

The WOODCHESTER Word

Issue 30 - May 2010

Should we try to save the replica of the Great Orpheus Pavement?

On 24th June 2010, the amazing replica of Woodchester's Great Orpheus Pavement goes to public auction, with the risk that it may end up leaving not just the county, but the country! Does it matter where the replica of the pavement is displayed? Should it stay in what many see as its rightful place, here in Gloucestershire, or does it not matter where it is as long as it is available for public viewing?



Most recently it has been on long-term public display in Prinknash Abbey, Gloucestershire, but its full potential has not been realised there and its private owner has decided he wants to sell this incredible historical artefact.

The original Roman pavement lies here in Woodchester in the heart of the County and is recognised as having global historical significance, but many factors now make it impossible to put it on public view. Not least is its ability to attract such a huge number of visitors that the local infrastructure would be unable to cope - when last on view in 1973, around 150,000 people turned up over two weeks.

The reconstruction itself attracts similar levels of interest from the media and public. It has the potential to become a major tourist attraction, it is an important and vital educational resource, and has great historical, artistic and cultural merit.

A small group of Woodchester citizens has decided that the replica Great Orpheus Pavement does indeed belong in Gloucestershire. The team, which includes members of Woodchester Parish Council, local business leaders and long-term villagers, has been trying to establish whether funds could be raised to buy the pavement and to find out where it could be housed in the long term. Local solicitors and accountants have been engaged to act as independent overseers for the project.

Funds might be raised from individual benefactors, local and national businesses, as well as from local people. In the time available, it is unlikely that approaches to major charities and funding bodies will be successful, so the success of the project will depend wholly upon the generosity of individuals.

The goal is to raise enough money to buy, renovate, display and promote the replica of the Great Orpheus Pavement. The hope is to permanently display it as close as possible to the site of the original and create a major and culturally significant public attraction. A number of local organisations have been approached regarding possible hosting of the Pavement, and meetings with these will be arranged in the near future, once we have an idea of the initial financial support for the project.

It's an ambitious project, with very little time to succeed, but with such an important local historical treasure at risk of being lost to the area, it must be worth trying to save.

There is more information about the Woodchester Roman Villa and the Great Orpheus Pavement inside this issue.

If you are interested in getting involved in helping to save the replica of the Great Orpheus Pavement, you can contact members of the team to discuss how you can help.

Contact: Rhiannon Wigzell on 01453 872353, or email rhiannon@atcombe.com. Peter Lead on 01453 832383, or email peterdawnlead@aol.co.uk. Paul Syrett on 01453 878 553 or email paul@syrett.name. Iain Dunbar on 01453 872185 or email iaindunbar@btconnect.com





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Woodchester Villa and the Great Orpheus Pavement

The Roman period was one of great prosperity for Britain – and Gloucestershire – with large settlements developing around Gloucester and Cirencester. Great villas erected include one at Woodchester near Stroud, which included a phenomenal 60 rooms – 20 of which boasting mosaic floors, including the large hall which contained the great Orpheus Pavement.

It is the largest mosaic to be found north of the Alps; and it survives largely intact beneath the local churchyard (though partially damaged by grave-digging). It is carefully protected for future generations.

The mosaic depicts one of the most important figures in Greek mythology, Orpheus, with his lyre, hunting dog and a myriad of beasts around him – including a tiger, leopard, lion and elephant.

The remains of the original pavement were periodically uncovered and opened to members of the public, and during the last opening in 1973 brothers Bob and John Woodward became spellbound with the work. Fearing another uncovering might never take place after more than 150,000 visitors flocked to see the mosaic, they decided to make a full-scale reconstruction.

Bob Woodward tried to discover what the missing parts must have looked like and found a report dating back to 1693. In it Celtic scholar Edward Llwyd recorded having seen 'birds and beasts on the floor'. More animal sightings were recorded in the early 18th century – possibly the result of partial uncovering, perhaps during burials. During the 1780s, Samuel Lysons made the first full excavation.

The original pavement was made of limestone in seven different colours and 14 shades.

A replica in stone would have been prohibitively heavy and expensive to use for the project so instead the Woodward's scoured the country to find clays with suitable natural colours.

12 tons of clay were fired into strips which were then cut into cubes. Colour slides of the original were projected from below onto a transparent workbench. That way the image of each square appearing on the bench was exactly the same size as the original.

Following a breathtaking amount of research, honing their skills and meticulous work, 10 years later the mosaic was completed and even gets a mention in the Guinness Book of Records under the 'largest mosaic' entry: 'The largest Roman mosaic in Britain is the Woodchester Pavement, Gloucestershire of cAD 325, excavated in 1793, now re-covered with protective earth. It measures 47ft square comprising 1.5 million tesserae. A brilliant total reconstruction was carried out by Robert and John Woodward in 1973 to 1982'.



The reconstruction of the 2,200 square foot Orpheus Pavement has been described as one of the most significant archaeological projects of recent times, and is possibly the greatest example of a Roman mosaic outside of Italy.

Only one small panel of acanthus scrollwork, delicately pieced together in tiny mosaic work, is currently on display to the public, at the British Museum. More than 40% of the original Orpheus Pavement has unfortunately been damaged over the years and may never be publicly displayed in our lifetime. This increases the value of the reconstruction and the importance of displaying it for public viewing.

Protecting the Woodchester Roman Pavement - a story from the last opening

When the Roman pavement was open last in 1973, a group of men who lived in the village and who had a dog decided that they would guard the pavement at night. In the past, it had not been unusual for people to climb the fence to steal a few bits of tesserae to keep as souvenirs.

On the first night of the opening, I settled down to sleep on the camp bed in the shed specially erected for the purpose, with the dog asleep on the grass by the door. Just as the sun was rising, I awoke to hear an almighty commotion taking place outside, to see two police officers climbing the fence and my dog pouncing across the precious pavement in a direct line towards one of the police officer's dangling legs over the fence! My memory doesn't tell me whether at that time I was more concerned for the welfare of the leg or the priceless pavement!

The police hadn't been told that we were spending the night in the churchyard, so had come to check all was well. Finding the gate locked (obviously), they decided to have a look inside. Also, the dog hadn't been told that a dangling leg in a dark blue uniform and wearing a black boot was not to be savaged! Nor had the dog been told that she should go round the pavement and not across it with all claws out to get a good grip! I can reassure everyone that neither the policeman nor the pavement suffered any damage. We had no more visits from the local constabulary as they were confident that the pavement was in safe hands, paws and jaws! (Rod Harris)

Around the Village

Parish Council Update

The Woodchester Spring Litter Pick was well supported on Sunday 11th April by regulars and new volunteers. There was a depressing amount of junk collected particularly as the village was cleared up only last November. One of the worst places every time is where youngsters ride their bikes over the humps just off the cycle track near the lay-by on the A46. The Parish Council would urge everyone to keep that area, and everywhere else in the Parish, free from litter.

This year's Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday 20th May at 7.00p.m. at the Endowed School Hall. All residents are invited to this sociable occasion to find out about all the many and varied organisations in Woodchester. This year there will also be an update on the Village Design Statement following a preliminary analysis of the questionnaire that everyone was asked to complete during March.

St Loes Trust is looking to appoint an honorary treasurer. The post has been held for the last 22 years by Geoffrey Yates who has served loyally and efficiently but now wishes to retire. The charitable trust exists for the benefit of children in Woodchester and Rodborough and grants awards to the local schools and their pupils. The duties have been simplified over the years. The time involved is now about half a day in each quarter spent writing cheques and keeping a cash book together with two or three short evening meetings throughout the year. The Governors are asking anyone who wishes to be considered for this worthwhile and rewarding position to apply in the first instance to the Chairman of the Trust, George Bastin, on 01453 872526 or to write to him at Oakley House, North Woodchester, GL5 5PQ.

The website has been upgraded and updated by our volunteer webmaster John Fairley enabling many of the Village Design Statement questionnaires to be completed online. It also has a new address: www.woodchesterparish.org.uk. The site has real potential to be a great source of information for the local community. To post items on local events and issues or to give feedback to help us to continue to develop and improve the site please contact either clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk or webmaster@woodchesterparish.org.uk.

Woodchester Parish Council has revised its Emergency Plan in the light of feedback from local residents, Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire County Council as well as the experience of other parishes in dealing with emergencies at local level. The updated plan can now be found on the Parish Council web-site. We are now looking for volunteers who could, during a major incident, offer the Parish Emergency Management team specialist skills, expertise or practical resources. These could range from temporary accommodation to vehicles and from camp beds, pillows and blankets to generators. A questionnaire detailing ways in which you can help is available on the village web-site or alternatively from the Parish Emergency Co-ordinator Dr Gervase Hamilton (01453 872837, email clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk), to whom completed questionnaires should be returned. The details you supply will remain confidential to members of the Parish Council and will not be published in any revised version of the plan.

Orchard Pastures Update

Do you remember what the field was like this time last year! Brambles, brambles and more brambles was the coverage it had had for some fifteen years but now - WOW! Following working parties, machine clearance, some exquisitely executed 'horse power' harrowing from Comet and Prince (courtesy of Peter and Anita Brown) and a great number of most excellent bonfires, masterminded by Bert Cossins, the place has been transformed into five really exciting looking allotments and ... the beginnings of a real community orchard, planted with indigenous Gloucestershire varieties including Cambridge Queening, Ashmead's Kernel and Arlingham Schoolboys. The trees have been sponsored and dedicated by several local people and thanks go out to all.

The allotments are now deer-fenced and planted with a multitude of produce. The trust is looking to provide more plots but help will be needed for the clearance work. Other projects such as a vineyard, playground and garden are still at the blueprint stage. If you have any questions or ideas please contact swalt.wire@hotmail.co.uk.



Ploughing Orchard Pastures the traditional way: Comet and Prince with Peter Brown.



Planting the Community Orchard



The new allotments take shape, complete with deer fencing.

Around the Village

Woodchester WI

Our small but friendly WI still meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7.30p.m. in the village hall, new members are always welcome. Come along and see what we can offer.

We have been invited to provide refreshments at Atcombe Court Open Gardens on June 12th; we look forward to this challenge! Come along and have a cuppa in beautiful surroundings. Our next community project will be a produce stall at the village fete in September and we also aim to participate in the Church Flower Festival the same weekend.

If anyone is interested in joining us please contact – Muriel McTiffin on 873348 or Fleur Vallender on 766038.

Woodchester Historical Society

The next meeting of the society will be on Tuesday 8 June at 7pm. It will be a guided walk round the Dunkirk Millponds with Nigel Brown. Park in the overflow car park (Stroud end of the site) – start from the Nailsworth end of the site, outside Coopers Mill. Anyone requiring further information or transport should contact Nigel Brooke-Smith on 872586.

Woodchester FC

Another successful season is coming to an end, with only three games left to play. After promotion last year from Div 8 we are now lying roughly mid-table in Div 7 even though at the end of last season we lost several of our top players to clubs in Div 3 & 4.

We are very pleased with our progress this year and most of all with some of the younger players coming through the ranks and we would ideally like to hear from any local Dads who would wish to set up and run a South Woodchester Youth Team. All the facilities are naturally available and there is a very active Stroud League for all age groups. The Official Stroud League web site is: <http://www.barkus.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/div7.htm>

We have also recently applied to become a registered "CASC" (Community Amateur Sports Clubs) which is a form of charity specially created by the government to help local community clubs. This will be finalised soon and we are then hoping to make an announcement regarding a very kind offer of sponsorship from one of the "locals".

Anyone who wishes to have a trial with a view to playing next year is very welcome to come along for a run out and we are also still looking for a shirt sponsor!!

Stroud Beekeepers Association.

The bees are now out collecting nectar for their queen and larvae and so the first check on the beehives was made on the 10th April. Happily all was well and the eight hives there were all buzzing and healthy. The Apiary is located in the Convent Farm and is used by the Association for training at all levels.

On the 24th April a Beginners Training Day was held at St Dominic's School and the Apiary when 20 people of all ages met and were given a basic introduction to beekeeping. Anyone interested in joining the Association and coming along to the Apiary should contact Peter Lead 832383.

Woodchester Girlguiding

As we are still celebrating 100 years of Girlguiding, many of our activities in the summer term will be centred around this theme. The Brownies will be celebrating in the Forest of Dean with Brownies from all over Gloucestershire, and there is a day for Brownies and Guides at Stratford Park, where we will be having a picnic and participating in various activities and challenges.

Our regular weekly evening meetings will be packed with the usual variety of summer activities, including meeting away from our usual venue, getting out and about, and for the Guides the obligatory campfires. Food features rather a lot in our plans for this term, but we also have plenty of games planned to work off the excess calories! Some of the older Brownies will be joining 1st Nailsworth Brownies for a Pack holiday.

Anyone wishing to join Brownies (girls aged 7-9 years) or Guides (girls aged 10 -13 years), or anyone (aged 14-64, including men over 18!) who would like to help as a leader, should contact Jackie on 01453 821258.

Local water feature in Japanese children's park

This year kicked off to a great start for local specialist water landscaping company Ebb & Flow with a large order for one of their water features. An 11-piece 'Akalla' Flowform cascade, destined for a children's adventure park in Japan, will improve the quality of the water in its lake whilst also becoming a children's water play attraction.

Most of Ebb & Flow's granite cast water features are produced at Ruskin Mill but due to the size and weight of some of the pieces required for this order, they turned to Woodchester based Hampton Cast Stone for help. "Despite being confronted with a very challenging production schedule, thick snow at times and having to handle some pieces weighing almost 800kg each, Hampton Cast Stone came up trumps" said Warren Abis from Ebb & Flow. "They were a pleasure to work with", he added. The cascade was installed in late April.

Ebb & Flow supply everything from large or small cascades to individual water features. You can visit them at Ruskin Mill, or see their advert for further contact details.



School Reports

Woodchester Endowed School

During the last few months we have seen the talents of many of our pupils shine. We have held a series of class assemblies for parents concentrating on our 'values curriculum' which have allowed children to think deeply about what they believe is really important in life. We have also entered enthusiastically into a number of singing events both in and out of school culminating in a wonderful shared performance with other local schools at Stratford Park Leisure Centre.

Further talents were demonstrated by some of our pupils who took part in the annual schools' nature quiz against St. Matthew's School. We were extremely unfortunate to lose the quiz by the smallest of margins – just ½ of a point but we were nonetheless really proud of the children's efforts.

Our sporting teams, both boys and girls, have been very busy taking part in x-country (2 children making it through to the county finals), netball, tag rugby and football. We finished the season on a real high with our year 3&4 football team coming top of their league and our year 5&6 team beating Bluecoat School in the final of the Riddiford Shield to be justly rewarded for their hard work.

Spring time finally appears to be with us so we are now planning activities to take us into the summer. The highlight of the term will no doubt be our whole school Roman fortnight. Amongst other things children will be making mosaics with the help of Sir William Romney's School, visiting Caerleon in South Wales and learning about our local Roman connections. The fortnight will finish with a full Roman Feast in school. (In full fancy dress of course!)

Please note that our summer fair will be held on Friday 9th July this year commencing at 5:30pm. Please do join us if you can. (Gordon Soutar, Headteacher)

St Dominic's School

As I write this report the weather is verging on snow again! It is rare to both start and end a term with snow but this has been the case this year. The poor weather has again caused disruption to our sporting fixtures and the rugby final and netball tournament, both planned for this week, have had to be postponed to the summer term.

Despite that, it has been a very positive term for sporting successes; the football team got through to a second tournament and then lost in the semi finals and the rugby and netball teams both got through to the final.

Class four sang enthusiastically at the Stroud Music Festival, the dancers danced brilliantly at the Country Dance Festival and as for the mock trial – we were very relieved that our defendant was found 'not guilty' and a good time was had by all. The term ended with a very close round in the Nature Quiz which we narrowly lost by one point. In all a very successful term with many enrichment activities!

The end of this term also brings a sad 'Good-bye' to Mrs Sue Chambers who has worked at the School for about

20 years. She will be greatly missed by us all but we know there will still be close contact when she picks up grandchildren from school.

Hopefully the summer term will begin with some fine weather so that children can enjoy the outside and the many trips that are planned; class 1 to Westonbirt and the seaside, the choir to the Cheltenham Festival and of course our PGL residential trip later in the term. (Margaret Smith, Headteacher)

Sir William Romney School

We are delighted to have been given the opportunity to participate in this newsletter. A number of Sir William Romney's School students came to us from Woodchester Endowed Primary School and it is a great way for us to keep you informed about what is happening at the school.

Following recent elections, a team of students across all year groups has formed a 'Student Council', with the aim of improving the overall decision-making process within the school. Under the leadership of Head Boy - Ollie Jones and Head Girl - Izzy Lomas, the Council will enable all students to bring their ideas and suggestions to the table for general discussion and future action. They are encouraged to have their say on issues including behaviour, homework, uniform and school clubs and charity events, and have recently raised a substantial amount for the Haiti Earthquake Appeal.

St Dominic's Primary School Tag Rugby success

Years 5 and 6 girls and boys have enjoyed a very successful season in the local tag rugby league, coming second in the Finals held at Stroud Rugby Club, losing only one game in the whole season.

The highlight for the team was their success at a tournament organised by Painswick Rugby Club where 12 Primary School teams from the Gloucester area came together to compete. St Dominic's came through undefeated winning the trophy that the school now keeps.

At both competitions, St Dominic's team were complimented on their behaviour, both on and off the pitch, and all teams were praised for the high standard of rugby played.



Planning

Planning Committee meetings

Since I became chairman of the Planning Committee some two years ago I have been surprised by how few members of the public come to the planning meetings. However, it could be that many of you are unaware of the planning process. So, below is a brief outline on how planning applications are processed and how the views of the Parish can influence the ultimate decision.

When a planning application is made to Stroud District Council, they will register it and allocate a planning officer to consider its merit and consult with other interested bodies, such as Highways, the Environment Agency etc. and the Parish Council, post notices on the subject property and notify near neighbours before making a decision.

Our Clerk will be sent a copy of the application with a request for the Parish Council to comment. Generally we have 28 days to do so. Our Clerk will issue notices to all of us on the Planning Committee to arrange a meeting. We need a minimum of three Councillors, a quorum, for the meeting to be valid.

Notices will then be posted on the village notice boards giving a minimum of three days notice of the meeting. This may seem short notice to give, but you have to bear in mind that generally Councillors have busy lives and getting three and the clerk together is often difficult.

The meetings are mainly held in the Undercroft of the Church and are public meetings when members of the public are welcome to attend, look at the plans, and make comments.

For many applications we will make a site visit and if an application is known to be contentious we make every effort to contact those who would be affected by the proposal. However, it is your responsibility to be aware of the application and then make contact with the Clerk so that you can be notified of the date of the meeting.

Whilst the planning committee does comprise Councillors with planning and legal knowledge we are not trained planning experts and meet to express our personal views and those of others who have spoken to us.

IF YOU DO NOT ATTEND YOUR VIEWS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED OR INCLUDED IN OUR REPORT TO STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL. We also have to ensure that our comments are relevant to planning law and not just personal opinions.

We enjoy a close working relationship with Stroud District Council, and our representations are respected, although we are but one voice. Our views are not always agreed with, but very often we can influence a planning decision and therefore if you wish us to listen to what you think about a particular application you do need to make contact with any of us on the planning committee (we were featured in the last Woodchester Word) or come to the meeting.

Also it is very important for you as an individual to write direct to Stroud District Council with your views to add

weight to any recommendation. Make sure that you refer to the application number and officer dealing with the case which is publicised on our notices and also please copy your letter to our Clerk so that we know what you are saying as sometimes the planning officer will discuss applications with the Parish in the process of making a decision.

Finally, we will always listen to your comments, both positive and negative, and will welcome you to our meetings.

Peter Lead)

Village Design Statement

Following various public consultations and displays, an online survey has been promoted throughout the Parish and a paper copy distributed to every household.

Of the 600 or so distributed we had 16 paper copies completed 105 electronic forms completed.

Following this feedback, the VDS group will now produce a draft Village Design Statement and will report to the Parish at the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on the 20th May and should anyone wish to comment or discuss this report please come along.

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WOODCHESTER PRODUCE and CRAFT SHOW

9.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m., Saturday 11th September 2010

It is time to start planting and planning for the 2010 Woodchester Produce and Craft Show. We are building on the success of last year's show but with some changes to the classes. Entry forms will be sent out with the next edition of the Word in August when they will also be available for collection from the Post Office and Pubs.

ADULT CLASSES

A. Vegetables

1. Potatoes, 5 (any variety and shape)
2. Tomatoes, 3 (any variety)
3. Onions, 3 (any variety)
4. Longest runner bean
5. Heaviest marrow or pumpkin
6. Most comical vegetable
7. Collection of herbs in a vase

B. Fruit

1. Bowl of any home grown fruits
2. Basket of any wild fruits

C. Produce

1. Victoria sandwich (using 3 eggs)
2. Jar of jam
3. Jar of marmalade
4. Jar of chutney
5. 3 decorated cup cakes
6. Bottle of cordial
7. Bottle of any alcoholic drink

D. Art

1. Picture of an animal – any medium
2. Miniature painting, max size 7cmx5cm
3. An illustrated poem

E. Photography

1. Picture of Woodchester
2. A portrait
3. A happy picture

F. Craft

1. Any item made from recycled materials
2. A knitted or crocheted article
3. An embroidered article
4. A hand or machine made fabric article
5. A soft toy

G. Flowers

1. Vase of garden flowers
2. A purple/mauve flower
3. Miniature flower arrangement, overall height under 10cm
4. A scented flower arrangement

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

H. Under 5

1. Anything you have grown
2. A vegetable creature
3. A decorated pebble
4. Picture of an animal (any medium)
5. Miniature garden on a plate (max size 20cm)

I. 5-10 and 11-15

1. Largest sunflower head you have grown
2. Miniature garden on a plate (max size 20cm)
3. Decorated fairy cake you have baked
4. A creature you have made from a vegetable
5. Any vegetable you have grown
6. Any flower you have grown
7. Matchbox (5.3x3.7cm max) filled with different (not living) items beginning with R.

Sponsors: Nailsworth Garden Centre and Little People Company

There is an opportunity for non-commercial organisations based in Woodchester to have stalls on the Village Green, free of charge for selling produce, tombolas etc. To book your place, please contact Penny Brown (873431) or Peter Lead (832383).



Puzzles, games, pocket money toys, dressing up, lunch bags, drink bottles, musical toys, arts and craft, dolls, puppets, castles, dolls houses, activity games, baby clothes, soft toys, cards, scooters, role play, traditional wooden toys, balance bikes, paddling pools, swimming aids, bath toys, specialist children's hairdresser, baby changing facilities.

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Around the Village

Woodchester Villa, Canada!

Henry James Bird was born January 3rd 1842 at Southfield House, Woodchester. His father Oliver Bird owned three weaving mills, where Henry learned his woollen milling skills. In his early twenties he travelled to Australia and the USA, but decided to settle in Canada.

In 1867 he worked for the Rosamond Woollen Co. at Almonte, Lanark County, Ontario. In 1869 he bought his own mill; in 1870 and again in 1871 the mill was flooded out by a great rise in the river level.

He decided to move to Bracebridge to open a new mill, possibly prompted by the availability of water power, the opening up of the Districts of Muskoka and Parry Sound, and the likelihood of Muskoka becoming a sheep raising district.

After establishing his mill business, it was his practice to assist settlers to acquire flocks of sheep. Henry and his wife lived above the mill, but as his business expanded the mill took on carding, spinning and fulling, which were taking so much floor space that he felt it was no longer possible to 'live above the shop'.

He decided to build a new home and being interested in innovation and all things scientific he followed the thinking of Orson H Fowles, published in a book, that an octagonal shape was a new convenient and superior mode of building.

Henry's villa with its walls of poured concrete and solid central core has stood firm for many years, celebrating its centennial in 1892.

Henry James Bird named his house 'Woodchester Villa' after his fondly remembered village in England. The house is now kept as a museum. If you want to know more go to www.octagonalhouse.com - this site is comprehensive with many interesting photos.



Woodchester Woes - Litter

The litter pick took place and many bags of litter were collected. Whilst those of us who turned out did not mind so much collecting litter from roadsides and footpaths we did object strongly to seeing litter directly outside homes and in many cases in the roadside between cars and the road edge. Surely those guilty of dropping the litter or walking over it can pick it up as it must be seen every day. The culture of 'someone else will pick it up or take responsibility' has to come to an end as the District Council has ever decreasing funds to provide public services and surely simple jobs like picking up your litter or not dropping it in the first place are easy for us to do.

The older folk will remember when householders expected to extend their house-keeping to the part of the street in front of their house. Well if we all did that now and just a little more how much cleaner would our Parish be and how much better we would all feel. Remember the snow clearing, it was a good social occasion as well as purposeful. I say turn back the clocks and let us all be more responsible for our actions and environment.
(Name Withheld)

Local Business Directory

The idea of publishing a directory of local businesses has been discussed at meetings of the Woodchester Freelancer's Network. The idea would be to publish and distribute the directory to all local households, in the hope that villagers will choose from local suppliers first. There are doubtless many local businesses which people do not know about, and this idea has worked well in other communities. If you run a local business and are interested in being included in such a directory, hopefully at a nominal cost to cover the cost of printing, please contact the Editor (iaindunbar@btconnect.com).

Local Transport Initiative

If any Woodchester residents have problems getting to the post office/shop, please contact the Parish Council clerk so that we can establish if there is a need for a local transport initiative.

Duschanka Sutherland, Clerk to the Council, telephone 01453 833313, email clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk

Who is Richard Latham?

Some may know him through rugby, others over a pint, but having seen him treading the boards recently at The Market House Minchinhampton I am confused. In a non stop, quick witted and humorous performance of the strange case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde he appeared as Richard Mansfield, Utterson, Sinclair, Father, and Sir Danvers Carew all in quick succession and very convincingly.

On a more serious note, Richard has appeared on TV in Some mothers do 'ave 'em, Shackleton and Casualty, performed at The Royal Shakespeare Theatre Aldwych and The Savoy - a truly talented performer.

His performance at The Market House was brilliant along with the three co-actors of the European Arts Company and I would recommend any one to see Richard perform when he is next in the area.

Letters

Keep the Taliban out of Woodchester!!

I have lived in Woodchester for 42 years and have had a dog for the vast majority of that time. There aren't many footpaths, hills or woods around our village that I haven't walked. But earlier this year, a foot operation followed by three months in plaster have curtailed my walkinguntil at last, the plaster is off, and special boot on meant that I could get out, albeit on crutches, into the spring countryside....and I was in for a big surprise on my favourite walks.

Hedges grubbed out and secure barbed wire fences in their place, old walks blocked and public footpaths edged with barbed wire! No more can we harmlessly wander through a wood, no more can the village children chase squirrels or have imaginary treasure hunts, build shelters and sit to quietly watch the deer grazing or woodpecker clearing out an old nest, (the land owner of the time knowing that everyone was enjoying themselves responsibly and without causing damage and leaving everything as it was found).

In other parts of Woodchester, signs suggest that we are far from welcome, to "keep off the grass" or that this land is "private". On one public footpath in the parish, it is not unknown for the owner of the land to stare at you, watch your every step across his land and ignore any conversation, making it very obvious that he doesn't want you on the footpath!

I have no objection to new landowners improving their land or making changes, but why do we have to have so many hundreds and hundreds of yards of fencing topped by layers of barbed wire in so many places in North Woodchester, strong enough to keep the Taliban out of Woodchester! Sadly, it gives the impression that the land owner is very possessive about the land and has no intention of letting others in the village share in the beauty of the countryside. At first I thought it was just me being grumpy about the changes that are taking place but now, having talked to a number of walkers, I know that my views are shared by others. Perhaps this letter might elicit a response with some answers?

Rod Harris



The Seys and Bridges Educational Foundation

In 1705 Elizabeth Seys, daughter of Evan Seys, Sargeant-in-Law (M.P. for Gloucester and Recorder for that City in 1697), bequeathed £400 to be invested in an Estate the profits of which were to be divided between three poor women or more, for teaching these girls to read and work, i.e. housework, laundering, etc. As a result Dames' schools were to be found in the village. Robert Bridges, of Woodchester, in 1722 left £500, again invested in estates the profits of which were to be used to teach three poor boys of Woodchester to read and write, and to clothe and apprentice one boy yearly. If income permitted, more boys were to be taught and apprenticed.

A "School House", i.e. the old school room in Church Road, later to be the Parish Room and, today, the Village Hall, was built by subscription in 1834. It was simply one room with a partition separating the two schools, one for girls and the other for boys. The trustees of the Seys Charity were responsible for the old Dames' School in Atcombe Road. In November 1883, the Charity Commission drew up schemes in respect of both the Seys and the Bridges Charities.

The present Endowed School was opened in 1884, thus bringing together the "School House" and the "Dames' School". The trustees of the two Charities were appointed by the Charity Commission to be trustees of the new school.

It was not until 3rd November, 1910, that a scheme was made amalgamating the two charities into one, known as the Seys & Bridges Educational Foundation. Investments, no longer in land, provided funds not only to the "public elementary school" in the village but also for the purposes of apprenticing, evening school fees and prizes for needlework. The Scheme was revised in 1973 and 1988 to reflect changing educational needs.

The current body of trustees consists of the Rector of Woodchester (ex-officio); two trustees appointed by the County Education Committee; two appointed by the Parish Council and up to three co-opted trustees. The Foundation's investments yield an income that is distributed in the form of grants. Whilst it has a commitment to provide a minimum of £100 annually to Woodchester Endowed Primary School, it is also able to make individual grants to young people under the age of 25 years who live in the parish or who currently attend either the Endowed School or St Dominic's Primary School; and it also makes grants to either Primary School for the direct benefit of its pupils. Individual grants can help towards the cost of, for example, uniforms, equipment, music lessons/instruments, books for university, etc. and typically are in the £100-£250 range (but there is no set limit).

Individual applications for grants, by letter, are welcomed and should be sent to: The Clerk to the Trustees, Diana Fowler, 30 The Daffodils, King's Stanley, Stonehouse, GL10 3QJ.

For any other matters relating to the Seys & Bridges, you are welcome to contact the current Chairman of the Trustees, Andrew Pemberton, on 01453 872813.



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History Snippets

Here are a few snippets from 2,000 years of Woodchester history:

- On the death of John Maltravers, Lord of the Manor of Woodchester, in 1364, Woodchester and all the lands of the manor were valued at £20.
- Initial plans for a railway from Nailsworth to Stroud were turned down in the 1850s. A certain Mr. H. Drummond was of the opinion that the railway should not be built because he had pledged "to resist the Pope, the devil and all his works" and he believed that the railway would enable the Roman Catholics to meet more easily at the RC church in South Woodchester! Mr. Horsman, the Borough M.P. said "I am Member for the borough. I have been there once or twice but know nothing of the wants of my constituents; it is not necessary for a Member to do so now."
- The word *Woodchester* in olden times was spelt in a variety of ways – *Udecastre*, *Wuducastre*, *Wodecestre*, *Widuceastre* and *Wychester*, all meaning "A fortress in a wood". *Berrymore* comes from 'Byrig' (a fortified place) and 'moor' (a waste land or moorland) where it is highly likely that soldiers who were protecting the Villa's resident, were billeted.
- Behind Little Britain Farm (opposite Station Road in South Woodchester) is a raised tump of ground. This is believed to be the Roman brickfield which supplied the bricks and flues for the villa.
- Around 1796, a family of Jenners lived in Woodchester and it is believed that Dr. Jenner of Berkeley (of smallpox vaccination fame) may well have lived in the village around that time.
- On March 18th 1851 a meeting of 300 men took place in support of total abstinence. The Ebley Band was in attendance. But only 18 men signed the pledge.
- Woodchester Village School was opened in 1889 and had cost £1,400 to build!

Ballet in Woodchester

Sophie Makosch is a new resident Ballet Dancer here in Woodchester. Having trained in Scotland and then spent many years working in fitness, Sophie now has her heart set on bringing Ballet to everyone for their enjoyment, where fitness becomes a by product! She has set up classes for adults and children in Woodchester and the surrounding villages which have become increasingly popular, as well as Personal Training at a range of locations including people's homes. If you would like information contact Sophie on 07887671956 or e-mail: svmakosch@yahoo.co.uk

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 12th June

Atcombe Court garden will be open under the National Gardens Scheme on Saturday 12th June from 2pm to 6pm. Everyone is welcome to come, and delicious teas will be available from the Woodchester W.I.

Wednesday 16th June

The last Messy Church before the summer holidays takes place on Wednesday June 16th 3.20-5pm. All youngsters up to year 6 are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. Look out for trumpets, city walls and lots of other crafts as our theme will be Joshua. Messy Church has been very popular and we will be back in September. There are cards at the back of church or look out for the banner outside school.

Sunday 20th June

At St Mary's Church on Sunday 20th June at 11am there will be a service to celebrate our pets and the special place they have in our lives. All pets are welcome, with their owners!

Friday 9th July

Summer Fair at Woodchester Endowed School, 5:30 pm. Circus Performer, including free circus workshops for children, inflatable obstacle course, face painting, tattoos, fire engine, and a penalty shoot-out. Lots of stalls including cakes, plants, second-hand books and toys, jam jar tombola, wine/water tombola, junior geological stall and panning for gold. A BBQ and bar will also be available for refreshments and the children of Woodchester Endowed School will be providing music and country dancing performances for what promises to be a fun-packed evening for the whole family.

Village Hall Programme

Monday

1000-1200 Short Mat Bowls (01453 872340)
1915-2245 Table Tennis Club (Sept-March, 766116)

Tuesday

1000-1200 Art Group (01453 873689)
1400-1630 Friendly Circle - alternate weeks (873566)
1915-2245 Table Tennis Club (Sept-March, 766116)

Wednesday

1000-1600 Calligraphy- alternate weeks (387768)
1830-1930 Movement to Music. New members are welcome to this very friendly group, come along and have fun and keep fit. Tel: Clare Bader 01453 886953.

Thursday

1000-1200 Healthy Lifestyles (01453 885766)
1615-1715 Adult Ballet (0788 767 1956)
1830-2130 Parish Council (1st in month)
1930-2130 Women's Institute (3rd in month 873314)
1930-2130 Morris Dancing (2nd, 4th, 5th, 759150)

Friday

1000-1200 Art Class U3A (01453 872044)
1500-1700 Ballet (01453 834356)
1915-2245 Table Tennis Club (Sept-March, 766116)

For all bookings, including weekend bookings, please contact Mrs Kath Gay on 01453 873348.