

**Woodchester Village Report
2015/16**

Woodchester Village Report 2015/6

The Parish Council – *Cllr. Dr. Gervase Hamilton, Chair*

1. Introduction.

The past year has seen some radical changes in the government's approach to planning and finance at local authority level with particular reference to the National Planning Policy Framework which has had a substantial effect at District and Parish/Town Council level. In particular, this applies to the need for all new developments to be 'sustainable' and for a 'housing delivery test', which has had the effect of forcing local councils to fulfil already unrealistic local housing targets. It has proved difficult for your Parish Council to keep up with all the multifarious changes which are likely to impact on the housing and development needs of our local residents. This particularly applies to the (admittedly small) need of parishioners for affordable housing in Woodchester. This has to be balanced against our equally strong desire to protect the integrity of our beautiful surroundings. Fortunately the Stroud District Local Plan does not envisage any major increase in housing in Woodchester with the majority of the proposed major developments occurring elsewhere in the district.

The other important area of local government reform is in the way in which it is financed. In the past local authorities have benefited from grants from central government with a smaller proportion coming from local council tax. Now the government has decided that local taxes, including business rates, are to become the main source of LA revenue. Essentially this is to hold local councillors, rather than government departments, accountable for their decisions. For this to work properly there is a need for councillors at County, District and Parish level to plan strategically, behave transparently and prioritise local interests in the light of providing value for money for those they represent. For Parish Councils such as ours this means that our precept (our contribution to the local council tax pot) remains within acceptable limits-any exceptional increase being likely to trigger a local referendum.

For the past three years Stroud District Council has paid to parish/town councils their share of the local council tax support it has received from central government. Each year the amount paid to the Parish council has been reduced in line with the stated reduction in government funding. The spending review agreed by the government last November meant less spending for District Councils. Therefore SDC will cease to pay local council tax support for Parish Councils from 2016/2017. This past year we have managed to keep our precept the same as last year but the increasing demands on our services at local level means we are bound to see an increase in our precept in the next financial year.

2. Stroud District Local Plan.

This was formally accepted by the District Council in November of last year following a requirement by the relevant government inspector to increase the number of housing units required from 9,500 to 11,400 over the next fifteen years designed to reflect the expected increase in the population locally, as well as for an increase in the number of jobs to be made available from an estimated 6,800 to 12,500. For the Stroud Valleys area, which includes Woodchester, the number of dwellings provided was raised to 450-mainly along the 'canal corridor'. Woodchester was regarded as 'moderately accessible' with a low need for housing and employment. No major housing developments are expected in our village in the next fifteen years. Any development that does occur will be mainly in-fill in conformity with the Parish Plan and the Village Design Statement agreed between the Parish and Stroud District Councils in 2015. In this

connection we asked Karen Phimister of the Gloucestershire Rural communities Council to undertake a survey of affordable housing need for local residents on our behalf.

3. The Woodchester Housing Needs Survey, July 2015.

The survey was sent to all 557 households in the village and 168 (30%) were returned to GRCC. Analysis of the data revealed that:-

- (i) 88% of the respondents owned their own homes, 4% rented from Stroud District and 6% were in the private rented sector.
- (ii) 84% of homes had three or more bedrooms; yet 69% of households had only one or two persons living in them.
- (iii) 4 respondents mentioned that a family member had moved away in the last 5 years because they could not afford the accommodation available within the parish.
- (iv) There are currently 12 households within the parish who have self-identified themselves as being in need of affordable housing accommodation, 8 of which require affordable rented accommodation while 4 would prefer shared ownership.
- (v) 47% of residents were in favour of small local development of affordable houses, 13% were against and 36% unsure.

So while there does not, at present appear to be a great need for affordable housing, the Parish Council felt that the survey might have to be repeated at some time in the future to reflect the changing needs of the next generation of Woodchester residents and if the village is not to become a place for mainly elderly and retired people or second home owners as is the case elsewhere in the Cotswolds.

4 .Section 106 (the Community Infrastructure Levy).

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1980 imposed a levy on those developers who stood to gain financially from the increased value of land on which they had successfully achieved planning permission to undertake development. The levy was to be directed towards a variety of public sector initiatives, including the provision of affordable housing in the immediate LA planning area. Typically a new housing development over a given threshold (usually 15 dwellings or more) would require the developer to provide a pre-determined proportion of the cost of the development to the local authority concerned. This was then to be applied to the provision of housing, leisure or education related activities locally.

Recent court decisions have resulted in a requirement that all successful planning applications for new properties, even single residences, are now subject to Section 106 contributions. The changing rules and how they should to be interpreted has led to some difficulty for Local Authority planning officers (including those in SDC) who take into account the views of local residents as to the use of the contribution as identified through consultation with their Parish or Town council. In the case of Woodchester, this has led to some confusion in the guidance issued by SDC as to how best the contribution from recent planning decisions should be allocated.

Stroud District Council is now proposing to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be allocated towards the future funding of new infrastructure developments at local level. This will result in a fairer allocation of resources in line with local needs. SDC is now consulting on a proposed 'Schedule and Draft Planning Obligation' document which lays out the type of infrastructure (including affordable housing) which will be funded or part funded by the CIL allocation. In this connection 15% of all the CIL collected will be given direct to the Parish Council

to allocate to whatever schemes of community infrastructure local residents agree are worthy of support. This is good news for the Parish Council.

As noted in our report by the chair of the Planning Sub-Committee, recent planning applications have resulted in the decision that s.106 payments should be allocated primarily to the mountain bike trails (although most of the funding for this delayed project has been funded from a grant from GCC, local businesses and charity donations) and towards the erection of kissing gates to replace decayed stiles on public footpaths around Woodchester. Some s.106 funding is likely to be allocated to the Football Club.

5. Neighbourhood Wardens.

The role of the Neighbourhood Warden (funded by the relevant Local Authority) is to help to create a safer, cleaner and greener district by engaging with local people and liaising with the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in a variety of roles, for example:

- Supporting vulnerable people
- Dealing with intimidating or anti-social behaviour
- Abandoned vehicles
- Overgrown hedges
- Bogus Callers
- Advice on home and security crime prevention schemes
- Hate crime
- Graffiti and fly posting
- Litter dropping and fly tipping/dumping.

Neighbourhood wardens do not aim to replace the roles of local health, police and social services but to supplement their roles.

Dominic Everiss, our local Neighbourhood Warden, is one of a team of six (soon to be eight) wardens in Stroud District. He, or when off duty one of his buddy wardens, have already been involved in a variety of issues around the Parish since his substantive appointment (see his attached quarterly report) and is working closely with the Parish Council to identify those areas which would further benefit from his intervention.

6. Traffic, Parking and Access issues.

The volume of traffic along the A46 seems to increase year by year and 2015/16 has been no exception. The Parish Council has become increasingly concerned about a small but significant increase in reported road traffic accidents within our boundaries - fortunately with no deaths or serious injuries over the past 12 months. However speeding over the 40 mile an hour limit by an irresponsible minority of drivers is an issue given the paucity of safe places to cross this busy road and the poor sightlines affecting both drivers and pedestrians. Our attempts to have the speed limit on the A46 reduced to 30mph and an increase the number of pedestrian controlled crossing places have been stymied by cut backs in the funding allocated to Gloucestershire Highways and their contractors, Amey.

Pot holes in the road surface are an ever present concern and a potential danger to road users. We always report these to GCC Highways as soon as we become aware of them but a backlog has built up and, notwithstanding emergency funding from central government, GCC has had a hard task to catch up with outstanding repairs and many minor roads in the parish still await intervention. The same applies to hazard warning and white lining identified as essential by the Parish Council which are seen as a low priority in the Highways current action programme.

'Twenty is Plenty' has been in place in Woodchester for over a year. Although local residents generally observe the speed restrictions, there is evidence that the advisory 20 mph is being ignored by many drivers, particularly commuters, from outside our area particularly on known 'rat-runs' such as Selsley Road. Unless the police or our local PCSOs can warn such drivers there is little the Parish Council can do to enforce the advisory limit.

Parking remains an unresolved issue, particularly in South Woodchester where obstruction by carelessly parked vehicles in the High Street has caused problems for the local twice weekly bus service on a number of occasions. Following a meeting last year with local residents and the emergency services, which could be hampered in their response by badly parked vehicles the situation has improved somewhat. In the absence of any suitable alternative car parking place to park for residents or visitors, the issue remains an intractable one.

Congestion of traffic in Convent Lane and around the Bottle Green plant spilling over into adjacent areas when events are on at the Convent Hotel has been causing increasing annoyance to local residents who find access to their homes regularly blocked on such occasions. The current parking at the Convent is totally inadequate for the needs of users. Plans were submitted a year ago by the Convent Hotel's owners for a new car park and access road from the A46 but this has been repeatedly delayed and, so far there is little sign of action from SDC Planners to enforce the planning regulations either for the car park or the planned extensions to the hotel itself.

Planning - *Cllr. Peter Lead, Vice-Chair*

This year, as in previous years, has seen several minor applications for extensions and other alterations, together with tree removal or pruning in protected areas.

Generally, we will not interfere with applications for minor building and tree work, but when we feel comment or objections should be made or parishioners are concerned we do take action.

In May the Rooksmoor development was being considered and many parishioners had serious concerns over design and impact. We supported these concerns and attended SDC but our concerns were over ruled and consent granted.

From July through to November two contentious applications were made, withdrawn and resubmitted. We, and some parishioners had concerns and objected. Our concerns were over ruled in respect of the Piano factory Woodchester Mill, despite some very poor and potentially dangerous design features. However, the concerns about the proposed car wash opposite Selsley Road were upheld and the application refused. It went to appeal where our concerns and SDC's refusal were upheld.

During August, The Convent was given consent for a new access onto the A46 and to use the whole of the building for hotel and commercial use. A condition was imposed stating that the access road be completed by May 2016. To date this has not been started.

Our position as consultees in the process of decision-making is very often frustrating, as on many occasions our comments seem to be ignored. However, we are sometimes listened to and will continue to meet and pass comment and when necessary attend meetings at SDC offices.

We recently have been the recipients of some section 106 money that has been allocated to the proposed cycle track. For many years this money has not been allocated to us, but due to new personnel at SDC this seems to have changed. We have to submit to SDC proposals and detailed costings for recreational schemes that they approve before they will allocate any money. For our Parish, suitable schemes are an issue as for many years we have struggled to find land for a playfield, however we are making enquiries as to opportunities that are eligible to receive funds.

Footpaths – *Cllr. Barbara Warnes*

In Woodchester, we are lucky with our footpaths, they are, in general, kept in good order. We don't suffer from them being 'ploughed up' as in some neighbouring parishes and landowners are usually prompt in responding to concerns. Of course, we have our fair share of mud but short of laying tarmac over the countryside, that is inevitable. Spring is always a good time to write a report as the mud is drying and the nettles haven't grown!

Last year I reported on the status of the cycle track ie when it opened on the disused railway line, it was never officially designated. There was a proposal to rectify this matter and various designations were under consideration. This, we were told, would lead to a proper maintenance plan. We know nothing more and nothing so far appears to have changed.

The vegetation at the sides is 'under control' partly due to residents who have cleared stretches outside their houses. We usually have a very good response to fallen trees etc. but it is important to remember that Amey will not deal with something they do not know about. Blockages should be reported to the parish clerk who will pass them on.

We are always grateful to the landowners for cutting back vegetation, especially nettles, on footpaths to allow us to walk through and to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who quietly improve conditions for us. Please be aware that rights of way only have a right for their particular designation and the right only exists on the path ie bicycles and horses are not allowed on footpaths and there is no right of access to other parts of fields and woodland just because they look attractive!

If there is any further development in the village and we receive Section 106 payments, we have a plan to replace several stiles with kissing gates. To start with, these will be on paths that would gain most benefit - where it is easily walkable but the stile is a difficult obstacle for some. Of course, these changes cannot be made without the landowners' co-operation.

Remember we have walks from Woodchester and a tree walk on the website, so please take a look and walk our footpaths.

Woodchester Endowed School – *Glyn Aelfryn Jones, Headteacher*

What type of learners do we want to see leaving Woodchester Endowed Primary School? What knowledge, skills and understanding will ensure that our children thrive when they leave for secondary school and the world thereafter? These questions are the drivers for everything that we strive to achieve at Woodchester. Whenever we look at school development we ensure that we are sharply focused on the needs of our children, first and foremost.

We believe that our children need to be great learners. We want them to achieve as highly as possible in order to equip them for the next step on their educational journey. Last academic year, children from Reception to Year 6 attained very highly indeed putting us among the very highest schools in Gloucestershire. In order to progress even further, we have been developing

innovative approaches to learning that deepen understanding and allow children to apply it in a range of contexts. Through this, we hope to drive standards up even further.

Children also need to be emotionally healthy. Over recent years, Britain has seen an increase in the number of children suffering with their emotional wellbeing. As adults, how many of us are put in positions of high stress on a regular basis? For us to be successful as a school, we need our children to be able to recognise and deal with anxiety. Woodchester Endowed Primary is leading the way with using Mindfulness with children. Staff have been trained to integrate Mindfulness within the school day as a way of managing emotions and stress through focusing on the present. This research rich approach is having an impact on both children and adults at Woodchester, creating a culture of emotionally healthy learners.

We also want our children to love learning. We want them to be inspired by the curriculum and see school as a place for enjoyment. As part of this, we have been developing our provision for outdoor learning. This involves lessons taking place both within the class as well as outside on a regular basis. Why learn to count inside a classroom when you can do it by collecting autumn leaves? I know which I would prefer! Our woodland area has enjoyed a revamp, in order to support this style of learning. This provides a rich and varied outdoor space in order for children to explore.

It is hard to think about Woodchester Endowed Primary School without thinking about sport. We have competed in numerous competitions, including a victorious outing at District Sports. Football, rugby, netball, cricket and various other competitions have been entered and our children took part with a desire to win as well as a sporting attitude. Recently, the school has hosted an event for professional development of the teaching of PE. Not only are we increasing the quality of PE and sports within Woodchester, we are also contributing to the quality of PE in the local area.

St. Domininc's School – *Briege Ward, Headteacher*

At St Dominic's the centre of our aspiration for our children to discover a deeper delight in learning. We want every child who comes through our doors to open his or her mind to new things and uncover their interests and talents. We wish to prepare them to use their passions and talents to make a difference in the wider world. We know we do this well and our children have a lot of fun along the way. In addition to this we ensure that the children are involved and are aware of school-wide initiatives such as the Pupil council and the chaplaincy team. The children are taught to embrace charitable endeavours such as creating Gift boxes for the needy at Christmas, contributing towards the food bank and raising funds for a number of charities. By doing this the children learn the importance of helping others.

The school year seems so short but it is truly amazing how much the children can fit into each term. This year we were involved in a number of events such as The Country Dance Festival, The Mock Trials, a number of sporting events, Young Voices in Birmingham and the local version at St George's church in Nailsworth. All of the children in key stage 2 attended the ballet at the Royal Opera House in Covent Gardens to see Romeo and Juliet. This was a wonderful show and I am confident will be a fond memory for many of our children and staff.

We are fortunate that our school is supported by a vibrant number of parents who truly care about our school and the community which supports it. We have an excellent Parent, Teacher & Friends association who are passionate about adding those extras for our children. They are

willing to give a lot of their time to raise money and make the school a hive of activity and fun whilst doing so. In addition to this we have very dedicated group of governors who give freely of their time to ensure we are giving the best service to our children and parents whilst supporting the staff along the way.

We are already preparing for our next academic year 2016-2017 and have enrolled a full cohort of 15 for our early year's class. This is very exciting for us all to see another full intake making their way into our beautiful EYFS classroom and learning area. At the same time we are sad to see our current Year 6 leave us for their high schools but feel confident in the knowledge that they are fully prepared and ready to take on the next phase in their learning with the Christian values and resilience learned at St Dominic's.

Woodchester Playgroup – *Meryl Smith, Play Leader*

It is great news that we can report another successful, happy and active year.

We have enjoyed the garden alterations immensely and found that the artificial surface has been such an asset for our outside play, explorations and learnings.

We also had an Ofsted inspection which resulted in GOOD. We were all very pleased with this and also found recommendations given by the inspector useful.

The number of children attending has been healthy, so allowing all the staff to be using their skills all year round, which in turn has brought more opportunities for the children.

Our future looks positive and we all hope this continues for many years.

Woodchester Village Shop – *Christian Dannemann*

The Volunteer Village Shop is now in its second year of running, with 50 volunteers taking regular shifts and working on the administration side of things. With close to 6000 hours contributed so far, the shop is a labour intensive project, but enjoyed by all contributing.

As usual, special thanks to Pauline, who is not only our very capable postmistress, but also helps the volunteers along. Without her, we wouldn't have been able to keep the shop and post office open.

The shop turned over close to £100,000 in the last financial year which just ended, making a healthy profit. We were able to donate to St. Mary's to fix the heating, to both our primary schools, and to Stroud Foodbank. On top of that, we had a nice Christmas do at The Old Fleece as a small thank you to all our volunteers. Last but not least, we paid a 2% dividend to our shareholders, which is more than you can get on most savings accounts in the UK, so we are quite proud of that as well. Talking of shares - we still have 140 shares at £50 each for sale, if anyone wants a decent return on their savings! On top of that, you will get a say about what to do with this year's profits at the AGM.

Everyone contributing can be very proud of what has been achieved, and it also looks as we have found a way to make this a sustainable feature of our village, able to not only contribute to the social fabric, but also capable of supporting village projects financially.

A huge thank you to all our volunteers and customers!

The Parish Church of St. Mary - Andrew Pemberton

The church at St Mary's always seeks to be welcoming to the community that it serves. The building has been open every day of the year for visitors to explore and use as a place for prayer. The churchyard and the Green have been well maintained by the 'Tuesday Gang', providing a peaceful area for reflection, and a space for recreation. The Green was the setting for the nativity tableau in the village carols organized by the Parish Events Committee, and was used for the village produce show in September. The Undercroft has been used for meetings by village organizations such as The Parish Council and The Historical Society. Concerts given by The Capriol Chamber Orchestra and The Thameshead Singers have been held in the Church. I-sing-pop was a great event held in church in September for the children at Woodchester Endowed School.

A number of regular events are held which attract many beyond the church membership:

Lunch-with-Friends, the monthly lunch club for predominantly older people and those living alone, is now well established and enjoyed both by the guests and the large team of willing volunteers who cook hot meals, prepare tables, wash up and provide lifts.

"Coffee and chat" continues, in the Undercroft on the first Saturday morning of each month.

Messy Church has provided fun-filled craft sessions for many families from Woodchester and beyond, including special Easter and Christmas sessions. A new event this year was the Messy Church Light Party, an alternative to Halloween, which was attended by 86 children.

The **Laser Youth Group** for school years 6-8 has continued to meet.

Many of our congregation attended a weekend away at Lee Abbey (Devon) in March. There was a men's walking weekend in the Brecon Beacons in May. A group attended the New Wine conference in the summer, and young people from Junior Church went to the ever-popular Lager Camp and on other Scripture Union holidays. In October we received a visit of the choir from our link parish in Sweden.

The bell ringers have continued to mark the centenaries of the WW1 soldiers commemorated on the Woodchester war memorial with a half-muffled quarter peal.

The strong links with Woodchester Endowed School have continued. The school has 12 governors, 7 of which are foundation governors.

We continue to support the mission organizations Interserve, CMS, Tear Fund and Scripture Union. Money was raised for The Poppy Appeal and for the Children's Society. The collection for Christian Aid took place in May. Before Christmas, gift-filled shoeboxes were collected for Operation Christmas Child.

The work of the Church and its concern for others is supported by prayer. A prayer chain has been set up for individual requests, and also a prayer tree for hanging written requests at the back of church. A group has met for prayer on Wednesday evenings and there is a new prayer walk on the first Saturday of each month.

Our old boiler broke down and has been replaced with two new boilers enabling the church and the Undercroft meeting room to be supplied independently. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed donations, which enabled the replacement to be completed before Christmas.

David Newton, our church surveyor, has drawn up plans for the redevelopment of the back of church to provide better facilities and more usable space for community events. This is to include a new kitchen and toilets, storage space, opening up the base of the tower, and moving the rood screen to the back wall to improve its appearance. There are sketches in church of these proposals: we don't yet have the costs or timescales for completing what will surely require several phases of work (and fund-raising).

Our activities and services are advertised via the monthly Apex leaflet which can be delivered to your household within the village, and via the website www.stmaryswoodchester.org.uk.

The Priory Church of the Annunciation – Jenny Bailey

We have had another busy and fulfilling year, helped by Fr. Bill's work both in Stonehouse and Woodchester now being supported by Deacon Bogdan Wasylikiw, Gloucestershire born to a Polish mother and Ukrainian father. Bogdan has introduced some East European customs to our major festivals, colourful and full of symbolism good for adults and children to share. We held three ecumenical services earlier this year, Christian unity [Churches Together] with a Latvian theme, symbolic foods again, bread with salt in a hole in the middle and ginger biscuits, Women's World Day of Prayer led by the women of Cuba, a poor country under a Communist regime, then a candle-lit Taize Lent service. All were well attended by our fellow churches. Last autumn there was a shared Parish/School Sunday lunch with delicious food prepared by a parent who cooks at Ebley Mill.

The Stuart Singers' concert last month raised £615 for Vumilia, a Tanzanian village linked with Nailsworth which now has a vital borehole saving long daily treks for water; their next project is fund-raising for Secondary education, Primary being free. The Thameshead Singers will be performing on 10th July to help Hope for Tomorrow, a Tetbury based mobile chemotherapy charity. This month a Parish Walk round Woodchester Park is taking place for CAFOD, our main charity, also our annual Rogation Mass in a barn at Barton End Farm with a bring and share supper, thanks to Cllr. Rowland Blackwell.

Finally, we have a large number of children from both parishes making their First Communion in June. This is the corner stone of our faith and a milestone in their lives. There have also been many baptisms, marriages and funerals over the past year, again connected with food and hospitality, and a reminder of the Last Supper.

Village Events Committee – Rachel Hemming, Secretary

The first event of the year was the Open Gardens in June when gardens all over the village were opened. Everybody had worked very hard to produce gardens of a very high standard. Teas were served in two gardens. The day was fine and this proved a very popular event. Over £500 was raised which was divided between Horsfall House and the Stroud Food Bank.

The usual Produce and Craft Show took place in September when a wide range of items was on display. The children's classes produced some very imaginative exhibits. Tessa Pemberton won Best in Show and Jane Willoughby the David Brown Trophy for Fruit and Vegetables. Amber Tunney was overall winner in the Junior Section.

For the second year the day also included a fun Dog Show on the Green. This proved a popular part of the proceedings. As it was the WI Centenary year they provided an exhibition in the church.

Carols took place on December 21st, accompanied by Nailsworth Silver Band. Starting at Frogmarsh singers walked to the Green for nativity performance, carols and refreshments. The Committee is now planning a Tea Party in celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday.

Woodchester W.I – *Kath Gay and Sally Bull*

We like to advertise our WI as small and friendly; we are still friendly but have welcomed 8 new members this year. Sadly we lost one member but can still boast of 23, the most for many years. We have enjoyed a wide range of talks. Our speakers have covered subjects such as Zululand and the tasks of a Parish Clerk; we were enrolled into The Land Army – just for an hour or so! We had an amusing evening of anecdotes and funny rhymes and heard a very informative talk on the walled garden at Stroud Museum. Our WI year always includes food and we enjoyed fish and chips delivered by our own Meals on Wheels husband and a Christmas celebration meal of casseroles and jacket potatoes, cooked by members. Crafts were part of the programme too: a session of Origami and "Arm Knitting" on members' night (thank you for that, Gail). Some of us ended up with a scarf, some items were beyond description, and some members just went home in despair, but still laughing: a good night was had by all.

We participated in trips, walks and the annual concert with Gloucestershire Federation WI. Providing teas for the village Open Gardens and a tombola stall at the local produce show proved to be good fund raisers. To help celebrate the WI Centenary we joined with the Group for The Baton Day, one member attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party and another went to the AGM at The Royal Albert Hall. We also held an exhibition in the church on the produce show day. Our village concert last December was in aid of Cobalt. Unfortunately it will be our last for the foreseeable future, due to lack of support, but we are proud of the funds we have raised over the years for charity.

New members are always welcome, as are visitors who are interested in a particular speaker. We meet at 7.30pm on the third Thursday of each month in the village hall.

Woodchester Historical Society – *Katherine McNealey, Secretary*

This report covers the period June 2015-June 2016.

We are a small and friendly group of local history enthusiasts who meet three or four times a year to listen to expert speakers or to enjoy a guided walk or tour.

In June we used St. Mary's church to accommodate over thirty people who listened with great interest to a talk from former county archivist, David Smith, on William Tyndale and the origins of the King James Bible. We were fascinated to learn how many phrases in common use originated from the Bible.

Barbara Warnes kindly lead a guided walk round the village and told us all about Woodchester at the time of the First World War.

In September our very own David Gegg shared his knowledge of the life of the poet AE Housman, who was a regular visitor to North Woodchester.

At our November meeting we were well entertained by Fiona Warin, who is the Allotments Officer for Cheltenham Borough Council. She talked about the History of the Allotment and illustrated her talk with a number of real life props including a garden fork.

November was also our AGM, when Jill Merriott-White stood down from her role as Chair, to be replaced by Barbara Warnes who was previously Vice Chair. Mike Warnes remains as treasurer and Katharine McNealey as Secretary.

Local Historian John Loosely spoke about childhood employment in Gloucestershire at our March meeting. We were also pleased to welcome four new members to our Society. Sally and Kevin Bull and Mike and Lesley MacKaskill.

Many thanks to Zillah Bolton and Brenda Highfield who warmly and efficiently provide us with tea, coffee and biscuits at every meeting.

Girlguiding – Jackie Hayes

Both Brownies and Guides have enjoyed regular meetings with games, singing, craft, cooking and other activities. Various badges have been awarded, with all the Brownies gaining their Musician badge at the end of the summer term and the Guides achieving their Performing Arts badge with a great rendition of songs from musicals, painting their own scenery and making their own props.

Both groups joined other units from Nailsworth Valley District for a trip to West Midland Safari Park and some Woodchester Guides joined Nailsworth Guides at their summer camp.

In November, as usual, Woodchester Brownies and Guides took part in the Remembrance parade and Church service, in Nailsworth. The Brownies worked towards their Season's badge and the Guides took part in a challenge called "Top Job". For one Patrol this involved organising and running a disco for the Brownies which was a great success. Girls also took part in the WI Christmas concert.

We were pleased to welcome a former Guide to the Leadership Team, as she volunteered to become a Young Leader, working with the Brownies. The girls decided her Guiding name would be Humming Bird.

Once again the Brownies and Guides joined forces in March this year to host a coffee evening to raise funds for the Acorn Children's Hospice and the Starlight Children's Foundation. An amazing total of over £340 was raised and everyone's support was greatly appreciated.

Woodchester Guides recently enjoyed a trip to Cadbury's World with Nailsworth Guides and some of the girls are also joining them on summer camp in Dorset. Another evening at Westonbirt Arboretum is also being planned.

Anyone interested in joining Girlguiding, either as a Brownie, Guide or Leader, please visit www.girlguiding.org.uk, or www.ggwoodchester.wordpress.com or contact Jackie on 01453 821258.

Stroud Beekeepers – Buzz Club – Peter Lead

We have started our Buzz Club meetings at the allotments but sadly, our bees did not make it through the winter. Despite feeding and treating them and the bees having enough food, for some reason 2 colonies died and one was destroyed by wasps. Many beekeepers have suffered similar winter losses and are beginning to think that these losses could be due to the queen bee failing. This in turn is probably due to the drones, (male bees), not developing fully and therefore not being able to efficiently mate with the queen.

All of this could be due to the use of insecticides and increase damage due to the varroa mite or the changing climate and the bees taking time to acclimatise.

We are restocking our apiary, and will continue to promote beekeeping, awareness of the world we live in and the creation of a healthy environment. At our first meeting we sited solitary bee hotels full of larvae ready to hatch and made some new hotels.

Exciting news is the progress of Buzz Club Ghana. During my visit to Ghana we awarded two schools with Buzz Club status and have raised £6,000 towards our target of £8,000. The project, to fund secondary school education through beekeeping, will start in August this year and run for 3 years to assess its sustainability, and then be promoted to other schools in Ghana.

Please visit www.stroudbeekeepers.co.uk to find out more about this project, how to join our Buzz Club and other activities that we are involved with.

Woodchester Football Club – James Collins, Secretary

It's been a very positive season at Woodchester Football Club. We started our Stroud League 7 campaign with a good win at home, and whilst we haven't been able to keep results to that level, our points tally has comfortably improved on last year's. The season will finish with a hard-won appearance at the Bill Bick Cup final - so hopefully by the time this is published we'll have some long-awaited silverware!

Off the pitch our finances remain in modest but good order, with much appreciated continuing support from local sponsors including Renishaws and The Ram Inn. In order to take the club forward more significantly, in tandem with providing a more meaningful facility for the local community, we are working very closely with the Parish Council in order to obtain a grant for a new community clubhouse.

Woodchester Mansion Trust – Rhiannon Wigzell, Chair

The catering facilities at the Mansion have been improved and expanded for the 2016 open season, building on the achievements of last year. In addition to the regular refreshments, there are packages combining tours with lunches or cream teas served in the drawing room. The Mansion also caters for weddings and private parties. It has a five-star hygiene rating and is regularly commended on Trip Advisor.

A new feature this year is that the large bedroom over the drawing room has been made accessible by a walkway, so visitors can enter the room and see more than was possible from the corridor, in particular the construction of the drawing room's beautiful vaulted ceiling and the stunning views. Several Mansion-related historic artefacts, such as the Woodchester glass, are also being displayed for the interest of visitors.

All season the Mansion is hosting a wonderful exhibition of textile art created by members of the Stroud Branch of the Embroiderers' Guild, inspired by the Mansion and Park and celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. There are also other attractions and events; for example, an outdoor production of *Hamlet* by The Festival Players on Thursday 25th August, Heritage Open Day on Thursday 8th September and the popular, spooky Halloween Party on Saturday 29th October. There has already been a concert by the Minpins (the Junior section of Stroud Choral Society) and a demonstration of making a stained-glass green man. (See website for further details of events).

The Mansion needs several million pounds spent on its conservation. There are also smaller projects in the £5,000 to £10,000 range. In the meantime, work goes on to prevent further deterioration. Progress has been made on a number of repairs and improvements such as glazing windows and temporary solutions have been effected to stop more water damage. Stonemasonry students from The City of Bath College and the Prince's Foundation have worked, often in very wet weather, at repairing the badly frost-damaged east buttress and elsewhere. Planning permission has been applied for to construct a "Mason's Lodge" and work undertaken, in an area of the Mansion that is currently unused and awkward to access, towards providing an indoor teaching space for student stonemasons and possibly also for school visits.

The Mansion was featured on television twice last year, on *Countryfile* and on *Antiques Road Trip*. This year, so far, there has been a visit from *Escape to the Country*, although the programme will not be screened for several months.

In 2015 around 250 Greater Horseshoe bats and over 500 Lesser Horseshoe bats, reared their young at the Mansion. They have been returning since mid-April and can be watched on the screens in the bat observatory.

The Mansion relies on its knowledgeable, resourceful volunteers for such important and essential tasks as tour guiding, driving the minibuses, selling tickets, helping with the catering, putting on children's activities and facilitating school visits. Another group of volunteers apply their expertise to care and maintenance. An active volunteers' group organizes events; for example, a wine tasting of the local Woodchester Valley wines and an explanatory tour of the recently excavated Italian Garden near the Mansion. If anyone would like to join the team, or find out more please contact Rhiannon Wigzell (rhiannon@atcombe.com; telephone 01453 872353).

In 2016 the Mansion will again be open six days a week until 30th October (closed Mondays, except for Bank Holidays) from 11.00 am until 5.00 pm.

www.woodchestermansion.org.uk;
info@woodchestermansion.org.uk;
Telephone 01453 861541 or follow us on Facebook

SWALT – South Woodchester Amenity Land Trust – Bert Cossins

It's pleasing to report once again that Orchard Pastures continues to flourish – all allotment plots are taken and well-tended. The cold spring has delayed progress and we've our fingers crossed that the late April frosts won't reduce our autumn fruit harvest; we had anticipated a bumper crop following the volume of noise generated at our well attended January wassailing. We're very appreciative of our 'pruners' endeavours to ensure the trees are both shapely and productive.

It is probably fair to tell you that the periods of low temperatures and a wet August reduced both the onion and potato crops – onion rot coupled with potato blight! Our local badger population have acquired a taste for carrots, sweet corn and Jerusalem artichokes – very difficult to keep them out.

The Buzz Club is well attended; it's proving to be very popular with children and young people. The orchard chickens have yet to be replaced – 'Freddy Fox' outwitted the owners!

No firm decision has been taken on the future of the remaining untamed area of brambles but discussions are on-going; decision may be made by the time writing the 2017 SWALT update.

All readers are cordially welcome to visit our stall at the Village Produce Show in September, attend our annual apple juicing in the autumn and heartily contribute to the wassailing in January '17 – watch the Woodchester Word and posters for details.

Woodchester Village Hall – Malcolm Swait, acting Chair

October 2015 was the end of an era for the Village Hall, as Bob Ludlow and Joyce Adamson, the Chairman and Secretary, both decided that after 21 years of faithful service to the Hall, the time had come to formally retire. However they left behind a Village Hall generally in excellent condition both structurally and financially, which has been the result of many years of tireless work. Throughout this time they were very ably assisted by Kath Gay and others, and not least, Kath's husband Brian. This however has left a gap in the Committee, which needs to be filled, ideally by several others to spread the load and relieve Kath of some of her burden. As a temporary measure, I have agreed to be "acting Chairman", but due to very many other commitments I am reluctant to take this on "long term". I am hopeful that we do have two potential new trustees, but if anyone knows of anyone else who would be prepared to get involved, please contact Kath or myself.

During the last regime the Hall has been updated to comply with all the latest Legal and Health and Safety conditions necessary for a public building. Additionally it has benefitted from a complete overhaul of the kitchen, toilets, lighting and heating; including a new boiler. Further attractive windows were installed to commemorate the Millennium, a new floor has been laid, a new entrance created to provide disabled access, the car park re-laid, new tables and chairs, regular redecoration, new cups and saucers.... the list is endless! However, old buildings need constant attention and we are currently arranging for the damp area on the rear wall to be completely re-plastered, and treated to try to overcome the damp problem. The Hall is well used

by regulars groups for meetings, gatherings and classes. It also provides an excellent venue for private functions and can be booked, subject to availability through Kath.

We thank the village for their support over the years and look forward to this ongoing: and most particularly with two or three more willing to act as trustees in some role or other.

Seys & Bridges Educational Foundation – *Diana Fowler, clerk and trustee*

Meetings

The trustees met twice last year. As is usual following the end of the financial year, the annual accounts were presented to the May meeting and subsequently reviewed by an outside examiner.

Grants awarded

The annual grant of £100 was made to the Governors of Woodchester Endowed School. A further sum was allocated to the Governors to help fund the purchase of a new boiler.

Three grants were awarded to individuals to assist with music and drama lessons and after school activities. A grant was also given to St Dominic's School for the benefit of individual pupils who needed funding towards PGL trips, uniform and after school club.

Applications from eligible individuals are welcomed at any time and should be sent to the Clerk.

I submit this report on behalf of Mrs. Liz Ewart-James and myself, the two trustees appointed by the Parish Council.

St Loe's Exhibition Fund – *George Bastin, Chair*

St Loe's School Exhibition Fund or St Loe's Trust, as it now known, was founded by Nathaniel Cambridge in 1697 to provide financial assistance to pupils attending the maintained primary schools in Woodchester and Amberley who seek further education. The trust now provides beneficiaries grants to assist funding students at universities, training colleges and those entering a trade or profession.

The Trust meets twice a year to provide grants to students who can demonstrate a financial need for assistance in pursuing their personal goals in further education. Sometimes the requirement to demonstrate this need discourages some applicants. The funds have grown slightly this year and we have been able to award grants to four students. One of the grants has been made so that a student is able to pursue a dance training course which has resulted in him being selected for a national theatre group. They also provided £300 each to the Woodchester and Amberley schools for books for their library and a book to each school leaver in both schools.

If there are any parishioners who wish to apply for grants they are urged to apply as early as possible after the award of a place at university and by 1st September at the latest to the Chairman or Secretary at the address below. Any application is dealt with in the strictest confidence.

We also looking for a parishioner to become a governor. This position should take up no more than a total of 2 hours over two meetings. If anyone is interested they should speak to the Chairman in the first instance at the address below.

St Loe's Exhibition Fund

Charity No. 311753
c/o Goring House
North Woodchester
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 5NG
Telephone 01453 872526

Woodchester Quarterly Report

Warden: Dominic Everiss (07753725185)

On duty for 15 shifts

Month: March, 2016

Visits to Local Residents:

Rooksmoor, visit residents & give advice re overgrown hedge.

Lawns Park, visit residents & give advice on boundary dispute.

Visits to vulnerable people: x 2

Liaise with Partner Agencies:

Parish Council & Councillors re overgrown hedge & fly posting procedures.

Attend Woodchester Parish Council full meeting to introduce myself & my role.

Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour:

Fly Posting:

6 taken down advertising teak sale.

Fly Tipping:

Bath Rd, following a vehicle when a lit cigarette butt was thrown from the driver's window. £70 fine issued through the post to the registered keeper.

Frogmarsh Mill, chair & table.

Abandoned Vehicles:

Frogmarsh Lane abandoned caravan. Owner traced & vehicle moved.

Attcombe Rd., not abandoned, owner traced.

Graffiti Removal: Nil.

Dog fouling: No complaints.

Foot Patrol Conducted: x 5

Directed Patrols: N/A

Any Other Business:

Provide youth transport for young people to attend the Stroud District Youth Council.

Take work experience pupils on patrol.

Mentor new intake of SDC Wardens.

Southfield Rd, complaint of hedge obstructing the pavement. Owner spoken to.

Matter being dealt with.

Forthcoming events:

wc 02.05.16 I will be heavily involved in work supporting SDC staff organising the elections.