like corn syrup or cane sugar making their way into her jars of honey!

So, I guess my New Year's resolution is pretty clear: shop locally and support the businesses around me!

Do you know of, or run, an interesting local business? If so, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at keepitlocal@wobl.news

Vanessa Ayres

Two New Town Councillors

Two new Councillors joined the Council at the end of last year, both in separate uncontested elections



Hello, my name is Cynthia but I also go by Cyn, and I'm thrilled to be a representative of this vibrant community. I've had the pleasure of calling Woodstock my home for the past two years, but I am a lifelong Oxfordshire resident. During this time, I've come to appreciate not only the beautiful landscapes and rich history of our town but also the warmth of the people who live here.

I truly believe that a strong community is built on connections with one another, and as such I hope to be a reflection of the kindness I have experienced and offer an inclusive voice on the Town Council.

As a young person in our community, I decided to put myself forward for council to bring a strong and thoughtful voice for the youth of our town. As a mother to a young child who is growing up here, I feel a deep personal responsibility to advocate for children and young people, ensuring they have safe spaces, fun experiences, meaningful opportunities, and a positive future within our community.

Cynthia Muthoni



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I've lived in West Oxfordshire for over 23 years - for most of that time in Bladon. I moved to Park View in 2024 with my partner Sam and my daughter.

We chose Woodstock because of the great community with facilities walking distance away. In July 2025 Sam and I walked to the Town Hall to get married.

My day job is Professor of Leadership where I run entrepreneurship courses, support leadership development for executive MBAs, and work to address the challenges of leadership and governance with universities in countries as diverse as Algeria, Kosovo, and Indonesia.

I decided to stand for Woodstock Town Council because I want to support the town and see it thrive and prosper even more than it does at present. As a Councillor I see it as imperative that WTC remains financially secure whilst providing for a growing population. I'll work to encourage WTC to work with OCC, WODC and Blenheim Estates to ensure we have the funding and facilities we need for our future.

David Dawson



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Nature Matters

January settles over the Oxfordshire countryside with a quiet steadiness, the sort that invites a slower pace. With the landscape pared back to its winter bones, familiar places reveal details that often go unnoticed in busier months: the structure of hedgerows, the twist of old willow trunks, the pale geometry of ash branches set against low skies. Frost sometimes rims leaves and grasses at dawn, lending a faint shimmer to paths that reward an unhurried glance.



Though the season may seem still, there is more activity than the first impression suggests. Snowdrops begin to press through the firm soil along woodland edges and beneath hedgerows - small signs that often appear just when one least expects them. In sheltered pockets, hazel catkins lengthen into yellow-green tassels, ready to release pollen whenever the air turns dry. Daffodil spikes lift through banks and borders, their early promise discreet but unmistakable to anyone pausing beside them.

Birdlife remains lively even in the chill. Robins sing with a soft clarity that carries across gardens and lanes, and mixed flocks of blue tits, great tits, and long-tailed tits move restlessly through thickets, inspecting each twig for overwintering insects. Great spotted woodpeckers begin tentative drumming on crisp mornings, their bursts echoing lightly through the trees. Song thrushes offer brief phrases from exposed perches, as though feeling their way toward the coming spring.

Winter thrushes - redwings and fieldfares - continue to work the fields and hedgerows. Redwings give gentle contact calls as they pass in loose groups, while fieldfares search meadow edges for fruit and worms. Over open ground, red kites trace wide circles, unhurried in their flight, and buzzards hold watch from posts and bare branches. Other signs of life appear in quieter traces. Fox tracks thread along field margins after damp nights, weaving between tussocks and bramble. The five-toed impressions of badgers mark softer ground, and deer paths show more plainly now in the winter light as they shift between pasture and woodland.

Even in the coldest spells, insects persist in small and often easily missed ways. Tiny midges rise briefly in pale sunshine; galls and egg clusters cling to stems; and woodlice shelter beneath logs softened by winter moisture. Mosses and lichens brighten in the damp air, covering stones, bark, and shaded walls with vivid greens and silvered patterns - worth noticing on days when colour feels scarce.

January is not a month of spectacle, yet its richness rewards attention. Its quietness leaves room for detail: the clear forms of trees, the voices of winter birds, the first subtle hints of growth beneath the cold earth. For those who step outside, even briefly, the countryside offers a gentle reminder that the year's cycle is already turning.

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Meme of the Month

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Plant of the month

Nandina domestica or Heavenly Bamboo



I'm always glad when February rolls around. It sits between Winter's hold and Spring's promise. For a gardener, there's lots to be excited about. Light levels are starting to extend. Bare trees make for dramatic backgrounds at sunset. And hopefully all that hard work bulb planting in autumn is paying off. This edition of 'Plant of the month' was more difficult than I first thought and surprisingly I found myself spoilt for choice. This month, I've chosen one of my favourite shrubs.

A major caveat to its common name: it is not a bamboo. So you won't upset the neighbours by planting it next to the fence! It belongs to the same family as Berberis. It has bright red berries and an elegant upright form. It's evergreen so keeps its place all year round in the back of a mixed border. In time it will mature to 2m or you can trim to suit, after the last frost. It also comes with interesting autumn foliage to boot! In autumn the tips tend to turn red and orange and it carries those memories lightly at this time of the year which makes for a pleasing blend.

Native to East Asia, Nandina was introduced to the UK in 1804 by William Kerr, a gardener at Kew no less. Long used in China and Japan for medicine and household purposes, its bark even served as toothpicks as it was considered flavourful. Revered in religious gardens and used in wedding ceremonies, it became known as sacred or heavenly bamboo.

My top tip is to cut out the foliage and any branches that grow out from the lower third. I think this leaves the shrub in a much more upright shape and shows it off almost like a bouquet of flowers. The clearer base offers another advantage: extra room, giving you space for even more bulbs! Its red berries could contrast well with clumps of Snowdrops or white daffodils such as 'Thalia'.

Dom, Head Gardener & Owner at Ford and Kent Gardens



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Sustainable Woodstock

New cycle paths. Hedge laying. Litter picking. A 20mph zone. A stunning community woodland. 100s of trees distributed to local residents. A campaign to get a fair community benefit fund from the planned Botley West solar plant. Support for Duke of Edinburgh scheme participants. Film nights in the community centre. A commendation from the BBC. Just your usual year at Sustainable Woodstock.



Forget all the bad news you're reading nationally and globally. Locally the Woodstock community is smashing it. We may be a small town but we punch above our weight - and it's at the local level where we can really deliver change and develop community spirit that makes all our lives richer, healthier and fundamentally better.

As the new chair of Sustainable Woodstock I'm looking forward to carrying the baton on the next leg of our collective journey - one that is drawing support from and touching the lives of residents from Hensington & Park View to Old Woodstock, Combe to Bladon.

By encouraging action through engagement and support from the community we aim to help build confidence that our local, individual and small actions can create significant and transformative change that is essential to effectively address climate change and achieve a future that is sustainable.

And what we do and say here does resonate in Westminster. MPs I have spoken to in the past decade say that the conversations and campaigns in their constituencies influence their thinking in Parliament. In a year where local elections will be held across the UK - and could see a more diverse set of parties winning power - ensuring our voice is heard is vital.

Community is key. We are in a world where social media & smart phones dominate - but there is huge power in coming together as a team. In 2026 we want to encourage more in Woodstock and its environs to help care for the community woodland, join campaigns for new cycle routes, get tree planting and learn more about our amazing local environment.

We will be reaching out to fellow networks and groups in the coming months. But there's also an ask to everyone reading this - if you'd like to help in whatever capacity then please get in touch. Drop us an email at sustainablewoodstockuk@gmail.com & ejk1978@gmail.com. In the meantime have a fantastic January.

Ed King, Chair, Sustainable Woodstock

Curate's Log

Happy New Year! Christmas seems a distant memory; however, it was wonderful to welcome so many people through the church doors of St Mary Magdalene and St Martin, at the many carol and Christmas services. Particularly memorable for me was the Community Christmas lunch on Christmas Day. Around 30 of us sat down to a delicious meal and 7 meals were delivered to homes, prepared and served by Jack Butler from Blenheim Palace. Thank you to all who came, ate, drank, helped, cleared, drove, and chatted. Thanks also to Jack and Blenheim Palace for making the lunch possible.



As we enter a New Year, many of us find ourselves looking both backwards and forwards. For some, this is done with gratitude and hope; for others, with a degree of uncertainty or even apprehension. January is often experienced as a time of transition - a pause between what has been and what is yet to come. In the busyness of everyday life, we do not always give ourselves permission to notice these moments, yet recognising and marking beginnings and endings can be an important part of making sense of our lives.

One of the gifts of the Church is that it helps us to do just that. The Church year does not begin on 1 January, but with the season of Advent, as we prepare again for the coming of Christ. From there, we move through the celebrations of Christmas, the journey of Lent, the joy of Easter, and the steady growth of Ordinary Time. Each season has its own rhythm, invitations, and emphasis, gently encouraging us to reflect, give thanks, hope, and begin again. These repeated transitions remind us that reflection is not something reserved only for the New Year, but something we are invited into throughout the year.

As we step into 2026, my prayer is that both St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock and St Martin, Bladon continue to be places where these moments can be noticed and held - whether in worship, community events, or simple conversation over a cup of tea. Whatever this New Year holds for you, may there be space to reflect on what has been, and hope to carry you into what lies ahead.

With every blessing,
Revd Gemma Ferrier

Terry Summers, MVO

1932 - 2025



Terry was born in Bristol but moved out when his home was destroyed by a land mine in 1941. He left school aged 15 and began working on farms. He married Helen Trevor Roper in 1957 and started married life in a severely primitive two roomed thatched farm cottage.

After fourteen years of farming Terry went to agricultural college at Newton Abbot where he was president of the students' union and a keen player of rugby and cricket. After a further two years of farming he became a Senior Lecturer at his old college where he stayed for seven years.

Terry then joined chartered surveyors, Smith-Woolley, where he started their department that managed 33,000 acres of farms from Norwich to Carmarthen. His clients included the Duchy of Cornwall and Highgrove Farm. On one occasion he travelled to Inverness to buy highland cattle for Her Majesty the Queen. When Terry retired, he was appointed MVO, which is only given for services to the Royal Family.

In 1980 Terry and Helen moved to Oxford Road, Woodstock where he was soon a greatly valued member of our community, joining in the running of the Exhibition Foundation and the Carnival of which he was the chairman for five years; Terry planned the layout of eleven carnivals, recruiting and finding places for all the dozens of stalls and other attractions.

He was an active member of the Bowls and Tennis Club for at least twenty eight years including stints as Bowls Captain, Competition Secretary, and, for a long period, manager of the bar. He was a popular President of Probus.

Terry was Chairman of the committee that constructed the Millenium Triangle at the junction of High Street with Oxford Street to commemorate the year 2,000 AD. He chaired the fund raising committee at the Church of St Mary Magdalene and was secretary of their Planned Giving Campaign. His help was valued by the Good Companions, The Red Cross Disabled Club, and the Stroke Club.

Helen died in the year 2000 after 43 years of marriage; two years later Terry moved six doors down Oxford Street to marry Chris, who was the widow of his friend Rusty Patterson. He was delighted to share the company of her son, daughter and three grandchildren and (he said) Chris's wonderful cooking. Terry was very proud to have experienced two long and happy marriages.

Robert Edwards

Woodstock and Bladon Churches Together

The children at Bladon Primary School have spent a happy year learning, playing and growing up fast! Here's just a little snapshot of what we explored together in worship assembly. We discovered how festivals and important saints are relevant to our lives nowadays.

For Epiphany we used chalk to mark classrooms with the date and the initials of the three wise men - asking that Jesus will always be a guest and friend in our homes and school.

During the week of prayer for Christian Unity we learnt the mnemonic TRUST, respecting others and working through differences between friends. We marked the baptism of a younger brother by holding a 'baptism service' in school with children as parents and Godparents and much splashing of water.

During Lent we raised enough money to support seven children around the world with a free daily meal for charity Mary's Meals - that was very special!

When the ceasefire was announced in Gaza we made a wonderful kite with prayers written by every child on the bows praying for peace for the children living in refugee camps.

Eighteen children are worship team members and participate in, or lead worship most weeks; even making a Christmas cake in front of the school, later raffled at the Christmas Fair. Fantastic work Bladon Primary School!

The Revd Katie Jones, Associate Priest in the Woodstock and Bladon Benefice

Woodstock Probus Club

The speaker at our December lunch was from 'Hearing dogs for deaf people'. Most people know about dogs for the blind but dogs for the deaf is less well known. This organisation was founded in 1982 with just a few dogs but has now partnered well over 1000.

Our speaker began with some statistics. Ten years ago, one in six people suffered from hearing loss; now it is one in three. This might be because we live in a noisier environment, misuse of earphones or because people are living longer.

The organisation has 3000 volunteers who help to train and rear dogs which can have 3 litters before being retired. The dogs that are used can be small Labradors, poodles, spaniels and others. The dogs are linked to the sort of person they are designed to help. So, for someone who likes country walks, a spaniel might be ideal but if you live in a city or a flat a different dog might be more appropriate.

On Tuesday 16 Dec we held our Christmas Carol Service; a special feature of this concert is the music provided by the Witney Brass Band. After the concert all were invited to stay for minced pies and drinks. Although organised by PROBUS, the concert is open to everyone.

David Anderson, Past President

Bladon and Woodstock Flower Club

Hello everyone - we had a lovely evening on 8 December when we had our Christmas workshop and after doing our arrangements, we enjoyed mulled wine and lovely nibbles made by the committee. A lovely ending to our year.

We do not have a meeting in January so our next meeting is on 9 February when we will welcome Alison Gillot with her title 'A Pocket Full of Posies'. Our March meeting will be our AGM; we have a small break for tea/coffee and after that we have an In-House Demonstration. The subscription for the year will be due to be paid in March. Visitors will always be very welcome at a charge of £10.

If you would like to know anything further about our club, please contact Ann on 07701 000977. We meet in the Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse, Cadogan Park, Woodstock on the second Monday of the month and the meetings start at 7pm.

Margaret Lang

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Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museums

A new vehicle acquired for restoration

After the excitement of the New Year's Day running event with the Christmas Jumper Competition, January is a quiet month for visitors. However, the workshop volunteers are busy. Restorations continue and our South Midland minibus is having a new engine fitted in preparation for the 2026 season. Our 1948 Morris 10 Series M's full restoration is nearing completion and it should emerge from the workshop in 2026.



A 1945 Y type postal van, GYW 973, photographed on Dulwich Common, which worked for the Post Office from May 1946 to August 1960

Some museum volunteers have clubbed together to buy, and therefore save, a 1944 Morris Post Office series Y van, GXK 685. It arrived at the museum on 8 October to be stored until restoration starts. The first task is to fit four new tyres so it can be moved easily.

The Morris series Y 100 cubic foot vans were first used for postal work in 1939, when two were purchased. They had a 11.9hp side-valve engine and a 10cwt semi-forward-control with an all-steel construction. Interestingly, the engine was positioned to one side, allowing the driver to sit beside it with no room for a passenger.

GXK 685 is a Cowley-built Series Y van and one of a batch of 350 supplied in 1944 to Royal Mail. We understand that it spent its early years in rural Cumbria before being sold to a carpenter in Nottinghamshire where, it is believed, it was used in his business for the transportation of coffins. It was last used in 1964.

About twenty years ago, GXK685 was purchased by a local collector with the desire to save it, because it is thought that only two other Royal Mail versions of this type have survived. On learning that it was still awaiting restoration, a syndicate of seven museum members have joined together with the aim of restoring it to its original condition for the Museum.

Frank Collingwood

Panniers

Everyday cycling in Woodstock and Bladon

This year, one of the key campaigns for Sustainable Woodstock and the Village Travel Network will be to start work on a network of cycle-friendly routes that link all Woodstock's existing and planned residential areas - Park View, Hensington Estate, Randolph Ave, Banbury Road, Brook Hill and Hill Rise - together with the primary and Marlborough schools.



The benefits of cycle networks are well known. They create convenient routes that connect communities and make cycling feel safer for all ages and abilities - especially children, families, and less experienced riders.

Blenheim Estates, as the main local developer, has signalled its backing for the concept and we are now looking for support across the town.

Some of the network - which will also benefit pedestrians - will be off-road, on well surfaced paths, and elsewhere it will be on existing or planned residential estate roads with low levels of traffic.

There is much work to do, but we hope that this will eventually boost the take-up of cycling significantly across Woodstock.

More cycling and fewer car journeys means improved public health, lower greenhouse gas emissions, less traffic congestion and calmer streets.

David Walker

The Marlborough C of E School

Senior Citizens Afternoon Tea

On Wednesday 3 December, we welcomed local senior citizens to join us for a festive Christmas afternoon tea. This annual event is always a joyful highlight, bringing together both the older and younger members of our community. The funds for the afternoon were raised by our students during last year's Charities Week.



Senior Citizens Afternoon Tea

Our dedicated Year 9 volunteering team, supported by an enthusiastic group of sixth formers, planned the event, prepared the venue, served our guests, and helped with the clear-up. The MEC sparkled in silver and blue, and the festive spirit was unmistakable as students served a wonderful afternoon tea while Christmas music played softly in the background.

Guests were then treated to delightful performances from our music department. The choir sang three beautiful pieces in harmony, complemented by impressive solo performances. We concluded with a cheerful sing-along and, of course, a raffle.

Christmas Carol Church Service

The Marlborough School Christmas Carol Church Service took place on Monday, 15 December, at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock. The school community came together to enjoy a wonderful festive evening, offering a period of calmness and reflection during the busy Christmas period.

The Revd. Sarah Bourne opened the service with a warm welcome. Accompanied by Mr. Wallace on the piano, a selection of traditional Christmas carols were sung beautifully by the congregation, with an exceptional solo performance from one of our very talented music students, Iza.

In between carols, readings were delivered by several of our students who read so clearly and confidently, truly letting their light shine. Principal, Mr. Hanlon, and other Marlborough staff also delivered readings,



Christmas Carol Church Service

with Mrs Hoyland, RE Curriculum Leader and the school's SIAMS lead, leading the closing prayer. Rev'd Bourne concluded the service with a blessing. It was a joyful and uplifting event which encapsulated the warm, magical feeling of Christmas.

Fund-raising

One of the ways in which we aim to live out our school values is through supporting the wider community. Alongside raising money for our three nominated charities each academic year, we have also supported Clothes2Kids - a project which supports families in the local and wider community - as well as The North Oxfordshire Food Bank.

In the past couple of weeks we have also raised money through staff and Sixth Form 'Christmas Jumper Day', and the 'Rotary Christmas Shoe Box Appeal'. We were also delighted to support the 'Oxford Christmas Lunch' event for the second year running, by offering the use of our school minibus. We are exceptionally proud of our school community - especially our students - for their incredible dedication and ambition to help those in need.

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum

Our February talk in the Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

Wednesday 4th February at 7.30pm

Lights, Camera, Action! Blenheim Palace - star of the silver screen.

Speaker: Antonia Keaney

Social Historian and Researcher, Blenheim Palace

Annual Membership for the Friends

This runs for 12 months from April 1st. Membership gives you free access to all our talks which take place in the Museum in Woodstock on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm. They are also available on ZOOM. Non-Members are very welcome at these events for a fee of £5

Woodstock CE Primary School

A Festive Season to Remember - A New Year Reflection

As we begin this new year, it feels fitting to look back and celebrate the many joyful festivities that brought our school community together over the Christmas season. The past few weeks were filled with creativity, generosity and music, creating memories that will stay with us well into the year ahead.

One of the most striking sights was A Hall Full of Stars. Thanks to the enthusiasm and creativity of our children, the hall was transformed into a wonderfully festive space, with stars adorning the ceiling and beautifully framing our nativity performances. We are incredibly grateful to the PTA volunteers who generously gave their time to help hang the stars - their support made a huge difference.



Our festive spirit extended beyond the school gates with Christmas tree decorating at St Mary's Church. A group of children enjoyed a visit to the church, where Gemma helped them make the trees sparkle with festive cheer. Back at school, children from across all year groups also took part in decorating the Christmas trees kindly donated by Blenheim, ensuring our own spaces were just as bright and welcoming.

The nativity performances were, as always, a highlight of the season. It was wonderful to welcome families of our Nursery, Reception and KS1 children into school to share these special moments. We are thankful for everyone's cooperation with the new ticketing system and especially appreciative of the PTA and governing body members who volunteered to help with refreshments, adding to the warm and festive atmosphere.

Our older pupils also had the opportunity to perform in the wider community through two very special carol services at the local church. Years 3 and 4 led one service, followed by Years 5 and 6 in a separate celebration. Both services were a wonderful showcase of the children's singing and confidence, and it was lovely to see families and members of the community come together to enjoy traditional carols in such a meaningful setting.

Music played a central role through the season. The school choir, led by Ms Christie, had a very busy and exciting time. They performed at the Big Sing hosted by the Music Service, where their enthusiasm and talent shone. A specially written song by Ms Christie was met with great excitement and applause. The choir also visited Spencer Court, delighting residents and staff with their Christmas songs and enjoying the chance to spread festive cheer beyond school.

As we step into the new year, we would like to thank all pupils, staff, parents, carers and volunteers who helped make this festive season so special. It truly reflected the spirit of our school community - working together, celebrating together, and supporting one another. We wish everyone a happy, healthy and successful year ahead.

Starting in Reception in September 2026

We are delighted to welcome families who are considering joining our school community in September 2026. Come and see our classrooms in action, meet the staff, and find out what makes our school such a special place to learn and grow. Please contact the school office to make an enquiry. Please note, the closing date for Reception places through the Oxfordshire County Council portal is Thursday 15 January.

Anna Poole, (DHT, DSL & Curriculum Lead)



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The Woodstock Society

There were a record number of members and guests for our talk before Christmas to listen to a presentation by Charlie Ross, the internationally renowned auctioneer and TV personality. His experience at TV presenting was not lost on our audience as they witnessed his charming and humorous talk on his life as an auctioneer, and chorister.

He rounded off his presentation with a faux auction of three antique pieces which tested our ability to value each item and then to bid in competition. It was great fun and Charlie was in his element running the auction with gavel in hand.

We have some great talks for 2026 so do come and join us. You are welcome to join as a member or just come for one talk at a time:

- 19 January** James Dillon Godfray: Oxford Airport - past, present & future
- 16 February** Alice Foster: Women’s Work
- 16 March** Saïd Business School: The Human Side of AI
- 20 April** Dave Lowe: Secrets Of the TV Theme Tune
- 18 May** Jill Cable: Organ Transplants in the Early Days

Bob Frost

The Arts Society Cotswolds

Lecture on Wednesday 11 February 2026

Banksy, Fraud or Genius



The lecture will trace the story of Banksy’s humble beginnings as a tagger on the streets of Bristol in the 1980’s to one of the most recognisable names in the art world. We will examine the reasons behind his incredible rise, looking at some of his famous stunts and discuss what his influence has been on the art market today and look at what his legacy, if any, might be.

About the speaker: Pepe Martinez qualified as a London blue badge tourist guide in 2011, graduating at the top of his class. Since qualifying as a guide he has specialised in the graffiti and street art of East London. Prior to becoming a London blue badge, he was a tour manager for 15 years, travelling extensively, all over the world.

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

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.

Or contact Alison Morgans on 07771 817050.

Woodstock & District u3a

Are you recently retired and looking for local social activities around interests you have already or would like to pursue a new interest? Our U3a branch is centred in Woodstock but welcomes people from the surrounding areas. Our interest groups develop when someone is willing to run them - maybe you have something that you can offer? If so please make contact with us -we would be delighted to hear from you. Monthly meeting are held on the first Thursday of each month at St Hugh’s Centre, Hensington Road, Woodstock. at 2.15 for 2.30.

Our speaker in December was Anna Beer an author and historian, who gave a fascinating historical talk about Beth Throckmorton known as Bess, the wife of Sir Walter Raleigh. She was a remarkable woman and the force behind Sir Walter Raleigh’s achievements. When Queen Elizabeth I found out about their secret marriage and the birth of their son, they were both imprisoned in the Tower of London.

On 8th January Anna Boucher from the Burnside Partnership, a specialist in wills and probates is due to give us an informative talk about wills and power of attorneys.

The speaker in February will be Timothy Walker, a lecturer, botanist, author and gardener. The talk is entitled 'How to be a 21st Century Gardener'. Visitors £3.00 to include tea/coffee and biscuits.

For more information on forthcoming speakers, please visit our website: www.woostock.u3a.uk.

Sian Wallworth, Press Secretary

Wake Up To Woodstock

Why local businesses thrive when they come together

Running a business in Woodstock brings a special mix of opportunity and, as with all business comes challenge. The town benefits from a strong identity, a steady flow of visitors and a loyal local community, yet many independent businesses operate in isolation, balancing visibility, marketing and growth alongside the realities of day-to-day trading. That’s where being part of a local business association can make a difference.

Wake Up to Woodstock aims to connect, support and champion businesses based in and around the town. It is a not-for-profit association, run by local business owners, with a simple aim: to help Woodstock businesses be seen, heard and supported - together.

A key benefit of its membership is collective visibility. For many small businesses, navigating this can be time-consuming and costly. We offer umbrella support, with Wake Up to Woodstock members benefiting from inclusion in the Blenheim Palace e-shot - a highly valued communications channel reaching a wide audience. Alongside that there’s coordinated social media promotion, shared business news and inclusion in the Wake Up to Woodstock online directory.

Connection is just as important. Hosting four networking events throughout the year, Wake up to Woodstock brings together businesses from across retail, hospitality, professional services and more. Informal and welcoming, the events are designed to encourage conversation, giving members a chance to find referrals, relevant collaborations and natural partnerships. They are well attended, by members but non-members, who are also welcomed for up to two events, without membership.

Wake Up to Woodstock works with partners such as Experience Oxfordshire to help raise the profile of the town and ensure local businesses are represented in wider conversations around tourism, events and economic activity, highlighting the strength of a collective voice.

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

As the new year begins, Wake Up to Woodstock is inviting more local businesses to join a supportive network that believes businesses thrive better when they work together. If you’d like to know more, visit www.wutw.co.uk or email info@wutw.co.uk.

Num44

As we welcome 2026, the Management Team at Woodstock Community Benefit Society (No 44) would like to share a short update on where things stand and the progress made in recent months.



As many of you will know, the former social club closed in August 2024 after a sustained period of financial losses. It became clear that change was needed to secure the long-term future of the building and ensure it could once again serve the community in a sustainable way. Since then, we’ve been working steadily behind the scenes to explore the right options for No 44 and to put foundations in place for what comes next.

Here are some updates for January 2026.

Funding secured:

We have received an £8,000 grant from the Co-op Booster Fund, providing valuable support for the project to contribute towards the project to assist with our planning and engagement work.

Support and guidance:

We are also receiving ongoing support from the Plunkett Foundation, with further advice and assistance expected as the project develops.

Transparency and meetings:

Minutes from the 2025 AGM have now been shared and are available online, alongside other key documents, at www.num44.com

Other recent Important Documents of the Community Benefit Society (CBS) progress, along with Q&As, are also available to view, ensuring stakeholders can stay informed and engaged.

Future management model:

We are currently in discussions with several potential new tenants, with the intention of selecting one to take on the space, subject to agreed criteria that align with No 44’s community values and vision.

Looking ahead:

While the building remains closed, real progress is being made. Our focus in the first quarter is on careful decision-making, ensuring that any future tenant, structure and use of the space supports financial sustainability, the community and the long-term future of No 44. And getting structural and operational works carried out.

We’d like to thank everyone for their patience and encouragement as we move through this next phase.

Further updates will be shared as plans develop and share online at <https://www.num44.com>

The Management Team

1st Woodstock Scouts, Cubs, and Beavers

1st Woodstock Scouts and Cubs have been busy as always over the past couple of months. Scouts have been working on their DIY badge learning how to work safely with electricity and equipment, plus standing outside on a very cold evening learning how to service a car. To achieve their badge they now need to complete two DIY projects, so we're looking forward to hearing about some lovely painted rooms, patios constructed and furniture restored (good luck parents!). We've also been building up teamwork skills, including building the highest tower using salty snacks as possible, and lots of creative activities in preparation for a big campfire celebration we'll be having early this year.



Posters to advertise the local area by our Cubs

Cubs have been working hard on their local knowledge badge, creating posters advertising the local area. This has involved exploring Woodstock, creating maps and in the new year interviewing someone who has lived in the area longer than they have. We've also enjoyed some lovely Christmas activities creating our decorated tree for the Methodist Church Tree Festival and we finished term with a spectacular trip to the Palace of Oz in Blenheim, thanks so much to the Palace team for allowing us to enjoy such a special treat.

Activities planned for the next few months include our Chef and Science badges which are always a lot of fun.

Join our team! We want to start up a new Beaver Group for boys and girls age 6-8. If you'd like to see how you can get involved email us at: 1stwoodstocktrustees@gmail.com.

You'd be helping to really make a difference in young people's lives and would find yourself part of a lively and supportive team. Drop Kate and Nigel a message on the email above and we'll be in touch to chat with you about our lovely group.

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Renovating a Property

With UK property prices being unaffordable for many people seeking to buy a home, one option is to consider an old property that needs renovating. These can be substantially cheaper than new build properties, and you have the potential to suit your particular needs rather than buying a new build. Renovating an old property can improve energy efficiency and significantly increase its value. Two and three-bedroom houses are the most common renovation projects. However, careful consideration of the factors that can significantly impact the project's success, timeline, and budget is needed, and understanding these issues before beginning work can help avoid potential costly mistakes and legal complications.

When looking at potential properties, look for subsidence cracks, roof deterioration, and damp issues. Renovating without understanding the building's structural condition can lead to unsafe results and escalated costs. A structural survey is highly recommended, especially for older homes. Surveyors can also identify materials such as asbestos, which is common in properties built between the 1950s and 1990s. Asbestos removal can add time and cost and must be undertaken by licensed professionals. Victorian and Edwardian properties often have solid walls that require different treatment than modern cavity walls, particularly regarding insulation and damp-proofing. For terraced or semi-detached properties, work affecting shared walls requires serving notice on adjoining owners under the Party Wall Act. This legal requirement prevents disputes and protects all parties' interests.

When you have found a potential property and had the structural survey done, you then need to check whether your renovation ideas require planning permission. While many internal alterations fall under Permitted Development rights, extensions, loft conversions, significant structural changes, and alterations to listed buildings or properties in conservation areas often require formal approval. You should also check whether the property is covered by an Article 4 Direction which has removed PD rights for the property. Before buying, submit a Pre-Application Enquiry to the local authority Planning Department to find out whether the work you intend to do qualifies as PD or will require a planning application. Building Regulations approval is a separate requirement and applies to structural changes, electrical work, plumbing, insulation, and fire safety. Compliance ensures the home is safe and energy-efficient, and you will need completion certificates when selling the property.

With an encouraging structural survey and Pre-App response, you can then create a detailed budget that

includes labour, materials, professional fees, planning costs, and a contingency fund, typically 10–20% of the total cost. Some works, including refurbishments of long-empty properties, are zero-rated for VAT, so is essential to understand which VAT category applies to your project. You should also consider upgrading energy efficiency. Replacing single glazing with double or triple glazing, improving insulation, installing heat pumps or upgrading boilers can significantly reduce energy bills. Some upgrades - like external wall insulation - may require planning consent depending on the area. Energy Performance Certificate requirements mean that improved efficiency can add value to your property. Heat pumps, solar panels, and improved ventilation systems may qualify for grants or incentives, although installation costs should be weighed against long-term savings.

Finally, consider the ceiling price of your area: the maximum value buyers are typically willing to pay for homes in that neighbourhood. Spending more on renovations than you can recoup on resale (overcapitalisation) is a common issue, but not so much if you plan to live there long term. Research comparable properties and focus your investment on extensions, loft conversions, energy efficiency, and general modernisation, which tend to yield the highest returns.

Jan Liberadzki BA Arch (Hons), MSc, JLDA

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Helping You Create a Better Home

The answers to the Ashes Quiz on Page 30 of this issue are:

1. Bails
2. Andrew Strauss
3. Scott Boland
4. Usman Khawaja
5. Shane Warne
6. Jim Laker
7. Michael Fish
8. Three
9. Last English captains of Ashes series winners
10. Ricky Ponting

The answers to Woody's Cryptic Crossword No. 002 on Page 30 of this issue are:

Across: 1 Alone, 4 Octane, 8 Trestle, 9 Deserve, 10 Steeple, 12 Glen, 13 Liner, 14 Pike, 16 Soap Opera, 19 Roar, 21 Treason, 23 Mere, 24 Sauna, 26 Cleanse, 27 Stories, 28 Taster, 25 Tenon

Down: 1 Antelopes, 2 Ocean, 3 Enter, 4 Overstep, 5 To date, 6 Emerge, 7 Soviet, 11 Ewes, 15 Mortal Sin, 17 Proposer, 18 Area, 20 Dealer, 21 Tenant, 22 Assent, 24 Sport, 29 Union



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Fitness, What's On

Exercise and movement classes in and around Woodstock. Please report errors and discrepancies.

Monday

9am - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at St Hugh's Church Hall, Hensington Road (engergitraining.co.uk)
9.30am - Cardio Tennis at Woodstock Tennis Club
12pm - Age UK Stretch and Balance Class (open to all) at Woodstock Community Centre
7pm - Boot Camp at Tackley Playing Field with Energi Training

Tuesday

6pm - Hatha Yoga Flow with Inspire Studio at Woodstock Community Centre
6pm - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at St Hugh's Church Hall, Hensington Road
6pm - Jim's Fitness Bootcamp in Tackley (Jim Brown PT)
7.30pm - Zumba with Rhonda at Woodstock Youth Club

Wednesday

9am - Boot Camp at Tackley Playing Field with Energi Training.
7pm - Pilates for Sport and Functional Activities at Woodstock Community Centre
8pm - Hatha Yoga with Kira at Pilates Studio on Hensington Road (07887 512523)

Thursday

6.15pm - Mountain Bike Club with Project Active
6pm - Strength and Stretch with Rachel at Woodstock Town Hall (engergitraining.co.uk)
7pm - Beginner Pilates Reformer class at Woodstock Pilates Studio, Hensington Road
8pm - Vinyasa Yoga with Kira at Woodstock Pilates Studio, Hensington Road

Friday

10am - Zumba with Rhonda at Woodstock Youth Centre, New Road
10am - SOMA Breathing Energised Meditation at St Hugh's Church Hall, Hensington Road

Saturday

8.15am - Blenheim Bootcamp with Project Active
9am - Bazza's Bootcamp at Kirtlington Village Hall

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/Rejuvenate.Aesthetics.UK

Regular Events

This section tries to list regular events. If you would like your event included here, please email editor@wobl.news.

Culture

Bladon Garden Society
The 3rd Thursday of every month at 7.30pm, usually in the Church Room in Bladon
Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum
The Friends hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On
Woodstock 50+ Cinema Club
Monthly films hopefully starting again
Woodstock Literature Society
This well established society hold regular talks and events, which will all be listed in What's On
Woodstock Natural History Society
Second Tuesday of the month at St Hughs
Woodstock and District u3a
All events are listed in What's On
Wootton Village Hall Talks
These take place monthly

Music

Kings Arms / Mandolirium
Listen to our local group in our local pub, usually every third Thursday at 6.30pm.
Singing for Fun
For July, August, and September, this takes place at the Woodstock Baptist Church at 2pm on the 1st Monday of the month
The Crown
Live music every Friday nights from 7.30pm
Woodstock Jazz
Usually on the last Friday of the month at St Hughs

Social

Bereavement Cafe
The 3rd Friday of every month between 3 and 5pm at St Mary Magdalene Church
Ladies Coffee Morning
The last Tuesday of every month between 10am and 12noon at 10 High Street, Woodstock
Methodist Coffee Club
The Coffee Club meets every Thursday morning 10.30am to 12 noon in Woodstock Methodist Hall.
St Mary Magdalene Church coffee morning
First Saturday of the month between 10am and 12noon. All proceeds to our local food bank
Woodstock Lunch Club
Lunches are held in the Community Centre every other Wednesday at 12 noon.
Woodstock Stroke Club
Every other Tuesday between 10.15am and 1pm at the Community Centre

Sport

Cricket at Blenheim Palace
The local team play on the South Lawn at Blenheim Palace most Sundays during the summer
Woodstock Bowls Club
The outdoor season runs from April to September and the indoor season from October to March.

What's On

For the latest information, please click on the Events link at www.wobl.news.
If you would like your event included here, please email editor@wobl.news.

Saturday 17 Jan 2026, 15:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk
'Greek Tragedy in Performance: Speaker':
Professor Laura Swift
St Mary Magdalene

Monday 19 Jan 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk
James Dillon Godfray: Oxford Airport – Past, Present and Future
St Mary Magdalene

Friday 23 Jan 2026, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
John Donegan Band: Brilliant Standards & Fresh Material from this Wonderful Pianist
St Hugh's Centre

Wednesday 04 Feb 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk
Antonia Keaney: Lights, Camera, Action! Blenheim Palace - star of the silver screen
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

Monday 16 Feb 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk
Alice Foster: Women's Work
St Mary Magdalene

Friday 20 Feb 2026, 19:30

Woodstock Jazz - Music
Rob Brian Quartet: An electrifying Mix of Styles from this Quite Brilliant band
St Hugh's Centre

Saturday 21 Feb 2026, 15:00

Woodstock Literature Society - Talk
Going up-market: Theatre in the Jacobean period
St Hugh's Centre

Thursday 26 Feb 2026, 19:30

Bladon Gardens Society - Talk
Helen Potts: The Worshipful Company of Gardeners Then and Now.
The Church Rooms, Church Street, Bladon

Wednesday 04 Mar 2026, 19:30

Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum - Talk
David Meara, Archdeacon Emeritus of London: 50 Gems of Oxfordshire
Coach House, Oxfordshire Museum

Monday 16 Mar 2026, 20:00

The Woodstock Society - Talk
Jyotveer Singh Gill: The Human Side of AI: Myths, Realities and Future Possibilities
St Mary Magdalene

QUIZ - Compiled by Richard Stockwell

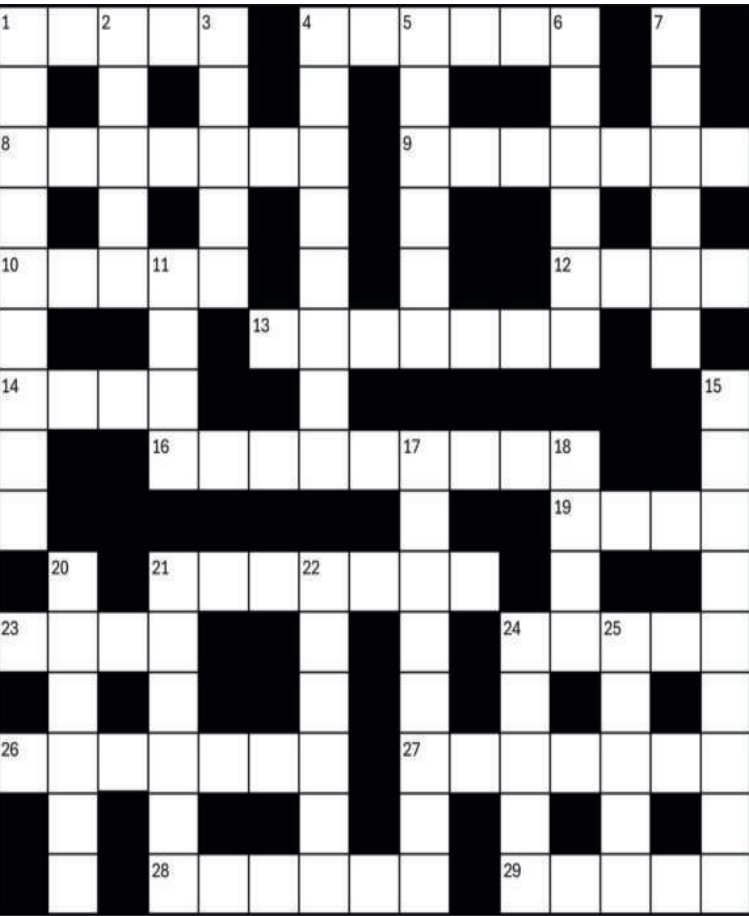
This month, all the questions have connections to The Ashes.

- 1. The terracotta urn, made in 1882, to commemorate Australia's first victory on English soil, is said to contain the ashes of burned stumps, a lady's veil, or most commonly of what other cricketing essential?
- 2. Of 37 Ashes series played in Australia, England have won 14, but none since 2010-11. Who was the England captain on that tour?
- 3. In the recent Boxing Day Test, at The MCG, which player faced the last ball of the first innings and the first ball of the second innings on the same day?
- 4. Which player took part in both English victories, either side of their Test drought in Australia between 2011 and 2025?
- 5. Who bowled the "ball of the century," on June 4th 1993, his first ball in the contest, dismissing Mike Gatting and immediately etching his name into Ashes folklore?
- 6. At the same ground, in 1956, who set a record by taking 19 out of 20 Australian wickets in a single Test?
- 7. The Women's Ashes trophy is a hollow ball carved in 1998 from a Yew tree which fell in the October 1987 British Storm, famous for being inaccurately predicted by which weather forecaster?
- 8. Whilst the men's Ashes is the best of five Tests, lasting up to five days per game, the women's series is a combination of how many different formats of cricket?
- 9. What achievement do Sir Alistair Cook and Charlotte Edwards CBE have in common?
- 10. Gary Pratt may have only played one session in an Ashes Test, becoming famous for running out which Australian batter?



The answers to both the quiz and the crossword can be found on Page 28

Woody's Cryptic Crossword No 002



- Across

 - 1 Gangster loses headgear by himself (5)
 - 4 One act mixed petrol additive (6)
 - 8 Carpenter's aid juggled letters (7)
 - 9 Earn merit (7)
 - 10 Hang around no good ship (5)
 - 12 Google news covers valley (4)
 - 13 The French behind expensive architectural feature (7)
 - 14 Take turn off toll road to find fish (4)
 - 16 Clean weekly entertainment? (4,5)
 - 19 Animal noise sounds new (4)
 - 21 Prepare nose art crime (7)
 - 23 Nothing more than a body of water (4)
 - 24 Animals heading off after Southern hot place (5)
 - 26 Purify 100 thin cardinals (7)
 - 27 Small party tales (7)
 - 28 A short introduction relating to a gourmet
 - 29 Saw joint (5)
- Down

 - 1 Stakes surround stick-up animals (9)
 - 2 Canoe upset Indian for example (5)
 - 3 Go in and write down (5)
 - 4 Go too far concerning climbing cats, for example (8)
 - 5 Go steady so far (2,4)
 - 6 Develop European blend (6)
 - 7 (and 25d) Old pact into envious changes (6,5)
 - 11 New estate houses sheep (4)
 - 15 Tin morals produced this heinous crime? (6,3)
 - 17 Maybe Groom for sitter (8)
 - 18 Space region (4)
 - 20 Trader distributed Red Ale (6)
 - 21 Resident letter (6)
 - 22 Approval for bypass entirely covered (6)
 - 24 Cricket or Rugby in Cape Town for example (5)
 - 29 See 7d

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John Donegan - piano, Steve Waterman - Trumpet, Paul Jefferies - bass, Rob Brian- drums
Tickets £22.00
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February 27th
ROB BRIAN QUARTET
An electrifying Mix of Styles
from this Quite Brilliant band
The Robert Brian Quartet will deliver a delightfully curated mix of jazz styles from swing and Latin, to funk and even a touch of drum & bass. The quartet is amiably led and hosted by Grammy Award winning drummer Robert Brian, renowned for his great technique and education sessions presented on the global stage. This show will look at how great jazz drummers have influenced jazz in many of its wonderful forms.
Rob Brian - drums/narration, Mat Sibley - saxophone, John-Paul Gard - keyboards, Paul Jefferies - basses
Tickets £22.00
from Website or call for payment link
07704 297119

THE JAZZ CLUB

THE JAZZ CLUB AT WOODSTOCK
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www.thejazzclub.uk



BLENHEIM PALACE

WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

Restoration and Conservation Tours 7th January - 13th February

FEBRUARY

February Half Term Fun 14th - 22nd February

Blueprints of Power 14th February - 10th April

MARCH - APRIL

Easter Eggstravaganza 3rd - 6th April

MAY - JUNE - JULY

Jousting Tournament 2nd - 4th May

Giffords Circus 8th - 18th May

Blenheim Palace Food Festival 23rd - 25th May

Blenheim Palace Triathlon 6th - 7th June

Blenheim Palace Flower Show 19th - 21st June

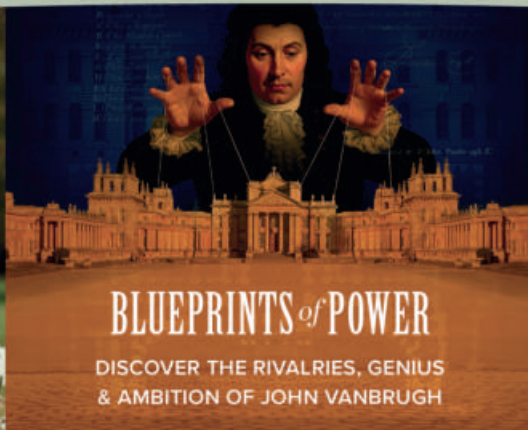
Blenheim Palace Festival June - July

EXPERIENCES FOR 2026 OR BEYOND

Family Treasures mid February - end of August

Roof Top View re-opening January

Life Below Stairs permanent exhibition



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