

THE WOODCHESTER WORD

Issue 79, Spring 2023



EASTER OPENING FOR NEW WOODCHESTER PLAY FACILITIES

Easter Saturday (8th April) will see a Grand Opening for Woodchester's two new play facilities.

Saturday morning will see the official opening of the playing field on Selsley Road, with a football coaching session open to all children from 10:00 to 10:30, followed by a match between Minchinhampton Rangers and Woodchester Endowed Primary School at 10:30. Mid-day will see the Grand Opening of the Children's Play Area (next to the Mountain Bike Trail on the cycle path), with refreshments available on both sites.

Woodchester Parish Council has taken on the lease for the playing field so that from the New Year this is available for all to use for recreational purposes. We are delighted that Minchinhampton Rangers football team are using the pitch for junior football matches on Saturday mornings during the football season.



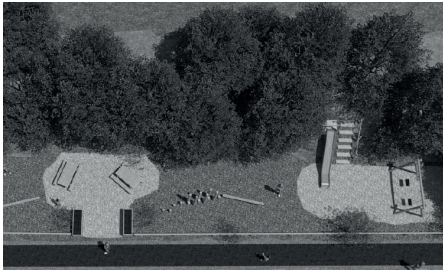
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Easter opening for new Woodchester play facilities continued

The Council has been working on the children's play area for the last couple of years, overcoming various issues relating to the terms of the lease of the land from GCC and raising the required funding. "We are delighted that this has now come to fruition, and we are finally able to open this exciting facility for the use of our villagers" commented Woodchester Parish Council Chairman Pater Lead. The area will include two swings, a slide built into the bank at the back of the site, stilt walk, balance beam, cargo net, and a nest swing for younger or disabled children. There will be two picnic benches for parents to relax whilst keeping an eye on their children. The Parish Council is also working with Woodchester Primary School on plans to make this not only a play area but an educational environment by installing various ecology features, including bug houses, bird and bat boxes, and planting which will attract insects and birds to the site.



Village Shop and Post Office

Once again, it has been good to welcome some new residents to the village and introduce them to some of our locally sourced products. Woodchester honey proved very popular to the extent that we completely sold out. New supplies are not expected until June when the bees have had a chance to get busy, but good news..Cotswold honey is still available.



Snowy days brought more customers to the shop as they were unable to travel and realised the value of our village shop. Luckily our suppliers managed to reach us and provide deliveries.

Mothering Sunday fell on March 19th this year and we had a good range of cards available for this special day. There is a wide variety of cards for all special occasions in the shop and while you are buying your card take a look at the lovely chocolates and gifts.

Easter will be here before we know it and once again we have a wide choice of Easter cards and will also have a choice of Easter Eggs including for the first time, Raw Chocolate Easter Eggs made by the Raw Chocolate Co and truffles by Booja Booja.

In the Post Office we can again accept International Mail (some of you may not be aware but there was a cyber attack on Royal Mail in January which prevented posting abroad). Fortunately a solution was found and from 21st February International Mail can once again be accepted.

We look forward to seeing you in the shop and if there is something that we don't stock that you would regularly buy please let us know.

A letter from our Chairman

Spring is just around the corner, and we now have a childrens play area and a playing field to enjoy but do please treat them as yours by keeping litter free and safe.

This also applies to our whole Parish, where each year a few residents have given a day of their time to pick up other peoples' litter. This year, the Parish Council would like to propose that everyone takes responsibility for making our Parish litter free. We have litter pickers and hi-viz jackets and can obtain waste bags for anyone to use. If you would like any of these, please give me a ring on **07768 881950**. We can arrange for the removal of large quantities of litter.

If you are a Facebook user why not join the FIVE VALLEYS WOMBLES and share your best (or worst) litter picking triumphs. This group of local volunteers raise awareness of litter problems locally and are lobbying Stroud District Council, local Supermarkets and fast food outlets for a better response to the problem of litter across Stroud District.

Running costs of our Parish, the precept.

Reluctantly we have had to decide to increase our precept by about £2.75 per month as

explained in the article written by our clerk. Over the past few years, we have used our surplus funds to subsidise the precept but this year we felt we had to charge a small increase. Additional expenses will be incurred due to us now having a play area and playing field to look after.

We try very hard to keep costs down, and you can help us do this by sweeping and weeding the road side of your property boundary, and not letting hedges overgrow pavement and roads. If we all did more, then Tim our maintenance man would have less to do.

Events

Over the years we have had a Village Events Committee who have organised a number of events with the aim of bringing the community together. We have had Open Gardens, the village fete and flower and produce show; dog show, a village football match, Christmas carols and several street parties. Most of the events committee members have felt that they have now



"done their bit" and stood down. Could you spare a little time to organise a village wide event? The format for the Produce Show is tried and tested and ready to be taken on by a different group of people with fresh ideas.

This year we have the Coronation to celebrate, and we are looking for folk who would like to organise this at the beginning of May. Another street party? Music? Games? The choice is yours!

Without your enthusiasm events cannot take place and so we would welcome ideas and volunteers to take on the mantle and contact us with ideas. Funding and advice is available to support future village wide events. Please contact one of your Councillors.

Cheers, Peter Lead

Should we have a 30mph speed limit on the A46 in Woodchester?



With increasing traffic volumes on the A46 through Woodchester, and seemingly no reduction in the average speeds on the road, it has become increasingly difficult to exit some of the side roads in the Parish onto the A46, and there seem to be more incidents of road rage (I witnessed one myself recently) and minor accidents, particularly at the Selsley Road junction. Traffic speed and volume also make it more difficult for pedestrians to cross the A46, for example to access bus stops.

With respect to vehicles trying to join the A46 from the Selsley Road junction, it is worth noting that right turn movements are the dominant factor in injury accidents or collisions. One of the main problems with collisions at junctions is that drivers “Look but don’t see” to the right, then look left and pull out. Unless drivers focus up the road to the right, the brain can fill in the image with peripheral vision. A lower speed limit on the approach might help give drivers more time to pull out safely.

A recent discussion with our Local Highways Manager centred on the possibility of extending the 30mph speed limit through Woodchester, initially from Rooksmoor Hill to Station Road.

The 30mph limit was introduced by the Road Traffic Act 1934 as a way of slowing traffic in built-up areas (defined as having a system of street lights no more than 200 yards apart) for road safety. Lower speeds have been shown to protect everyone, especially vulnerable people like

children, cyclists, pedestrians, the elderly, and people with disabilities. People have a 90% chance of surviving after being hit by a vehicle travelling at 25mph, but less than 50% at 40mph or higher.

Russell Cook, father of Scott, who was killed on the A46 in 2005, wrote to the Parish Council suggesting that the 30mph speed limit on the Rodborough stretch of the A46 is extended south through Woodchester to include the Rooksmoor development and the Woodchester feeder roads. He also suggested that the Parish Council should adopt “positive speed enforcement” similar to that which Rodborough PC has done at sites on the A46, encouraging drivers to obey the speed limits and protect pedestrians.

An extension of the 30mph speed limit south from its current position through Woodchester Parish may have a number of benefits, including improving ease of vehicular access to the A46 from village feeder roads, reducing the likelihood of additional fatalities in the event of a serious

pedestrian/vehicle accident, making it safer for adults and school children crossing the A46 at Selsley Road, Station Road and Frogmarsh to access southbound bus stops, and reducing noise and emission pollution for residents along the A46.

DoT figures show the risk of fatality for a pedestrian hit by a car increase from 10% at 30mph to 50% at 40mph. This data also highlights the fragility of elderly pedestrians. If hit by a car at 30mph, the risk of fatality for a pedestrian +60 years is 47% compared to 5% for the general adult population. (Source: Relationship between Speed and Risk of Fatal Injury: Pedestrians and Car Occupants, Transport Research Laboratory, Department for Transport, September 2010)

So, what do you think? The Parish Council cannot proceed with this project unless it has the support of local residents. If you have an opinion, you can let the Parish Council know by emailing the clerk at clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk, or completing a form in the village shop.

Speed enforcement on A46

The Parish Council is continuing with its Vehicle Activated Speed Sign program on the A46, encouraging drivers to adhere to the 40mph speed limit through Woodchester and gathering data on traffic volumes and speeds to inform our Parish traffic policies and to help the Police target the worst areas for speeding.

Our data shows that at certain points on the A46, nearly one in five drivers exceeds the speed limit, more than 50 vehicles a day exceeds 50mph, and the highest speed recorded so far has been an astonishing 88mph!

We are working with the local Police team to provide a speed enforcement program on the A46. Our PCSO has promised an enforcement session in the near future when a Police team will be onsite monitoring speeds and issuing fines to those exceeding the limit.

We are also working to get a site on the A46 in Woodchester approved for use with Police Trucam device. This is a portable speed

camera which can be set up at any approved location, and from which the Police are able to issue speeding fines directly, much like a GATSO camera. The advantage of this

device is that it can operate at night and will enable us to target the most serious speeding offences on the A46, the majority of which occur after dark.



Personal Safety

At a recent Parish Council meeting residents raised the issue of personal safety with our PCSO's, particularly for unaccompanied women walking in the parish, and in light of two recent incidents in the area.

Woodchester is generally a very safe area and no-one should feel worried to walk freely around the Parish. But there are sensible precautions you can take wherever you are to minimise any risk.

First of all a few general tips:

1. If you are planning to walk in an area where you don't feel safe, then Walk with a buddy whenever possible. You are automatically a less desirable target if you're not alone, and a little face to face social time doesn't hurt in the age of social media.
2. If you are walking alone at night, stay near well-lit places of business and well-lit walk ways. Avoid alleys and other poorly lit, closed spaces that might allow you to be surprised.
3. Trust your gut when parking your car. If you feel uneasy about where you've just parked, start the car and keep moving. Park as close as possible to your destination. If you must park farther away, look for well-lit areas with lot of public foot traffic. If you're meeting friends, don't be ashamed of calling someone and asking them to walk you to/ from your vehicle.
4. Always carry your phone when out walking. But put your phone down! A distracted person who is focused on a conversation and not observing their surroundings is an easy target. Your calls, texts, email and social media can wait 10 more minutes.
5. Watch where you are going and keep scanning your surroundings. Being observant of your surroundings can help you identify potential problems before you're in the middle of them, and identify exit routes, safe places to duck into, and allies on the street.

6. If at any time you feel threatened when you are out walking, you should immediately contact the Police to report your suspicions.

PCSO Candice Francis provided some other very helpful information.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner works with the Hollie Gazzard Trust to promote their app **Hollie Guard**, which helps to reduce the risks to females travelling alone or meeting people for the first time. That app can also act as a very effective personal alarm and can trigger an alert to the police.

Safe Space is a community of businesses that provide a safe and secure place for females to go if they feel they are being followed or under threat in any way. If you see the safe space logo, you know the business welcomes you in immediately. There are a number of premises in Nailsworth & Stroud that are signed up to this excellent community initiative started by Chrissie Lowery, who is the owner of the Craftology shop in Stroud & Nailsworth, and our PCSO has contacted some Woodchester businesses to find out whether they will sign up for this.

There are various other ways you can report inappropriate behaviour.

The **StreetSafe** tool is for the public to anonymously report feelings of safety against a number of environmental or behaviour criteria with the reporter taken through a carefully worded reporting form. The data can support operational policing and policy decisions around crime prevention, problem solving, patrol plans and where conversations are needed around partnership working in the locations given. The public reporting form is accessible via Police.uk and



via Single Online Home police force websites.

The **Flare** app is a simple-to-use smart phone app to report incidents anonymously. The app is really easy to use and only takes a few seconds to report a range of offences, including inappropriate comments, sexual harassment, being followed and spiked drinks. You can download the Flare Report app from the Game Store.

Your Community Alerts is a free messaging system for Gloucestershire that enables residents, businesses and community groups to participate in a two-way exchange of information about what is happening throughout the county. You can choose exactly the type of alert you wish to receive. For example, you can help tackle crime by registering for witness appeals or keep ahead of those traffic jams by registering for road closure alerts. The aim of this system is to send you relevant information from public sector agencies of your choice that is relevant to where you live. You can register to receive these alerts at www.yourcommunityalerts.co.uk

You can also find crime prevention advice on the Police website at www.gloucestershire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/



THE ARTS SOCIETY PAINSWICK was founded in 1984 and is a welcoming and friendly society. We meet in the Painswick Centre at 11am every 2nd Thursday of the month, except January and August. Our excellent lecturers share their specialised knowledge about the arts. Speaking on a wide range of topics such as: architecture; artists and designers; china; glass; furniture; jewellery; music; painting and much more.

We cover ancient history to modern times.

The idea is that through inspiring lectures, visits and study days we hope to broaden our knowledge and enjoyment of the decorative and fine arts with like-minded, sociable people. Why not come to a lecture, as a guest, for only £5! If you are interested to find out more, please visit our website: www.theartsocietypainswick.org.uk or email the membership secretary: elisabethnoblet@gmail.com.

This is a truly inspirational Society offering top class knowledge brilliantly presented in a warm, sociable atmosphere open to all.

Parish Precept Increase Explained

Published: February 2023

Council tax bills will shortly be arriving through letterboxes, and although there are usually explanatory leaflets from Stroud District and Gloucestershire County Councils plus the Police & Crime Commissioner, Parish and Town Councils don't ordinarily get the same opportunity.

Hence, we thought we would use Woodchester Word to explain why the amount you pay to Woodchester Parish Council is going up in 2023 - 2024.

Your Parish Councillors thought long and hard about whether to increase the council tax and if so by how much, mindful that in a nutshell, everything is going up, wages are not keeping up, and no one knows what the near future might hold.

The Parish Council provides very local services such as street cleaning, village events, bus stops and open spaces to name but four. Whilst these might not be in the same league as education and social services, they are nonetheless important to the village to keep it a good place to live, work and visit.

Unlike district and county councils, parishes receive no funding from central government, relying solely on what residents pay. Thus, the increased cost of running things, made up of wages, materials and energy also has to fall on residents.

Councillors went through every budget line carefully, pruning where it was sensible to do so, and calculating what reserves could be utilised before increasing the precept request, all in order that front line services that residents really appreciate were protected; one of these is the new play area which, although has been funded by generous donations and grants will require ongoing maintenance delivered by the Parish Council which is funded by you.

In terms of facts and figures, for 2023-24 the Council has approved:

- a precept request of £15,800 which is an increase of £2,500 or 18.79%.

This is taking into account that there has been a tax base increase of 12.18 or 2.17%

For an average Band D property this equates to **approx. 40p per month extra.**

To find out more about the things your precept helps to pay for, please visit <https://www.woodchesterparish.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Asset-Register-2022-updated.pdf>

Parish Council meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend and utilise the open public forum within the meeting, for more information please visit <https://www.woodchesterparish.org.uk/about/meetings>

Girlguiding Woodchester

Due to our exceptionally low number of girls, Brownies and Guides have been meeting together.

This allows us to play games and do certain activities, but then we can separate into individual groups and take part in age appropriate Girlguiding programme.

This term both groups created some lovely pieces of art using a form of abstract painting. The Guides went on to doing some origami and a project of turning a box into a room suitable for a peg doll that they also made. The Brownies meanwhile have been busy working towards a badge and making a junk monster. A walk in the dark one night with both groups proved to be a noisy but fun time as the Brownies were looking out for things that were good or bad for the environment and the Guides were looking for, or listening for, anything to do with nature.

Plans for the remainder of the term include a music themed evening and a food-based activity evening, as well as working towards achieving badges.

We have plenty of space to accept new members and girls aged between 7 and 9 (Brownies) and 10 and 13 (Guides) are very welcome to join us. We'd also be happy to hear from any adults who may be interested in helping. Please email: woodchesterbrowniesandguides@gmail.com or 'phone Jackie on **01453 821258**.

How to Boost your State Pension

Do you know someone on a state pension who struggles to make ends meet? Or perhaps a couple? What if they could get a boost to their income?

Too good to be true? A lot of other state pensioners certainly think so: a third of those who are eligible miss out. That's a million older people scrimping and saving and going cold when they don't need to.

This pension boost is called 'Pension Credit'. It not only provides extra pension income: **it can also cover or reduce a host of other costs – rent, mortgage payments, council tax, energy and utilities, TV licence, dentists and opticians and more.** Overall, the effects really can be transformative to pensioners who are struggling.

How to qualify? State pensioner households may be eligible if income is less than

£182.60 per week for single people and £278.80 for couples. Pensioner households with higher income may be eligible in some circumstances – for instance if there is a carer in the household or a disability.

So, have a think: do you know someone who may qualify? If in doubt, search for Pension Credit online, ring the Pension Credit Helpline - **0800 99 1234** (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday), or get in touch with us at Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswolds, **0808 800 0510** (10am-4pm Monday to Thursday, 10am-1pm Friday) where we can check you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to. Don't hesitate – Pension Credit can make a big difference.



Time to get walking again!

With Spring on its way we start to think about getting out to walk in the beautiful English countryside again, but where to find new and interesting walks?

Walking in Gloucestershire <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/glos> has loads of walks to download and print, free, it also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.

John Harris (who maintains the website) said 'There is so much walking information on the web but it is difficult to find. Walking in Gloucestershire (part of the Walking in England website) has brought it together in one place so whether you are walking from home, or away on holiday, you will be able to find a walk suitable for you'.

With walks from half a mile to twelve miles plus long, and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs, everyone can find a walk to enjoy.

Orchard Pastures, February 2023

Oh wow - what a wassail! Thank you so much to all of you who were able to come along – we had a record crowd, well over a hundred people - and a fantastic atmosphere.

We had babes in arms to those with the wisdom of many years and, when asked whether they were enjoying it, a group of teenage friends said it was 'Amazing'!

Oh dear, the nights are drawing in, hastened by the clocks going back. So it's time for allotment holders and gardeners to reflect with pride, or perhaps a bit of regret, on how the season worked out for them: 'Runner beans at the end of October?!' 'The drought did for me!' - and to start planning for next year.

If you feel you'd enjoy the highs and lows of allotment life, we have a few plots available at very reasonable rents. See contact details below.

Orchard Pastures is the land below The Ram owned by a group of villagers. If you'd like to find out more or are interested in an allotment, please email: swalt.org@gmail.com or phone Bert Cossins on **872407**.



What's on at the Cotswold Playhouse



Ladies On The Costa

29th March - 1st April at 7.30pm. Tickets £13.

Told by five expatriates from different backgrounds now living and working on the Costa, these fascinating tales presented by the Cotswold Players are funny, relatable and sometimes sad and highlight the fantasies, foibles and fables of the five women and their families.

From celebrating Christmas on the Costa, through learning to dance Flamenco, to running a pub in a foreign country, they tell of their experiences. Audiences will be transported to the beautiful Spanish Costa, moved by shared human experiences that span oceans and eras.

Selected from a set of 12 stories, Lindy McNaughton Jordan reflects her own experience of expatriate life after living in Spain for many years.

Seeds Of Memories

15th April - Tickets £10 (£8 Concessions)

Recently it has felt like grief is all around us. Seeds of Memories is a wistful and uplifting show packed to the brim with puppetry and poetry. It offers a gentle exploration of losing a loved one and dealing with grief through the magic of the memories they leave behind.

Join "A" as he explores the garden and his relationship with his grandfather as both grow older together. After his Grandad passes away, "A" finds comfort in the love of nature they shared and the memories they grew together.

Inspired by the works of Dylan Thomas, simple rhymes and spoken word give way to fantastical and intricate puppetry sequences, tied together with heartbreakingly intimate naturalistic scenes which are all-too-familiar. Created by Black Hound Productions for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, this piece is supported by the egg, Theatre Royal Bath Young Creatives Scheme. Please note this production is approximately 45 minutes in duration.

Jack Boskett - From Railways to Royalty

22nd April - Tickets £13

Photography is a superb medium of telling a story. Creative imagery can speak a thousand words and the Cotswold Players' in-house photographer Jack Boskett is performing just that!

Join Jack for an entertaining evening as he goes behind the scenes and tells the stories alongside his most iconic images. Marking an accolade of 13 years as a professional photographer, his work is widely recognised in national papers and magazines. This varied lifestyle has led him to photograph Railways, Royalty and everything in-between.

You don't have to be a Royalist or Rail enthusiast to enjoy this show - there are plenty of laughs to be had through twists and turns along the way. You will be surprised at the variety of subjects that this 'Jack-of-all-trades' has turned his hand to.

A prayer, carried on the wind

As spring approaches we look forward to spending more time outside. Beyond the sound of birdsong returning to our valley, other familiar sounds begin to grab our attention. Foremost amongst these is the sound of bells, both near and far.



One church bell, brought to us by the prevailing wind, chimes from the Priory Church tower on Saint Mary's Hill, Inchbrook. We may be reminded that noon, or 6 o'clock, have come round again - time for an early lunch, or perhaps a glass of wine a bit later?

However, rather than being a mere timekeeper, the bell's intended purpose is, naturally enough, a spiritual one. The chime is referred to as the *Angelus* Bell.

Such an aspect of daily worship will be familiar to those of us who travel in Ireland, continental Europe or countries where the rites of the Catholic Church are more widely recognised and remain a daily feature of life's routine. While not as common now, there was a time when *Angelus* bells regulated nearly every town across Europe at dawn, noon and evening. This developed in a period when most people didn't have clocks, much less phones, to tell them the time.

In common with other observances inherited from the earlier Christian Church - such as *Gaudete* Sunday and *Laetare* Sunday for example - the title *Angelus* derives from the first words, *incipit* or *introit*, of the associated prayer from the specified liturgy for any given day. In the case of the *Angelus*, the Latin form of this runs thus: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ*, which translates as 'The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary'.

The bell is sounded in the pattern of three sets of three strikes, repeated three times and this is played out every day of the year at the times allotted. The chime used to be rung by hand in the days of Woodchester's monastery, as indeed was also the case at the Franciscan Convent

of Poor Clares, but is now produced by an automatic chiming mechanism, as the nuns and friars are no longer in residence here! Perhaps, fortunately, Woodchester is spared the *Angelus* at 6 o'clock in the morning, although many monasteries and convents still observe this elsewhere.

In the Church's year an exception to the *Angelus* prayer occurs during the fifty days between Easter Monday and Pentecost Sunday, known as the season of *Eastertide*, when the prayer *Regina Coeli* 'Queen of Heaven', is substituted, the ringing pattern of the bell remaining the same.

This pattern of bell ringing follows the arrangement of the *Angelus* prayer, which consists of three short verses called versicles separated by three Hail Marys:

Verse: *The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,*

Response: *And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

Verse: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*

Response: *Be it done unto me according to Your Word.*

Verse: *And the Word was made flesh,*

Response: *And dwelt among us.*

Verse: *Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.*

Response: *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Amen

The bell that chimes the *Angelus* is the tenor bell of the current peal of five bells in the Priory Church tower and the bell dates

back to the time of the construction of the church. It is one of the original three bells provided for the belfry which, along with the church itself and its associated monastery - the latter demolished in 1970 - being personally funded by William Leigh Esq, of the Woodchester Mansion connection. The two additional bells were provided much more recently, in the year 2000, in memory of the late Fr Michael Jones-Frank, former parish priest. All our bells, including the originals, were cast by Taylor's Bell Foundry in Loughborough - the company still holding the 1849 receipt for the original bells signed off by Charles Francis Hansom, architect.

The consecration of the church in 1849 was to the *Annunciation*, and it is still referred to as "*Our Lady of the Annunciation*" by English Heritage. Unsurprisingly, the *Angelus* bell, being the principal one, is dedicated to Saint Gabriel, the Archangel, and is tuned to the pitch of B^b, and weighs 4^{cwt} 1^{qr} 13^{lbs}. It carries the inscription *Protege Pura Pia Quos Convoco Virgo Maria* which translates as 'Holy Mary blessed Virgin, protect those whom I summon'.

This sound therefore, signifies a prayer of intercession and has echoed along the valley, uninterrupted, for the past 174 years. When you next hear it, might you just pause for a moment and reflect on the message it carries to us?

Christopher Jay
Priory Church, Woodchester





Letter to our fellow Woodchester villagers

Dear All,

We are approaching our 7th Birthday here at The Royal Oak.

We are battling to stay afloat, but do realize that many are in a similar position.

To keep the Royal Oak open we are having to underpin our losses personally which is unfortunately not sustainable.

We have taken the time to do a survey of North and South Woodchester and the result was less than 2% supporting The Royal Oak.

We now think that the vast majority of villagers are not interested in having a local pub.

If you would take the time to look at our website www.royalookwoodchester.co.uk you will see the various services that we offer.

Hopefully we can celebrate our 8th Birthday together.

Your village local is in your hands!



ST Mary's Church

A Place of Calm (mostly!)

The last few months have been difficult for many of us, dealing with the increased cost of living and being concerned for world events especially in Ukraine, Turkey and Syria.

Don't forget that the church is open during the day, every day, if you want to sit somewhere to have a time of quiet reflection and, if you are so moved, a time of prayer.

Easter is approaching and we will be delivering greetings cards with our Easter events to households in the village. Meanwhile there is a chance you might encounter one of the noisy times in church – the Monday morning Little Stars toddler group, Messy Church, the “Cake Bar” on a Wednesday afternoon or Lunch with Friends on a Friday - all going strong and bringing people together.....



Views on the pews - We need your input!

Thanks to generous support from community and church members, we have updated the facilities within the church building to make it more usable by community organisations as well as for our church activities.

We would now like to move on to the next stage of our reordering, to address the constraints of the floor space inside the building for holding the less formal events than Sunday services, weddings and funerals.

The church already hosts several successful activities for the wider community such as choir rehearsals/concerts, school ceremonies, Little Stars Toddlers, the “Lunch with Friends” monthly social and Messy Church for school children. The increasingly popularity of these is great, but it means we are struggling for floor space on many occasions. The main issue is our solid oak pews, which are fixed to the floor, leaving limited room for playing or tables. Stackable, good-quality chairs would give us much more flexibility and we plan to recycle the oak from the pews into beautiful storage cupboards for the equipment needed by the various clubs, thus keeping the church uncluttered.

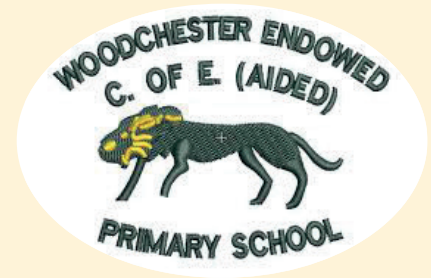
The replacement of church pews used to be a controversial issue— but we hope this is less the case nowadays. Have you been into St Laurence's church in Stroud recently? It's now a venue for concerts in the round, and many other diverse activities. The removal of pews has given the building a new lease of life. St Martin's church at Horsley is another good local example of how a church interior can be made adaptable.

So we are asking for your feedback: in the interests of preparing St Mary's to serve our community widely, both now and for generations to come, are you open to the replacement of all or most of the pews to provide more flexible space? Please give us your feedback with your reasons where possible.

We invite you to visit the Church and see for yourself the proposed plan for our flexible floorspace. Nothing is committed as yet and we want to be sure we have the support of the wider community before we go ahead and start the lengthy church planning process.

We are also holding an open evening for anyone who wants to discuss, endorse or challenge the proposal – on Tuesday May 9th: drop in to church between 7.30pm and 9pm. Alternatively, please send your written comments by email to: secretary@stmaryswoodchester.org.uk or you can post a letter through the letterbox in the Undercroft door.

Woodchester Endowed Church of England Primary School



Unbelievably, almost four years ago now, we consulted with all our stakeholders to consider our school vision and to think about what makes us distinctive as a church school. There were many aspects to this but central to our aims was providing a rich, engaging curriculum within a caring, nurturing environment with a sense of community at its heart.

We have had an interesting and enjoyable start to the New Year with lots of great learning and experiences which have been enhanced by links with our community. Just within the last half term there have been many examples of this and everyone at school is extremely grateful to those who have contributed and supported life in school.

Our church community are unstinting in their continued support of school. This vibrant and active link is so important to us and we appreciate and value the contribution it makes. Every week, our collective worships are enhanced by the 'Open the Book' team during which children love to watch and take part in the acting out of Bible stories. Recently, our Reception children received the gift of a Lion's Storytelling Bible from St. Mary's. Each Wednesday, either Revd. Francis, Revd. Haslam or Rod Harris lead collective worship exploring important themes and reflecting on our Christian values. Another firm favourite is Messy Church which so many of our families and children enjoy on many occasions during the year. Liz and her team put so much effort into planning and organising a wide range of fun activities and crafts as well

as tasty food and drink and it is such a great opportunity to enjoy spending time together. Helen and Gail who are passionate about cherishing God's wonderful creation also provide Wild Worship, making the most of our wonderful outdoor spaces in the village to explore and enjoy our natural world. Our church family organised a Posada diary and some of our families took part in this as part of our Advent journey. The Posada diary was kindly given to school to keep and it is a joy to read, full of caring thoughts, poems, reflection, artefacts and photographs – a very special memento indeed.

Now firmly established in the monthly calendar is a special link between our parents, church and our amazing FOWES team – The Cake Bar. With kind donations of cakes and sweet treats, 'The Cake Bar' provides an opportunity to sit, relax and chat with friends whilst also raising funds for school. In January, FOWES also organised a film night for the children which was very well supported.

In the last few weeks there have been other occasions when our community has inspired learning and personal development. Three Storeys in Nailsworth organised an art exhibition for local young artists and

a number of our children took part. Again, this was a fantastic opportunity for children to develop their creativity and all should be very proud of their wonderful and unique pieces of artwork. At the beginning of January, the Dogs' Trust visited school and talked about the importance of being a responsible dog owner and the rules of behaviour around dogs. Peggy, our school dog, was very impressed! Our community also extended learning in Science and RE, with a STEM workshop by Jude Starbeam and Dr Rachel, a neuroscientist, who helped children learn about the brain and how it works. Local scientist and Christian, Liz, visited Year 6 as part of their learning about Science and Religion. Much discussion was generated during her visit which sparked children's interest and deep thinking.

We are in the early stages of deepening links with local Rotarians at Nailsworth and looking forward the opportunities that will grow from this. Thank you to everyone who contributes to making our school such a happy, vibrant and caring community. It is much appreciated.

Mrs Lynn Pennington, Headteacher



Something different, something new

Just over a year ago I took the plunge and joined the WI. At 36 years old people asked, why are you joining the Women's Institute (WI)? Many comments followed including 'Isn't that for old people?' My answer to this question is simply, 'No'. There is a minimum age of 18, but no maximum age, giving the opportunity for any woman regardless of her background to attend. Historically the Women's Institute was set up to encourage women to learn about growing food produce. Despite some similarities to the present day, over 100 years has seen the WI create unique and varied opportunities for women. Examples of the many meetings have included a talk on bee keeping, their colony and survival; a lady skipper who had sailed the seas in a predominantly man's world; a session exploring the role of the midwife, herbalist and witch and people's perceptions throughout history was also a favourite of mine. What I love the most about the WI is not only the experience I have gained from the many speakers that have shared their knowledge and stories, but also the creativity and the variety of skills, experiences and learning opportunities the WI provides.

The abundance of tea and cake provided and shared during each meeting creates an opportunity for women to relax and meet new friends. Women are considerate of each other's dietary needs which are regularly catered for. The WI remains a group where you can become involved as much or as little as you like with additional meetings that run throughout the month such as the book group, crafting get-togethers and walking clubs. Members can attend a pub lunch bi-monthly in the Stroud district. Where possible other members try hard to help those with transport needs to attend. I personally enjoy the craft club. I find it relaxing and in a modern world fuelled by technology and busyness often with little time to appreciate the small pleasures, the WI creates the perfect opportunity. I like that the WI has good community links with the local school, even collaborating with teaching staff and supporting after school classes teaching boys and girls to sew. The WI provides financial support fundraising for charities both in the UK and abroad. In meetings, women are encouraged to vote on set topics related to ecology or social matters which have historically been raised at parliament highlighting the importance of women's contributions within society. Through solidarity, the WI is a part of our history and heritage as women. I feel proud to be a member.

Woodchester WI meets on the third Thursday of each month at Woodchester Village Hall, at 19.30.

For more information contact – Gail on **07875 028671** or Kath on **01453 873348**.

Woodchester Glass House

This article is largely based on a book 'The Woodchester Glass House' written in 1950 by J Stuart Daniels. He was the Chairman of the Cowle Museum in Stroud which was later to become the 'Museum in the Park'

In the late 1870s a Mr Basil Marmont, then in his late teens, discovered a Glass House (a building for the manufacture of glass) in Colliers Wood in what is now Woodchester Park. Basil was 5th son of Joseph Marmont the co-founder 'Perkins, Marmont and Chritchley' who were the owners of the Frogmarsh Mill when it was a Pin Mill.

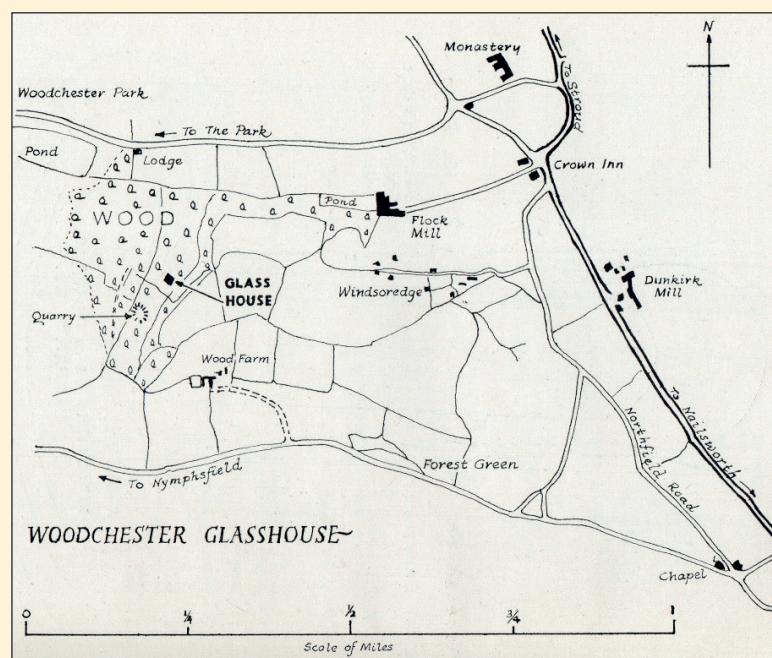
Initially Basil did no excavations, but between 1890 and 1920 he was 'frequently engaged in digging and found a considerable number of fragments of glasses together with one unbroken bottle, some bottle fragments and a small amount of window glass.'

A bit of history, prior to around 1549 ordinary people drank from vessels made of horn, wood, metal or rough pottery and the use of glass was rare even amongst the upper classes. In that year 8 glass workers from Murano, Venice arrived in England and started making glasses for

ordinary people. Some 8 years later Huguenots (French protestants) and Flemings arrived and continued the manufacture of drinking glasses in southern England and Wales.

The Glass House in Colliers Wood, now a scheduled monument, was built around 1599 on a level platform in the middle of a heavily wooded clay bank. It was around 15m square with a circular central furnace about 5m in diameter. Fuel came from the wood, the Cotswold sand either side of the Woodchester valley may have been used to make the glass together with potash made by drying and burning local bracken and brushwood. Daniels' book, a copy of which is in the Woodchester Parish Archive, has photographs of the fragments of bottles and glasses and one complete bottle found at the site.

In 1615 a law was passed which banned the use of wood burning to produce glass, allegedly to protect the woodlands for the Navy. This resulted in glass making moving to towns with a local supply of coal; effectively closing down rural glass manufacture. So, the Woodchester Glass House was in operation for less than a quarter of a century.



National Trust

Protecting Greater Horseshoe bats at Woodchester Park

As part of the National Trusts ambitious nature recovery plans, the parkland at Woodchester Park will soon be grazed by its conservation grazing herd of Belted Galloway cattle. Exciting plans to accelerate the restoration of nearly 48 hectares of mainly former conifer plantations to species-rich grassland and native woodland are already underway. Targeted grazing, hay cutting regimes and wildflower seeding will all play their part. Woodchester Park is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A key reason for the designation is the presence of a colony of Greater Horseshoe Bats whose summer roost is located in Woodchester Mansion. Creating and maintaining the right habitat with our partners at the Woodchester Mansion Trust, is vital to ensure their survival. The bats feed on a range of insects throughout the year, including crane flies as well as beetles and flies associated with cow pats. The majority of baby bats or 'pups' are born in early July and can be foraging within 30 days. The availability of dung beetles is critical for them at this stage. As one of the foremost bat experts in the country, Dr Roger Ransome has been studying the bats at Woodchester for a record breaking 65 years. It is from Roger that the National Trust team are taking advice. At 45 days, the young bats can travel up to 3km. Adult bats also feed over some distance, so it is important that the landscape around Stroud includes a mosaic of suitable foraging habitat connected by hedgerows and wood edges. In the winter, the bats disperse to mines and other roost sites around the Stroud area and the Forest of Dean. To further help the bats, the project team avoid using worming treatments on the Belties. Avermectins often used in wormers are thought to have a detrimental effect on insects associated with cow pats. It's an exciting time for Woodchester and its most famous residents, the bat.

Wonderful wetlands, by James Gomery Area Ranger

Ponds support many freshwater plants, animals and insects, including toads, dragonflies and stickleback. They also provide feeding and drinking opportunities for birds, bats and reptiles. Farmland ponds, originally created to provide drinking water for livestock are also important to wildlife. Sadly, over recent decades the number of farmland ponds have decreased. Over the last year, the National Trust has been working with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) to create new ponds at Boundary Court Farm. The WWT explains, "Ponds are important hotspots for biodiversity. Collectively, they support more species, and more scarce species, than any other freshwater habitat. Healthy networks of ponds, at different stages of their 'lives', help wetland species to move around the countryside, supporting nature corridors. As habitat fragmentation continues to increase, they are more important than ever. Without them, many species would struggle to survive." The pond creation and restoration work at Boundary Court is part of WWT's Flourishing Floodplains Project which aims to restore threatened wetland habitats in the farmed landscape of the Severn and Avon Vales. The ponds will help to increase biodiversity, store carbon, improve soil and water quality, and connect people with nature. The ponds were installed and restored by a specialist contractor last autumn and consist of both dew and spring-fed ponds. Some of the ponds will permanently hold water while the one in Homeground field will be ephemeral, drying up in the summer months. Having a variety of different types of ponds will improve the 'pondscape' in the project area by offering different options for different species.

New Year, new homes for raptors by Ellie Castle, Area Ranger

Earlier in 2022, the National Trust received a very generous donation. This wonderful gesture allowed us to purchase six bird of prey boxes, which will be put up around Woodchester Park and Boundary Court. These two locations provide ideal habitat to support healthy populations of raptors. It is always beneficial to enhance the nesting opportunities around here for new birds establishing territories. We purchased two kestrel boxes, two tawny owl boxes, a barn owl box and a little owl box to cater for a variety of birds which we know are present in the surrounding areas. The boxes have been handmade by Peak Boxes and are being installed in carefully selected trees. We selected trees which are not quite large enough to contain nesting cavities, but still have a large enough network of branches beneath the box to ensure any fledglings have perches to hop around on when they first leave the nest.

Belted Galloways in Woodchester Park

The National Trust will soon be grazing Woodchester Park with our herd of Belted Galloway Cattle. We are currently looking for volunteers to support the team in making sure that the cattle are well cared for. The role will predominantly involve checking the cattle on a weekly rota, keeping an eye on their health and reporting any issues to the Conservation Grazing Ranger and Farm Manager. The role will also offer the opportunity to get involved with other practical tasks such as fencing, and invasive plant species removal.

For more information on how to apply for this role please contact Beth Curl at Beth.Curl@Nationaltrust.org.uk

Ideas for future village events?

For a number of years, the Woodchester Village Events Committee have worked hard to organise all sorts of events and celebrations to bring the village together. Huge thanks to everyone who has been involved in organising village events in the past, and to those people who have kindly donated money, space and items to allow these events to take place. Many people of all ages have enjoyed the flower

and produce show, dog show, open gardens, various street parties, teas and games on the village green and the annual carol singing round the village.

But most of the people who have been involved in organising events in the past have moved away or moved on to follow other interests and commitments. We need fresh ideas and new enthusiasm to help plan and run village events. Funding is available from

the Parish Council and we can provide guidance on how to plan and organise all sorts of activities and deal with tricky issues such as insurance and risk assessments.

Got any good ideas? What would YOU like to do? Drop an email to woodchesterparish@gmail.com with your thoughts and provisional dates.

Business Directory

The Woodchester Word is now fully funded by the Parish Council and voluntary donations and is no longer taking paid advertising. We propose to use this page as a local business directory. If you run a business which is based in, or serves Woodchester, you can send a 30-word text entry with brief details of your business and contact details, which we will include free of charge.

Dennis Brown Timber Yard. Complete timber specialists.
T: 01453 873516. www.timber-yard.co.uk.

Woodchester Cabinet Makers. Hand made bespoke kitchens and interiors. T: 01453 835580.

Leopard Press. Printers and stationers. Letterpress, litho, digital. T: 01453 872123.

Woodchester MOT Centre. MOT's, tyres, repairs and service. Call Tony on 01453 873355

N Scotford. Your local garage for services and MOT's.
T: 01453 873787

Woodchester Valley Wines. Quality Cotswold wines, tours, shop. T: 07523 967219

Julie Shere-Massey Art. Unique commissions capturing family pets or animals. T: 07743 001812

Stroud Chiropractor. Back pain, neck pain, stresses and strains, joints and muscles. T: 01453 763755

Woodchester Valley Village. Cotswold retirement village for active people. T: 01453 837700.

Plus One Design. Graphic Design Agency.
T: 07768 095 404.

Useful Village Contacts

PCSO:

Steven Phillipson
T: 101
or visit www.gloucestershire.police.uk

Neighbourhood Warden:

Chris James,
T: 01453 754512, 07753 725185
E: chris.james@stroud.gov.uk

County Councillor:

Steve Robinson,
T: 01453 834270
E: steve.robinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Village Hall:

Mrs. Kath Gay,
T: 01453 873348
E: wvh888@btinternet.com

Bookings: Rod Harris
T: 01453 872317/07775 652379
E: WVH2021@gmail.com

Parish Council:

Mandy Rossiter, Clerk to Woodchester Parish Council
T: 07863 098710
E: Clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk
www.woodchesterparish.org.uk

Gloucestershire Highways:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/
T: 08000 514514
E: gcchighways@amey.co.uk

Woodchester Post Office and Village Shop:

Shop: 01453 873218
Post Office: 01453 872581

St Mary's Church:

Rev Peter Francis,
T: 01453 759680

Church of the Annunciation:

T: 01453 822121

Letters, articles and items for publication should be sent to the editor, Rod Harris, at woodchesterword@gmail.com
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Diary

Cotswold Canals Connected is holding Saturday 13 May, called The Lock Challenge (TLC). This event is encouraging people to move along the canal; whether that is walking, running, kayaking or by accessible bike! It is taking place along the route of the planned restoration works from Stonehouse, towards Saul.