

Woodchester Village Report 2018

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

1. INTRODUCTION.

The past year has been a busy and productive one for the Parish Council in its endeavour to bring long standing planning, traffic and road safety and environmental issues to fruition. We are more than half way there but there are still challenges to be met.

2. PLANNING.

2.1 District Wide Issues-Local Implications.

Stroud District's Local Plan designed to meet the housing, economic, development, retail, transport and community needs of the District for the next 15 years, was formally accepted by the Council in November 2015. Last year SDC agreed to undertake an early review of the plans to beyond 2031. This was particularly designed to address any unmet housing or development needs that had arisen since adoption. In particular all Parish and Town Councils were asked under the Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) provisions to identify any land which might become available for local housing or related development over the next twenty years.

In the case of Woodchester, two potential sites for development were suggested - one in Rooksmoor, the other off Lawns Park. The latter referred to a field off Water Lane behind the houses on Selsley Road. A previous application to build on this site some years ago was rejected on grounds of poor access. The SALA proposal stated that, as there were no heritage restraints, this site had potential for a limited number of houses notwithstanding the fact that it was immediately adjacent to an AONB and to the Grade II listed Priory. The land is however owned by four separate owners and subject to a covenant restricting building on the site. For this reason the Parish Council considered it unsuitable for further development.

The other site was in Rooksmoor which has significant heritage constraints as it abuts the Industrial Conservation Area and contributes to the area's landscape setting, including the cluster of listed buildings in Rooksmoor itself –a distinctive and well contained hamlet within the Woodchester Parish boundary. As such it falls within level of sensitivity 3 –significant heritage restraints. This is of particular relevance to existing plans to develop the Rooksmoor Mills site.

Plans were put forward to develop this site for a mixed housing and commercial development in 2005 and approved in 2008. Plans were resubmitted in 2011 for modifications to the original design but later withdrawn. Revised plans were drawn up again in 2013 and at that time the Parish Council and local residents raised objections to the plans both on the grounds of design and overall size and further argued that the heritage restraints mentioned above had particular relevance to this site. Notwithstanding these concerns planners approved the plans in 2016. This resulted in a High Court challenge being instituted by a local resident which subsequently quashed SDC's Development Control Committee's approval of the third set of plans on the ground of failure to take into account agreed heritage constraints and proper consultation procedures. As a result, developers submitted revised plans to include reducing the height of the main block. In November 2017, by a narrow margin, the DCC voted the revised scheme should go ahead. The development is now a 'fait accompli' but it has resulted in the developers having a constructive meeting with the Parish Council and Rooksmoor residents, agreeing some modifications to the proposed elevations in the nature of the facing material to be used and to drawing up a scheme to minimize

inconvenience to local residents while construction is taking place. A detailed report on this meeting is attached to this report (qv).

2.2 Heritage issues.

Heritage issues are more often honoured in the breach than the observance as our experience with the Rooksmoor Mills development has demonstrated. The Parish Council therefore took the opportunity to respond positively to a consultation document from SDC 'Towards a Heritage Strategy' published in autumn 2017. This proposed that a revised heritage register to include buildings 'at risk' should be set up and reviewed at regular intervals; the current conservation heritage areas should be re-appraised to reflect current practice and need and that a 'heritage champion' should be appointed to oversee the whole process. The Parish Council felt that the document fell short in not including other features which give meaning to the our area's heritage such as old tracks and pathways, wells and spring heads, markers and milestones.

2.3 Consultation on Planning.

The saga of the Rooksmoor Mills planning application throws into doubt the whole process whereby proper consultation with Town and Parish Councils on planning issues takes place. Some years ago the previous head of planning at SDC referred to planning as, 'a game in which the player with the most influence wins'. This rather cynical response may not be typical of the way in which the majority of planning applications locally go through. We do, however, share the concerns of a number of other town and parish councils locally that the consultation process is not working as it should. While we understand that the planning department at SDC is currently understaffed and overworked, we take the view that not only should planning decisions made at officer and council level be in concordance with central and local government legislation and guidance but also should be in line with the perceived needs of local population for housing (particularly local authority and affordable housing which is in short supply). Better communication at officer and district councillor level is of the essence.

3 TRAFFIC & ROAD SAFETY ISSUES.

Seven years ago our Parish Plan (and its subsequent revisions) identified that one of the major concerns of Woodchester residents was the increase in the number and speed of vehicles passing through our village, and road safety issues in particular for pedestrians and cyclists especially along the A46 where it passes through our parish. At the time the need was identified to monitor the extent of through and 'rat running' traffic and whether recommended speed limits were being adhered to. Three years ago a safety drive resulted in the PC erecting 'Twenty is Plenty in Woodchester' signs throughout the village but this proved only partially successful in slowing down traffic.

Mindful of the continuing problem of traffic generally, the Parish Council has recently expanded the role of the Footpaths and Rights of Way sub-committee in monitoring traffic flow and speed and introducing road safety measures in conjunction with our neighbouring councils.

In this connection a traffic survey was carried out over a twelve hour period in October 2017 on Selsley Road just below the Village Shop. The traffic volume was greater than anticipated with the total number of vehicle movements over a twelve hour period in the working day totalling 2,745. The peak period was between 8.00 and 9.00am with 466 movements - one vehicle passing (mainly downhill) every 8.7 seconds and a second peak between 17.00 and 18.00 with a total of 370 vehicles passing (mainly uphill). A subsequent survey using a borrowed speed camera at several locations on Selsley Road revealed that of the 911 recorded over a an eight hour period, two thirds

kept to below 24mph many respecting the 20 mph recommended limit. The majority (92%) of drivers respected the mandatory 30 mph limit but a small number 26 or 7.4% exceeded 30 mph and only 4 (1.3%) were speeding over 35mph which could render them potentially liable to penalty under the Road Traffic Act.

The success of these initiatives led to a further survey using a speed camera on the A46 just south of its junction with Selsley Road in February of this year. This revealed that between 7.00am and 4.00pm a total of 5510 vehicles passed up and down the road, of which 97% were observing the mandatory 40mph limit, 2.6% travelling between 40 and 45mph and only 0.3% exceeding 46 mph with one doing 51mph.

The conclusion of these surveys is, that as far as Woodchester is concerned, it is the sheer volume of traffic rather than the speed as such which causes problems especially and not unusually, in the peaks. The narrowness and winding nature of our local roads plus on-road parking probably deters drivers to reduce their speed - and this is not a bad thing!

Ongoing discussions have taken place between The Parish Council and our County Councillor, Steve Robinson plus Andrew Middlecote, former Highways Manager on implementing traffic control measures locally. Unfortunately alterations to the highway (eg. speed bumps, chicanes etc.) require a Traffic Regulation Order which would currently cost the Parish Council £15,000. In the meantime it has been agreed to relocate and replace the 'Twenty is Plenty' signs throughout the village (already done) and bring forward measures to repaint areas of badly worn road marking including the possibility of adding 'SLOW' markings in Selsley Road near the bends. Active consideration is also being given to installing a vehicle activated speed reminder sign on the A46. All this will however take time and money. Cllr. Dunbar, using the data Woodchester has collected, is also in discussions with adjacent parishes, particularly the Rodborough Road Safety Group who have put a considerable effort into highlighting road safety issues. Ultimately the intention is to draw together with Highways, Road Safety experts, Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucester an agreed policy on traffic flow, speed restrictions and road safety that would work effectively in our local area.

3.1 Parking.

Parking remains a contentious issue in Woodchester, especially South Woodchester, where space is at a premium. Efforts to find alternative parking places have proved fruitless. The availability of suitable land being the key issue. A suggested sale of the field off Frogmarsh Lane adjacent to the Mill building has come to nought, the land being regarded as too steep to use for parking or indeed leisure purposes. In the meantime the Parish has worked with Bottle Green and the other proprietors of Frogmarsh Mill to ensure the entrance to the Mill for HGVS and other vehicles is not obstructed by carelessly parked cars.

3.2 The Cycle Track.

The Cycle track between Dudbridge and Nailsworth is well used by cyclists and walkers especially where it passes through our parish, aided by the continuing popularity over the past year of the specially constructed Bike Trail sponsored by the Parish Council and generous local donors. The designated status of the track (as opposed to the Trail) has never been made absolutely clear. A proposal has been recently put to Gloucestershire County Council Rights of Way to have the track designated a bridleway shared by cyclists, walkers and riders. There are concerns that, if so declared, there could be conflicts between riders, pedestrians and cyclists with an increased risk of accidents. This would be made worse by the narrowness of the existing track in places leaving little

room to pass. In the meantime costs are being obtained for a suitable firm surface suitable for all users.

3.3 Pot holes and Road Repairs.

The recent hard winter and the 'Beast from the East' has aggravated the problem of cracks and potholes in our local roads. While we do our best to identify such hazards and inform Gloucestershire Highways of their state, the County Council has cut the money given to each councillor to spend on Highways to £20,000 per annum. However a new grant of £30,000 to spend over three years to invest in local infrastructure projects has been allocated to each councillor to spend on their division on small highways projects, including drainage, resurfacing, better street lighting etc.

4. THE ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Drainage.

Aside from the poor state of our local roads, a major and continuing concern for the Parish Council has been poor road drainage. In a steep area such as ours, heavy water run off after rain is to be expected. This means that drains and gullies should be regularly cleaned of mud, road dirt, leaves and other debris and verges on roads and footpaths be kept clear of excessive growth of grass, shrubs and weeds. Neglect of these precautions not only leads to overflow and the potential for flooding of properties below the drains or gullies concerned but also the breakup of the adjacent road surface. Blockages on parts of the A46 and at Frogmarsh Lane, Convent Lane and Bospin Lane have been made worse by the recent inclement weather conditions. The appointment of 'lengthsmen' to undertake work at local level was welcomed as a step in the right direction. A list of tasks has been drawn up by the Parish Council for the necessary work to be carried out.

4.2 Grit Bins

Mention of adverse weather conditions draws attention to the fact that the Parish has 23 grit and salt bins distributed in strategic locations throughout the parish for use in snowy or icy weather. A survey of these bins carried out last autumn revealed that some were in poor condition, most had their lids missing leading to hardening of their contents and some had not been topped up recently. A review will take place over the coming months to gradually replace those bins in poor condition.

4.3 Rubbish and Dog Fouling.

Dog fouling has always been an emotive issue for local residents. Fortunately incidents of this kind have declined recently as most dog owners pick up their dog's faeces for safe disposal frequently in the identified dog waste bins. There are eight of these in strategic places in our parish but they are often used for the disposal of general litter at the same time. SDC Environmental services proposed to charge the Council £239 per annum to empty these bins. To add insult to injury they removed three general litter bins without warning, on the grounds they were 'broken or damaged' and refused to replace them. A brisk exchange of correspondence with SDC ensued in which it was finally agreed that the Parish Council would replace one of the better used bins on Selsley Road and monitor the use of the others but we refused to pay the additional sum for emptying the dog waste as this was seen as part of the general waste disposal in the parish and would unnecessarily increase the cost of our precept.

5. FINANCES.

The precept (the additional sum paid by residents to the District and County Council authorities for the provision of local services) has been held constant for some years by judicious expenditure and use of reserves. Councillors agreed earlier this year that the budget for the year 2018/19 should be £12,815 to include an extra £250 for Bike Trail and general maintenance. With the allocation of £1,005 from reserves plus £310 from repayment due of VAT and interest, it has been proved possible set the precept at £11,500. Although this is an increase of £750 from last year's precept, the precept ten years ago was in fact £12,500 so, allowing for inflation, the PC still provides good value for money for the services it is expected to provide to local residents.

6. EVENTS.

June 2017 marked the centenary of the very first World War memorial ever erected to the fallen of the World War I in this country - the Wayside Cross which stands below the Roman Catholic Priory in South Woodchester and commemorates the fallen of the parish in both world Wars.

A ceremony of rededication was organised by a small steering committee of residents led by George Bastin, former chairman of the Parish Council. It was held on 10th. June 2017 following the format of the original ceremony of dedication almost exactly 100 years previously. It was attended by the RC Bishop of Clifton, local clergy, our local MP and District Councillors, relatives of those whose names are recorded on the memorial, village school children and residents plus representatives of the Old Comrades and the British Legion. The Parish Council was represented by your chairman. It was graced by the presence of the Princess Royal, Princess Anne and her husband, Cmdr. Tim Lawrence who made special arrangements to attend for which we were most grateful.

All who were there agreed that the service of rededication was a dignified, moving and an appropriate celebration of the lives of so many Woodchester residents whose lives were sacrificed in the service of our country in both World Wars.

7. PERSONNEL.

In February 2017, Charles Grundy who had recently moved into South Woodchester with his family, was co-opted and stepped in to serve as parish councillor to replace long standing former Cllr. Malcolm Swait who has since moved away from the parish. We much valued Cllr. Grundy's expertise and advice but, unfortunately, increasing professional commitments meant he had to stand down from his post twelve months later. Fortunately we were able to replace him with Cllr. Iain Dunbar – a former parish councillor now retired, who is much involved with road safety issues, as well as providing expertise on the Woodchester Word Publications and Parish Council website committee.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Maurice Chestnutt who resided at the Old Rectory, North Woodchester for many years. He served as parish councillor from 2000-2008. He was particularly active in working with children and young people and provided much support to the working party involved in the early stages of our Parish Plan. Our sympathies go to his wife and family.

9. CONCLUSION.

I am always surprised and gratified by the amount of work the Parish Council gets through and this last year has been one of our busiest. My thanks, as always, go to all my parish council

colleagues and more particularly to our clerk Ann Bijkerk without whom the work of the Council would be impossible.

Planning – Report on Rooksmoor Mills Public Meeting – Cllr. Iain Dunbar

A well-attended public meeting was held in Woodchester Village Hall in April at which Tony Cooper and Alan Tyndall, Directors of Rooksmoor Mills Ltd, explained the latest plans for the construction phase of the development now that planning permission has been granted.

Tony explained that they hope to start work on the site in July, although there is still a lot of detail to be agreed with Stroud District Council's planning department. The first stage will be enabling works, including rebuilding or renewing the derelict river tunnels under the site (which could take three months) and enlargement of the old mill pond to about 5 times its current size. The housing at the southern end of the development (Block F) will then be ready for occupation 12 months later, and the remainder of the development completed by the end of 2021.

Tony made it clear that many of the details of the design have been imposed on them by Stroud District Council and Heritage England, preventing them from implementing some features they would have preferred, but that they genuinely believe that the finished development will be "great looking buildings which we can all be proud of".

The meeting was, for the most part, very constructive, and gave local residents an opportunity to ask questions and raise specific concerns about the impact of the development.

- **Light pollution.** Residents raised concerns about light pollution from the site. Tony responded that they understand these concerns and that the designs (including the use of bollard lighting around Block F and the Mill Pond) ensure this will be kept to a minimum.
- **Flood risk.** Tony assured residents that comprehensive flood risk assessments are believed to have dealt with any possible flooding risk, including one of the river tunnels becoming blocked.
- **Noise pollution:** Tony confirmed that the new buildings will sit on 12-14m piles, and that the piling process will inherently be noisy, but that this should last only two weeks. Residents requested that we be given notice of this phase of the process.
- **Construction Traffic:** Tony confirmed that "special measures" will be implemented to allow construction traffic to access the site. Although not yet agreed with GCC Highways, these may include temporary traffic lights on the A46. There is understandable concern that this may result in traffic diverting through Woodchester, particularly Selsley Road. Chairman Gervase Hamilton confirmed that the Parish Council would carefully monitor this situation. Access to the site will be via the existing entrance during initial construction. Once Block F is nearing completion, the second access to the south will be prepared.
- **Materials:** The red brick finish on Block B specified by SDC has always been contentious, but the developers are currently looking at the possibility of changing this to stone facing, a move which was warmly welcomed by the meeting. Some red bricks will be retained during demolition for repairs to the wall along the A46.
- **Parking:** some concern was expressed that overflow parking from the finished development would spill into areas of the village, but Tony re-assured the meeting that there are 2.5 parking spaces for each of the 54 units.
- **Landscaping:** Tony explained that the detail of the landscaping, particularly around the pond and adjacent to the A46, have yet to be agreed, but that there will be "a variety of attractive planting in this area".

- **Commercial Units:** Alan confirmed that the commercial element at the North end of the site still requires a detailed planning application to be submitted, and is under review depending on the commercial success of the rest of the site.
- **Access to the Cycle Path:** There will eventually be two access points to the cycle path, a new one to the south and the existing path to the north (although existing steps are only temporary).
- **S.106 Funding:** £5,400 has been allocated to the Parish Council through s.106 to be spent on kissing gates in the village.
- **History of the site**
 - 1729 water-driven woollen mill
 - 1859 2-storey water and steam power mill, with own private siding from Stroud-Nailsworth railway
 - 1935 major fire destroyed most of mill.
 - 1963 mill closed, machinery removed, other businesses moved in

Cllr. Hamilton also confirmed that a process will be out in place to ensure regular dialogue with the developers throughout the construction process, enabling local residents to be kept fully up to date with plans and developments. More details will follow as we near the start of the construction phase.

Footpaths – *Cllr. Barbara Warnes*

In Woodchester, we are lucky with our footpaths, they are, in general, kept in good order. We don't suffer from them being 'ploughed up' as in some neighbouring parishes and landowners are usually prompt in responding to concerns.

For the last few years I have reported on the status of the cycle track i.e. when it opened on the disused railway line, it was never officially designated. There was a proposal to rectify this matter and various designations were under consideration. This, we were told, would lead to a proper maintenance plan. The latest news is that it is intended to make it a bridleway. This is supposedly going to consultation but it seems to me that there is nothing left to consult on and the decision has been made! The consequences of this may or may not impact most users. Horses will be permitted but we don't anticipate great numbers and we have already raised the issue of passing in the narrow stretch at Giddynapp. Cyclists' rights will change. Basically, a bridleway is "a way over which the public has a right of way on foot and a right of way on horseback or leading a horse, with or without a right to drive animals along the way." Although Section 30 of the Countryside Act 1968 permits the riding of bicycles on public bridleways, the act says that it "shall not create any obligation to facilitate the use of the bridleway by cyclists". Thus the right to cycle exists even though it may be difficult to exercise on occasion, especially in winter. Cyclists using a bridleway are obliged to give way to other users on foot or horseback. I don't anticipate any problems with cyclists being able to use the track all year round – it may even be better if the surface is improved – but I can see an issue with 'giving way'. We will all need to work together.

We usually have a very good response to fallen trees etc. on the cycle track 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. The response to issues on footpaths is not so good and broken stiles are often reported several times with no improvement.

We are always grateful to the landowners for cutting back vegetation, especially nettles, on footpaths to allow us to walk through and to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who quietly

improve conditions for us. Please be aware that rights of way only have a right for their particular designation and the right only exists on the path i.e 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!

Using Section 106 payments, we have a plan to replace several stiles with kissing gates. A new gate has been installed on Selsley Road next to Park View.

Last year, we gained a new permissive path leading down steps from the cycle track, through Rooksmoor Mill to the A46. This is a much safer option than the unofficial and unsupported route over the weir so please use it. The plans for the Rooksmoor Mill development include public paths to the cycle track.

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

Woodchester Endowed Church of England Primary School – Lynn Pennington,
Headteacher

After the extremely successful SIAMs and OFSTED inspections in 2017, Woodchester Endowed Primary School has seen some changes in recent months. Mr Glyn Jones left the school in July to take up another headship and Mrs Sarah Driver became Acting Headteacher during the Autumn term, before taking up a headship post herself. We send our warm thanks for the huge contribution both have made to life at Woodchester Endowed Primary School as well as our good wishes as they move into the next exciting stage of their careers. In January 2018, Mrs Lynn Pennington was delighted to be appointed as the new Headteacher and has been busy familiarising herself with the school, and building relationships with all members of the school, church and wider community. As part of this, a questionnaire was sent out to parents and a 'Moving Forward Together' meeting held to consider potential priority areas for the future. At Christmas and Easter, children demonstrated the strength of our Christian nature through their contribution to services in St Mary's and during the Infant Nativity. Their confidence, pride, self-belief and talent shone through as they delivered the Christian message during these services to a very full church and school hall.

At Woodchester Endowed we all work hard to try to ensure that every child can achieve their very best through a vibrant and engaging curriculum and we provide many opportunities to achieve and grow in confidence. The children took part in a wide selection of exciting activities during the Spring term. We were delighted to send two football teams to compete in the Riddiford Shield tournament at the Indoor Football Centre in Brimscombe and extremely proud when both achieved places in the next round. Our School Council, keen to promote recycling, organised and delivered an assembly to the whole school, providing detailed information about the importance of recycling and how we recycle in school. In addition to this, a small and enthusiastic party of children conducted a litter picking event around the village. Our enthusiastic band of young volunteers, who demonstrated a good deal of community spirit, determination and teamwork, cleared the streets around school of litter. Also learning more about life and work in the community, Willow Class visited Stroud Magistrate Court to take part in a Mock trial. This was a marvellous opportunity for them to understand more about law and democracy as they created and presented with great clarity and confidence the argument for the defence.

Music has also played a key part in learning and building self-confidence. Each day, at the beginning and end of collective worship, we have all been treated to a musical rendition from different children who are learning an instrument. Two of our classes have had an introduction to the violin and have come to realise how learning an instrument develops so many skills, including listening, determination and self-discipline, as well as providing opportunities to have lots of fun, of course!

Being able to come to school in clothes other than school uniform always seems to generate a degree of excitement and Sports Relief in March was no exception. It was great to see the children dressed up as a favourite sports star or just ready for the events of the day in sporty clothes. Our Year 6 children made a considerable contribution to the day, creating different stalls in the hall for the rest of the school to visit. They devised some entertaining activities for everyone to enjoy. A real highlight of the day was the sponsored mile run event which took place on the village cycle track. The day ended with a celebratory assembly during which Year 6 gave out a splendid selection of prizes to the winning children and children from Hawthorn Class shared news of what they had learned on their Fit2Last trip to Forest Green Rovers. Finally, we were joined by Mark, the manager of Forest Green Rovers, who answered an array of questions including what it was like to be a football manager. In total, we contributed 320 000 Sports Relief steps towards the billion target and collected **£1830.10**, an incredibly generous amount of money to raise for good causes.

The Parish Church of St. Mary - *Andrew Pemberton, on behalf of St. Mary's Parochial Church Council*

The Church of England's legal process for combining the parishes of Rodborough, Woodchester and Brimscombe into one united "Benefice" has now completed, and just recently Rev Peter Francis was formally instituted as our Rector (at long last!).

Whilst the day-to-day activity of the church carries on, and we continue to welcome anyone interested in exploring the Christian faith, the church council has launched a project to make improvements to the facilities inside the church, so that the building is more welcoming and better equipped for community use. The project is now in a fund-raising phase under the banner "A Building for Everyone" whilst detailed plans are drawn up and tenders invited. Further information can be found on the notice board in church and on the church website.

Both Lunch-with-Friends and Messy Church, which are flourishing community activities, will greatly benefit from our project's improved kitchen facilities and better storage and audio-visual arrangements. Lunch-with-Friends, attended by many who are elderly or living alone has taken place monthly through the year. The Christmas lunch in December included visits from the children of Woodchester Endowed School and Father Christmas! Messy Church, held monthly after school, has been enthusiastically attended by children and their carers from Woodchester and beyond. A Light Party with games, crafts and refreshments was held as an alternative to Halloween and was enjoyed by about 60 children.

The church has provided a venue for a concert of Renaissance music for Passiontide given by The Cappella Singers, a concert by the Eclectic String Band, and the Capriol Chamber Orchestra's 30th Anniversary Concert.

The church has also participated in community activities in the village. As an alternative to the house-to-house collection a Big Breakfast was held on the Church Green in May to raise funds for Christian Aid. The Church took part in the Woodchester Produce Show providing tea and cake and a book/DVD stall. Church members took part in the Woodchester Carol Singing around the Village and an ecumenical service to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Wayside Cross in South Woodchester.

Links with our partner church in Sweden were strengthened by a visit there last May during which the partnership agreement was renewed.

Work with children and young people has continued to be a strength of the Church. On Sunday mornings we run "Junior Church" and a crèche. Youngsters and leaders have attended X:Site Glos and Scripture Union Camps in the summer holidays. Some also joined adults in attending the New Wine Conference in the summer. The Laser Group with games and activities for school years 6-8 has continued and a new group for teenagers aged 14 upwards has started called PizzaChat. Seven Foundation Governors, including the Chair of Governors have served Woodchester Endowed School which was judged outstanding in all areas by OFSTED inspectors. The committed work of the governors was noted by the OFSTED inspectors.

The Church has continued to support a number of other Christian and charitable organizations, some of whom have been represented by visiting speakers: CMS, Interserve, Tear Fund and Scripture Union; Stroud Foodbank, Nelson House, Christian Aid (through the Big Breakfast), the Poppy Appeal (through the Remembrance Service), The Children's Society (through the Christingle Service), The Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust and the Christmas Teams-4-U shoebox appeal.

The church is unlocked during daytimes for visitors and local residents, as a place of tranquillity and reflection.

It has been another active year for St Mary's!

Woodchester W.I – Sally Bull, Secretary

We have been delighted to welcome several new members this year, bringing our numbers to a healthy 27 and ensuring the future of our group in the village.

Our programme last year provided a wide range of activities including talks, demonstrations, craft sessions and opportunities to enjoy good food together. Our speakers have engaged our imaginations with stories, taken us on illustrated journeys round the globe, introduced us to elephants and to donkeys in need of sanctuary and entertained us with autoharps. We have also challenged ourselves with quizzes and explored the campaigns promoted by the WI at national level. As well as the usual summer fish and chip supper, we enjoyed a delightful puddings night, visited the Clothiers as a group (complete with tiaras in celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday) and celebrated Christmas in our own way with a selection of homemade soups. A gesture in the direction of sport and fitness was made on our carnival-themed games night where some ladies displayed a surprising competitive streak.

Members also enjoyed some of the many opportunities open to members at county level, participating in walks at Frampton and Upton, trying out croquet (complete with cream tea) at

Cheltenham, visiting a mosque, Sikh and Hindu temples in Gloucester and seizing the opportunity to hear the first woman Tornado pilot speak at our AGCM. Members enjoyed the Christmas concert in Cheltenham with some participating in the choir. We have continued to raise money, providing teas at the Atcombe Court open garden event, running a lucky dip stall at the village produce show and organising a sales table at some meetings, with some profits going to the WI women's charity ACWW. As a new venture, a group of members arranged a pre-Christmas tea in the village hall with entertainment provided by the handbell ringers and the Stroud ukulele group. We were very pleased with the support and with the money raised for a local charity, Hope for Tomorrow, and intend to repeat the event this year.

New members are always sure of a warm welcome, as are any visitors who want to hear a particular speaker or to give us a try before committing to membership. We meet at 7.30pm on the third Thursday of each month in the village hall.

Woodchester Historical Society – *Barbara Warnes, Chair*

Woodchester Historical Society meets approximately four times a year, mainly in the Undercroft of St Mary's Church. We are a small group of people and would be happy to welcome new members. It is not necessary to know anything about the history of Woodchester to join us.

In the last year, we have had a visit to the Timber Yard, a tour of Gloucester Docks and talks on 'Life in a Romano British Villa' and 'A Woodchester house and its people' – a very local story about Cotteswold in the High Street.

We had a display about Woodchester Schools at Stroud Local History Society's Summer Exhibition and alongside the Produce Show in September we had a 'picture quiz' with old photographs. If anyone has other old pictures of the village that they are happy for us to copy and preserve, please get in touch.

This year will, I hope, have started with our postponed talk by Chris Billingham on the 'Monarch's Way' and will continue with a guided tour of Gloucester City, and talks on 'A Cathedral of Steel – Stanley Mill' and 'Redlers of Stroud'.

We have prepared leaflets of self-guided walks around both North and South Woodchester with an historical theme (both general and WW1) which can be purchased for a nominal sum. These are available from the Society or the Village Shop.

We continue to write articles for Woodchester Word with the current emphasis on remembering our Great War fallen as well as other topics of historical interest including our series on old tracks and paths.

The parish registers and censuses are available on the village website. Other records will follow when time allows.

For further information contact Barbara Warnes:- barbara.warnes1@gmail.com or 01453 872181

Girlguiding – Jackie Hayes

Both Brownies and Guides have enjoyed regular meetings with games, singing, craft, cooking and other activities including trying out some of the new activities which will be forming part of the new Girlguiding programme due to be introduced later next year. In the last year Woodchester Brownies and Guides both formed colour parties and took part in the Woodchester Wayside Cross Centenary and Rededication Service and the Nailsworth Remembrance Sunday parade and Church service. Both units also were also guaranteed a good time when they attended the pantomime by the Stanley Players.

The Brownies worked incredibly hard to achieve their sports badge, with each girl showing improvement in her abilities. They also had great fun learning about the outdoors to gain their Wildlife Explorer badge. One Brownie also had fun as she helped the community and environment, when she participated in the Nailsworth Town Council/Rotary Club annual town litter pick. Several girls enjoyed a weekend away on Pack Holiday with 1st Nailsworth Brownies. Some new Brownies have made their Brownie Promise and parents have been entertained as other girls have completed their hostess badges.

The Guides thoroughly enjoyed a visit to Westonbirt Arboretum exploring and learning more about survival skills, including gutting a fish and building an emergency shelter. Some Guides joined Nailsworth Guides on summer camp. More recently the girls had a sleepover at Go Bananas Soft play with 1st Nailsworth Guides, took part in the Woodchester annual litter pick and enjoyed an ice cream on Rodborough Common and exploring the woods.

Anyone who would like to get involved in Girlguiding, either as a Brownie, Guide or Leader should contact Jackie on 01453 821258 or through one of the following websites:

www.girlguiding.org.uk

www.ggwoodchester.wordpress.com

Stroud Beekeepers – Buzz Club – Peter Lead

Our membership this year is over 100 with 25 attending our training course each year. We have nine hives in our apiary where the responsibilities of beekeeping are explained and the life of a bee explored, and where existing members can meet to chat over a cup of tea.

The main challenge to the bees has been the use of pesticides and the reduced areas of forage through intensive farming and shortage of wildflowers.

However a new challenge is threatening, the Asian Hornet. We live with the European Hornet, but the Asian Hornet has spread through France, is on the Channel Islands and is starting to arrive here. Two nests were destroyed last year and one hornet sighted and killed this year.

The Asian hornet predated on honey bees and can attack and enter a hive killing all inside. This hornet is slightly smaller than the European variety and has different markings.

Any sightings should be reported immediately.

Visit www.stroudbeekeepers.co.uk to see how to identify the wasps and who to contact if you think you have seen one.

BuzzClub

This is now held in the walled garden of Stroud Museum where we have a Home-school group of some 15 children that meets on alternate Fridays and an 'open to all' on alternate Saturdays where any one can turn up.

Our newsletter giving dates of our meetings can be found at www.stroudbeekeepers.co.uk/buzzclub.

We also visit schools to teach about pollination and often take along live bees. This year we are booked to visit five schools.

SWALT – South Woodchester Amenity Land Trust – Bert Cossins

It is pleasing to report another busy twelve months on SWALT's 'Orchard Pastures'; like many ground based projects it is so dependent on the weather – favourable I believe last season. It seems to have been a very productive vegetable season and clearly our January '17 wassail was successful – fine singing, delightful violin accompaniment, ample toasting, robust volume to deter the sprites and plentiful toast to entice the wild birds to stay and devour the bugs - the resulting fruit crop was abundant – plenty for immediate use, storage and juicing. The annual wassailing was particularly well attended and thanks are extended to Phil at The Ram for his post wassail hospitality.

All allotment plots are currently taken although there are frequent vacancies for 'budding' vegetable growers. The hard winter has taken its toll of the 'greens' – pigeons showed great initiative and determination to bypass our netting and other deterrents. Increasingly, it has become necessary to take preventative measures to fence off our sweet corn as the local badger population have extended their dietary preferences beyond carrots. During our recent 'spring clear up' a sett was found immediately adjacent to one of the plots.

Plans are afoot for chickens to once again grace the orchard – can the planners outwit 'Freddy Fox' this time? As ever we remain optimistic – please watch for details of 'Orchard Pasture' events in Woodchester Word and on the village notice boards.

For further information about any of these matters contact by email: swalt.org@gmail.com

Woodchester Mansion Trust – Rhiannon Wigzell, Chair

Woodchester Mansion is open throughout the summer on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from Good Friday until the 28th October from 11.00a.m. to 5.00p.m. There are self-guided or conducted tours. A café for lunch, tea and other refreshments, which non Mansion visitors are welcome to use, is operated by Berry Blue Limited. For those who prefer not to walk, a minibus runs to and from the Mansion and the National Trust car park. There will be occasional closures for weddings and other special events, which will be announced on the website www.woodchestermansion.org.uk, which is now mobile compatible. On Fridays in May local people (SDC residents) may visit for a reduced fee of £5.00.

Mansion Volunteer and Woodchester resident Katharine McNealey has organised a prize draw in aid of a new minibus fund. Get your ticket and don't miss a chance of prize. The Mansion is now on EasyFundraising (www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/woodchestermansion). To support us, sign up and many online retailers will make a small donation to the Mansion with every online purchase you make, at no cost to you.

Local people are especially welcome as Volunteers or Members. The former run the Mansion on open days, help with maintenance and some office based tasks and several work with Trustees on various committees. The latter have unlimited access on open days, receive newsletters with Mansion inside stories, information and photographs, and have voting rights. Members pay £35p.a., so help the Mansion financially and show that there is local support which is useful when approaching funding organisations. We also offer Plus1 membership for £40pa. This entitles the Member to bring a guest to the Mansion free on open days.

Our visitors' experience of the beautiful Gothic Revival chapel has been improved by recent work to reduce the forest of scaffolding that has been there since the 1990's. This was funded by a local charity, the David Thomas Foundation. It is now possible to stand in the chapel and admire the stunning tierceron vault and the exquisitely carved stone roof bosses, representing the flowers and foliage in the park, two green men and the Leigh family's dogs.

New bat cameras have been installed, giving an improved insight into the lives of the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats that use the Mansion as a maternity roost. The bat viewing facilities were already thought to be unrivalled and are now better than ever. Several evening bat walks have been arranged and have been popular in previous years. See the website for the dates and cost.

This year the Festival Players are performing *Much Ado About Nothing*, an open air production with the Mansion as the backdrop on the 23rd August. Bring a picnic and enjoy the extra atmosphere provided by bats, owls, cows, sheep and any other creatures that join in on the evening.

A Mansion volunteer and trustee, Liz Davenport, has published an ebook called *Woodchester A Gothic Vision*, available from Amazon for £7.50. The result of ten years meticulous research by Liz, it is an excellent contribution to local history, a good read and contains some surprising information.

There is now a big green shed behind the Mansion, the long awaited work area for stonemasons – a modern incarnation of the traditional 'masons' lodge' that used to be a feature of building projects such as the Mansion. It does the same job, being big enough to work on lumps of stone in comparative comfort, out of the elements. It was much appreciated by the students from Bath College during their annual training in the autumn.

Filming took place in February for *Celebrity Haunted Mansion*. The Mansion was surrounded by caravans and tents and much of the inside filled with cameras and lighting equipment. That, with a crew of 180 about the place gave the Mansion a completely different ambience from normal and helped raise much-needed funds for restoration.

www.woodchestermansion.org.uk

Follow us on Facebook

Woodchester Village Hall – *Alan Boulton, Chairman*

The hall continues to be a popular venue for various groups as the figures for lettings show, and feedback from people who use the hall. Thanks to the people involved in putting together the comprehensive health and safety and risk assessment package for the hall. This item is very important to have in today's society. Unfortunately the lights in the main hall started to fail, so Kath and I took the decision to change them to prevent failure during hall rentals. The reason for changing them was, they no longer make fluorescent tubes of the special type we had. We now have L.E.D. tubes giving a better light also using less power. During the fitting of main lights it was discovered that 2 emergency lights were not working properly so they were changed as well. Parking continues to be a problem particularly at weekends, new large no parking signs have been erected to no avail. When I have been working at the hall on weekends cars still try to park giving various reasons:- Landlord of the pub says it is alright, chairman of the Village Hall committee says it is alright etc. The condition of the hall is good and keeping it well maintained is the secret of our success.

Seys & Bridges Educational Foundation – *Diana Fowler, Trustee and Clerk*

Meetings

The trustees met twice last year. As 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.

Five grants were awarded to individuals to assist with music and drama lessons and after school activities. Grants were also given to Woodchester Endowed School and St Dominic's School for discretionary use by the Headteachers towards pupils' costs of residential trips.

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

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

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

St Loe's School Exhibition Fund or St Loe's Trust, as it now known, was founded by Nathaniel Cambridge in 1697 to provide financial assistance to pupils attending the maintained primary schools in Woodchester and Amberley who seek further education. The trust now provides beneficiaries grants to assist funding students at universities, training colleges and those entering a trade or profession. 2017/2018 saw a reduction in the number of applications for funding at a time when our investment income has risen slightly. Applicants have to demonstrate a financial need and this sometimes discourages some possibilities. However the trustees are keen to encourage more applicants and have advertised more widely. 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. One of recipients who we have supported has been performing on the stage in London following grants for the performing arts. This may demonstrate that although the Trust was set up to support those leaving full time education with tools and equipment to aid apprenticeships and employment the trustees are keen to

widen the scope of grant giving. 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 1st September at the latest to the Chairman or Secretary at the above address. However we are now considering grants throughout the year in special circumstances.

St Loe's Exhibition Fund Charity No. 311753

c/o Goring House, North Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 5NG

Telephone 01453 872526

Neighbourhood Warden – Quarterly Report – *Dominic Everiss, Neighbourhood Warden*

So far, 2018 has been fairly quiet for me in Woodchester. You will see from the list below that there has been a smattering of 'bread & butter' issues that I have been dealing with. The only real exception was the 3 bouts of snow we had during the winter, which meant I was helping vulnerable residents by delivering food & medicine; clearing paths of snow and helping to defrost condensing boiler pipes.

Abandoned vehicles: Station road, one vehicle, which, once the owner had been given 15 days notice, was removed. There are regularly vehicles without tax at the Bath Rd junction with Gydynap Lane. I report these to the Police and DVLA. We have also had a genuine abandoned vehicle which SDC removed.

Fly tipping: I continue to check for fly tipping, but have found none in recent weeks. I have requested an industrial litter pick of the A46 and pick up small amounts of litter throughout the village when on patrol.

Fly posting: as previously requested by WPC, I continue to remove fly posting & out of date posters. To be honest there is very little, with the main 'hotspot' being the Bath Rd.

Vulnerable People: I have assisted Social Care with dealing with a hoarder in the parish to provide room for mobility aids and to reduce the risk of fire. I have also fitted two new carelines for Parishioners.

Warden: Dominic Everiss (07753725185)

Month: April, 2018

Woodchester Traffic & Road Safety Survey

Woodchester Parish Council Highways, Rights of Way Committee - March 2018

Road safety issues have been a high priority for residents of Woodchester for many years, highlighted in the 2005 Woodchester Parish Plan and the 2012 update to the Parish Plan. These issues include

speeding within the village, vehicles mounting the pavement near the Post Office pinch point, HGV's exceeding the 15-tonne Selsley Road weight limit, safety of pedestrians crossing Selsley Road to access the shop, 'near misses' on the narrow bends on Selsley Road near Church Road, safety of pedestrians crossing the A46, increasingly difficult to exit feeder roads onto the A46, speeding on the A46, and inappropriate parking at Frogmarsh Mill.

1. Selsley Road Traffic Flow Survey

Traffic was surveyed in one hour periods between 07:00 and 19:00 and was carried out mid-week during term time. **The total number of vehicle movements was 2,745.** The peak period was between 08:00 and 09:00, with 466 vehicle movements (one vehicle every 8.7 seconds). There are an estimated 3,500 vehicle movements in a typical 24-hour period.

2. Selsley Road Traffic Speed Survey

The survey shows that many drivers are keeping to below 24mph, and many of those are respecting the 20mph 'twenty is plenty' limit. The majority of drivers are respecting the mandatory 30 mph speed limit. A small minority (7.4%, approximately 26 per day based on our traffic flow survey) are exceeding the mandatory speed limit, particularly on upper Selsley Road and 1.3% are exceeding the APCO-specified speed threshold of 35mph, above which drivers can be reported to the Police for speeding.

3. Selsley Road Pedestrian Survey

A survey of pedestrians accessing the village shop and Post Office was carried out. The average number of people accessing the shop per day is 168, but this rises to over 200 on a busy day. The peak pedestrian flow is between 07:30 and 10:00. Assuming 25% park outside the shop (and thus do not cross the road), we can estimate that up to 150 people a day access the shop on foot, which means **300 pedestrian crossings of Selsley Road in a single day at this point.** A significant number of these are elderly, school children or mothers with young children, particularly at times of peak traffic flow. Cars traveling at 30 mph on this stretch represent a serious hazard to these pedestrians.

4. A46 Traffic Flow Survey

An M500 Traffic Counter was installed on the A46 near the junction with Selsley Road, providing detailed traffic flow data in both directions over a seven day period between 15th and 22nd February 2018. The total traffic volume over the seven-day period was 89,154 vehicles and the **weekday average traffic flow was 14,972 vehicles per day.** Weekend traffic is almost half that volume at 7,148 vehicles per day. This survey suggests that **over 4.6 million vehicles each year pass through the Parish on the A46.**

5. A46 Traffic Speed Survey

Over 5,500 vehicles were speed checked between 07:00 and 18:00. **97.1% of vehicles observing the 40mph speed limit.** 2.6% were traveling between 40 and 45mph and 0.3% exceeded the ACPO threshold speed of 46mph. Only one vehicle was observed exceeding 50mph (51mph). A comparison with a similar survey undertaken in 2012 suggests an increase in traffic flow of 22.1%

between 2012 and 2018. However, the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit has dropped dramatically from 3.2% to 0.29%. This may be due to a combination of increased traffic volume (meaning that 'clumping' of vehicles reduces the opportunity for exceeding the speed limit) and the introduction of speed awareness and enforcement measures on nearby stretches of the A46.

6. Recommendations for consideration by Parish Council

- A. Reduction in village Speed Limit to 20mph
- B. Reduction in A46 Speed Limit to 30mph
- C. Enforcement programme, possibly including a Community Speed Watch program, the installation of an ANPR Speed Camera on the A46, and installation of Radar Speed Signs, all of which have cost implications
- D. Action on parking at Frogmarsh Mill
- E. Upgraded HGV Signage on Selsley Road