

WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

TheVillageNews

APRIL/MAY 2025



Photo: Annie Cooper

– WHAT’S ON –

Experience a whole year of unforgettable memories in 2025

APRIL

Life Below Stairs A new experience	All Month
Stables Art Exhibition (By Cai Yuan)	All Month
Easter Eggstravaganza and Easter Weekend.....	5th - 21st April

MAY

Roof Top Tours A new experience	All Month
Jousting	3rd - 5th May
Dogs allowed in May.....	6th - 31st May
Blenheim 7k	18th May
Giffords Circus	22nd May - 2nd June
Blenheim Palace Food Festival	24th - 25th May
May Half Term - ‘Pip and Posy’ in Adventure Play	24th May - 1st June
Armchair talks (Stables Café)	27th May

JUNE

Blenheim Palace Triathlon	7th - 8th June
Nocturne Live	18th - 22nd June
Blenheim Palace Flower Show.....	27th - 29th



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Village Directory

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From the editor

It's all about V for Victory this issue.

On an international level, 8th May will be the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Some wonderful reminiscences from Westoners about that momentous day can be found in the centre pages and don't forget the Village Hall Committee are marking the anniversary by hosting a VE Day Anniversary lunch with live music from the D-Day Dollies.

A more local victory was the hard-fought Battle of the Oak Tree Footpath. Thanks to the unstinting work by the Parish Council and Roger Evans the original path, both hideous in design and damaging to the oak tree, is (finally!) being removed.

And last but certainly not least, there's the victory of the SOS Committee to save the Village Shop – all their time and effort has paid off and the village is safe in the knowledge that we still have this amazingly important asset.

Three very different, but all fantastic, triumphs. A very welcome start to Spring!

Alex



Photo by Alex Reid



Photo by Jordie Riches

**Deadline for June/July edition:
1st MAY 2025**



From the Rector

Gareth Miller

Rector of the Akeman Benefice and Area Dean of Bicester & Islip

Dear friends

I have just spent the most delightful morning visiting three of our churches. I am excited to report that our three churches which previously had no WC or kitchen facilities are now well on their way to remedying these deficits.

At Middleton Stoney, already beautifully equipped with these facilities, the original organ is now being rebuilt at the rear of the church. I chatted to the organ builders, marvelling at their skill and knowledge. At Wendlebury, the refurbishment project is well

under way, and again I had a most interesting talk with the carpenter and the archaeologist. The latter has dug a trench in the transept and has come across evidence of earlier churches and all sorts of interesting artefacts. Perhaps we will be able to arrange a display and a talk later in the year. We hope the refurbished church will be in use again for the Community Choir concerts in May. Progress at Chesterton is slower, but this morning we took the first tentative steps, as we look to replacing the pipe organ with a more flexible (and smaller!) instrument, thereby freeing up space for new facilities and more room for socialising.

So – three cheers to all three churches! I should not omit Hampton Gay, and there too we are making strides and moving towards a restoration of the building that has not been touched since 1972! We are blessed with beautiful buildings, which are loved and cherished by the wider community, and we have a duty to pass them on in

good shape – but we also need to maintain, beautify, and enhance their usefulness.

Pope Francis chose his name very carefully. It was chosen, of course, to recall St Francis of Assisi. One day Francis, a rich young man, heard the voice of Jesus Christ saying to him, 'Francis, rebuild my church.' At first Francis took it literally, and with a small band of brothers began rebuilding the ruined Church of San Damiano. But of course it had a wider and deeper meaning, and the influence of Francis and his example was huge in the Middle Ages and beyond as the church sought to renew its sense of purpose and mission.

The challenge for the church of today is not so very different from the challenge of Francis's day. The dangers of corruption, introspection, worldliness, preoccupation with the establishment – all these continue to afflict us. That is why it was so good that Jorge Maria Bergoglio sent a very clear signal to the church and to the world in choosing his papal name, and his teachings and writings have encouraged the contemporary church to move in a more Franciscan direction.

Such tensions, of course, are also found in our own internal and external lives – the battle between the person we want to be (noble, kind, selfless, humble) and the person we know ourselves to be (immodest, selfish, arrogant, greedy, etc!). We need the Francis of this world constantly to draw us back to the things that really matter – integrity, authenticity, care for the environment, care for the underprivileged. In a world that seems to be putting a worrying emphasis on power, deals, and megaphone diplomacy, we need to hear again the prophetic voice: rebuild my church; rebuild my world.

St Mary's Church, Weston on the Green warmly invites you to join in our services in April and May

6th April	11:00	Morning Worship
13th April Palm Sunday	10:30	Procession of Palms and Benefice Communion
18th April Good Friday	20:00	Sung Compline, Kirtlington
20th April Easter Day	11:00 15:00	Benefice Holy Communion, Chesterton '3 at 3' Family Service, Bletchington
27th April	10:00	Benefice Holy Communion, Chesterton
4th May	11:00	Café Church
11th May	18:00	Benefice Evensong with the Akeman Church Community Choir, Bletchington
18th May	11:00 15:00	Holy Communion '3 at 3' Family Service, Bletchington
25th May	11:00	Festal Communion and Rededication of Church, Middleton Stoney
29th May Ascension Day	19:00	Holy Communion

Please note: the times are subject to change. The monthly schedule is posted on the front door of the church as well as the bulletin box at the East gate.

For other services across the Akeman Benefice please visit:
<https://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk/church-services>

Church news

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is scheduled for the evening of April 30th, at the Memorial Hall. Official notices will be posted around the village. Villagers are welcome to attend, but voting is restricted to those who are on the Electoral Roll. Under the Church of England Ordinance, 2025 is the year to renew/re-establish the Electoral Roll. Application forms are available in the front entrance of the church and completed forms can be return to the sealed boxes in either the church or the Village Pantry, or, to our Electoral Roll secretary, Mr. Bob Hessian, or, to the wardens. GDPR regulations apply to the information provided.

By becoming a member of the electoral roll of your local church you will enhance the laity's voice in the management of the church to help ensure it is in line with the values of the society it is obligated to serve. The church does have an important role to play in our community, both local and national. The institution needs an active membership to able to leverage and maximize our collective abilities for the good of the community. We cannot rely on someone else doing it for us. We sincerely hope you will join.



Treasurer's Report

The table below gives a brief outline of the church's financial performance for the 12 months ended December 31st 2024, with comparative figures for 2023. Please note the figures presented are subject to review by an outside party and the final accounts will be posted insider the church porch.

Income		
	2023	2024
Regular Giving	£7,709	£8,328
Collections	£1,978	£1,216
Fundraising	£740	£633
Fees Earned	£1,002	£962
Other Income*	£1,973	£5,319
Total Income	£13,402	£16,458

**Includes £4,575 insurance settlement for the damage to the churchyard wall caused by the windstorm in January 2024.*

The church has several sources of income, which include donations by the Village Pantry from the proceeds of the sale of Friends'

Produce. We are grateful to the volunteers who donate their sales to this project. We are also very grateful to the many volunteers who actively support our participation in the Weston community.

Expenses		
	2023	2024
Parish Share	£8,065	£7,540
Insurance	£2,081	£2,248
Electricity	£882	£928
Garden*	£138	£5,355
Quintennial Report	0	£650
Tree Survey/ Works	0	£1,140
Sundry Expenses	£1,233	£1,075
Total Expenses	£12,399	£18,936
Surplus (Deficit)	£1,003	(£2,478)

**Includes churchyard wall repairs £4,825.*

Eric Bohm
Church Warden

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Chair's comments

The Cherwell District Council Local Plan 2040 submission

Cherwell's Local Plan submission has been both overwhelming and concerning across the district. It includes an ambitious housing and employment site building plan. The national planning changes have resulted in a different look at areas of the green belt. Even these two points have caused us to read the documents very carefully as well as to be involved in online updates. In the new plan, rural villages like ours do not have specific housing requirements but we are made aware that a certain number of houses need to be built and it is hoped we would make a small contribution. Our major concern has been the potential impact on traffic without sufficient new infrastructure investment. Hence below is a paragraph which is part of our submission to the district:

"Policy BIC, pg 209, 210.

This policy is unsound as whatever benefit it may have to the town of Bicester will have serious and detrimental effects on the population living outside of Bicester.

We have asked for improvement in the road and bus infrastructure in this area just to manage what is already built. The traffic problems,

the rat running, the pollution and speed issues which effect rural villages is currently very serious. The Weston on the Green Parish Council does not see anything in the current proposal which will mitigate the problem we, as a village have. In fact, employment sites, housing and leisure facilities will only increase the traffic along rural roads that can be used to travel in/out of Bicester and indeed on to Oxford. The build planned on the A41 will specifically have a significant negative traffic effect on villages in the area of Weston on the Green.

Valuing the rural villages by not demanding excessive housing is a benefit to the countryside but this is only part of what is needed to show that indeed rural areas are valued."

Weston on the Green Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan submission statement February 2025.

Oak tree path demolition

We are all pleased to see that OCC/Milestone has worked on the demolition of the concrete path on top of the roots of our 450-year-old veteran oak tree at the north end of the village. Now that the railings are down, drivers exiting from North Lane will have better visibility. The work wasn't easy as under the top layer of the



soil they found large amounts of hard core and concrete. Although the instructions were that this was to be all hand dug, it proved impossible to break up the concrete without mechanical assistance. Breaking up the concrete with the jack hammer and hands removing smaller chunks of concrete wasn't ideal but they were constantly under supervision and once the large pieces of concrete were removed they hand dug all of the smaller pieces.

The contractors were frank about their shock at the several tons of concrete poured directly on the roots of the tree. The Milestone arborist, the Cherwell District



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Council arborist and the consultant hired by the parish council were on site at various times and watched the work very closely so damage to the roots was minimal. By the time this article is in your hands, the roots will have been treated with special formulated soil and specific nutrients. The hard soil will have had compressed air pumped into it to enrich the nutrient-deprived soil. We expect that once the grass on the slope has grown back, all of us will benefit from the beauty of the tree and admire its perseverance and strength. Once again, we dare to hope that the legend from the past, that the growth and fertility of the village is dependent on the life of the oak tree. The campaign to remove the path has gone on for five years and has used up far too much time and effort. This tree could have another two hundred years and the parish council with the tremendous support of Roger Evans and our Oxfordshire County Council councillor Nigel Simpson is proud to have championed for its survival.

Annual Village Meeting – date for the diary

Our Parish Council annual meeting begins before the Parish Council meeting on 7th May. However, there is also an annual Village meeting, and we have chosen 22nd April at 7.30pm. There will be an overview of the years' work encouraging questions.

Susan Davis will discuss the Cherwell District Council Local Plan. She will give an overview of how the plan will affect our village and explain the complication of the time of our submission and which set of rules it will come under. Don't make the mistake of thinking this could be boring – there are serious concerns and managing them will involve an understanding of the issues. We would like to see as many people as possible new to the village since 2020, when our Neighbourhood Plan was agreed. Of course, we rely on those who were on the journey with us at the time to attend as over the years your support has been valuable.

Community Bus

For the past two years, the Parish

Council has been recording the usage of the community bus, and we are delighted that it has been frequently used and offers a real service to those living in our area. Over 3,000 miles have been travelled in over 150 trips and to approximately 20 different destinations. The bus takes people to the doctors surgery, the hospitals including the Horton in Banbury. We help many people who are anxious about their visits or going to and from surgery. Over thirty residents have benefitted from this invaluable community asset.

We must not forget that without the volunteer drivers, this community asset would not be, so a huge thank you to the organiser Graham Barnett and the other drivers who have helped, past and present, Nigel, Tony, Robin, Greg and James. They add an element of kindness and cheer that makes a great difference to all.

There is no charge for the use of the bus but there are annual expenses to keep it on the road: MOT, repairs, fuel, insurance. Our finance team has estimated an expense of £2,500 in 2025-26. We have benefitted from two grants this year but contributions to keeping the van on the road are welcome.

Goodbye

We are sad to have the resignation of Councillor Ben Lanham from the Parish Council. He came to us with experience of working for communities so has fitted quickly into our team. He has taken on the responsibility of the playground, playing field and spinney which has been a big job. Thanks to Ben, we have some new equipment in the playground. He has maintained a good relationship with the Ardley football team that rents the field. Sadly, he has also had to oversee the loss of a number of ash trees in the spinney which were infected with a fungus that is spreading across the country.

Over the past six months Ben has agreed to be the vice-chair of the Parish Council and has been a

great support to me in that role.

We also say goodbye to Kate and their three children Courtney, Elsie and Henry as they move to the edge of the New Forest while Ben takes up a new job at the University of Bournemouth and works on his PhD in Forensic Science.

Thank you Ben for all your work on behalf of the village.

Parish Council is knocking!

You may get a councillor knocking on your door to say hello. We aren't selling anything! There are some gaps on our mailing list, and we'd like to update it so you can be kept up to date on matters of urgency and importance. You may have areas of special interest or concern, and our councillors will be happy to listen. The time frame for 'the knock' is mid-March to mid-April.

Love dogs, don't love the mess

Last word – a polite reminder to all dog owners: dogs are to be on leads and poo is to be picked up. The School Field is included in this request as wildflowers will not survive in soil with dog poo on it. We've had complaints from residents that walking on some of the pathways is unpleasant.

Dogs are to be on leads throughout the village, including all fields. Loose dogs can frighten people and horses, stray into gardens, or even run on the road and be injured.

There are a number of dog bins throughout the village including at the playing field. In good faith we provide poo bags for use. In fact, we provided 8,000 last year.

For ongoing issues call the Cherwell Dog Warden 01295 227007. Many thanks.

Diane Bohm

Planning update

Planning applications relating to the parish are discussed at each Parish Council meeting and a report is placed on the Parish Council website. Full information regarding each application is available via the Planning and Building section on the Cherwell District Council website.

BUILDING APPLICATIONS:

Applications - Awaiting Decision

24/02685/F – Southview,
Northampton Road
Infill extension to existing bungalow and addition of first floor. Erection of garage and store with room in loft, including demolition of existing pole barn.

24/03356/PIP - Land North East Of Knowle Farm, Knowle Lane
Planning Permission in Principle is sought for the provision of 2-4 dwellings.

25/00142/CLUE - North View, North Lane
Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Development for domestic car parking area for two vehicles.

25/00139/F - Part of OS Parcel 0006 Adjacent and North of Normandy, North Lane
Demolition of existing buildings and the erection of five detached single and two-storey dwellings together with access, parking and garaging, amenity space, landscaping and drainage works.



25/00449/REM - Reynards Lodge, North Lane
Reserved Matters application to 24/00804/OUT - Access (with Construction Traffic Management Plan), Layout (with part drainage), Scale, Appearance, Landscaping and Biodiversity (with Construction Environment Management Plan).

25/00361/AGN - Land North of Filling Station adjacent to the track south of The Chequers Inn, Northampton Road
Prior approval application for erection of a Grain and Crop Store.

25/00356/DISC - Kelberg Ltd, Northampton Road
Discharge of Conditions 3 (construction management strategy), 4 (Arboricultural Method Statement), 5 (surface water drainage), 6 (biodiversity method statement) and 8 (lighting details) of 24/00893/F.



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Sam and Linda training

Welcome to Weston Community Shop and Post Office!

This article was originally written on the 2nd March. A brief update on the 14th March (less than two few weeks away!) is that we have now exchanged contracts for the purchase on the 24th March, legally binding us to take ownership. We will keep our members and the community informed.

We're thrilled to share that, as of the 24th March, our village and local community achieved something incredible: the successful purchase of the Village Shop and Post Office. This milestone marks the beginning of a new era, with the Shop now under community ownership – a testament to two years of dedication, teamwork, and unwavering support from the community.

A SMOOTH TRANSITION

On the purchase day, the Shop and Post Office closed briefly for Post Office auditing and the transfer to Weston SOS Limited. We apologise for any inconvenience caused and appreciate your patience.

We're excited to share some updates:

- New amenities: We've reinstated the beloved coffee machine, upgraded to a faster internet connection, installed a new till system and card machine and introduced Evri services from the Post Office including prepaid parcel drop-offs, collections and returns.
- Small renovations ahead: Over the next few months, we'll carry out essential maintenance, which we hope will include step-free access for those with reduced mobility. Please bear with us during any works.

Since 'Save our Shop' is no longer relevant, for now we're trading as the 'Weston Community Shop'. If you've got other ideas for a new name, send them our way – we will vote on a permanent change at an upcoming members meeting.

GRATITUDE AND THANKS

None of this would have been possible without:

- Our dedicated committee, past and present.
- Members of the community – our shareholders, advisors, and those who stepped in with affordable community loans and the Village Hall for their support.
- The incredible Shop staff for their patience and support.

A special shoutout to Wiz, who has stepped down during the transition, for his years of volunteer service to the shop – your contributions have been invaluable. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to Yasemin, the previous owner, for her guidance and support throughout this journey and the hard work and dedication she has shown in making the Shop the heart of the village and community asset it is today.

LOOKING FORWARD

This is only the beginning. We've saved our Shop, but its long-term future depends on all of us. By shopping local, you help keep this vital community hub alive. Stop by for:

- Banking, postal, and travel money services of the Post Office.
- Freshly made sandwiches, sausage rolls, and freshly ground coffee.
- A variety of essential groceries, beer, wine & spirits, locally made produce and gift items.

Stay tuned for our upcoming grand reopening ceremony and first members' meeting, where we'll elect the new Management Committee. Interested in getting involved? We're looking for volunteers to assist with the running of the shop, potential new committee members and a Treasurer. Email us at committee@weston-sos.org for more details.

As always, we welcome any feedback, thoughts, comments or suggestions – please do reach out to us at committee@weston-sos.org, via our Facebook page or by speaking to the staff in the Shop.

We are elated that through the support of this fantastic community, we have been able to execute on our mission to 'SOS - Save our Shop' and bring it into community ownership. We are incredibly excited with what the future will bring!

Sam Sharp, Chair, SOS

So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiederse

The Post Office came to Weston in 1851 when the village had several other shops. There must have been many interesting characters as Sub-postmasters (SPs), some of them we know about and some we don't. My predecessor will go down as a memorable one, her ideas of a village shop were somewhat different, you either got her or you didn't. Being a part-time villager since 2008 and a full-timer in 2014, I heard and was a part of many a conversation worrying about the future of the shop & PO. Things were not ideal to say the least.

Little did I know on the morning of 2nd March 2016, exactly 9 years ago as I write, the events that unfolded later that day would alter my life on many levels...

What are the chances of ending up on your commute from London back to Bicester to not only end up in the same carriage but on the opposite side of the aisle with Henry Donne who was then a parish councillor and in charge of getting ACVs (Asset of Community Value) onto the shop and our pubs. Whilst this is a great concept for the community, it is not one that is welcomed by any landlord; Henry was not looking forward to the Parish Council meeting to be held that night knowing our SP would be there to challenge it.

As I thanked him for the lift back to Weston and wished him luck, I walked into my house to my landline ringing. It was Tony Henman calling to say 'you must attend the PC meeting tonight, major discussion about the shop, I fear sparks may fly'. I protested, he insisted, it was a three-line-whip, he wasn't taking 'no' for an answer. He was good at winning. Reluctantly, I attended the PC meeting to witness the sparks, the PC's lack of understanding of how the PO contract operated and our SP's Oscar winning performance exiting the meeting telling us all to ... our shop & PO.

As matters moved onto the Neighbourhood Plan which I was well versed with, I snuck out of the meeting to bump into our SP walking her dog. I made the next mistake of the evening to ask her if she was alright, to which she said 'yes fine' and beckoned me into the Ben Jonson for a drink where her husband was waiting for her. Agreeing to that was my next mistake. She had made her decision – to not engage with the village. She was boarding up the shop, renting out the flat and moving on, the only person she would deal with was me!

Gulp! I didn't want a 5 to 10% decrease on the value of my property. Mum needed to get to milk, eggs, cash etc. Lost for words, I responded 'I'll check with the family and get back to you'

And there lies the start of a drastic transition in my life. I was about to become a character in the programmes I loved - Midsomer Murders, Vicar of Dibley, Little Britain, Arkwrights to name but a few.

With the help of many friends in the village; we did 4 days of cleaning, painting, fixing, and



stocking up and on the morning of 2nd May 2017 my mother, Emma Bernard and I went in at 6.00 am to take delivery of a tonne of newspapers, trays of eggs, fruit, veg and milk. My mother and I looked at each other, 'What have we done?' came out of our mouths simultaneously.

Once we opened the doors, we were hit by a barrage we weren't expecting or equipped for. There was also the issue with the PO, the SP had technically abandoned the branch leaving me as a Manager-in-Charge and I knew nothing! I will be eternally grateful to Linda Allinson and the incredible Jill Robinson - who was stricter than my housemistress at boarding school - walking and talking me through the ropes. The both held my hand through the baptism of fire, the biggest crash course of my life, learning the complexities of the PO.

After a gruelling process of applying to the PO, a Kafkaesque interview which made me feel like I was joining the KGB, we didn't officially get to own the PO contract until mid-October when the PO reported we had already quadrupled their business. Then came Covid, Liz Truss, the energy crisis and the Horizon Scandal. My 5-year plan to sell on a viable business to a lovely couple blew up in my face.

On my knees with stress and exhaustion, one bleak Sunday morning in January, clutching a cup of coffee in the Old Vicarage with David and Carole Sweetnam, David said 'let's ask the community'. Wheels went in motion for a village meeting in late February 2023 and here we are! The future of the shop and PO is no longer in the hands of an individual but in the hands of you, the community! That is what I call a result.

Enormous thanks go to Sam

hen, Good Luck ...

Sharp and team Weston SOS for moving mountains, especially in getting the sizeable grant from the government for community ownership.



My gratitude is endless for the staff past and present. Ruth Williams (awarded the badge, 'My Rock' during lockdown), Wiz (there aren't enough words to thank the great man), Sam Boshier, Colin Gates, Rebecca Andermahr, Becky Eriya, Sarah May, Noodle, Helen Nicholson, Patti Forbes, Christine Russell and, last but not least, my mother, Valerie Atilan. They have all been superstars.

I am also very grateful for the incredible support I have received from many members of the community from conception to handing over, seeing me through



many trials and tribulations. The list is actually endless but special thanks to Alex Reid, Annie Cooper, Lucy Stokes, James & Emma Bernard, Carole & David Sweetnam, the late Tony Henman & Jane Henman, the late Norman Machin & Liz Machin, the late John Brown & Anne Brown, the late Mike Finbow & Jennie Henderson, the late Julia White, Vincent & Fiona Kehoe, Eric & Diane Bohm, Mick East, Mandy & Ian Jones, Frank & Diana Butt, Paul Beecroft and Family.

I wish this next stage of the shop as

a Community Shop much success and hope they will find all the support they need to keep it going as a much-valued community asset. Whilst Royal Mail does its bit to oust the Post Office, long may live our old-school Postie, Ian. He's grumpy but a treasure - we fought hard to keep him as our Postie in 2021 and we won.

Carry on winning all battles, Weston Community Shop, because it's worth it!

With love
Yasemin

Thank you to the 60 plus villagers who joined us for our wassail evening in mid-January. In our efforts to banish the 'January blues' we welcomed villagers to the hall, bedecked with mistletoe balls and boughs (wassailers traditionally put a sprig on their hats or used it as a buttonhole).



A range of mulled drinks were on offer, including mulled cider and mulled whisky. Although we didn't follow the traditional form of wassailing (singing, hitting pots and pans to wake up the trees from their winter slumber and pouring cider on apple tree roots to ensure a good harvest for the year ahead) we did gather in the mid-winter to catch-up with each other and to have a relaxed evening.

Thank you to Laura and Toddy who kept the mulled drinks and canapes

flowing, and who ensured people's cups were never empty.

Our next event in May will be the special lunch in the Village Hall, marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day, on Saturday 10th May. The Hall will be decorated for the event, with a nod to the 1940s, with lots of red, white and blue, bunting and flowers. We will be serving a two-course lunch with complimentary prosecco. The main meal will be fish and chips (or an alternative) as this was the only food not to be rationed during the war (the government believed that safeguarding this comfort meal during the time of conflict was key to keeping morale up. In fact, Churchill called fish and chips 'our good companions!'). We will also have musical entertainment from The D-Day Dollies who will be performing a number of well-known and classic 1940s/wartime songs. Tickets for the lunch are just £5 due to the kind generosity, sponsorship and donations by the Parish Council, and local businesses, H2H Storage Solutions and Axicon Ltd. Booking is required for this event and to secure a place at the VE day lunch please email us at westonvillagehall@live.co.uk by 25th April.

We will also be running an art competition to celebrate this anniversary. Art works can be A5 to A3 in size, black and white, or colour, and should reflect the theme of VE Day 80. The deadline for the VE Day Art Competition is Friday 25th April and entries can be

dropped off at the Village Hall from 4.30 -5.00 pm. The age groups are as follows: 4-8 years, 9-13 years, and 14-18 years. There are prizes for the winning entries, and a certificate for all who submit a piece of artwork.

Elsewhere in this Village News are some villagers' memories of VE Day in 1945. In 2020 we were planning a VE Day 75 celebration when the pandemic and subsequent lockdown meant we were not allowed to gather together. Instead, we made a video montage of the village and villagers, which we emailed out to everyone on our circulation list. Jordie interviewed by telephone the villagers who could recall VE Day and some of these interviews are in this edition, with the additional interviews shared to the Hall's Facebook page in the week leading up to our VE Day event on Saturday 10th May.

Our AGM will be taking place on Wednesday 9th April at 7.00pm in the Village Hall. All villagers are welcome to attend and hear what we have been up over the past year and to hear our plans for 2025-2026.

Finally, we would like to say a big thank you to Neil and Corinne from Busy Needle, the made-to-measure curtains and blinds company based here in the village, for coming out late on a Friday afternoon in February to repair a damaged curtain track. We are hugely grateful to Neil and Corinne for their help and support.



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VE Day 80: Art Competition

Theme: VE Day 80

Deadline Friday 25th April 2025.

Entries handed in at the Hall between 4.30-5pm.

Art works can range from A5 to A3 in size and can be black & white, or colour.

The age groups for the art competition are: 4-8 years, 9-13 years, and 14-18 years.

There are prizes for the winning entries, and a certificate for all who submit a piece of work.

The Village Hall Committee would like to say a very big thank you to our VE Day Lunch sponsors.

Their generosity and support have enabled us to plan and host a very special event for villagers to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day.



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Please could we ask that book donations are not left in the phone box. If you wish to donate books please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

Many thanks and happy reading!



250 Club Results

FEBRUARY

1st prize: £18 No 114 Malcolm Brain

2nd prize: £12 No 83 Paula & Bob Hessian

3rd prize: £6 No 125 Simon Davis

MARCH

1st prize: £18 No 114 Malcolm Brain

2nd prize: £12 No 20 Bill Lawrie

3rd prize: £6 No 97 Neil Mullane



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Bristol Packing Mammamas

Weston's answer to the American Pistol Packin Mamas, the popular name for the wonderfully decorated WWII bomber planes, was our very own Bristol Packing Mammamas. For a while, during World War II, Weston became the workplace of a group of women involved in war work. This work was carried out in the village hall – the 'Old Hall'. This hall was a second-hand wooden building, bought and erected on the site of today's car park. Having seen service in Weston since 1921, the building was already well over 20 years old and was supported on several brick pillars. These pillars were checked regularly, before every dance or social as they often shifted and the floor would rock and slide.

Into this rather rickety building came the materials the Mammamas worked on. These supplies came in large wooden crates, often used, covered with old curtains, as seating when the Saturday socials were in full swing. What was in these crates? One suggestion is that they were spare parts for aircraft, another rifles and a third idea is that they were general ordnance parts. The airplane parts would lend credence to the nick name of Bristol as Bristol planes operated in the vicinity. We are not

far from Bicester Ordnance Depot and so the memory that these were spares for guns and machinery could also be accurate. I do not know if the Mammamas operated during all of the war years. Bicester Ordnance Depot became operational in 1943 so perhaps our efforts were during 1939-43 in an attempt to cover the ordnance supply needs before the Depot was built. It seems that the large crates of 'parts' arrived at Weston and the women picked parts to satisfy specific orders and wrapped them in waxed, waterproof paper, packaged these and labelled them ready for collection and despatch on to wherever they were needed. All parts had numbers and the packaged order would have to be labelled accordingly and one memory is of the sound of hammering as the crate lids were secured. Collection of these packages was made every day and supplies of crated parts would also arrive in Weston on lorries. We became a hub for large lorries on a daily basis.

Most of the women were unable to take on war work elsewhere because of childcare responsibilities or other pressures

keeping them in the village. Some women, with pre-school children at home, could not join the work in the village hall; others with school age children and evacuees could work while the children were in school. They became the Mammamas and so helped the war effort. Only one of the Mammamas gave information towards the end of the 20th century and just two children in the village during the war have since contributed information. I think the children were aware the women did work in the hall and many knew of the boxes under the old curtains when there was a village dance or social but the details of the work were not generally known. Is this Weston's part of the 'Dangerous talk costs lives' campaign? The constant movement of heavy crates and boxes was what tended to make the brick pillars beneath the hall shift and boys would be sent to crawl under the hall and check the pillars before a dance.

Once either the war was over or the need to outsource this packing service no longer existed, the hall returned to its previous use as the village hub.

Paula Hessian

VE Day Memories



ON 8TH MAY THIS YEAR, the nation will mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, which saw the end of the war in Europe after six long years of conflict. On 8th May 1945, at 3pm, Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a radio address to the nation in which he said that *'we may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead...I rejoice we can all take a night off today and another day tomorrow...after that we must begin the task of rebuilding our heath and homes, doing our utmost to make this country a land in which all have a chance, in which all have a duty'*.

As part of the 2020 interviews here are some

'I was 8 in 1945 and grew up on in Headington on the Gray's Road. I remember on VE Day we had a street party, and all the tables and chairs were brought into the street, and there were lots of cakes and sandwiches. Some people find that surprising, but most people had chickens in their back gardens so had a steady supply of eggs, I think the mothers knew the war was coming to an end so had saved their butter and sugar rations for the cakes! Dad was a fireman and was with us on VE Day. I remember he, and the other fireman, used their stirrup water pumps to spray all the children, which was great fun.

In the evening we had a big bonfire to celebrate and the next day the unburnt timbers were stored in the municipal air raid shelter. I was sitting on the top of the



shelter, with my hands holding onto the edge, and the wood was accidentally dropped onto my fingers and I still have the scars on my index and middle finger to this day!'

John Roper

'My sister born in 1939, in late May, knew only war years until the jubilant day in 1945 when the war ended. She recalls the very day quite vividly. Being only six years old she was apparently responsible for delivering a few daily papers to folk across the fields. She remembers the heading "The War is Over" on the papers and folk were clapping their hands and dancing around and so she joined in with them all singing the "War is over", "The War is Over" joyfully jumping around not really knowing that anything different has happened.

I seem to recall that a large bonfire was built in the old lamb pits at the top of North Lane. Our parents eagerly awaited the King's Speech and Winston Churchill on our ancient radio. The radio was run by a thing called an accumulator which we used to get from a man called Bishops at Kidlington. My brother had made many attempts at making his own radio called a "crystal set". I believe in those days the spoken word on the radio was extremely important as few people had access to any other means

of verbal communication in their homes such as we do today. Our Father had fought in WW1 for 4 years losing many of his friends as a young man and our dear Mother had lost her only brother in that same war. So, I remember as well as gladness there was also sadness as many young men and women were still fighting in Japan and elsewhere. Also, in this village, as in WW1, many families had lost their loved ones and for them there was no victory.'

Mary Warmington

'I was 12 when the war ended, and I remember as it was announced on the radio, we all headed to The Manor where my Mum worked in the kitchen. The villagers stood in the courtyard and the staff of The Manor came out and we all sang 'We'll Meet Again'. Walking back home with my parents it was the sight and smell of the purple lilac and wisteria that stayed with me. When I see them in bloom it always reminds me of that afternoon'.

Joy Lawrie



More than one million people celebrated in the streets throughout Britain to mark the end of the European part of the war. In London, crowds gathered in Trafalgar Square and up the Mall to Buckingham Palace, where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by their daughters, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, and Winston Churchill, appeared on the balcony of the palace before the cheering crowds. For others, VE Day celebrations were more muted as loved ones were still away fighting in East Asia, or would not be returning home.

In Weston, several villagers in 2020 (for VE Day 75) shared their memories of the war with Jordie; some recall the end of the war here in Weston, others from around different locations in the UK. Jordie had the privilege to interview and record the memories of these villagers (some of whom are sadly no longer with us) but the pandemic and lockdown meant the event planned for the Village Hall did not take place, and the interviews were shared on the Hall's Facebook page. For VE Day 2025 the full interviews will once again be shared on the Village Hall Facebook page in the lead-up to 8th May.

of the villagers recollections of VE Day 1945.

For some people VE Day 1945 wasn't about street parties and celebrations. For some the war continued. Below is Pam Miller's memories of VE Day 1945.

'The last two years of the war I was in the WRNS (the WRENS) and was stationed at the WRNS Naval Air Station in the Isle of Man. I have very clear memories of the crossing from Fleetwood to the Isle of Man. The sea was often very rough and choppy and not at all pleasant! I was an air mechanic, and we worked on the Fairey Barracuda torpedo bombers. The Barracuda bombers were specifically used to torpedo German submarines in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean and the Pacific. The torpedo sat externally, underneath the plane's carriage. They were not our favourites to work on! As a WREN you could either work on the airframes, the electrics, the engines or the armoury and I worked on the engines (which were Merlin 32 engines and then Rolls-Royce Griffon engines). For us, VE Day was a subdued affair with no big celebrations. We were billeted outside of a village and so were away from the main town so for us there was no big party and was a rather quiet affair. I do remember playing table tennis at the YMCA. Of course, we still were working on the planes as the war in the



Pacific was to continue for a few more months, until August. As friends we had joined up together, but I was moved to Gosport Naval Shore Establishment before being demobbed (once your number came up that was it, you were demobbed and out of the service) and a number of my friends were sent to Devon. Lasting friendships were formed for life.'

(For the rest of her life Pam remained part of the WRNS Association and every year, until her death, Pam and her ex-WRNS friends met annually for a lunch at the Village Hall.)

On Saturday 10th May, the Village Hall will play host to a special luncheon (see p. 12 for further information). To book a place at this event please email us at westonvillagehall@live.co.uk by Friday 25th April.



Weston Society

Weston Society met on Monday 13th January, when a favourite speaker of ours, Maurice East, gave a fascinating talk on a variety of plans drawn up in the past to put a relief road through Christchurch Meadow, none of which actually happened.



The talk was also illustrated with interesting facts and many photographs of Oxford city through the years.

At the time of writing, the Society is due to meet next on Monday 10th March, to hear a talk on Radley Manor and village.

The next meeting after that is scheduled for Monday 12th May for a history of the Purton Ships Graveyard at the mouth of the River Severn, which you may have seen a glimpse of in a recent television programme featuring Clare Balding travelling along the Severn.

We meet on the second Monday of alternative months, all are welcome free of charge to their first meeting, there is an annual subscription currently of £20 per person for anyone who then wishes to join, which enables us to pay for use of the Hall, pay for speakers and to share wine and nibbles after the meeting.

Photo: Cornmarket, Oxford



Weston Walkers

Our first walk of 2025 was due to take place in February, unfortunately the weather was against us again so the walk was cancelled.

Our next walk, weather permitting, will have been on Monday 10th March, Mondays 14th April and 12th May after that, meeting at Weston Village Hall at 1.30 pm.

All are welcome to join in as and when, there is no commitment to every month, so if you wish to enjoy sociable company, conversation and exercise please come along and join in or speak to me.

There are now also several local walks to enjoy published on the Weston on the Green Parish Council website, under Health and Wellbeing.

If while out walking you encounter any problems with overgrown vegetation, damaged stiles or footbridges, or any other issues, please let me know for Weston Parish or Katie Holt (01869 350219) for Bletchington Parish, in order that they can be reported to the County Council for repair.

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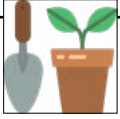
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Wandering Barn Owls and Redundant Nest Sites

Understandably, villagers have been keeping a careful eye on the Weston Oak Tree as workmen attempt to remove the carbuncle at its base. I have a particular interest as it has been the nesting site of a pair of barn owls. When I first came to live in the village (1973) there were a pair of Little Owls nesting in one of the holes in the tree. I've not seen any there now for several years.

In 2018, I was asked to look at a "small fluffy white ball" found in the grass at the base of the tree. This turned out to be a young barn owl that had fallen out of a hole situated in the side of the tree-trunk. It was nowhere near ready to be flying so it was returned to the nest. There were three other owlets in the nest. I never inspected the nest again until March the following year when two jackdaws flew out. Three weeks ago I got two of my British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) colleagues from Oxford to come and look at the nest site. They have a fibre-optic scope that allows them to see inside the nest hole without too much disturbance. The nest site was empty and it showed no signs of being recently occupied. It remains to be seen as to whether anything will take up residence whilst the concrete "lump" is removed.

As for the barn owls in my loft, last years adults overwintered in the nest box and now (early March) are showing signs of starting a family. Going on past records I would expect the first egg to be laid in late March/early April.

The youngsters are ringed each year but I only get to hear about them if one of them is found injured or dead - usually road kills. Two of mine have been



found in the south Oxfordshire region in 2019 and 2020 – both road kills. Last month one of my owls that had fledged in 2023 was found dead on the railway line near High Wycombe. I did ask my BTO colleagues what the farthest distance a barn owl (from this area) has travelled. One has been recorded in Kandahar, Afghanistan, approximately 4,500 miles away!!!! The bird in question had been ringed near the Bicester MOD site and was later found dead when the army opened a supplies container from Bicester in Kandahar!

Bob Hessian

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Whilst putting together her university applications and portfolio for architecture courses, Courtney Lanham (whose family is sadly leaving the village – see Chair's Comments on p. 7) was asked by one University to draw a 'my street' piece reflecting on where she lives. Looking at the idea of community places in Weston, Courtney illustrated five landmarks of the village: the North Lane oak tree, Weston Manor, the stocks, the Phone Box Library and the Ben Jonson – a wonderful reflection of our brilliant surroundings.



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### ADDITIONAL DRIVERS NEEDED!

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Mainly local trips to hospitals or surgery

**Contact Graham Barnett on 01869 350707**

Everyone is welcome to ...

## Neighbours' Natter



**2025**

**Weston-on-the-Green Village Hall**

**Thurs Apr 10<sup>th</sup> & Thurs May 8<sup>th</sup> 10am - Noon**

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## Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall



### **VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event**

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

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Alexandra House of Joy is a local charity seeking to provide a much-needed centre for young and older adults with profound learning disabilities and their primary caregivers, living in Oxfordshire. This charity has come about following the life and death of our daughter, Alexandra, who for 47 years gave us the absolute privilege of sharing in her world on a daily basis.

Following the erosion of Adult Social Care, our vision is to build a bespoke centre which both supports the young adult and their families. We have so far raised £923,000 - please visit our website for more information to keep in touch with our progress and the fundraising events that we put on: [www.alexandrahouseofjoy.co.uk](http://www.alexandrahouseofjoy.co.uk)



### Wendlebury's Very Own 'The Sometime Band' Saturday 26th April

A night of rock, singalong anthems and plenty of room to let your

hair down dancing!! 7.00 pm, Bletchington Village Hall. Bar, Street Food plus raffle. Tickets cost £15.00 and can be bought via our website or at Pavers Shoe Store, Bicester Avenue.

### Celebrity Quiz Night Friday 16th May

Our fifth Quiz Night, run by Dr Darragh Ennis (The Chase and Beat the Chasers) at Chesterton Community Centre. Teams of eight. Bar and Raffle. Tickets can be bought via our website or at Pavers Shoe Store, Bicester Avenue.

Look out for other events on: [www.facebook.com/AlexandraHouseofJoy](http://www.facebook.com/AlexandraHouseofJoy).

Ian and Rachael Scott-Hunter



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## April news

### Curlew

The Curlew's wonderful 'bubbling' call is one of the most evocative sounds of springtime in meadows and pastures across Oxfordshire. Something we cherish, but which is sadly under threat. The Curlew is arguably the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK, where nearly half the breeding population has been lost over the last 25 years and where range contraction has seen Curlews disappear from many traditional sites.

Watch our 'Curlew River' film which explores the work of farmers and volunteers to help our wonderful Curlews as well as highlighting the fabulous ancient meadows and wet grassland habitats that they inhabit in our area. <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/projects/curlew>

### National Allotment Week

Allotments can provide wonderful spaces for nature and people. Allotments and gardens are now a vital refuge for much of our local wildlife, with many species



now relying on our gardens to survive, such as the greenfinch, stag beetle and hedgehog. It's easy to forget that our gardens join up with other gardens as well as the local greenspaces to make one big patchwork of foraging, drinking, and nesting sites. Together we can help nature bounce back, garden by garden.

Thank you so much for all you have done for nature's recovery in the last year. Together we have brought people together, created more space for nature, and inspired more people to act for nature. Many people contribute to Wild

Oxfordshire and this support enables us to create a more natural, resilient, and biodiverse Oxfordshire for the benefit of all.

If you would like to join in and are able to, we would greatly appreciate a contribution towards our work, either through a one-off contribution, or a monthly contribution. Check out our website to find out more about the many ways you can support us and our recent achievements: [www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/](http://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/)

Mike Pollard, Wild Oxfordshire Curlew Recovery Project

## Walking in Oxfordshire

All the information you need to get walking in our beautiful county.

With the days getting longer, put a spring in your step, dust off those walking boots and head into the fields.

With walks from half a mile to twelve miles or more in length, 'Walking in Oxfordshire' has loads of interesting walks, both local and slightly further afield, all to download and print for free: <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/oxfordshire>.

It also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group, all the information is there in one place.





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The countryside charity  
Oxfordshire

# CALUM MILLER MP



Over six months into serving as your MP for Bicester and Woodstock, I am glad to share what I have been working to achieve for our area and to let you know how you can get in touch with my team and me if we can help you in any way. While I hit the ground running in Parliament and have been out meeting residents and groups across the constituency every week, it has taken a little longer than I hoped to recruit a small team to help me and to establish a fully operational office. Now that they are in place, we are better placed to provide the high standard of support to those who contact us. Thank you to everyone who has shown patience and support during this set-up period. We are continuing to hold regular surgeries across the constituency, so if there are any issues you'd like to raise, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

In Parliament, I've been working hard with my Liberal Democrat colleagues to ensure this Government is held to account. With serious economic challenges, public services on their knees and a volatile international environment, I strongly believe we should be working together across parties wherever possible. Liberal Democrats are committed to being a constructive opposition to Labour. So, for example, we have called on the government to meet with us and other parties to drive agreement on tackling the social care crisis, not waiting for three years for another inquiry.

At the same time, we've been challenging harmful government policies. We opposed the removal of Winter Fuel Payments from pensioners when so many rely on support to meet high energy bills. We have also challenged the National Insurance Contribution rises that will place an undue burden on small businesses and charities in our communities. We voted against the Family Farm Tax, which threatens to force many family-run farms to sell their land - an unacceptable blow to our rural economy and heritage.

Wherever we have the chance, we are putting forward proposals to strengthen legislation or to initiate new proposals. We pushed the Government to do more to limit water company bosses' bonuses and to stop billpayers carrying the can for the debts they racked up. I was also proud to support my colleague James MacCleary's bill on a Youth Mobility Scheme, which would create more opportunities for British young people to work and travel abroad in Europe.

I have also used my time in Parliament to speak up about the issues that matter most to our constituency and have pressed ministers across all departments to address some of the vital holes. Whether that be securing a meeting with the Health Secretary to discuss capital funding of surgeries, pressing the Prime Minister to seriously address the CAMHS waiting times or quizzing the Energy and Net Zero

Department about regular power outages affecting areas across our constituency, I am committed to fighting to secure the best deal for the people of Bicester and Woodstock.

It has also been a great pleasure to visit many events across the constituency and I am grateful to all those who have been so generous in welcoming me. Since being elected, I have visited dozens and dozens of community groups, projects, business and organisations. From speaking at a local community association meeting on London Road, attending a town council meeting, joining various Keep Campsfield Closed demonstrations, meeting with local campaigners committed to cleaning up our waterways and meeting various businesses and charities, I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing more about our exciting and vibrant constituency and I look forward to continue to engage with constituents across Bicester and Woodstock.

And finally, if you would like to be in touch, please feel free to email me at [calum.miller.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:calum.miller.mp@parliament.uk) and we will be in touch. I cannot stress just how honoured I have been to serve you and I look forward to continuing working together to progress the great constituency of Bicester and Woodstock.



# Don't know where to turn?

Navigate your way to  
**FREE** tailored advice on

- debt management
- benefits
- support services

and much more – one question at a time.

Local support  
from local  
advice teams

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Oxfordshire advice  
**Navigator**

Oxfordshire  
Welfare  
Rights

Agnes Smith  
Advice Centre

citizens  
advice West  
Oxfordshire

citizens  
advice Oxfordshire  
South & Vale

Rose Hill & Donnington  
Advice Centre

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**Local support  
from local  
advice teams**

- and much more – one question at a time.**



Oxfordshire  
Welfare  
Rights



**Agnes Smith  
Advice Centre**

citizens  
advice Oxfordcitizens advice West  
Oxfordshire

**citizens advice** West Northants & Charnell

**citizens advice** Oxfordshire  
South & Vale



Rose Hill & Donnington  
Advice Centre



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## Dates for the Diary

|            |                     |                                          |
|------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1st April  | 12.30 pm            | Golden Leaves Lunch                      |
| 2nd April  | 7.30 pm             | Parish Council meeting                   |
| 5th April  | 9.00 am – 12.00 pm  | Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry      |
| 5th April  | 2.30 pm – 4.00 pm   | Garden Club Spring Show                  |
| 9th April  | 7.00 pm             | Village Hall AGM                         |
| 10th April | 10.00 am – 12.00 pm | Neighbours' Natter                       |
| 14th April | 1.30 pm             | Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall |
| 22nd April | 7.30 pm             | Annual Village Meeting                   |
| 28th April | 2.00 – 4.00 pm      | Craft Group                              |
| 30th April | 7.30 pm             | Annual Parochial Church Meeting          |
| 1st May    | 7.00 am – 10.00 pm  | Oxfordshire County Council Elections     |
| 3rd May    | 9.00 am – 12.00 pm  | Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry      |
| 7th May    | 7.30 pm             | Parish Council meeting                   |
| 8th May    | 10.00 am – 12.00 pm | Neighbours' Natter                       |
| 10th May   | 12.30 – 5.00 pm     | VE Day 80 Anniversary Event              |
| 12th May   | 1.30 pm             | Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall |
| 12th May   | 7.30 pm             | Weston Society                           |
| 19th May   | 2.00 – 4.00 pm      | Craft Group                              |



**WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN  
VILLAGE PANTRY & POST OFFICE**

### FRIENDS' PRODUCE

As ever huge thank you to Mick, Corrinne, Toddy and Bill to keep this initiative going in aid of St Mary's Church and the Village Hall. The amount raised since the last edition of the news is £117.92. I believe Weston Community Shop will be carrying on with this initiative so please keep those goodies coming.





# Thinking about letting your property?

Get in touch with your local experienced agent.

We recently let this beautiful 4-bedroom detached property in Weston-on-the-Green on a long-term basis, to a family relocating to the area.

With our detailed local knowledge and physical presence in Woodstock, our dedicated team is here to help you find a reliable tenant for your rental property.



[woodstock@finderskeepers.co.uk](mailto:woodstock@finderskeepers.co.uk)

01993 848090

Get in touch:



Working alongside:



16 Oxford St, Woodstock



*Weston Manor Hotel*

# Open to non-residents!

Breakfast: 7-10am

Lunch: 12-3pm

Afternoon Tea: 1-4pm

Dinner: 6-8:45pm

Don't miss out on our Sunday Lunch, available until  
the end of April between  
12-3pm.

We'd love to welcome you!

Call 01869 350621 to book your table today

[www.thewestonmanor.com](http://www.thewestonmanor.com)

