

# The WOODCHESTER Word

November 2009

## Woodchester – integrated community or divided village?

It's a funny old place, Woodchester. Much of it is situated within a Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and we enjoy beautiful surroundings, including ancient woodland. The architecture is diverse – stone houses from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, to newer properties that reflect a 'boom' in this Cotswold village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and again in the 1960's.

We are lucky to have a Post Office, two churches and two primary schools. And we are unusual in having 64% of those in full time employment working within the parish, reflecting the many small home-based businesses as well as the larger employers operating along the A46.

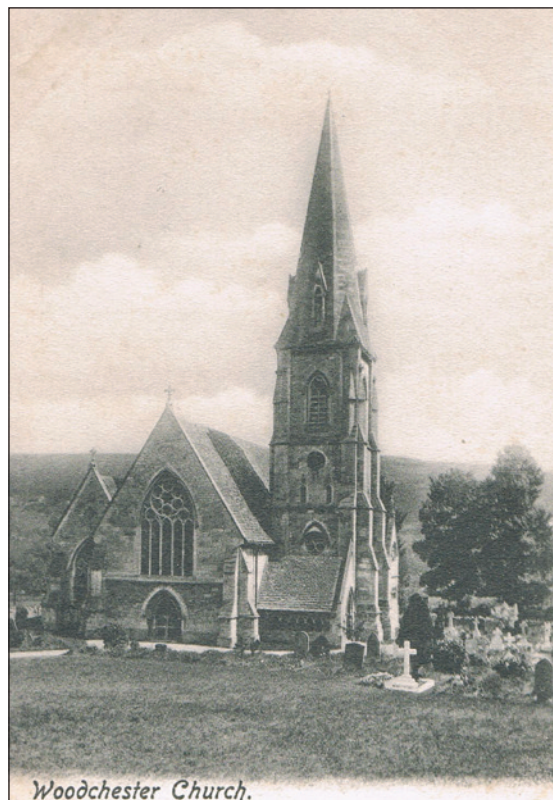
In the Parish Plan, published in 2005 after a major consultation programme, conclusions included that 'the overriding view of the village is that we live in a well-rounded community' and that 'the village is friendly, well integrated, and has a sense of community'.

But is that the reality of the village that we call Woodchester? And what is a 'community' anyway? Few sociologists agree on the definition of the term, although traditionally a community has been loosely defined as 'a group of interacting people living in a common location' – which certainly matches our village situation. But it is also often used to refer to a group that is organised around common values and social cohesion, and it might be that we don't quite fit that definition!

North Woodchester, South Woodchester and Rooksmoor each has its own pub, and the two ends of the village have their own primary school and church – each a central element in any rural community. Each area has its own characteristics, from population demographics to types of buildings. But, just as one example, do those living in the newer houses at the bottom of Selsley Road really feel that they belong to the same community as those at the far end of South Woodchester?

Perhaps the village suffers from a lack of identity. Woodchester is probably best known for its famous Roman Pavement buried beneath the old churchyard of the former parish church in North Woodchester. But that feature alone does not bind us all together.

It would be interesting to find out whether the balance of local opinion really is that Woodchester is the 'friendly, well-integrated community' that the Parish Plan would have us believe. If we want to help shape the future of our village, it's important to know where we are coming from, so we need to have this debate. The 'Woodchester Word' is your parish newsletter, and a great place to start the debate. Let us know what you think.



Woodchester Church.

## Christmas Past

Recently an old postcard came into my possession. It was of the Church, taken from the upper part of the churchyard where there are not many graves, so the probable date is late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is written in pencil and was obviously delivered by hand to an unknown person. The simple message is "Mrs Smith's good wishes to you and yours for a very happy Xmas and a prosperous New Year". Who was the Mrs Smith who would use such cards in this way, and would write in this manner?

My guess is that she was the wife of the Reverend Frederick Smith, who was rector of Woodchester from 1880 to 1913. The Smith's were the last clerical family to live in the old Elizabethan parsonage, which was pulled down following his death. A new one was built on the same site in 1915. This was the Rectory until 1990.

'Parson Smith' (as he was known) presided over two uncoverings of the Roman Mosaic (1880 and 1890) and wrote the first pamphlet about it. He is buried in the churchyard. Explore and find his grave and that of his wife. (John Cull)

## Village Fete a great success

Held on a glorious late summer day, the recent Village Fete has been hailed a great success by all who attended. From young children to grandparents, everyone seemed to have a great afternoon in the sunshine, with live music, food and drink, and a wide variety of things to do in the beautiful garden at Oakley House, as well as other attractions at the village hall, church green and Endowed School. The winners of the balloon race were Val Griffiths, whose balloon was found 147 miles away near Launceston, Cornwall and Callum Davis (8) whose balloon was found 125 miles away in Dolton, Devon. Val wins a Woodchester hamper and Callum wins four pantomime tickets for the Bristol Hippodrome.

The Produce Show was also very well received, with more than 120 exhibitors creating what the judges called 'a very high standard', and hundreds of people visiting the show in the afternoon. The winners of the strongly contested 'Best in Show' awards were David Butler and Lauren Turner. The success of the show has prompted the committee to consider making this an annual event - if so we will publish details of next year's show early in 2010.

'We are delighted at the positive feedback' Penny Brown, chair of the Woodchester Events Committee, told Woodchester Word. 'The Woodchester Events Fund is available to support other village events, and we would be pleased to hear from anyone with ideas, or who would like to be involved in future events'. Ideas being considered include a village picnic, open gardens, another street party, and perhaps another Fete in two years time. If anyone would like to get involved in future events, or help run the Produce Show, please contact malcolm.swait@woodchestervillage.co.uk.

---

## Local landmark sold

The Old Fleece at Rooksmoor has been purchased by long standing tenants Nick Beardsley and Christophe Coquoin.

The building has been a hostelry since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the 1850's became the posting-house between Gloucester and Petty France, with stabling for the coach horses and accommodation for drivers.

Nick and Christophe took the tenancy in 1993 and became known locally for their French cuisine and bistro style bar and restaurant. Their success prompted swift local expansion, and the group now includes The Britannia and Tippits in Nailsworth, The Old Lodge on Minchinhampton Common and the Fostons Ash near Birdlip. Their business, which is still based at the Old Fleece, employs 120 people and is a major contributor to the Stroud Valley economy.

The previous owners, Punch Taverns, agreed to sell the freehold after being approached by Nick and Christophe in May. Plans for the future include refurbished toilet facilities, terraced dining areas and the food service extended throughout the afternoon.

"Christophe and I are proud to have the Old Fleece in private and local ownership for the first time in over 100 years" Nick told the Woodchester Word. "The national pub conglomerates have been responsible for the loss of many local pubs, such as the Bell & Castle in Horsley, and this purchase will ensure the long term future of the Old Fleece for us and the local community. We have already started on refurbishments to the toilet facilities and improvements to terraces and gardens will follow".



Nick would enjoy hearing from anyone has any more information on the history of the Old Fleece. Nick can be contacted at pheasantpluckers2003@yahoo.co.uk

---

## Open Garden

National Gardens Scheme (NGS) is a nationwide organisation that raises money for charity through garden openings. This year for the first time we opened our garden at Atcombe Court for the NGS on Saturday 13 June. We were fortunate in having some good advanced publicity. There was an article on the garden in the Gloucester Echo and a feature on ITV's evening news programme the day before the opening. Being interviewed for TV was a novel experience but the interviewer and his cameraman were both charming and helpful.

The glorious weather on the open day brought a total of 215 visitors. It was a pleasure to welcome both Woodchester residents as well as those from further afield. The day raised £735 for the charities supported by the NGS such as Macmillan Nurses, Marie Curie Cancer Care and the Hospices. This could not have been done without the help of many people from the village who kindly manned the entrance and organised the car parking. Visitor cars all left by Atcombe Road and we are most grateful to the residents who arranged to remove all the parked cars along the road to allow the visitors to drive out easily and safely.

We will be opening the garden again for the NGS on Saturday 12 June 2010, when teas will be provided by the Woodchester Women's Institute. You will all be very welcome. (John and Josephine Peach)

---

## Post Office Anniversary

Linda and Terry are celebrating their first anniversary at the North Woodchester Post Office and are inviting customers to join them for a drink and snacks between 2pm and 4pm on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November. "We have really enjoyed our first year here and want to thank all our customers for their continued support".

---

## Woodchester Freelance Network

The Woodchester Freelance Network - for anyone who is self employed, or runs their own business - meets up once a month for informal chats, drinks, walks, and most recently, a wine-tasting. Forthcoming meetings will be at 8pm at The Ram, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, December 9<sup>th</sup>, and January 14<sup>th</sup>. Contact louise@louisetickle.co.uk

# Around the Village

## Parish Council News

Duschanka Sutherland has taken over from Simon Pierce as Clerk. She is secretary of the playgroup committee and has a child at school in Woodchester. Contact details: 01453 833313 , clerk@woodchestervillage.co.uk.

The Annual Litter Pick is scheduled for Sunday 8th November. We will meet at 2.00pm in the lay-by off the A46. Please come and help tidy up Woodchester before the winter. Equipment and refreshments provided.

The Village Design Statement was displayed at both school fetes and the village fete, eliciting some helpful comments. A questionnaire is being prepared for distribution with the next Woodchester Word.

Please come to the Remembrance Sunday events (see Diary) to remember those from Woodchester who died in the first and second World Wars.

## Woodchester Guides & Brownies

Girlguiding is 100 years old this school year, and many of our plans for the year will revolve around this celebration, starting with the District launch of the celebrations in October. We plan to end the Centenary year with a street/tea party and would like to invite any one in the area who has ever been involved in Girlguiding. If this means you, please contact Jackie (details below). Girlguiding UK enables girls and young women to develop their potential and to make a difference to the world, and has over 500,000 members. Just a quick mention that Girlguiding isn't just for the girls, adults can have fun too! A new leader (helping with Brownies and Guides) means we can accept more new girls into both units. If anyone is interested in starting Brownies or Guides please contact Jackie on 01453 821258.

## Bag 2 School

Woodchester Endowed School is organising another Bag 2 School collection to raise funds for the PTA, which this year has plans to improve the school's outdoor environment. The collection will be on Wednesday 18th November and is a great way to have a clearout of the following items: clothing, bedding, shoes, curtains, handbags and soft toys. Look out for a blue bag through your door nearer the time or contact Helen Latham on 872643 for further details.

## Woodchester Historical Society

The next meeting of the society will include the AGM and will be on Tuesday 3 November at 7:30pm in the Undercroft of St Mary's Church, North Woodchester. Philip Moss will speak on 'Old Inns of Gloucester'. Admission is £2 for members, £3 for non members. All Welcome.

## Football News

Woodchester have played four games in the Stroud & District Football League Division 7 so far this season, with one win, one draw and two losses. The team is currently mid-table, but is struggling to field a regular team due to injuries and other commitments. Anyone interested in playing should contact the Manager on a match day.

## St Dominic's School

It is often the case that the weather improves when the children return to school, and this year seems to be no exception. All our infants have now settled very well and we were also delighted to welcome several older children to our community this term giving us the highest number on role for some time.

Already the diary is beginning to fill up with dates for sporting fixtures and visits and it looks like it will be another busy year with lots of exciting activities ahead.

We finished the summer term with a sculpture week. Imogen Harvey Lewis came and worked with all the children designing and making a sculpture that celebrates our wonderful natural world. This has now been erected at the bottom of the school field and has been designated as a quiet, reflective area. The children are rightfully proud of this wonderful structure.

This term our older children are benefiting from a government scheme called 'Wider Opportunities'. All the junior children will receive violin lessons, as a class, once a week for ten weeks. This is a wonderful opportunity for children to try an instrument and we are hopeful that many will continue having lessons when the scheme finishes.

We will be holding our annual open morning on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November between 9:30 and 12:00 for anyone who would like to come along and see us in action! Everyone is welcome. (*Margaret Smith, Headteacher*)

## Woodchester Endowed Primary School

In a short space of time we have said good-bye to one group of children and welcomed a new group into our school. Our leavers did themselves proud in so many ways: achieving excellent SATs results, excelling in sporting competitions, conducting themselves well socially and right at the end of their time with us putting on the most fantastic performance of Shakespeare's Macbeth. They have departed to a full spread of our local secondary schools and are, we believe, well prepared for the challenges ahead.

A total of 19 children have joined the school this term and all are settling in well to their new school life. We have also welcomed Miss Sharpley, who has joined us as our Year 4 & 5 class teacher.

Life at our school is as busy as ever. This term our school council has teamed up with others from three local schools to discuss local issues with David Drew MP. Matters such as parking, dog mess, recycling and safer cycling were all debated in an extremely grown up manner.

We will be holding an open morning on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November for any parents who have children due to start school in September 2010. Please do pass this information on to anyone you know who may be interested to have a look around. (*Gordon Soutar, Headteacher*)

## Christmas Carols

If you would like to join a group of singers to lead the carol singing at the Carol Service at St Mary's Church on Christmas Eve, please contact Julian Elloway at mail@julianelloway.co.uk

## SWALT and Orchard Pastures

Something has been happening in Orchard Pastures, the land at the bottom of the Ram car park! Some Woodchester residents have bought the land and formed the South Woodchester Amenity Land Trust (SWALT) with the aim of making the pastures a focus of the community to be used for and by the villagers. Orchard and allotment projects are steaming ahead, hence the clearance, with other projects (play area, gardens, bee-keeping, vineyard, composting and parking) being researched. If you would like more information please email to swalt.wire@hotmail.co.uk and any of the trustees will be glad to help.

## Woodchester in World War II

I am trying to gather information about Woodchester during World War II and I am looking for people to help me with their memories. Recent questions have been asked about Prisoners of War held here – do you know anything about them? Evacuees arrived from Birmingham on 10 September 1939 – were you one of them? Do you know any of them? Are you part of a family who lost someone recorded on the war memorial? Were you in Woodchester during this time? Can you tell me about your experience? I hope you can. Please contact Barbara Warnes on 872181. Email Barbara.warnes@tiscali.co.uk

## From the Editor

After more than five years at the helm, Paul Lock has recently 'retired' from his post as editor of the 'Word', and we are very grateful to him and his team for all the work they have put in. I have the privilege of assuming responsibility for the safekeeping of our parish newsletter, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to the new-look 'Woodchester Word'.

Next year, with the support of the Parish Council, we are planning to produce four issues, and to increase the 'Word' to eight pages. We have a number of new members of the team and lots of exciting plans for adding to the 'Word'. We are very keen to encourage contributions from within the community, so if you have something you think the village might find interesting, or would like to contribute regularly on a particular subject, please get in touch. We are also planning to start a 'Letters' page, so please also tell us your views about the village, local issues, and what you think about the new format.

Iain Dunbar, Editor, Pear Tree Cottage, Selsley Road, North Woodchester GL5 5NQ. 01453 872185. iaindunbar@btconnect.com

## Advertising

The 'Word' will increase to eight pages in 2010, giving us the opportunity to include advertising on a regular basis. This advertising will support the additional cost of producing and printing the newsletter, so is vital to its future. The four issues will be in February, May, August and November, and an A4 quarter-page ad will be £35 per issue or £120 per year (for all four issues). If you are interested in supporting this very worthwhile community publication, please contact Iain Dunbar on 01453 872185, or email iaindunbar@btconnect.com

## Village Carols

If anyone would like to help organise the Village Carols event on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, or act in the nativity play, please contact Duschanka Sutherland (01453 833313 or email clerk@woodchestervillage.co.uk) or Councillor Penny Brown on 01453 873431.

## Playgroup Christmas Market

Woodchester Playgroup is holding their annual Christmas Market in the village hall on Wednesday 2nd December between 10am - 12noon. This is a chance to have a festive cup of tea or coffee as well as to buy from a variety of local stall holders including jewellery, toys, Christmas cards, gifts etc. Our youngsters (aged 2-4) will sing some of their favourite songs. Please come and support us.

## Village Hall

The new season for Village Hall Courses is now in full swing. The course calendar is posted on the village notice boards and outside the Village Hall, and we hope to include an updated calendar in the next issue of the 'Word'. Rent for the hall is very reasonable and it is an ideal venue for your family event.

A new ballet class has been started – contact Sophie Makosch (tel 834356 or 07887 671956) for information. A non-competitive Short Mat Bowls Group meets every Monday 10am–12 noon and costs just £2.50 per session including refreshments - contact Bob Ludlow (tel 872340) for more information or drop in and see what they do. Claire Bader has spaces available in her Wednesday evening Keep Fit class - call 886953 for information.

## Dates for your diary

### Remembrance Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November

Memorial Service at St. Mary's Church, 10.55 am followed by a procession to the war memorial and wreath laying ceremony at 12:00.

### Wednesday 2nd December

Playgroup Christmas Market, 10:00-12:00

### Friday 11th December

Endowed School Christmas Fair, 5:30-8:00pm

### Sunday 11th December

Christingle Service at St Mary's Church, 11:00am

### Saturday 19th December

Festive Concert by Thames Head Singers at St Mary's Church

### Wednesday 23rd December

Village Carols and Nativity Play

### Thursday 24th December

Candlelight Carol Service at St Mary's Church, 6:00pm

### Christmas Day

Christmas Praise at St Mary's Church, 10:00am