

**Woodchester Village Report  
2014/15**



## Woodchester Village Report 2014/15

### **The Parish Council** – *Cllr. Dr. Gervase Hamilton, Chairman*

#### **Introduction**

Over the past year the Parish Council has been busier than ever not only in addressing the concerns of local residents over planning, roads and transport and the environment but also in responding to central and local government initiatives on the National Planning Policy Framework with its likely implications for 'localism' and neighbourhood planning, the Boundary Commission's review of ward boundaries and consultation on the Stroud District Local Plan.

Each year the Parish council sets out the initiatives it wishes to take forward in order to meet the views of residents as expressed in the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement as well as taking on board the various comments made on our website and at Parish Council and Annual Village meetings. At each Parish council meeting we endeavour to monitor progress towards the achievement of these aims as well as responding to more immediate concerns raised by our residents.

#### **The Parish Clerk**

Much of the day to day work of the Parish Council is carried out by our clerk of the past three years, Ann Bijkerk. We could not function properly without her quiet, efficient input. So it was with particular pleasure that we heard that Ann had been awarded a distinction in her examination for the Certificate in Local Council Administration-the recommended qualification for all Town and Parish Clerks. Following local council elections in 2016, councillors will consider whether we work towards ensuring that Woodchester achieves 'Quality Award' status as part of the Local Council Award Scheme. This will raise our profile and ensure better and more effective consultation with Stroud District and Gloucestershire County Councils over planning and other matters of joint concern.

#### **New Councillors**

Being a Parish councillor can often be a thankless task. With a mere seven councillors and a busy agenda we endeavour to divide equally between us the tasks we undertake on planning, finance, transport and rights of way. We were therefore delighted to welcome two new faces to replace our much valued retired councillors, George Bastin and Iain Dunbar.

Paul Baynham-Honri is a South Woodchester resident who runs his own business making hats and country wear. His previous experience as a parish councillor in Rodmarton and his business experience makes him ideal for the post.

Katharine McNealey of North Woodchester is likely to prove an equally valuable colleague as her years employed with the Countryside Agency and the National Trust have given her a wide range of knowledge of rural planning, countryside access, fundraising and grants administration. She is also a volunteer with the Woodchester Mansion Trust.

#### **Local Government Issues**

1. The Stroud District Council Local Plan.

This sets out SDC's requirement for housing, employment, transport and the environment over the period to 2030 taking into account expected population increase and population movement over the next fifteen years. Following initial

consultation the initial draft plan was rejected by the central government inspector who questioned the assumptions on population on which the housing projections were based. SDC has recalculated their figures which show an increased housing need for approximately 1500 units by 2030. Consultation on the final draft is now taking place.

As far as Woodchester is concerned as an, 'Accessible Settlement with Minimal Facilities' as the Plan puts it, the final plan is unlikely to impact on development in the area. No expansion of housing other than that required to meet the local need for affordable housing within the village is envisaged.

## 2. Affordable Housing in Woodchester.

To address the issue of affordable housing across Stroud District, a Community Infrastructure Award scheme was set up in 2014 to offer an incentive for parishes for affordable housing to be built on 'rural exception sites' (ie land on restricted sites where planning permission for development would not normally be granted). The Parish Plan and the Village Design Statement (VDS) identified the need for affordable housing in our village, particularly for those young people born and bred in the area who are unable to find local housing to meet their needs. In order to determine the extent of that need, the PC agreed to hold a survey of local residents, co-ordinated and analysed by Karen Phimister, Rural Housing Enabler for Stroud District. Questionnaires were sent out to all residents with copies of the Woodchester Word. So far about 160 individuals have responded and by July we hope to have some idea of the total number of housing units that may be required.

## 3. Neighbourhood Planning.

An important element in the government's revised National Planning Policy Framework introduced in 2012, is the concept of 'localism' and, in particular, the greater involvement of local residents in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan which would need to be taken into account statutorily by District and County Council planning officers in making their final planning decisions.

Drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan, working in conjunction with other local parishes, is an expensive and time consuming process. Woodchester Parish Council, having already expended considerable time and effort on a revised Parish Plan and Village Design Statement, already approved by SDC, sees no merit in expending further time and effort in drawing up our own Neighbourhood Plan.

## 4. Boundary Commission Report.

Minor amendments were made to the Woodchester parish boundary in 2012/3 to address planning anomalies and meet the specific requirements of Conservation Area boundaries.

Every few years to reflect population change and the need to equalise the number of electors in each ward so that each elector's vote carries the same weight, the Boundary Commission reviews local ward boundaries. Concerned that we might be amalgamated with urban area or parish councils we traditionally had few links with, Woodchester Parish voted for 'no change'. Fortunately the Commission accepted the status quo as far as Amberley and Woodchester ward is concerned so we will retain the continued valuable services of our district councillor for the area.

### **The Mountain Bike Trails**

It is a year since the original plans for an off-road adventure cycle track in North Woodchester on land adjacent to the existing cycle track were drawn up by the Council in conjunction with the organisation 'Back on Track'. Funding towards the completed track of £23,500 has been forthcoming from local sponsors including Active Together, Renishaw, GFPA, together with the Somerfield Trust. Our two local primary schools have been enthusiastic and active supporters of the scheme. So why the delay? The necessary environmental survey has been carried out and access to some of the adjacent private land owned by Mr and Mrs Hill of 'The Priory' agreed, but the hold-up seems to be with the obtaining of the necessary lease and legal agreement with Gloucestershire County Council who own the land. Once this has been obtained we hope construction will go ahead speedily with completion by the late summer at the latest.

### **Bus Shelters**

Our school children and many older residents make regular use of the local bus services. Only two of the existing seven bus shelters owned and maintained by the Parish Council had seats for waiting passengers in them. Following a number of requests from users the PC funded extra seats in the shelters at the foot of Selsley Road. Approval has now been granted for seats in all the remaining shelters so sited as to maximise protection from the weather but allow a good view of the approaching bus.

### **Improved Communications**

#### **1. Notice Boards**

Some concern has been expressed about the siting and accessibility of the existing Parish Council notice boards as well as their poor state of repair. Many residents rely on these boards for information, not only about PC meetings, but also news of activities by local groups. The PC has now repaired and strengthened some of the existing boards and reviewed their location. Following local requests a new board has been erected at Frogmarsh Mill and a new board for Rooksmoor will be installed shortly.

#### **2. The Website**

A good, accessible and user friendly web-site is an essential requirement if the work of the Parish Council is to be more widely known not just to residents but interested outside web browsers. The PC Website Committee has made a number of long overdue improvements to the web-site incorporating users' views. Links with Facebook and a blog which we hope will stimulate residents to comment constructively (and sometimes critically) on the work of the council and on local events should improve its availability and usefulness.

#### **3. The Woodchester Word.**

The Woodchester Word has gone from strength to strength over the past year thanks to the efforts of its editor Rod Harris and is a widely read source of local news, views, discussion and articles of general interest. However it was never envisaged that the Word should be solely dependent on Parish Council funding or to be just an organ for Parish council views. Underwritten in the past by the PC it is now

self-funding from advertising. However the PC has recently agreed that, should the Word have to cut back its coverage or in the unfortunate event of its closure, the editor will be indemnified against any personal loss. The PC will, if necessary fund one edition and each edition will automatically contain a page dedicated to Parish Council news, dates of meetings etc.

### **The Village Shop and Post Office**

Residents were concerned when Terry and Linda who ran the North Woodchester Post Office and Stores for eight years announced they wished to retire in September 2014. Faced with the likelihood of the loss of a vital community facility, the Parish Council called a meeting of all those concerned including a representative of the PO. The Parish Council made it clear that it could not statutorily take over the running of a predominantly commercial concern but would facilitate any solution local residents might advance to prevent closure. After failure of a scheme to move the Post office to the Royal Oak pub, we welcomed the initiative of a group of residents led by Christian Dannemann to set up a co-operative venture, the Woodchester Village Shop Co., with shares available to local residents, who would recruit volunteers to run the store with the Post Office run by our qualified local post-mistress Pauline Woollam. A separate report from the shop appears with this report but we are pleased to say the venture has proved a considerable success and the friendly local staff are much appreciated by local residents.

### **Other Issues of Concern**

Many of the concerns addressed by local residents are dealt with in the separate reports from the Planning and Roads and Rights of Way Committees attached to this document. However a constant theme of complaint is the intractable parking problems in South Woodchester- in particular the difficulties experienced by the drivers of buses, public service vehicles and emergency vehicles in accessing the High Street. Likewise, damage to the road and the pavement and obstruction by parked vehicles making it difficult for HGVs entering or leaving the Frogmarsh Mill site.

On the planning side residents remained worried about the delay in planning consent for the Rooksmoor Mills development, the absence of any progress on the construction of an access road to the Convent Hotel and Club from the A46 and plans for a car wash on the A46 opposite the bottom of Selsley Road.

### **Planning - Cllr. Peter Lead, Vice-Chairman**

Other than the usual applications for extensions we do have a few outstanding applications that are of interest to many Parishioners.

The Convent continues to trade but as yet the consent for a new access onto the A46 and change of use for hotel accommodation has not been approved.

The application for residential consent at Rooksmoor Industrial Estate is also still outstanding.

The application for the car wash on the A46 was made the subject of an application for Lawful Use. This is examining in law whether there is a need for any application as the existing use of a petrol filling station may include the use of a car wash.

This application has been refused. So now any application for the use of the land will be regarded as a new development rather than a change of use, giving our objection greater strength. We will continue to object strongly to the proposed use as a car wash.

You should have received recently a questionnaire about the possible need for affordable housing. This survey is seeking to establish whether the residents feel there is a need for lower cost housing in our Parish. As you may well know there is a general housing shortage, particularly for the young. But is there a need in Woodchester?

If there is found to be a need then it may be that land is sought to provide such accommodation. If there is not, then developers can be discouraged from seeking land on which to build.

### **Footpaths** – *Cllr. Barbara Warnes*

Our footpaths have had a mixed year - wet and muddy at times but now showing signs of much improvement.

Last summer, the cycle track was very overgrown for a long time. Particular problem areas were the stretch from Pauls Rise to the bridge (which took a lot of effort to convince Highways/Amey that it hadn't been cut and desperately needed it), and the path connecting Selsley Road to the track (which was not cut at all despite requests). A lot of work has recently been done, cutting back the vegetation and making it much more open. It remains to be seen how much will grow back over the coming months. 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.

I should like, yet again, to draw dog owners/walkers attention to Stroud District Council's Dog Control Order which came into effect on 1 December 2012. I do not intend to give full details here as it is available on their website. As far as we are concerned it requires clearing up after your dog, keeping it on a lead on paths used to access the Primary Schools, which should be clearly marked, and also that 'Dogs shall be kept on leads on all allotments, cemeteries, car parks, canal towpaths and designated cycle paths'.

A new 'dog bin' is in position at the lay by at Frogmarsh which will be of benefit to dog walkers on the cycle track and we always have further provision under consideration.

We are always grateful to the landowners for cutting back vegetation, especially nettles, to allow us to walk through, and to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who quietly improve conditions for us - note the new kissing gates. 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!

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

We have recently been informed that when the cycle track opened on the disused railway line, it was never officially designated. There is now a proposal to rectify this matter and various designations are under consideration as follows.

Public Footpath

Public Bridleway

Cycle path

Class 6 highway

We have been assured that there will be consultation before a decision is made.

### **Woodchester Endowed School** – *Glyn Aelfryn Jones, Headteacher*

At the start of the year, I was appointed as Headteacher of this fantastic school following Mr Gordon Soutar leaving at the end of the previous academic year. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable introduction to Woodchester as a school as well as to the wider community. I have been made to feel very welcome by all.

As ever with a new role, a huge amount of my time has been spent discovering what Woodchester Endowed Primary does and what makes it a unique place for children to learn. I have talked to all stakeholders, in asking what they believe the school needs to be doing to address the current and future needs of our children. Through this I hope to develop a clear idea of where we aim to see our school going. This comes through my belief that a school needs to be developed personally to suit its children and the community that it serves, rather than to match the personality of its leaders.

There have been plenty of opportunities for our children to show their many talents, so far. Our Year 3 and 4 class, Hawthorn, demonstrated their drama and dance during their performance of Odd and the Frost Giants. Sporting opportunities have been plentiful with rugby, football, netball and cross country running tournaments taking place over recent weeks. Our Key Stage 1 children have been learning about different cultures which culminated in a Spanish/Italian café. Year 6 have even been tasked by Cardiff University Archaeology Department with helping their research about the Ancient Mayans! Surely, a curriculum to inspire.

Some of our children have been inspiring their peers to think deeply about those around them. Oscar, in Year 5, has organised and run a writing competition (in the vein of the Rotary Competition that we also entered). He acquired a prize that was donated from Waitrose, and asked children to write creatively as well as donating a pound. This was all done to raise money for homeless children in Bolivia after Oscar had read about the charity. Marie, Carys and Beth also organised fundraising in order to support the people of Nepal, after recent events. As a Headteacher, there is nothing that makes me more proud than seeing our values in action.

We look to see our values, curriculum, achievements and learning go from strength to strength in the future.



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

As soon as you open the door to the school or the gate to the playground of St Dominic's you can feel that the children are completely engaged in their learning and play. In the peaceful setting we have it is delightful to hear the children's voices ringing through the corridors and playgrounds. This year we have had 108 on role which is more than we expected. For the academic year 2015-2016 we have only three spaces left for children to come to the school.

This last year we have worked tirelessly on ensuring that we have addressed all the features of the new National Curriculum and this has led us to strengthen our partnership with the Cotswold View Cluster Schools which include Horsley, Thrupp, Avening, Brimscombe, Leighterton and Amberley primary schools. As a cluster of schools we have recently joined with The Rosary primary school in Stroud and Nailsworth Primary school to discuss the current issue of 'Assessment without levels.' We have had two twilight evenings together for all our teaching staff in our school hall and we have planned to have our first in service day on 1<sup>st</sup> September at Nailsworth Primary school. This is a great way of exchanging ideas and learning together. Our teachers all work together very well and it is a super opportunity for the Headteachers to look at what we need to do to make our schools the best in Gloucestershire.

This year we took part in the 2015 Primary Schools' Annual Wildlife Quiz and got through quite a few rounds. We are very grateful to our parents that help with this and ensure the children are well prepared to take part with confidence. We also took part in the Stroud Schools Country Dance Festival. We are very proud of this as it was our youngest pupils that represented us this year. Our reception children and their parents eagerly attended the evening. Our children also sang at St. George's church in Nailsworth and at the Farmers Market. It is so very beneficial to us all that we are able to share and do so many things together in the community. I feel this is very important for us as a school.

As always sport plays an important part in our curriculum and we are very privileged to have excellent sports coaches in every week. Each coach has a skill set in a certain area where they teach and coach the children to progress from their current level. This year this has included football, rugby, dance, athletics and gymnastics. In addition to this we are fortunate to have very skilled parents who take our children after school for football, netball and a running club. We also have teachers and parents who have a sewing club, a book club and a games club. At all times there is a hive of activity around the school.

At all times we are trying to ensure that we engage our children with the outdoors and the flora and fauna around the school. We are looking to making good use of our pond with the help of one our parents who is an ecologist. The children in reception watched their eggs hatch this Easter and we were the proud parents of 10 chickens. This caused a great deal of excitement in the school and parish. The children in Years 1 and 2 are currently watching the life cycle of their very own caterpillars as they change to butterflies.

We have been very fortunate this year with the refurbishment of two of our rooms; a new library will be opened in June by the famous children's author Brian Moses and we hope to make this quite an event. We have also had a new kitchen placed in one of our rooms so that the children can participate in cooking and other activities.

### **Woodchester Playgroup** – *Meryl Smith, Play Leader*

We had a very gentle intake of children for our Autumn term in 2014, which caused a few concerns, especially on the financial side to our business.

However, with word of mouth and advertising vacancies, the setting took off once again with almost full numbers and plenty of fun and enjoyment in our learning environment.

We have benefited so much from a totally revamped outside garden. This now divides into two main flat areas, one with an artificial surface, and the remainder left to natural grass.

We can now use the garden all year round, which leads to many more opportunities in play and learning.

Numbers continue to increase, and the atmosphere continues to be happy, safe and fun.

We hope this continues for many more years.

### **Woodchester Village Shop** – *Christian Dannemann*

Threatened with the closure of our village shop and post office, over 50 residents of North and South Woodchester got together to save it.

The necessary capital for the take-over was raised, and Terry and Linda were bought out so that they could start their well-deserved retirement.

The new volunteer run shop hit the ground running, and without a single day of closure the business continued to operate. A full-time position for the new sub-postmistress, Pauline Woollam, made the continuation of the Post Office possible, as this would have been to complex a task to be solely run by volunteers.

After over half a year of running, the shop is making a small profit, which will allow a small dividend for the shareholders, and a secure financial future for the shop.

Thanks to a sizeable contribution from Renishaw, the shop got a new double-door fridge, which allows us to sell locally produced meat, fresh milk, and a range of chilled foods and drinks.

Thanks to a very dedicated contribution of over 40 shop floor volunteers, the shop is open 6 days a week, 10 hours per day. Teams for accounting, procurement, and all other necessary tasks work in the background, and so far, over 2500 volunteer hours have been put in to keep the shop running, which is a sizeable commitment. A huge "thank you" to everyone involved!

## **The Parish Church of St. Mary - Andrew Pemberton**

St Mary's Church continues to be very active as a centre of worship and has a role in various community activities. Church membership grew slightly over the last year. Our priest-in – charge, Rev Peter Francis, and the rest of our ministry team having taken forward a number of the initiatives identified in creating a “vision” of the church's future in early 2014.

### ***Activities***

The monthly ‘coffee and chat’ on a Saturday has continued to provide welcome company to some. A new venture this year was ‘Lunch-with-Friends’, a monthly lunch club held in church predominantly for older people, especially those who live alone. Guests enjoy the company of others and a hot meal and transport is provided for those who need it, by a team of volunteer helpers from church and village. The final ‘Lunch with Friends’ for 2014 was a celebratory Christmas meal followed by carols for over 60 people.

The church has hosted community events throughout the year including an Easter Activity Day, the Cirencester Strings Summer Concert, the School Christmas concert and Woodchester Village Carols.

The Church's work with young people has continued to thrive this year. Messy Church, which is held monthly after school for children up to Year 6, accompanied by a carer or parent, continues to attract many children and is supported by an enthusiastic team of helpers. Many of the children attending Messy Church are from Woodchester Endowed School, although other local schools are also represented. The new head teacher at the school has continued to encourage the link between the school and the Church. The Church uses the school premises for Junior Church. The school uses the church for services and concerts.

Our Bellingers rang the first of a series of quarter peals in memory of the men on the Woodchester war memorial on or near the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their deaths. They have also installed a simulator so that people can learn bell-ringing without the neighbours suffering too much. Do get in touch if you are interested!

We have held a number of courses and outside trips this year. There is always some kind of learning opportunity “on the go”.

### ***Fundraising***

The Church has continued to support its Christian partner organisations Interserve, CMS, Tear Fund and Scripture Union, as well as Marah and The Door more locally. Food continues to be collected for Stroud District Foodbank. Shoeboxes containing Christmas gifts were donated to Operation Christmas Child. Money was raised for safe sanitation and clean water in the developing world by twinning all three of the church's toilets through the toilet-twinning scheme.

### ***Church Building***

Work has been completed to repair the cracked chimney and replace the stone cross to mark the church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Repairs were carried out to some of the stained glass windows

which were broken. A moveable wheelchair ramp has been purchased to allow wheelchair-users access to all areas of the church. The next project is to be the refurbishment of the kitchen and toilet area at the back of the church which will provide better facilities for Messy Church, Lunch-with-friends and other community events. The church is kept open every day during the daytime and the Undercroft room is available for appropriate use by other organisations, for a modest fee (no devil-worshippers, please).

### **The Priory Church of the Annunciation** – *Jenny Bailey*

Two major costly projects have been completed since our last report.

The restoration of the Wayside Cross at Inchbrook was finished in time for Remembrance Sunday and the Doom painting on the chancel arch was 'stitched' back onto the wall in several places where it had come loose from the stonework. With 166 years of accumulated grime removed the colours are as bright and fresh as when Henry Doyle, Conan Doyle's nephew, finished it. We are very proud of the historic connections with our church; eg. Sir Edward Elgar's sister, a prioress of St. Rose's convent is buried in our churchyard. Jane Bethell, our church historian, will talk to interested groups and gives guided tours.

We took part in Swienconka on Easter morning again. This is a Polish/Ukrainian custom, the Blessing of the Food Baskets. Decorated with sprigs of Box and coloured ribbons they contain decorated eggs, bread, bacon, sausage, cheese etc. and a butter Paschal Lamb. The church is very popular for weddings and there is always a group of children from St. Dominic's school making their First Holy Communion each summer.

Plans are being made to extend the burial area, and put kerbing around the cremations area. We will also encourage parishioners to take part in Woodchester Show, please can we have entry forms in plenty of time.

### **Village Events Committee** – *Penny Brown*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Flower and Produce Show**

This took place as usual on the second Saturday in September and was again well supported, by individuals and families who have a connection to Woodchester. The cup for the 'Best in Show', for the entrant who scored highest in awards across all categories, went this year to J Willoughby. J Willoughby was also awarded the David Brown Memorial Salver, kindly donated in 2011 by Stephen and Rhiannon Wigzell for the entrant with the highest combined score in the fruit and vegetable categories. There was a tie for the cup for 'Best in Show' in the junior classes and it was consequently shared by George Bijkerk, Maisie Sullivan and Alex Tunney.

The weather was kind to us and competitors and spectators alike were able to enjoy teas and stalls on the Church Green. This year, for the first time we introduced a fun Dog Show which was a lot of fun and seemed to be well appreciated. We shall hold another one this year!

It seemed fitting to mark the Centenary of the start of the First World War and the Committee was very grateful to the Woodchester Historical Society for their most informative and interesting exhibition in the Church. It really brought to life the War-time Village and the 19 names on the War Memorial.

Once again we were grateful to the Endowed School for the use of the School buildings for the Show, to St Mary's PCC for making the Church and Green available, and to all those who gave up their time to undertake the difficult but critical task of judging the entries. Finally our thanks go to all those who with considerable skill and commitment, (not to mention fore-thought!) planned, planted, nurtured and otherwise created and assembled the many splendid entries on which the success of the Show depends. Please continue to support it. This year it will be held on Saturday 12 September. This Year's Produce Show Schedule was included, in full, in the Spring edition of the Woodchester Word and I would encourage everyone to keep their copy, spread the word, and enter as many classes as they can.

### **Football Friendly**

Following the success of the first match between 'the Village' team and Woodchester Football club in 2013, a second match was held on Saturday 25th October last year. It was again played on the Village football pitch in North Woodchester and this time the Village team outnumbered the 'professionals' and had to lend them some players! It was a hard fought match demonstrating great skill and enthusiasm by the players on both teams. The result was a decisive win for the 'Village' team under their excellent Captain, Josh Maynard, who, sadly for us, ( but fortunately for him and his new Parish), has now moved on to be Vicar at a church in Coventry. A big 'thank you' to all the players and their supporters.

### **Village Carols**

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December saw the annual carol singing with two groups in and around North and South Woodchester meeting as usual on the Church Green where we shivered through some rousing carols before retreating to the Church for mulled wine, mince pies and more singing. The Nailsworth Silver Band turned out in force and greatly added to the enjoyment of the singing around North Woodchester, on the Green and in the Church. The carollers in South Woodchester meanwhile, though unaccompanied this year, were in great voice! A very big thank you to all participants - musicians, caterers and carollers, and also to St. Mary's PCC for the use of the Church.

This year we plan another Produce Show and Carols, and possibly another football match. Our next event will be the informal 'Open Gardens' on **Saturday 6 June, 2pm to 5pm.** Programmes will shortly be available in the Village Shop or you can just turn up at one of the locations selling programmes on the day.

Please look out for details of all our events on the Village Notice Boards. Thank you for your continued support and please do get in touch if you have ideas for future events or would like to join us on the Committee.

## **Woodchester W.I** – *Kath Gay*

Our WI continues to thrive, membership hovers around 18 – 20, and we have room for more!

Our programme for 2014 covered subjects such as Origami, Trees in Woodchester, A Magic lantern Show, A talk by our vicar Peter Francis and for the more energetic we held our own version of the Glasgow Games! Needless to say we enjoyed a post-Christmas Meal, a Fish and Chip Supper and our own Christmas Party which included a non-scheduled stop-over by Santa, who distributed a present to each member. We also held a “members night” whereby the committee sit back and the members take over arranging the evening.

Members take part in walks and outings organised by our Gloucestershire Federation (GFWI) and two members join the GFWI choir at a Christmas Concert in Cheltenham Town Hall; this past year the guest was Aled Jones.

We provided teas for the Open Garden Scheme (OGS) at Atcombe Court which helps raise funds for our WI as well as the OGS but sadly we could not hold our Annual Christmas Concert in aid of charity due to circumstances beyond our control. 2015 will see this event re-instated, volunteer performers of any skill level welcomed. We also had a Tombola Stall at the Village Produce Show.

2015 is the Centenary Year of WI’s we look forward to events celebrating this, at village level and beyond.

We meet on the third Thursday of each month at 7.30 p.m. in the village hall. We always welcome new members or, for more information contact Val on 01453 873658 or Kath on 01453 873348.

## **Woodchester Historical Society** – *Katherine McNealey, Secretary*

Woodchester Historical Society currently has 26 members but our meetings are open to everyone with an interest in local history. We offer a variety of walks, talks and visits throughout the year.

In 2014 we had an enriching year starting with a talk from Stroud historian Ian McIntosh on “Men Behaving Badly”. In June over twenty members travelled to Cirencester and enjoyed a guided tour of the town centre lead by Cherry Hubbard who gave us many insights into the buildings and people who lived in them from Roman times to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the summer Mike Hemming took two small groups of members around Southfield Mill House. Built in 1580 and added to over the years, this is one of the oldest buildings in the village. We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Hole for allowing us to visit their lovely home. Our September meeting focused on the Fabulous Fifties, when Virginia Adsett and Gillian Moss from “Those were the days” took many of us back to our childhood days with their spectacular collection of 1950’s ephemera including clothes, comics, games, household items and Festival of Britain commemorative items. We had lots of fun handling and trying on all kinds of things. I wonder how many times the phrase “” I had one of those” was repeated that evening?

A heartfelt thanks to Barbara Warnes, (with some help from husband, Mike) who put in a lot of time and effort to produce an excellent exhibition about Woodchester in 1914. This was on display in the church over the weekend of September 13/14<sup>th</sup>, which was also the weekend of the Flower and Produce show. Dozens of people attended and were fascinated by the maps, photographs and stories of the people, businesses and homes in Woodchester

at the beginning of the Great War. Barbara also lead two guided walks round the village that weekend looking at the houses and the people who lived there in 1914.

In November well-known local photographer Howard Beard gave an illustrated talk on life in and around Stroud at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Howard's extensive collection of old photographs and his relaxed presentation style always provides an interesting and entertaining evening.

In February 2015 Rose Hewlett gave a fascinating talk on the Severn Flood and explained how she had used original sources including Parish Archives and church records to investigate the cause and impact of this natural disaster. This proved to be our most popular event this year, with over thirty people crammed into The Undercroft!

Our next meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a talk from former county archivist, David Smith who will talk about William Tyndale and the origins of the King James Bible. This could prove intriguing to anyone who recently enjoyed the BBC TV Drama, Wolf Hall!

### **Girlguiding – Jackie Hayes**

The summer term ended with a joint meeting of Woodchester Brownies and Guides on Rodborough Common, starting off with an ice-cream, followed by games and activities in the woods.

Woodchester Brownies met up in the summer holidays to celebrate Maisie being awarded the prestigious Guiding Star Award. A morning of fun at Pennwood Scout Centre concluded with the presentation and buffet lunch. We were all incredibly proud of her.

To celebrate 100 years of Brownies a Division trip to West Midland Safari Park was organised which Woodchester Brownies participated in and they enjoyed it so much they've requested to go again: so shortly we will be off on another trip to the safari park, but this time with the Guides, as a District.

Some of the Brownies joined Nailsworth Brownies on Pack Holiday, whilst a couple of Woodchester Guides participated in the County Camp.

Both Brownies and Guides joined in the Nailsworth Remembrance Sunday parade and Church service. The girls from both groups have achieved various badges, enjoyed playing games, singing, participating in crafts and other activities.

Woodchester Brownies joined the District again in January to watch the Stanley Players perform the pantomime, Aladdin.

Woodchester Guides recently took part in a night hike at Westonbirt Arboretum, which involved watching and listening for wildlife in the dark and some star gazing. The hot chocolate at the end was much appreciated!

For more details about Girlguiding please contact Jackie on 01453 821258 or go to [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk) or [www.ggwoodchester.wordpress.com](http://www.ggwoodchester.wordpress.com)

### **Stroud Beekeepers - Buzzclub – Peter Lead**

We are in our fourth year and going strong. This year we have three groups meeting on alternate Monday afternoons, are establishing a Buzzclub at Wycliffe Prep School and through the enthusiasm of a parent hoping to help St. Dominic's have their own hive rather than relying on our hives. During Stroud Nature Festival 13<sup>th</sup> June until 27<sup>th</sup> June we are having two open days at our apiary and appearing at several venues. We will also be at

Stroud Show and Frampton Show. So at any of these events, which all have websites, we welcome anyone to come and see what we do.

### **SWALT – South Woodchester Amenity Land Trust** – *Bert Cossins*

Sound progress continues to be achieved on Orchard Pastures, found just below The Ram's lower car park. At the time of writing the orchard is a mass of blossom, the bulbs planted in the bank last autumn also bring welcome colour. Undoubtedly the fulsome blossom can be directly attributed to the annual Wassail held in mid-January – it was particularly well attended – we remain optimistic that our Wassail rituals will generate a plentiful orchard harvest; this will be seen in the abundance of fruit at the Village Show and juice from our planned autumn apple pressing.

The 'allotments' have been a scene of great activity as holders enjoyed the warm spring weather – all plots are taken and are well attended. Our spring tidy-up session was well supported and the annual spring chores swiftly achieved; Orchard Pastures will be fully involved in the 'Open Gardens' on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

The Buzz club, with their hives continues to thrive – their regular meetings are well attended with various age groups of children and young people involved – if one didn't know better they could be misconstrued as just landed from a space craft dressed in their bee proof kits

We remain uncertain of the ultimate use of the south facing bramble patch adjacent to Station Road; any suggestions to [swalt.org@gmail.com](mailto:swalt.org@gmail.com) please.

Our future events will be contained in SWALT's regular contributions to the Woodchester Word and advertised locally - all interested villagers are welcome to attend.

### **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 resurfacing of the rear playground.

Seven grants were awarded to individuals to assist with music and drama lessons and after school activities.

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, Chairman*

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 nine students. 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> September at the latest to the Chairman or Secretary at the address below. Any application is dealt with in the strictest confidence.

St. Loe's Exhibition Fund, c/o Goring House, North Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 5NG