

DIDCOT

TOWN MAGAZINE

Edition Five 2023

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Hedley Thorne - Earth Trust Gallery (Artweeks venue 77)

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Welcome to the fifth edition of the Didcot Town Magazine, the sun is peeking from behind the clouds, and we've got so much to look forward to for the summer months ahead. From comedy shows and local theatre to markets and music, flick to page 9 to see what's on. Artweeks – the UK's oldest and biggest open studios and pop-up exhibition event – is on its way. During this festival, you'll find artists, designers and makers showcasing extraordinary talent, explaining their materials and, often, demonstrating their methods. Within the next few pages, you can find a complete local guide to help you start planning your experience.

Elsewhere, we meet Carsick, a Salisbury-based genre-bending band who are heading to Steventon's Truck Festival this summer. If you're a fan of Blur or The Streets, Carsick can definitely go on your must-watch list when this year's Truck comes around. In celebration of May's Royal Coronation, we also ask the band what makes them feel the most British!

Also within this issue, Michelle Heather introduces some great charities and organisations that you can get involved in, including Shaw Trust, Pennyhooks Farm Trust, and Pjyamarama – a fundraising opportunity for Children with Cancer UK. There are many ways to raise vital funds for charity, but Children with Cancer UK has created a truly comfortable way to do so this year. The charity is asking for schools, nurseries, or youth groups to get involved. Quite simply all you need to do is pay £1 per student and dress down in your favourite PJ's on a school day. Turn to page 63 to see how you can get involved.

Amongst all this and loads more updates from around the town, we've got animal stories, local fitness classes, the ultimate guide to growing peonies, some right royal recipes from Mary Berry, and we learn what makes Didcot brilliant.

We hope you enjoy this bursting edition of your local magazine. If you have any stories or updates you'd like us to cover in the next issue, please feel free to get in touch with eloise@fyne.co.uk – we'd love to hear from you.

Eloise Lonsdale

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What's on

6-29 May

Oxfordshire Artweeks

Feast your eyes on a huge range of creative activity by hundreds of artists, makers and designers in artists' studios, pop-up galleries, glorious gardens, ancient churches, medieval tithe barns and hundreds of other amazing venues. Enjoy artists' painting, photography, textiles, sculpture, and ceramics; be amazed by woodworking, glass art, mosaics and jewellery and be intrigued by contemporary installations and multidisciplinary practice.

Various Venues

experienceoxfordshire.org



13 May

Didcot Farmers' Market

Didcot Farmers' Market is a popular market that takes place every 2nd Saturday of the month and offers a wide range of fresh produce from your local farmers and growers. You will find plenty of fruit and vegetables in season, fresh meat and fish, delicious fresh breads, cakes, and other baked goods. You will also find preserves, goats cheese, handmade soaps and plants in season.

Orchard Centre, Didcot

tvfm.org.uk



17 May

Brush Party: Three Little Ducks

Join Brush Party, the UK's 'Paint and Sip' experts, at The Ladygrove Pub in Didcot to paint a gorgeous picture 'Three Little Ducks'. Get a drink, settle down to your canvas, and unleash your inner Van Gogh – have a great night out that you'll be talking about for weeks. No experience needed... it's all about the fun.

Ladygrove, Didcot

brushparty.co.uk



19-22 May

Wood Festival

WOOD is an award-winning festival of music and nature held in the beautiful Chiltern hills at Braziers Park. As well as music, there is a full programme of free workshops for all ages, kids tent activities, and delicious locally sourced food and drink.

Braziers Park, Wallingford

woodfestival.com

Oxfordshire Artweeks: Your Local Guide



Oxfordshire Artweeks is the UK's oldest and biggest open studios and pop-up exhibition event, and the 41st festival, which runs from 6-29 May and begins with a coronation, promises to be fit for a king. As the country's creatives open their doors to welcome visitors, for free, there's a wealth of art and intrigue to explore. In and around Didcot as many as 30 artists, ceramicists, sculptors, jewellers – many of whom are taking part in Artweeks for the first time this year invite you to explore more than twenty locations venues including the Biblio Press in Oxford's Bodleian Library and the National Trust Heritage and Rural Skills Centre in Coleshill, just beyond Faringdon – once the top-secret training headquarters for the secret British Resistance. You'll find artists, designers and makers showcasing extraordinary talent, explaining their materials and, often, demonstrating their methods. Touch and talk about thousands of pieces of art and craft and uncover the stories of their inspiration.

Didcot venues

In Didcot itself, as well as coastal and cityscape paintings and contemporary furniture in the Cornerstone, there are three home studios to visit including that of Rachael Anders, the Oxfordshire Artweeks 'cover girl' for 2023: her kingfisher graces the front of the Artweeks festival guide. "I'm currently working on a bird series, including a kingfisher, a robin, a bluetit, and a greenfinch. There's something so special about birds," says Rachael. Birds can be so colourful, they can fly – which is the superpower I would choose if I could – and they sing beautifully evoking such feelings of spring and joy. When I see the detail of the natural world in art, for me, it emphasizes the beauty: I almost appreciate it more than in the real world because I know every tiny detail has been noted and reproduced. I hope my own art generates that same emotional response in other people."

You can also visit printmaker Tracey Underhill's studio and garden to join her in celebrating bold and beautiful colours with strong and suggestive shapes that

she uses to create my signature graphic style. Her limited-edition linocut prints, which range from true representations to abstractions, are inspired by childhood memories, a love of the natural world and simply from finding joy in everyday life.

Also on the Ladygrove estate, showing her work in a pop-up gallery, Sabine Barber promises a feast of still life, landscape and wildlife paintings both in oils and pastels as well as portraits galore, especially those of African-inspired women and women in general. "I feel that women have harder lives than men, certainly in Africa," she explains. "They work twice as hard as men and their bodies go through so much with pregnancy and birth, carrying children and hard manual labour too. Women are strong and I feel I can identify with them in a way I don't so much with men. Whether it be in oils or in pastels, I enjoy carving out a personality in a portrait, layer by layer, and to make it come alive. And yet, although each person has a whole lifetime of stories to tell, in each painting or pastel drawing I am purely capturing a single moment, a snapshot,

a look or the way a shaft of light falls. Diving into the complexities of a face and obsessing over details gives me an immediate emotional connection to the subject I am trying to capture. This is especially important when I work on commissions, which I so enjoy!

**Bahar Murphy, Janine Phillips
and a+b furniture
(Artweeks venue 66)**

Energetic & colourful paintings of city & sea, buildings, and vistas, & tactile modern furniture.

**Cornerstone Arts,
25 Station Road OX11 7NE
Runs from 3rd-30th May
(Cornerstone opening hours)**





Sabine Barber
(Artweeks venue 68)

A colourfest of portrait paintings, still-life, leopards and more.

6 Chinnock Brook OX11 7XU
Open 6-14 May
(11am-6pm; Tue-Fri 2-5pm)



Rachael Anders
(Artweeks venue 69)

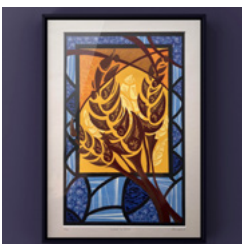
Highly detailed colour pencil drawings of flowers, wildlife and birds in a home studio.

33 Dagdale Drive OX11 7XP
Open 9-14 May
(11am-6pm; Sun 10am-4pm)



Tracey Underhill
(Artweeks venue 67)

Bright & bold limited edition lino prints.
26 Orwell Drive OX11 7RY
Open 6-14 May
(10am-2.30pm; Sat/Sun 10-6pm)



North Moreton, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and The Wittenhams

A warm welcome awaits you at North Moreton Church, at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Village Hall and a Mongolian Yurt at Haddon Acre set in the wonderful Oxfordshire countryside close to the Wittenham Clumps.

Just down the road at Earth Trust, Artweeks visitors can enjoy bird's-eye views of the landscape with aerial views from a drone flown by photographer Hedley Thorne. "It's intriguing when you see a familiar landscape from the air. If you live in South Oxfordshire, you'll be used to views of the iconic Wittenham Clumps because it is visible for miles around. However, it's rarely seen from above and seeing things from an alternative perspective, you see different patterns or shapes and it makes you think afresh about the ground beneath your feet," says Hedley. "It's intoxicating."

Alongside visitors can also enjoy more art inspired by and championing the natural environment from paintings and wildlife photography to ceramics, both

wheel-thrown stoneware and delicate decorative pieces. Here too, Artweeks newcomer, Emma Williams is showing intense blue sunprints created using a traditional photographic process and then over-painted with real indigo pigment, coloured paints and foraged chalk from the Ridgeway that celebrate the artefacts and monuments created by the area's previous prehistoric inhabitants.

Nearby in the Clumps Orchard you'll find art on a theme of Synchronicity in a stunning barn gallery and orchard setting and take a painterly journey through Oxfordshire and Wales or an icy journey through Svalbard in the Arctic Circle, Antarctica and Patagonia in South America in the paintings, photographs and sketches of artist Jane Duff. Also, in Long Wittenham, there is a home studio to visit close to The Sylva Wood Centre where you can enjoy all things wood, including handcrafted boats.

North Moreton Artists

(Artweeks venue 70)

Fine art, prints and etchings, textiles, woodwork, rocking horses, ceramics, and jewellery in a beautiful church.

**All Saints' Church, Wallingford Road,
North Moreton OX11 9AT**
Open 6-14 May
(10am-6pm; Sun 11am-5pm)



Brightwell Village Hall Artists

(Artweeks venue 71)

Diverse paintings and wonderful pottery in a beautiful hall.

**Stewart Village Hall, West End,
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell OX10 0RY**
Open 6-14 May
Open 7-14 May
(11am-6pm; Thu 11am-8pm)



**Susan Olave, Ken Organ
& Caroline George**
(Artweeks venue 72)

Creatively inspiring textile design & paintings in a mystical Mongolian yurt.
Haddon Acre, Sires Hill OX11 9BG
Open 7-14 May
(11am-6pm; Thu 11am-8pm)



Earth Trust Gallery
(Artweeks venue 77)

Connect with nature whilst admiring beautiful local ceramics, painting, photography & more.
Earth Trust Centre, Sires Hill, Little Wittenham OX14 4QZ
Open 6-14 May (10am-3pm)



Clumps Orchard Arts
(Artweeks venue 75)

Six artists exhibiting a new collection entitled Synchronicity in a beautiful barn gallery.
Clumps Orchard, Little Wittenham OX14 4RE
Open 6-8 11-14 May (11am-6pm)



Jane Duff
(Artweeks venue 76)

Paintings of Oxfordshire & Wales. Photographs of Svalbard, Antarctica & S. America.
The White Cottage, Little Wittenham OX14 4RA
Open 6-7 9-14 May (11am-6pm)



Clare Owen & Nandi Ablett
(Artweeks venue 73)

Hand-built decorated plates, tall jars and small pottery pieces; bird and pet paintings.
42 Little Wittenham Road, Long Wittenham OX14 4QS
Open 7-8 12-14 May (11am-5.30pm)



Sylva Wood Centre
(Artweeks venue 74)

Open furniture workshops, Sylva Wood School, Anglo-Saxon house, Future Forest walks. Other art.
Little Wittenham Road, Long Wittenham OX14 4QT
Open 6-7 13-14 May (10am-4pm)



Looking South

Down in Blewbury, there are three talented artists exhibiting together in the village Clubhouse showing wall art ranging from delicate embroidery by Yvette Phillips to intriguing collages by Valentina Gonzalez Saez and large expressive landscape paintings in glowing colours by Josie Clouting. Yvette's pieces use only vintage fabrics which often can provoke an emotional response, which she works on with free-motion machine and hand embroidery to create bold collages in a rich palette of colours, patterns, and textures, provided by brocades, damasks, synthetic, and natural fibres. She also creates small hand embroideries on vintage fabric that capture the beauty of birds and small mammals, and imbue them with life and individual character. You'll also find three talented artists in Chilton where Ardington resident Lisa Wallis is showcasing her jewellery alongside the stunning pottery of Jo Marshall and watercolours and oil by talented painter Lin Kerr in whose studio the exhibition is hosted.

Yvette Phillips, Valentina Gonzalez Saez & Josie Clouting
(Artweeks venues 63-65)

Beautiful birds and small mammals, in textiles with a rich palette of colours, patterns and textures. Well-balanced collaged compositions in playful colours inspired by construction sites and

simplicity and vibrant intuitive paintings inspired by the vastness and wonder of the natural world.

Blewbury Clubhouse

Boham's Road, Blewbury OX11 9HF



Lisa Wallis, Jo Marshall & Lin Kerr

(Artweeks venues 60-62)

Bespoke crafted silver jewellery made using ancient and contemporary methods of smithing, recycled silver and ethically sourced stones; handmade ceramics with brightly coloured slips and Contemporary still-life in oils, floral watercolours, Oxfordshire landscapes and daily demos.

41 Limetrees,

Chilton nr Didcot OX11 0HY

12-14 May (11am-6pm)



Looking West

Greg Whiteman is an artist based in East Hendred. In the old church rooms "Tin Hut", Greg has recently created the Hendred Creative Hub, a place for art, workshops and life drawing classes, and this is where he is exhibiting his own art from portraits to automotive art, botanicals and his dusk to dawn series. Greg's work is striking: his photorealistic style often has viewers commenting if it's a drawing or not.

Greg Whiteman

(Artweeks venue 59)

Bespoke crafted silver jewellery made using ancient and contemporary methods of smithing, recycled silver and ethically sourced stones; handmade ceramics with brightly coloured slips and Contemporary still-life in oils, floral watercolours, Oxfordshire landscapes and daily demos.

Hendred's Creative Hub,

Newbury Road, East Hendred OX12 8LG

Also open 6-8 12-14 19-21 26-29 May

(11am-6pm)



Across the whole county, during the festival, as many as 2000 artists, ceramicists, sculptors, jewellers, furniture-makers, milliners and more than 200 new exhibitors will be presenting over 500 shows at nearly 400 different locations. They will be showcasing their creative talent, explaining their materials and, often, demonstrating their methods. Visitors will be able to see, touch and talk about hundreds of thousands of pieces of art and craft and uncover the stories of their inspiration. The art on show both celebrates iconic Oxford views and local landscapes and promises a global journey through the eyes of local artists who have been influenced by people and places around the world and the colours, fabrics, and styles of exotic destinations. Explore a five-acre sculpture park in the Cotswolds and take an art trail through the towns of Woodstock, Watlington and Wallingford, or tour America on a motorbike, go on safari in Tanzania, head to Svalbard or Cuba, and be enchanted by Rajasthan.

For more information on these venues and hundreds more, visit artweeks.org



Meet The Artists

Ahead of the 41st instalment of Oxfordshire Artweeks – the UK's oldest and biggest open studios and pop-up exhibition event – meet some of the artists who will be showcasing their creative talent, explaining their materials and, often, demonstrating their methods, from the newcomers to the regulars.



Greg Whiteman

Greg Whiteman is a new face for this year's Oxfordshire Artweeks festival, exhibiting in East Hendred, near Wantage. Using a combination of precise pencil-drawing hyperrealism and airbrushing techniques for his open studio exhibition, he has been working on a series of animals including a Eurasian Eagle Owl with a life-size wingspan of 1.8m. It certainly packs a punch.

"I love owls", says Greg. "I find them really interesting. They can rotate their necks 270° and did you know they can control the size of their pupils independently so one can be larger than the other for accuracy of vision? Their ears are slightly offset too so they can detect their prey accurately.



I am also drawing some big cats. While I love all animals, I suppose I am most drawn to species that are majestic and powerful. And yet, there's a paradox in that: while they're the hunters and at the top of the food chain in their environments, so many are still endangered.

I am working on a series where the animals – or birds – are against a striking sunset-orange glow. Orange is my favourite colour and it evokes warmth, the sun and bright days. I've always been inspired by the American artist and illustrator Drew Struzan who designed the iconic posters for the Indiana Jones films. They use deep orange as a backdrop which adds drama and a touch of danger and excitement.

Closer to home, I draw horses too. Living in East Hendred, near Ardington and Lockinge, it's the thick of racehorse country and there are horses everywhere."

As well as portraiture of animals and people, during Artweeks, Greg will also be showing a series of automotive-inspired paintings including the E-type Jag ("my wife's favourite") and the first Land Rover off the production line in 1948, as seen in the British Motor Museum in Gaydon.

"Cars are quite a challenge to draw," he explains. "The ellipses of the wheels have to be absolutely perfect – they're like a face in that you can tell instantly if they're not exactly right. With an animal you have a little more freedom," he smiles.





Jo Marshall

Long-time Artweeks exhibitor Jo Marshall is exhibiting in Chilton this May alongside Ardington jeweller Lisa Wallis and painter Lin Kerr. Her popular designs, inspired by the local countryside, include blackbirds, hares, striking silhouettes of trees, the moon, and the Uffington White Horse.

"I grew up in Oxford and one of my most vivid memories is visiting the Uffington White Horse as a small child and standing on the eye – although they ask you not to stand on the chalk these days.

I'd never been anywhere else like it, and I remember thinking it was the most magical place on earth. It was a special family day out with my grandmother and uncle, all of us crammed into the car as you did back then and I was probably on the parcel shelf! There was no one else there except my family and I felt as if we'd

discovered a secret place. We had a picnic and we rolled down the hill carefree. It was bright sunshine and so in my mind, that's how I always imagined it. There's something about the hill and the views that strikes a deep chord. Up on the top, you have the iron-age earthworks of Uffington Castle, The Manger and Dragon Hill below you and then the flatter Thames valley rolling away into the distance and you feel truly grounded in the landscape and its ancient history. It's a stunning view and an incredible place.

When I moved to Uffington, after a few years as a graphic designer in London, there was a horse in the field next door that belonged to a local potter. I had three small children by then and so I took pottery lessons almost as therapy, to give me a release from the everyday practicalities of family life. It was heaven, and sometime later I bought a potter's wheel and a kiln and other bits and pieces from another local potter who was retiring. They were ancient, 'shabby chic' I called them, but they were just what I needed to keep my creative side inspired and after that I spent as much time as I could in the garage.

There's something amazing about taking a blob of mud that's literally come out of the earth and making it into something that's useful and beautiful. I loved it immediately and I still find it just as exciting twenty years later," she smiles.

Jo's pots are highly decorative functional pieces in a stylish, colourful palette in which a light midnight blue, a cheerful turquoise, soft sunshine yellow, and a harmoniously peachy sunset figure strongly, colours inspired perhaps by the light

at dawn and the colours of dusk and twilight hours. "They're the most expectant times of day," she explains, "when you are likely to see the most wildlife.

I use a 'paper resist' technique to put the hare onto my pottery," she continues. "I use lots of layers of coloured slips and for each individual animal or decorative motif which I carefully hand cut from paper and stick to the surface to resist the application of slip or glaze. Then the design stands out the colour of the layer beneath. It's very labour-intensive but it's a labour of love!

I have always been very drawn to hares and this part of the Vale, and White Horse Hill in particular, is one of the best places in the country to see hares. If I was in Philip Pullman's Northern Lights (or The Golden Compass film), my daemon would definitely be the hare. He's such a beautiful animal. I love his free-spirited and elusive nature. They are becoming more of a rarity, so it is a real treat to see one, and when you do, there's this wildness about him – or even that madness of the March hare – paired with a confidence which is an unusual quality in British wildlife. He won't come near you but he isn't scared away by you either."

Alongside blackbirds and hares, in a co-exhibitor's new home gallery in Chilton, visitors can also browse pieces with random abstract Sgraffito designs, in which she scratches through the top surface of the slips to reveal a lower layer of a contrasting colour. These are each an emotional response to events, each 'mad platter' a Wonderland journey with paths leading in different directions.

