



IT'S A WONDERFUL FIBRE OPTICS LIFE

The residents of Woodchester face a significant challenge when it comes to the future of our village's digital infrastructure. Gigaclear, the company initially expected to provide fibre optic broadband, has recently removed our area from their planned roll-out. As a result, we currently have no confirmed plans for fibre installation in Woodchester. This leaves us with the ageing copper-based broadband system for the foreseeable future, unless we, as a community, take proactive steps to change this situation.

While Woodchester is classified as having "superfast" broadband, delivering speeds of 30 Mbps or more, this is a far cry from the potential of gigabit broadband, which offers speeds up to 1000 Mbps. As more of our daily activities such as business, education, entertainment, and healthcare all depend on fast and reliable internet, the limitations of our current system are becoming increasingly evident. Fibre broadband offers a level of speed and reliability that copper lines simply cannot match, and without it, our village is at risk of falling behind in the digital age.



Unfortunately, with both Gigaclear and Openreach currently showing **no plans to bring fibre to our village, Woodchester could be left relying on this outdated technology** for many years to come. This presents a particular challenge for residents who work from home, use online education platforms, or rely on digital services for healthcare.

How We Can Make a Difference?

All is not lost. **Openreach, which could provide fibre in the future, will only do so if there is a clear and demonstrated demand for it.** This is where you, the residents of Woodchester, can make a difference. Here are three key steps that we can take as a community to ensure we are considered for future fibre roll-outs:

1. Register Your Interest with Openreach:

Visit the Openreach site www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/fibre-community-partnership and check their Fibre Checker tool to confirm that fibre is not yet available at your address. From there, click the "Keep me informed" button. By registering your interest, you'll help signal to Openreach that there is demand for fibre in Woodchester. The more people who register, the more likely Openreach will consider our village in future plans.

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Boundary Court Barn

In September about 20 people attended a public meeting with staff from the National Trust to discuss their plans to renovate the derelict barn and improve the access track in Boundary Court. Residents were able to ask questions and share their concerns and knowledge about our secret valley.

The application is currently held up during the planning process as the National Trust have been asked to demonstrate to Stroud District Council how the project will add to "Biodiversity net gain". Hopefully the work will be done this financial year while funding is still available.

Defibrillator Training

Unfortunately the date planned for the defibrillator/CPR course coincided with some extremely wet and stormy weather forcing the trainer from Community Heartbeat to cancel the event at short notice. We apologise for this and hope that the training will be held in the spring instead. **THANK YOU to Mark Little who has checked and looked after the South Woodchester phone box for the past two years and welcome to Gary Brown, Linda McGill and Bob Page who have taken over from him. Nigel Brook-Smith looks after the North Woodchester defib and also tidies the book swap when it gets too messy.**

Stroud Council Meeting

Cllrs Sarah Canning and Katharine McNealey met with the Stroud District Council senior management team in October. The SDC officers were interested to visit the Rooksmoor development, our playground and the site of the Roman pavement.

The Chief Executive shared our concerns about the failure of Gigaclear to finish their work in Woodchester and has offered to raise this issue with our local MP Dr Simon Opher.

Website News

The Parish Council website is undergoing a complete rebuild and will have a new fresh style and easier access by 2025. This is part of a national project to switch all Parish Councils to a ".gov.uk" domain. Councillors will also have new email addresses.

Village Maintenance News

Not so tidy Britain? Gloucestershire County Council, who are the Highway Authority are limiting their road sweeping, drain clearance, hedge and verge cutting activities due to budget cuts. We met with our Area Highways Manager in October who explained how all Highways work is contracted out to Ringway who then sub-contract to a number of smaller, specialist contractors. The Area Highways managers have little or no control over the frequency or quality of work done on the ground, which is frustrating. The Parish Council do have a small maintenance budget and we will continue to employ a contractor who will give priority to access and safety such as the bus shelters and visibility at road junctions. We are occasionally able to access additional funding for various works such as road patching and our County Councillor Steve Robinson is helpful in identifying priority work. Please could householders could keep their own hedges cut back from pavements or roads, and help keep property frontages and drains clear of weeds and debris.

Please report all problems including potholes on <http://www.fixmystreet.gloucestershire.gov.uk>

Double yellow lines on St Marys Hill. After a long legal process, the double yellow lines to deter inconsiderate parking on St Marys Hill should be painted soon. This has been a problem in summer months when visitors to Woodchester Lakes have blocked access for residents and emergency vehicles.

We have requested the road is weeded and swept **BEFORE** this happens !

Public rights of way. Volunteer help needed! Do you regularly walk the footpaths through the fields in the Parish? The Parish Council would welcome the help of a volunteer who could check and report on the state of the public rights of way around the Parish over the year, and help us identify particular problems. Please contact the Parish clerk if you would be like to help out.

Traffic speed and volume continues to be a cause of concern especially along the A46 and Selsley Road. Unfortunately someone has stolen the rechargeable batteries from our VAS cameras, so traffic monitoring will be paused while we decide where best to locate the cameras to keep them safe.



Water Lane Update

We are aware of terrible state of Water Lane which is often flooded due to a blocked culvert and the presence of a number of new springs emerging from the hillside. This ancient trackway is actually a minor county road, although it is clearly not suitable for motorised vehicles. The Highway Authority are aware and hopefully will carry out some work next financial year.

Meanwhile we suggest you wear your wellies and carry small dogs and children!



Mountain Bike Refresh

Mountain bike trail. Following the wet Spring months the mountain bike trail became very overgrown with nettles and brambles. We were pleased to find a contractor who himself is a keen mountain biker and he was able to tackle the weeds and get the tracks clear for use before the end of the school holidays. We hope to keep on top of the maintenance work next year. **Thank you to Scotty Chalmers for his hard work.**

The Family Magic Show

Sunday 16th February @ 3 & 7pm Tickets £9.50 & £7.50 (under 16)

The Great Baldini is a magical legend, a relict of the music halls, and a theatrical performer of the old school.

Guaranteed to have children (and parents) screaming with laughter!

The Great Baldini is an award-winning member of the Magic Circle and the Bristol Stage Magic Champion.

THE FAMILY MAGIC SHOW
A HILARIOUS MAGICAL ROMP

THE GREAT BALDINI

3pm & 7pm
(one hour)
TICKETS
£7.50 - £9.50

Sun. 16th February

COTSWOLD PLAYHOUSE
STROUD'S OWN THEATRE
Parliament Street, Stroud, GL5 1LW

THE COTSWOLD PLAYERS

Steve Thompson's

WHIPPING IT UP

COTSWOLD PLAYHOUSE
STROUD'S OWN THEATRE

a biting parliamentary comedy

Tue 28 Jan – Sat 1 Feb 2025
cotswoldplayhouse.co.uk 0333 666 3366
An amateur production by arrangement with Nick Hern Books



Whipping It Up

Tuesday 28th Jan to Saturday 1st Feb @ 7.30pm Tickets £16

A quick-witted satirical farce set in the Whips' office at Westminster.

It's a week before Christmas, and the new Tory government is facing dissent over its latest Bill. With a majority of only three, the Whips' office is out in full force, and they'll stop at nothing to keep the strays in line.



Money Management

Our Top Three Tips for Managing your Money at Christmas

My children love Christmas and they're already picking extra treats off the shelf when we go shopping and telling me what presents they want. I really want to make it a special time for them, but times are tough and I can't help worrying about overspending and getting into debt. What can I do to manage my finances during the holiday season, and where can I turn if I find myself struggling?

The festive season can be a financially challenging time, and borrowing money or using a credit card to fund Christmas can often seem like your only option. There are steps you can take to keep your spending under control and avoid falling into debt.



1. Budget:

The first thing to do is make a budget and stick to it.

- Consider who you're buying gifts for, what other seasonal expenses you have, and how much you can realistically afford to spend.
- Always keep receipts, or ask for gift receipts, in case you overspend and need to return something.
- And remember that household bills may be higher during this period due to colder weather and spending more time indoors.

2. Deal with debts:

If you've built up debt, please don't ignore bills or letters. Speak to the organisation you owe money to, as they may let you pay smaller amounts.

- Pay 'priority debts' first, like rent, mortgage arrears, council tax, and energy bills.
- For other types of debt like credit cards or loans, gather all the information on what you owe, create a budget, and contact your creditors to set up an affordable repayment plan. This might seem scary, but it's an important first step.

3. Check your eligibility for cost-of-living support:

If your budget just doesn't add up and you need help to afford essentials like bills and food, see what cost of living support is available on the Citizens Advice website.

Continued..

Home-Start A Family Charity

Home-Start Stroud and Gloucester are a local charity supporting families with young children within the community experiencing a time in their lives when they need a little extra help and support, practically and emotionally.

Parenting is not always easy, but with the support of a trained volunteer, together we can really make a difference. Our volunteer training provides people with the skills and confidence to share their parenting experiences to help make that difference when it's needed the most.

If you are thinking about volunteering and have as little as 2-3 hours a week spare, please visit our website for more information and to apply www.homestartsd.org or call 01453 297470 for a chat.

Thank you for your support.
Shelley James
Office Manager



Money Management Continued...

It is especially important to check if you're eligible for the **Winter Fuel Payment**, which will now only be paid to those who receive Pension Credit or other means-tested benefits. If you make a **claim for Pension Credit by 21 December**, you might still receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

If you do find yourself struggling financially during or after the holidays, don't panic. Support is out there, and Citizens Advice can help you understand what's available. We're here to help you find a way forward. Please look at the public website first www.citizensadvice.org.uk

For further help please call us on 0808 800 0510 or 0808 800 0511 (Monday and Tuesday 10am to 4pm; Wednesday and Thursday 10am to 12.30pm). Or complete our email form on local access site www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk.

We will be closed from 1pm on 24th December until 10am on Thursday 2nd January. If you need urgent help, check our website for information.

News from St Mary's Church

We're coming up to the busy season...Christmas is always a happy time at the church with a lot going on. Find all the dates and times below, and join us!

Christmas Calendar

Christmas Eve Crib Service at 3pm

The Crib Service takes us through the Christmas story in a form suitable for all ages – Feel free to come dressed as shepherds or kings (or any other character in the Nativity!).

Candle-lit Carol Service at 6.30pm

The Carol Service will also include our traditional mix of congregational singing, seasonal church choir, and our handbell ringers; with readings of the Christmas story taken from St Luke's Gospel.

Christmas Day at 10.00am

We celebrate the birth of Jesus, God's son sent to redeem humanity, to walk in our shoes and to show us God's extraordinary love.

Wise Men at 11am Sunday, January 5th

The morning service, for all ages, is all about the Wise Men coming to find the infant Jesus – you might think of this as part of the Christmas story but in the church calendar we celebrate this event separately as "Epiphany" – where the divine nature of Jesus is revealed.



Carols Round the Village Thursday 19th of December

Carols Round The Village will finish in St Mary's church with our friends in the Nailsworth Silver Band providing the usual harmonious and mellow accompaniment. Look out for posters, or the village FaceBook page, which will tell you where you can join in.

Mulled wine will be on offer in the church to soothe dry throats after all that singing!

Church News

Works continue in our beautiful churchyard, to complete our tree-planting scheme; and you may soon see a bicycle rack installed outside the west end of the church, in support of our visitors and regulars who prefer eco-friendly "active travel"

Our friend Liz Hale has organised and encouraged us to fill decorated shoeboxes with small presents for the charity **"Teams4U"** which collects and delivers them to deprived families and children in Eastern Europe. 2024 was a record year with a total of 534 boxes collected from people in Woodchester and surrounding area. Thanks to all who contributed They were collected in early November for overland journey by lorry to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Romania. Brilliant!

Christmas Feast- 'Lunch with Friends' Friday 13th of December at 12pm



Our **'Lunch-with-Friends'** club for Woodchester's elders (& betters) meets monthly in church welcoming old friends and new over a delicious meal. Join us for a Christmas Feast

Could you spare a few hours on a Friday once a quarter? For more information call Liz on 07974 911016

Remembrance

We held a special service on November 3rd – "Remembering Together" – for those present to remember their loved ones, both in sadness at their loss and with thanks for the joy they brought to our lives. This annual service is becoming more and more valued by everyone who attends.

The programme this year has been varied, with something for everyone. A speaker from the Stonemason Guild of St Stephens shared fascinating facts about his journeys and working life. We all enjoyed a performance by the Stanley Singers who provided an entertaining selection of songs. Policeman turned goatmilk skincare product entrepreneur, Nick King, told us about the growth of his business from kitchen to warehouse. Local arborist, Si Gardiner, spoke about caring for woodlands, the vital safety aspects of his work, how to age a tree and how to check if the tree in your garden you are planning to chop down is in fact protected from the chainsaw.

Food plays an important part in all meetings, refreshments including an impressive range of cake and biscuits, including gluten-free and vegan options. The fish and chip supper in July was the usual success and we are now all looking forward to the pudding night in November and our Christmas Party.

Remember that you can come along to three sessions to try us out before signing up. We meet (except in December) on the third Thursday of each month at 7.30 in Woodchester Village Hall. If you would like to know more about us, please contact Kath Gay on 01453 873348 or Judy Cliff on 01453 873511.

Membership Numbers have been swelling at Woodchester WI We are always delighted to welcome new members. Having come along to try us out, a number of ladies have taken the plunge, signed up, paid their subscriptions and got fully involved.

In addition to our monthly sessions, most with a speaker or performer, we run monthly chat and craft sessions in the village hall (first Thursday of the month between 2 and 4 in the village hall for £3), a ladies lunch club, a book club and occasional walks. There are also numerous activities on offer at county level. A group of us are looking forward to our Christmas crafts day run by the GFWI near Cheltenham, several members sing in the annual WI Christmas concert and there are monthly walks across the county, all culminating in a home-made lunch.

This October we ran our second Woodchester WI craft day with activities led by WI members. Ladies enjoyed a day together in the village hall. As always, a good choice of cake was available so fingers were carefully washed before we made felt Christmas-tree ornaments, robin brooches, Christmas cards, beaded angels and paper earrings.



Girlguiding Woodchester

We were very pleased to welcome some new girls to Brownies this term, along with a new leader, Tawny Owl. Our old Young Leader has become Barn Owl and a Guide who was helping at Brownies has now become our Young Leader.

We have done a little bit of singing, played some new games and done some craftwork as well as other challenges and activities from the Girlguiding programme, including theme evenings on the Girlguiding Promise, Remembrance/Poppies, and Bonfire/Fireworks.

Both Brownies and Guides joined in with the District at the Nailsworth Remembrance Sunday parade and Church service, carrying our flags/colours.

The Brownies have planned to hold a Promise Ceremony and Badge presentation evening by torchlight soon, whilst the Guides are planning on a nighttime walk, culminating in buying fish & chips.

Much of the remainder of the term will be spent on Christmas activities, including a Christmas party and a Christmas craft evening.

Girls aged between 7 and 9 (Brownies) and 10 and 13 (Guides) are very welcome to join us as members of Girlguiding.

Email: woodchesterbrowniesandguides@gmail.com
Or phone Jackie on 01453 821258



Woodchester Endowed Church of England Primary School

This September has brought change to the school and whilst we say a fond farewell to Mrs Lynn Pennington (Headteacher) who retired in the summer, we have also had the opportunity to welcome Miss Lord to the teaching staff.

As for myself, stepping up from the role of being a class teacher to Headteacher will allow me to get to know more of our community as the year progresses. Please do say hello if you see me about the village!

The glorious weather back in September allowed our children to use the fantastic field at lunchtimes and playtimes, with our new reception children being 'shown the ropes' by their Y6 buddies. Roll on 10 weeks and the confidence these children show is inspiring.

Just before half term in October, **the whole school came together in St.Mary's Church to celebrate the Christian celebration of harvest.** There was singing, reading, poetry and a performance by the Woodchester school band. Thanks to the generosity of our parents and staff we were able to donate over 9 crates of tinned goods to the local foodbank, which in turn will be used to help those in our community.



Our families have also shown their generosity in supporting the T4U shoebox appeal and yesterday 45 boxes were dispatched to go to needy children elsewhere in Europe.

'Love, learn and flourish together'



Our school's Christian vision is very much at the heart of what we do here at Woodchester. From the smallest, newest members of our school community who only started with us in September, through to our oldest children who face the challenges of Year 6 and the prospect of change on the horizon, our vision continues to shape all that they do in their time with us.

A review of the school's Christian vision took place during the summer term, culminating in three pieces of whole school art that celebrate the vision whilst containing contributions from every child and member of staff at the school. These pieces of art are proudly displayed in our school hall so that the children are reminded regularly of our vision and its importance to our school – we hope that you agree how striking they are!

As a church school, we are proud of our place in the Woodchester community but we are regularly asked about the purpose of a church school, the differences between a church school and faith school and whether being in a church school means that we just 'talk about God'.

Did you know that our school was established through the donation of land to the church for the provision of a school in the 1800s by local landowners? The school was built and opened in 1889 to service the children of the parish regardless of their faiths. All that we do is underpinned by our Instrument of Governance which says 'Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.

The school aims to serve the community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.'

Over the remainder of the school year, we will be continuing to support our children in their understanding of our Christian vision, the reason why 'Love, learn and flourish together' was chosen for our school and how they can demonstrate our Christian values in their own lives.

Mrs Lynne Loomes
Headteacher



Meet Your Stroud District Councillor

Sarah Greening



Thank you to everyone who cast their vote at the local elections back in May and especially those that chose me as your District Councillor.

Since May I've been busy getting to grips with the ins and outs of the role and how Stroud District Council (SDC) operates, while also responding to the numerous questions and issues many of you have raised with me.

Being a new councillor, I've been asked all sorts of questions since being elected, and thought I'd share the answers to the most common ones I've been asked so far.

What does a District Councillor do?

SDC is responsible for key local services including recycling and waste collections, social housing and planning. As a District Councillor my role is to make sure that the Council is delivering those services as effectively as possible, for example each councillor sits on one of the committees which oversee the Council's key responsibilities, and I am part of the environment committee. While at the same time helping residents of Amberley and Woodchester to access these services and find solutions to issues or questions you have in relation to them.

What do you hope to achieve in your time as a District Councillor?

My main professional aim is to make the biggest positive difference I can, and a key part of this is about performing my core duties as a District Councillor to the best of my ability. At the same time I'm also trying to understand how I can use my time most effectively to make a real difference beyond this. In some ways this has already started, for example contributing to the development of the new Council Plan, which will be the framework for SDC's work programmes for the coming years. However, I'm interested in all sorts of important local topics from the environment to local economic development, and there's more I think I can do with the limited time I have, but this will develop over time.

Do you have any other responsibilities?

As a full time sustainability lead and senior manager in a large national organisation, I have my work cut out for me juggling professional and councillor commitments, but I hope my professional experiences and skills will really help me to be an effective councillor. Many of you will also know or have met Zeus my dog who also keeps me busy too!

How long have you lived in Woodchester?

I moved here with my now husband in November 2020, so still a newcomer compared to many who've lived here for much longer! I have lived in Gloucestershire for more than 14 years, having grown up in Surrey and spent time living in Leicester while I went to university.

If you have any questions or queries then please contact me at cllr.sarah.canning@stroud.gov.uk. You can also follow me on Facebook – simply search for Councillor Sarah Canning

Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club

Founded in 1846 and now meeting regularly in both Painswick and Box, the Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club (CNFC) is for anyone with an interest in the natural history, environment, antiquities and cultural heritage of Gloucestershire, the Cotswolds and elsewhere.

A great year of summer excursions concluded in September with a five-day fully subscribed trip to Norfolk visiting such treasures as the Sandringham Estate, Ely Cathedral, Houghton Hall and the Blickling Estate, as well as natural wonders like the Cley Nature Reserve and the 40 mile long Holkham Beach, with the extraordinarily good fortune of seeing no fewer than four kingfishers during our boat trip on the Broads!

Our monthly Autumn lecture series is now well under way, at Box Village Hall (2.30pm on third Tuesday of the month) and Painswick Centre (2.30pm on first Wednesday of the month) from October 2024 until May 2025. Please visit our website: <https://cotsnatsfield.club>

Planning for next years excursions has begun, including a day trip to Salisbury, an opportunity to tour the recently opened Mansion House in Cirencester, a half day trip to the incinerator at Javelin Park, and a trip to Hopewell Colliery in the Forest of Dean.

Excursions are for members only, and charged at cost. Lectures are free to members and £5 for non-member visitors, including light refreshments, no booking required. Membership of CNFC is currently £25 per annum or £40 for two or more people at the same address. To find out more, please contact Clare Woodman on 01452 812 767 or CNFCMembershipSec@outlook.com or just come along to one of our lectures.

Nailsworth Turnpike

Before 1698 there was no direct road of any kind from Stroud along the Nailsworth Valley. The main route at that time from Stroud to Nailsworth was very circuitous. It left Stroud up Beeches Green, then along Stratford Road and down Paganhill Lane to Dudbridge, where it crossed the Frome. It then went up Selsley Hill to Selsley village; along Bell Lane and across the fields to come out by the old churchyard in North Woodchester; through North Woodchester, Southfield Road, South Woodchester High Street and down to Frogmarsh. It then turned right up Convent Lane and down Cow Lane to cross the Inchbrook. Then up again by Inchbrook Hill, along Northfield Road before finally going down Chestnut Hill into Nailsworth. No wonder that it was a day's work for a carrier to travel from Stroud to Nailsworth and back.

In 1698 the Toll Road Trust was established in Gloucestershire and in the following decades turnpikes were built, but, until 1780 these were merely improvements to existing roads. However, by then it had become clear to clothiers and other business people in the Nailsworth valley area, that there would be advantages of better roads along the valley. So, in 1780, they formed the 'Nailsworth, Dudbridge and Woodchester Turnpike Trust', led by Sir George Onesiphorus Paul, the prison reformer and Mill Owner, who lived at Hill House, Rodborough. Its purpose was to build a new road along the valley bottom from Dudbridge to Tiltups End, where it would join an existing road to Bath. There were also to be some short branch roads, including those up Bear Hill and Selsley Road.

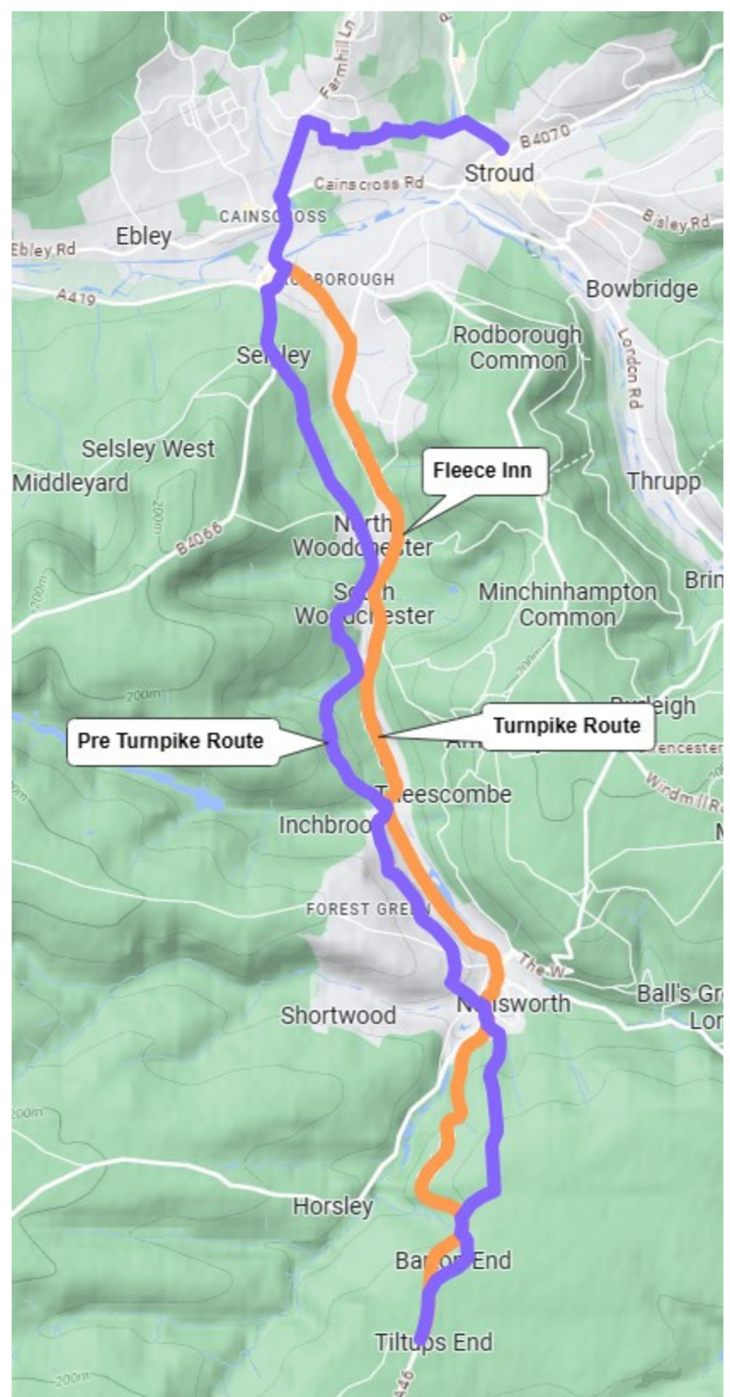
These new roads were opened in 1781 and must have immediately brought huge benefits to the inhabitants of Woodchester and Nailsworth.

Paul also saw a business opportunity in the new road. He knew that business would be brought to the area if he could persuade stagecoach proprietors to use the new road through Dudbridge and Nailsworth, rather than the old route through Frocester and its steep climb up Frocester Hill.

To do this it would be necessary to establish a posting house at some point along the new road and Paul was quick to provide both the land and the money enabling it to be sited at the bottom of Bear Hill, at what is now Hillgrove House. The Paul family papers show that the inn cost a total of £1,369 to build and shares were taken in the inn by some of Paul's collaborators in the new road. This inn was to be known as the Fleece.

Construction of the inn must have been underway before the road itself was completed. A report in the Gloucester Journal for February 1782 stated that the building is under construction and that: "The Fleece will have every accommodation as an Inn, Tavern, and Post House.

It will consist of four large, elegant Parlours, with Bar, Tap Room, Kitchen, and all other useful offices on the Ground Floor. There are 18 good Bedchambers. Also cellars for 500 Hogsheads of Beer and an arched vault for Wine. There will also be Coach Houses and Stables for any number of horses". The Fleece was opened to business in the autumn of 1782 and soon became the first staging post out of Gloucester on the route to Bath. It seems that the proprietors of the George Inn, Frocester, and others with an interest in the old road, were not going to lose business without a fight. They altered the road at the top of Frocester Hill so that the steepest section could be avoided and built a new road avoiding Nymphsfield village. The proprietors were also prepared to provide an additional pair of horses for every carriage leaving Frocester Inn at no further expense to the travellers.





Nailsworth Turnpike Continued

Much was also made of the fact that the Frocester route was a mile shorter and offered the traveller much better views, especially of the 'romantic mountains of South Wales', than the road through Woodchester. However, it appears that The Fleece was determined to retain its new business. A further report in the Gloucester Journal for 1794 says: "The house has received considerable improvement. Great additions have been made to the furniture, beds etc. The wines and liquors are old, and of the best qualities. It has prime bottled cider etc., the much esteemed Rodborough cask and bottled beer, together with a good larder, and everything requisite, to render an inn comfortable.

Neat post chaises, with capital stables of horses, and steady drivers. Ladies and gentlemen who wish to avoid disagreeable hills, and travel with despatch and safety through the most beautiful part of the county of Gloucester, the heart of the Cloth manufactory, and one of the most delightful vales in the kingdom, will find themselves highly gratified and most agreeably surprised". The Fleece became very prosperous and was a favoured place for meetings, including the periodic gatherings of the Gloucestershire clothiers. In 1796 the Medical Society also held their meetings here and it was at one of these that Dr Jenner explained his remarkable discoveries on vaccination against infectious diseases. The inn's importance increased further after 1801 when the new road was opened from Lightpill through Stroud to Birdlip putting the inn on the main route from Cheltenham to Bath, which brought with it some of the most fashionable custom in the land.

This article relies heavily on a longer article written by Alan Fielder, which I acquired from John Cull's collection. Mike Warnes

A Fibre Optics Life Continued

2. Spread the Word:

Encourage your neighbours and friends to do the same. The greater the number of households expressing interest, the stronger our case becomes when Openreach reviews the demand for new fibre roll-outs.

3. Engage with the Parish Council:

Our Parish Council is actively monitoring the situation and exploring ways to advocate for improved broadband infrastructure. By working together and staying informed, we can better represent our community's needs to Openreach and other relevant authorities.

4. The Importance of Taking Action Now

It is vital that as many households as possible register their interest. If we do not act, we risk being left behind, relying on an increasingly outdated system that will struggle to meet the demands of modern life. High-speed internet is no longer a luxury, but a necessity—especially as services like remote working, online learning, and telemedicine become more prevalent.

One area where this will have a huge impact is access to online medical services. The healthcare sector is rapidly moving towards digital platforms, with offerings like remote consultations and telemedicine becoming essential for many, particularly those who are elderly or unable to travel easily. Reliable internet will allow residents to access these critical services from their homes, improving the quality of care and reducing the need for unnecessary travel.

Let's Secure Our Digital Future

The time to act is now. By taking just a few minutes to register your interest, you can help ensure Woodchester remains connected to the digital age. Together, we can push for the broadband infrastructure our village needs to thrive in the future.

CHAIR-BASED EXERCISE CLASSES

The British Heart Foundation states, 'we all know that being physically active is good for us, but not everyone can take part in activities like walking, cycling or aerobics classes. If that's the case for you, but you want to keep active, then chair-based exercise could be just what you're looking for.'

These classes are designed for people living with any mobility restrictions. I will guide you through gentle exercises to help improve mobility and gain muscle strength to support joints, helping you to self-manage your condition and everyday tasks. You will all be able to work at your own pace and within your range of comfort. The support of the chair will be used in all movements.

New classes of Chair-based Exercise led by Elisabeth Noblet will begin 11th December in Woodchester Village Hall at 11:20 for 30mins. **The cost is £5. Interested? Contact Elisabeth T: 07973 877029 Email: elisabethnoblet@gmail.com**



Ringers Old and New

in Woodchester

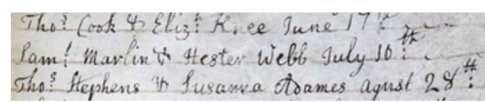
It is quite by chance that Sue and I ended up living in Stroud, and it was the churchmanship that led us to worship at Woodchester. But all my life I had been aware that my great grandmother was proud of being part of the Marling family (though her name was Roberts) – to the extent that portraits of five Marlings graced the walls of our dining room during my childhood.

Jump forward another 15 years, and my sister is moving, so needs to find a new home for the Marling portraits, which came to her. She asked me to find out how we are related to them, and a friend introduced me to the wonders of Ancestry.co.uk. What emerged was wonderful. It turns out that Sam Marling was my four times great grandfather: my father's mother's mother's mother's father's father.

Sam's widow Hester remarried, to John Figgins, so his only child, William, grew up in London. He must have got on well with his stepfather, because he named one of his own sons John Figgins Marling. But instead of staying in London, William returned to the Stroud Valleys, where he went on to found a highly successful wool weaving company – originally in Frogmarsh Mill. One of his sons, Samuel S Marling, carried on the business so well that he was honoured with a Baronetcy and built Ebley Mill, Stanley Park and Selsley church.



Sam the bellringer was born in Woodchester in 1748. He married there in 1775 (note how his name is spelt in the register).

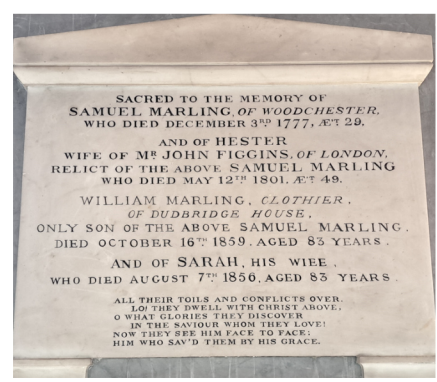


We come from the less well-off part of the family, via Samuel's younger sister Sarah Apperly, who lived with her husband in Dudbridge House (just near where Sainsbury's and the cycle track now are).

Fast forward 25 years, and John Hale lured me up the tower at Woodchester Church to become a ringer. I was mildly interested in the old board detailing the purchase of a treble bell, which included the names of the then ringers. I saw the name Sam Marlin, (no "g") but thought no more about it. A bell historian mentions how the bell is unusual in that the date of casting (1759) was erased and 1761 incised on its shoulder, a year after its caster, Abel Rudhall of Gloucester had died. It was probably bought from stock rather than being cast specifically for Woodchester.

Their son William (gentleman in the portrait) was born in 1776, (by which time Hester and he were members of Rodborough Tabernacle). He died (aged 29) a year later. If you do the maths, when named on the bell memorial as a ringer, Sam was just 13. Perhaps he had just been recruited to ring the new treble bell?

As far as I am aware, none of the intervening generations were bell ringers, and none of our children are. But it is interesting and nice to think that my 4th great-grandfather Sam once rang that same Woodchester treble bell that I now often ring.



David Pouncey



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SCAN ME

Five Valleys Voices Winter Concert

7pm @ St. Mary's Church

Mamma Mia, it's some **Cold Snap** we're having!

If you want to stay warm and enjoy some festive entertainment, then come and join us. It's going to be a **Heavenly Night** down at **St Mary's Church Woodchester**.

Christmas Is Coming and it's once again time for a **Calypso Lullaby** and the **Five Valley Voices Christmas Concert**. It's **All About The Bass**, and **The Holly And The Ivy** as we rock you gently into a festive mood. Are you ready to be led **Knee Deep** into **The River** of joy and festive cheer? There may even be a **Pirate Song** or at least a **Sweet Dream(s)** and a **Seven National Army** mash up.

"Don't Come Between a Man and His Tools!" is all I can say. Well, I had to **Say Something** about that. You will be glad to hear that **Both Sides Now** are calm. The **Seal Lullaby** did the trick, that and **The Prayer**. Well lots of prayers from the vicar. **Veni Veni Emmanuel, O Come, O Come Emmanuel, Lead Us Lord**, lead us! We all need that **Breath Of Heaven** don't we?

Disclaimer: No song titles have been harmed in the writing of this article.

FIVE VALLEYS VOICES
WINTER CONCERT
FRIDAY
13 DECEMBER
7.00- 9ish
at St. Mary's Church, Woodchester
Featuring:
♪ Veni, Veni Emmanuel ♪ ABBA Medley
♪ The Holly and The Ivy ♪ Pirate Song
plus loads more!
ENTRY RAFFLE BAR
Pay as you feel Payment by card or cash
(suggested £5)

North Woodchester Village Shop and Post Office

We have had quite a busy summer welcoming new residents to the shop and also enjoyed meeting many customers from Nailsworth while their Post Office was closed.

Our Christmas stock has arrived! We have many fantastic gift ideas including Chocolate Umbrellas, Flying Scotsman Sweet Tins, Dairy Free Christmas Treats and Advent Calendars, Noel Tatt Christmas Cards including Charity Cards, Monty Bojangles Cat Truffle Tins, Booja Booja. Faith in Nature Gift Boxes.....and much more - come in and see our lovely selection and support your local shop.

As usual we have our lovely Lodge Farm Ready Meals and hope soon to be stocking their Christmas Range - containing local meat and vegetables also some of the meals are Gluten Free. A fantastic last minute energy saving choice.

We would love to see you and perhaps if you could spare a couple of hours occasionally consider volunteering - we would love to hear from you and it's a great way to meet people in the village.

The shop weekday opening time will change to 8.00am from 2nd December.

Merry Christmas to our lovely customers and thank you for your continued support.

A message from the Chair of the Parish Council.....

Woodchester Village shop volunteers now needed.

Our community shop is now in its 10th successful year, but we need a few more volunteers to help keep the shop open all day. If you have time on your hands come and join us. Its a great way to get to know people and do your bit for the community.

We operate a flexible online rota system of "shifts" from 7.30am to 5.30pm, five days a week (8 to 12.30 on Saturdays.) You can volunteer regularly or occasionally as suits you. Call in to the shop and have a chat with one of the volunteers on duty to find out what's involved. Or sign up on woodchestervillageshop.org.uk/volunteers. We look forward to meeting you!

Katharine

Orchard Pasture News

We were delighted to be part of the Open Gardens in Woodchester in July. **Thank you to those of you who visited our allotments and orchard.**

Recently the ownership and management of our land has been transferred to Woodchester Community Land and Gardens – a new community benefit society - in order to secure the land for future generations of villagers. Our aims are to use the land for the benefit of the village, enabling people to share horticultural, social and educational activities whilst maintaining the largely natural habitat of the land. If you are interested in finding out more or becoming a member, please contact us.

Work Party

We usually hold work parties to maintain the land every third Saturday of the month .

10-11.30am, with refreshments. Do come along and join us – it's fun, friendly and a convivial way to meet fellow villagers.



Join the fun!

We expect to have allotments available for rent in early spring, so please get in touch if you're interested.

If you'd like to find out more, please email: swalt.org@gmail.com or phone Bert Cossins on 872407.

Toad Patrol Recruitment

Last year Woodchester Toad patrol moved over 300 toads, frogs and newts across the roads of Woodchester to safety. Despite our efforts, many died too.. This year we would like to include Frogmarsh and the bottom of Convent lane.

We are looking for more volunteers to help us!

We are a friendly crowd and always meet at least in two's, usually in a small group.



Volunteering involves going out at around dusk, in mild, usually damp, weather to walk slowly along the road with HiViz, torch and bucket! If this sounds like you, we'd love you to join us (especially if you can commit to an hour one or more evenings a week). For more info please get in touch with Sylvia on 07396 919456 or sivpiv@aol.com.



- Villagers toast the trees at the wassail

Wassail Celebration

The annual wassail will take place on **Sunday 2 February at 4pm**. Once again the fabulous Rodborough Folk Orchestra will lead us along. Everyone is welcome for a bit of fun, song and theatre. Afterwards we will retire to the village hall for more music, wassail cake and a little dancing. Drinks available from the Royal Oak.

Where to find us...

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

Fly Tipping @ Water Lane

Walkers were astounded to find a great pile of rubbish dumped in Water Lane in the early July. What kind of person would do this?! All credit goes to the Parish Council who arranged for the Stroud District Council to come to clear it away within a couple of days. Thank you.

Sadly, litter and rubbish, in various quantities, dumped in the quieter spots of our village is not an unusual event.

Editor



Woodchester Open Gardens Summer 2024

Summer 2024 in Review

The open gardens proved to be a highly successful community event organised by Katherine McNealey. There were eight participating gardens around the village including South Woodchester Community Allotments. To those that had pre-booked Friarsfield, Convent Lane was also available to look around. At the church there were stalls from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Stroud Swift Group and teas and delicious cakes. As well as the gardens being attractive and welcoming to visitors, the emphasis this year was that the gardens should be as wildlife friendly as possible.



After a rainy build up, thankfully the clouds parted in the afternoon and we had some sunshine. Although our garden number eight on the list we had a steady stream of visitors from the beginning, as many did the trail in reverse order! Those that made it up the hill were so enthusiastic and interested in all the planting. They were keen to know not only the names of plants, but where they came from. There was also a great appreciation of the wildlife value of areas of unmown grass.



Other participants had similar stories of enthusiastic and appreciative visitors. They thought it was great to meet people, especially neighbours that they had not met before. The event was also a good fundraiser. £712 was raised which was split equally between The Door, Stroud District Foodbank and Stroud Women's Refuge. The Church also raised £344 from the tea and cake sales. As one of the participants said "It was a great afternoon and brilliant community event - helped by the sun blessing us!"



If you are inspired to change or improve your garden, now is a good time to be planning for next year. A good place to start is the Exedra Nursery based at the Painswick Rococco Garden (they were formerly at Miserden). They have a great range of slightly unusual herbaceous perennials, climbers and shrubs and are very happy to help you chose appropriate plants for your garden.

Woodchester Open Gardens was a really enjoyable event to be part of. Although it was quite hard work getting the garden up together, it was definitely worth it to meet interesting people and share a passion for plants.



News From The National Trust

Winter at Woodchester Park and Tinkley Gate

This year has been a busy one for Tinkley Gate and Woodchester Park. As well as the second season of summer operation for the café, we have also worked hard on new events and programming, like our outdoor theatre event in September and Summer of Play. We've also installed a new pizza oven, added a powered door to improve access and raised a regional record total of funds in the second-hand bookstore.

Thank you to everyone in the community who has visited Tinkley Gate and Woodchester Park in 2024, we couldn't do the work we do to look after our places for everyone, forever, without you.

Here are a few things that are happening at Tinkley Gate during winter – we look forward to welcoming you over the Christmas period.

Tinkley Gate Path Work. We are working hard on new path work across Tinkley Gate over the winter period, which will make access into the great Woodchester Park area much easier.

Resurfacing work on the red route around Tinkley Gate has already been completed – this has smoothed out the surface and remedied several bumps which made it hard for wheelchair users. As well as this, the surface now is covered with a landscape-sensitive Cotswold Stone, which improves drainage.

The Blue route down into the park has been improved, removing some of the steeper sections and improving grip. Work on the zig-zag path that is being created to connect to the park from the bottom of the red route has also begun, and this will be complete over the winter, making accessing Woodchester from Tinkley Gate easier for everyone.

Christmas Events

We are pleased to be hosting a number of festive events at Tinkley over the Christmas period.

Come and learn about some of the animals that we have hibernating at Woodchester Park this winter in our free **Hibernating Animals Exploration Trail.** Perfect for little legs, follow the round signs through the mown paths in front of Tinkley Gate Cafe to learn the hibernating habits of a different creature at every sign. Pick up the trails in the second-hand bookstore – running **from Friday 29th November to Sunday 26th January.**

We are also hosting **Copper Ornament Workshops at Tinkley Gate on Tuesday 17th and Thursday 19th December.** Engrave your own beautiful copper-sheet ornament inspired by natural woodland shapes, all materials and tools provided. The workshop will take place in the warmth of Tinkley Gate café and is suitable for beginners.

For ticket prices and booking visit Woodchester Park events.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/gloucestershire-cotswolds/woodchester-park/events

Swifts in Woodchester

Woodchester is home to several swift colonies, recognizable by their distinctive 'screaming' as they search for nesting sites. These birds pair for life and return to the same nests annually. Sadly, swift numbers have plummeted by nearly 60% in the past 25 years, placing them on the red list. Most likely causes are reduced insect populations, and a loss of habitat as people restore or improve older buildings.



How We Can Help

To combat this decline, St Mary's Church, Stroud Swift Group, and Woodchester Parish Council have installed new nest boxes. **If you're interested in adding a nest box to welcome swifts next year** contact Sylvia at 07396 919456 or sivpiv@aol.com. Boxes need to be attached to a wall at least 4 metres up and with a clear line of sight. Key locations sought include around Old St Dominic School and South Woodchester High Street. **If bird boxes aren't your thing, you can still help by encouraging insects into your garden.** Not using pesticides, adding a water feature (it doesn't have to be much), leaving an area with longer grass, growing native plants that flower at different times of the year and leaving safe areas for insects to shelter like piles of logs or a bug hotel all help. **No garden? Getting involved in citizen science is another great way to help.** Next spring/summer why not download RSPB Swift Mapper and record swift activity, take part in 'the big butterfly count' or google 'splatometer buglife' and help them with their data collection?



Woodchester Word Business Guide

Your Woodchester Word is delivered by volunteers. If you can help deliver a small number of Words to your local neighbours in North or South Woodchester, that would be very helpful in getting the Word to everyone quickly and spread the load a little more. Contact Rod on 872317 or woodchesterword@gmail.com

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.timberyard.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

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www.johntimberlake.co.uk

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Miss Daisy

Try my delicious brownies at the post office, or call me for cakes, event catering and more!
facebook.com/southwoodchester
Becky T: 07864018972



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Useful Village Contacts

PCSO:

Joe Hedger 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: 07920 103953
E: Clerk@woodchesterparish.org.uk
www.woodchesterparish.org.uk

Gloucestershire Highways:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/
T: 08000 514514
E: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet

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

Stroud Neighbourhood Policing Team

PCSO Candice FRANCIS PCSO Charlotte KING
Non-Emergency: 101 or
www.gloucestershire.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about
Emergency: 999
Anonymously Report to CrimeStoppers: 0800 555111
For other information visit:
www.gloucestershire.police.uk/

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