

## **VILLAGE APPRAISAL 1999**

In 1979 Shipton Gorge Parish Council undertook a survey of the parish which resulted in the publication of the first Village Appraisal. The cover of the document states that it was carried out "in the belief that a survey of the parish as it is today, and the views of its inhabitants as to its future, would be useful as a guide to the Parish Council itself as well as to the County Planners, and would stimulate and inform discussion within the village".

In 1989 a second Village Appraisal was undertaken and comparisons made with the previous one. It showed the changes that had taken place in the 10 year period, stimulated discussion on the future of the village and made fascinating reading.

A further 10 years has passed and this document, the third village appraisal, still has the same mission as that of 1979. It provides a snapshot of the village as it is now, encompasses the views of the inhabitants as to its future and will be a useful guide to local government agencies when considering changes that might alter the quality of both the environment and the people who live here.

When read in conjunction with the previous two appraisals it also provides a very interesting record enabling us to view the past 20 years of our village. It also gives us the opportunity to consider what changes the next two decades may bring and how we can all be involved in determining our village's future.

It was felt that in contrast to the previous documents it was not necessary to reproduce all background information that was in the 1979 and 1989 editions. It is recommended that it therefore be read in conjunction with the previous appraisals, copies of which are still available from the Parish Council.

This 1999 Village Appraisal was financed by the Parish Council and compiled by a committee consisting of Cllrs. Mary Boughton, and Robert Cornish, together with Christine Hewlett, Jim Gray, Christine Huxtable and Tony Taylor.

One fact emerged immediately we started to compile the document. It was apparent that in contrast to the previous editions, the factual information required was not able, in the main, to be compiled from local and individual knowledge. This appeared to be a result of the many changes in occupancy that had taken place in the interim and the loss of village amenities. The latter has meant that villagers have had less opportunity to mix and the close knit community spirit had inevitably been reduced. Therefore it was hoped that facts and figures in this village appraisal could be obtained from the responses received from the questionnaires sent to every household in the parish. However of the 176 questionnaires distributed, only 136 were returned (80%) so a combination of local knowledge and logical assumptions were made to give an overall picture. We are confident that the information is therefore as accurate as is possible and reflects the true state of the village and its inhabitants.

It is important that a document such as this belongs to, and is owned by, everyone in the parish of Shipton Gorge and we would like to record our thanks to all those who gave us factual and historical information, suggestions, comments and constructive criticism. It would not have been complete without the views of the inhabitants to whom we are grateful for their input and also to those who circulated and collected the questionnaires on our behalf.

This document therefore truly belongs to everyone in the parish and we hope that all those who live or have lived, in the village enjoy reading it.

## **THE VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Schedule of Ancient Monuments by English Heritage**

There appear to have been no changes since the 1989 appraisal.

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

There is still just one SSSI in the parish and this is the area surrounding the Old Lime Kiln and Polyzoa, between Burpit Lane and Peas Hill. It is one of 49 SSSI's in West Dorset and this designation continues to afford protection to this important geological site.

### **Conservation Area**

Much of the centre part of the village was designated a Conservation Area by West Dorset District Council in 1994. This means that property for development within the Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area by being appropriate in mass, proportions, detailed design and materials to the site and its surroundings. A map is attached showing the area concerned and this also defines the current Development Boundary for the village, the one SSSI and the area below the church as being Land of Local Landscape Importance.

### **Tree Protection Orders**

In addition to the existing Tree Protection Orders, protection is now afforded within the Conservation Area. Permission is required and six weeks notice must be given of intent to undertake work on a tree within the Conservation Area.

### **Listed Buildings and those of Special Architectural or Historical Interest**

There have been no changes since the 1989 appraisal other than the demolition of Cumberland Cottage.

### **Footpaths and Bridleways**

There still remain 18 footpaths and 7 bridleways within the parish. In 1997 the lane between Footpath 3 and Footpath 4 was also designated a right of way, thus joining these two paths together. A full list of footpaths with numbers and grid references was listed in the 1989 appraisal. Many of these rights of way are used frequently with 115 people reporting that they walked them regularly or occasionally. The 1989 Definitive Map is held by the Parish Council's Rights of Way Liaison Officer.

### **Saunders Richardson Wood**

Back in 1985, under the terms of the will of Mrs N Richardson of Bridport and once resident of Shipton Gorge, the Woodland Trust became the owners of about three acres of land bordering Smacombe Lane on the eastern edge of the village. This low-lying land has a stream running through it. The Trust carried out a substantial replanting programme of this area using Alder, Ash, Willow, Lime, Wild Cherry, Crab Apple, Aspen, Field Maple and Hazel. The wood receives the minimum amount of maintenance necessary, with nature looking after the rest, providing a continuous growing haven for wildlife. The terms of the bequest preclude general public access to the land; nevertheless the area continues to make an important contribution to local amenity.

## **HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT**

There has been very little change in the number of properties in the village since 1989. At that time there were 176 properties and this is still the case. However there have been two changes - Cumberland Cottage in Icen lane has been demolished and replaced by a mobile home. It had been listed in a report of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments but had become unsafe. Virginia House has been renovated and the barn on the property converted to a small cottage. The only new buildings in the village are two office buildings, which have been erected by village businesses. The properties owned by West Dorset District Council were transferred to the Magna Housing Association in May 1993 and since the last appraisal a further two have been purchased. The majority of properties in the parish are owner occupied and just under 50 dwellings have single occupancy. A substantial increase in the number of dwellings will occur when the approved redevelopment at Lynch Bungalow and the adjoining Home Farm properties is completed. Currently there are plans for 4 properties on the Lynch Bungalow site and a further 15 at Home Farm, which is an increase of over 10% in village housing stock. There are currently 19 holiday or second homes in the parish. These represent 11% of total dwellings, a decrease from the 23 (13%) in 1989 but higher than the 13 (9%) in 1979

As in the previous two appraisals, residents were asked for their opinion as to future development within the parish. When asked if they supported the Parish Council's policy of actively discouraging development of the green fields surrounding the village, the overwhelming majority agreed, with 117 supporting the continuation of this policy and only 8 disagreeing with it.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

In 1989 it was recorded that three properties in the village had satellite television receivers.

Information and Communications Technology has increased in the last decade and from the 136 responses received the following was reported.

- 34 properties have satellite television receivers

- 56 properties contain a personal computer

- 32 of these had connection to the Internet

- 69 households have mobile phones with a total of 89 individual phones

The majority of mobile phones were connected to the Orange network (45) although at present there is no signal on any network within the main part of the village.

## POPULATION

The electoral role lists 295 adults, of which just over one third, 109, are believed to be over retirement age, a drop from the 1989 figure of 140. However the number of children (under 18's) has also reduced to around 50. There are a number of babies, under 1 year, but very few other pre-school age children.

To determine the number of residents of "local" origin it was agreed that the criteria would be that those who had been born whilst their parents were resident in the parish were classed as "Shipton born", and those born elsewhere in the county would be "Dorset born". Using this criteria and based on the returns received, there are 7 adults and 18 children who are "Shipton born", and 59 adults and 21 children who are "Dorset born". It can therefore be estimated that around 25% of adults and 80% of children in the parish are of "local" origin.

There have been a significant number of new residents who have moved into the village. Of the 136 questionnaires returned it was found that the length of residence was as follows:

Under 5 years	-	101 adults and children
6 - 10 years	-	34 adults and children
11 - 15 years	-	59 adults and children
16 - 20 years	-	30 adults and children
21 - 25 years	-	7 adults
26 - 30 years	-	12 adults
over 30 years	-	21 adults

Many people in the last category have lived in Shipton Gorge for considerably longer than 30 years with two residents having lived in the village for over 80 years. When taking the above figures into account it must be remembered that the first two categories will include young children who will have lived in the village since birth. Nevertheless the trend clearly shows a turnover of population similar to that shown in the 1979 and 1989 appraisals.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Of the 136 households responding to the appraisal questionnaire, the following details were given.

There are 37 males and 16 females in full time paid employment, with a further 4 males and 21 females in part-time employment. Self-employment remains fairly constant with 15 males and 5 females fully self-employed. In addition there are 5 males and 9 females who are part-time self-employed, some of these being also employed elsewhere part-time.

Unemployment remains low with just 2 males and 2 females listed.

There are 11 people in Further or Higher Education (5 males and 6 females) with the majority living away from home at college or university during term time.

Many people living in the village have retired from work; some previously worked locally but many having moved here to retire. The returns show that currently there are around 50 men and 65 woman in this category.

Eighteen residents who are employed or self-employed, full or part-time, work within the parish, whilst the remainder mainly travel to Bridport, Dorchester, Weymouth or the surrounding villages. There are nineteen residents who work outside Dorset on a regular basis.

Agriculture is no longer the largest form of employment in the village. There are currently 10 people working in agriculture compared with 19 in 1989. Retail and sales is the sector in which most residents now work, (10 males and 9 females), whilst Administration and Health related employment are now on a par with agriculture, employing 10 people each.

Other occupations vary from Local Government and Manufacturing (9 each), the Construction industry and Education (7 each). Roughly equal numbers are employed in Leisure industries, Domestic/Care work, Service industries and the Creative arts.

## **AGRICULTURE**

Home Farm, the last farm to regularly move cattle through the village, ceased to be a working farm in 1999 and the land was sold for development. All its farming operations were then transferred to Lynch Farm which had been acquired for this purpose.

There remain 7 working farms in the parish, Shipton Hill Farm, Lower Sturthill Farm, Higher Sturthill Farm, Icen Farm, Manor Farm, Lynch Farm and Dairy Cottage. Four are dairy farms, one is beef and arable, one contracting and one small scale mixed farm still keeping Poll Dorset sheep. In addition there are a further 4 farms, Bonscombe Farm, Hammiton Farm, St Lukes Farm and Bennett's Hill Farm, which are all private residences with associated land being let as keep.

## **EDUCATION**

Returns showed that there are 31 children under 16 years of age attending schools.

Of the 23 primary age children, the majority, 16, attend Burton Bradstock Primary School. The other 7 attend schools in Bridport, 3 at each of Bridport Primary and St Katherine's Primary Schools and 1 at St. Mary's Primary School.

Colfox School was completely re-built in 1999; the first in the country to be funded through the Private Finance Initiative, and was re-named The Sir John Colfox School. It is attended by 7 of the 8 secondary age children, and 1 child attends Beaminster Comprehensive.

School transport habits have altered considerably in the last 10 years, with 14 children now travelling to school by bus, 16 by private car and 1 by taxi to Beaminster.

From the appraisal forms received, 1 child of pre-school age attends Burton Bradstock playgroup, compared with 6 in 1989.

In the village there are 14 young people aged between 16 and 18 years of age compared with 5 in 1989. Of these, 11 are in full time education and 3 in full time employment.

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Private Transport**

As private transport has increasingly become a necessity for residents of remote villages, it is not surprising that in the 136 households responding there are 157 private cars, 7 vans and 11 motorcycles. Most people in the village depend on their own transport and many households therefore have two or more vehicles. On-road car parking continues to give rise for concern throughout the village. A residents' car park was built in the early 1990's behind the houses at Peas Hill but many residents and visitors continue to use the roadway because the car park has become inadequate for the number of vehicles which need to use it and many find it inconvenient.

A minority of people also mentioned that they use bicycles as a routine form of transport and a number of residents walk into Bridport regularly.

### **Public Transport**

The bus service to Bridport, via Walditch, continues to run on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings only. The current price of a single adult fare is now 60p. Only 4 people reported using the bus regularly, with a further 34 using it occasionally. A few people use the hourly bus service to Axminster, Dorchester and Weymouth, boarding it at the bus stop on the A35.

### **Taxis**

There are no private taxi operators based in the village.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES AND GENERAL AMENITIES**

### **Fuel**

All properties in the parish have mains electricity.

Gas connections have increased with 85 of the 136 properties being connected.

Gas is now also the fuel used by the majority as their main form of heating, with 76 properties heated by it compared with 31 heated by oil, 26 by electricity and 14 by solid fuel.

### **Water and Sewerage**

It is thought that connections to mains water and sewerage remains the same as in 1989, with just a few properties still having a private water supply and some outlying properties having septic tanks or cess-pits.

### **Refuse Collection**

A private contractor is now responsible for the weekly refuse collection throughout the parish. There is no longer public access to the landfill waste site at Bothenhampton, which is due to be completely closed in 2000. The public amenity site was relocated to Bridport in 1998.

### **Post Office**

The Community Post Office in Chapel Street closed in 1992, along with the village shop that was run from the same premises. The loss of this village amenity has been greatly missed as it provided a valuable service and community meeting point. Residents now have to travel to either Burton Bradstock, Bridport or Post Offices farther afield. Responses indicate that 91 people use a Bridport office, 38 Burton Bradstock office, while 5 people go elsewhere.

### **Post boxes**

There are still two post boxes in the village, at Peas Hill and at the bottom of Church Path. The latter was relocated there following the closure of the village shop and Post Office. Responses show that both are well used with 47 people using the Peas Hill box regularly and another 26 people using it occasionally, the Church Path box is used by 37 people regularly and another 19 people use it occasionally. There are two collections each weekday and one on Saturday from the boxes. Since the last appraisal a further collection on Sunday mornings is now made from the Church Path box.

### **Telephone**

The overwhelming number of properties are connected to a land line telephone service, it was therefore decided not to register the number for this appraisal. Despite the threat of replacement, the red public telephone in Brook Street still remains and is still used by some residents and visitors. As previously mentioned, a significant number of households also have mobile phones.

### **Health Services**

All residents need to travel to Bridport for general medical services such as doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacies. A new Community Hospital was built in Bridport in the 1990's which now offers a larger range of services than the previous one and so has enabled many people to have more localised care. Accident, emergency and specialised forms of care are now mainly dealt with in Dorchester.

### **Home Watch Scheme**

This was initiated in 1992 by the Village Society; Fred White was the first co-ordinator. The scheme provides an early warning system of potential crime. The village and properties in the surrounding area are divided into 10 sections; each section having a contact person who is kept informed of any local problems. This is done through the Ringmaster, a computer-controlled telephone system, which is linked to the Dorset Police. The scheme is currently co-ordinated by Frank Rogers. It continues to be effective and the Police report a very low level of crime within the parish.

### **Public Libraries**

The main library for the area is in Bridport. It was relocated in 1997 from its former premises in East Street into the building previously used as the Fire Station in South Street. It is open everyday apart from Thursday and Sunday. There is a smaller library in Burton Bradstock, which is open on Monday, Thursday and Friday afternoons and also Tuesday mornings. The mobile library service visits the village on alternate Fridays, stopping for 20 minutes at Quarry Close. Of the 92 households regularly or occasionally using a public library, only 7 people make use of the mobile service, with 76 using Bridport and 9 Burton Bradstock.

### **Highways**

#### **Street lighting**

There has been no extension to the street lighting in the parish. The majority of residents who returned the appraisal questionnaires indicated once again their strong opposition to any increase, with 110 of the 136 supporting this opinion. Neither of the two planned housing developments in the village includes street light provision.

#### **Road signs**

Since 1989 more roads and streets in the village are now identified by nameplates. Additional warning signs for the playing field and for pedestrian safety have also been erected.

#### **Hedge and verge maintenance**

The County Council cuts all hedges and verges within the centre of the village twice yearly, with several areas of grass also being maintained by them on a regular basis throughout the Summer. The local farmers and residents maintain other hedges and verges.

#### **Drains**

During heavy rainfall, surface water continues to cause problems due to the nature of the drainage systems within the village.

#### **Street cleaning**

Due to the remoteness of the village, the County Council only carries street cleaning out once or twice a year. Each Spring the Parish Council organises a village clean up which is undertaken by volunteers. The village is kept tidy throughout the year through the efforts of some residents.

### **Community Services (WRVS, Home Carer's Etc)**

The Meals on Wheels Service is operated by the WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) from its premises in Downs Street, Bridport and serves a number of households in the village. Carers, previously known as Home Helps, are provided by Social Services and this service is used by a number of households in the village.

### **Government Agencies (Jobcentre, CAB, DSS, Registrar etc)**

The local office of the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths is located in the Borough Gardens in South Street, Bridport, behind the Tourist Information Office. It opens for two hours on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings and Friday afternoon each week, although it will also open by appointment for an hour on Saturday mornings. The Citizen's Advice Bureau is at 45 South Street, Bridport and is open on each weekday. The Jobcentre has offices at the junction of East Street and West Street in Bridport, opposite the Town Hall and is open throughout the week.

### **Child-Minders**

There are no registered child minders operating within the village.

### **Tradesmen (Fish, Milk, Paper, Coal Etc)**

Milk is delivered to households in the village by Hanger's Dairy based in South Street, Bridport. Daily papers are delivered by Mr Connolly of Bridport, Sunday papers by C & S News of Dorchester and a young person within the village delivers the Dorset Evening Echo. A fishmonger and a butcher make deliveries to households in the village on a weekly basis. Coal and bottled gas supplies are also delivered regularly by businesses in the surrounding locality.

### **Hairdressers**

There is now only one hairdresser working in the village, operating from her home and providing this service to many people within the parish.

## **VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS AND AMENITIES**

### **St Martin's Church**

The small church, with its 14th century tower, stands high with glorious views over the village and surrounding countryside. The addition of two new bells in 1996, made possible by a donation, means that the tower now houses a ring of six bells, one of which dates from 1655. The bells peal for every church service and on special occasions. There is an unusual seven sided 13th century font to complement the tower. The remainder of the church which was rebuilt in 1862 (Thomas Hardy was a pupil architect) has fortunately retained an air of tranquillity which many, including non-churchgoers and visitors find uplifting. The church seats 160 but on festive occasions this can be insufficient. The average attendance for non-festive services is approximately 10% of the total village population. Many members of the village keep the inside of the church clean and decorated while others deal with the outside maintenance. It is a living church. The rector of Burton Bradstock, John Atkinson, cares for Shipton parishioners as well as leading a team of one vicar and two lay readers for the eight churches within the Bride Valley. The team produces the Bride Valley News, which is delivered free to all homes and is an important source of village news as well as church matters. During the compiling of this appraisal, in the approach to the millennium, the lych gates were being repaired and restored to celebrate 2000 years of Christianity.

### **The Parish Council**

Shipton Gorge parish Council consists of 9 elected or co-opted members. In recent years elections have not been held, as the number of candidates standing for office has been equal to, or less, than the number required. Each member of the Council, in addition to their duties as councillor, has further responsibilities. These include sitting on the Playing Field and Planning Advisory committees, responding to issues regarding Rights of Way and Highways matters, and liaising with other local groups such as the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils and the Neighbourhood Watch. Parish Councillors are elected to serve as one of the trustees of the Village Hall Trust and as a governor at Burton Bradstock Primary School. It is the duty of the Parish Council to set the precept and this is done at a budget meeting held in November each year. A substantial amount of the precept is used to maintain and improve the Playing Field. Additional spending is on employing a part-time clerk, general office costs and donations to local groups. The Parish Council currently meets bi-monthly on the first Thursday of alternate months in the Village Hall. Our representatives on both the County Council and West Dorset District Council regularly attend the meetings and take part in discussions. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings and have an opportunity to voice their opinions in the democratic part of the meeting. Regrettably, it is only when there are matters of great concern to villagers that more than a handful attend the meetings, with only 6 reporting regular attendance.

### **The Annual Parish Meeting**

In April every year a Parish Meeting takes place. This provides an opportunity for the Parish Council and all the other local organisations to present reports to the parish on their activities during the preceding year and it is usually well attended with around 30 being the usual attendance.

### **King George V Playing Field**

The field is used by both children and adults throughout the year, with people using it including a number of visiting grandchildren. General maintenance is organised by the Parish Council using local contractors. Grass cutting and minor maintenance has in recent years been undertaken by a village resident, who also maintains the mower, and this has not only reduced the running costs but is also reflected in the excellent condition of the field. In 1996, following a petition by local children to the Parish Council, a practice Basketball Court was erected in the south-west corner of the field. This was entirely funded by grants and fund-raising events organised and held in the village. Concrete play pipes were also installed on an earth mound nearby. In the 1989 appraisal it was noted that the Parish Council had resolved to form a charitable trust for the playing field, but following legal advice this plan was dropped. The 1999 annual inspection of the field's equipment revealed that some items failed current standards and a five-year programme of replacement was put in hand. The Parish Council receives many compliments from residents and visitors on the condition of the field and its equipment.

### **Village Hall**

The Hall, situated a little to the West of St. Martin's Church, continues to be used by groups and individuals from both inside and outside of the Parish. The Charity Commissioners act as 'holding trustees' and the Shipton Gorge Village Hall Management Trust comprising, at present of eleven people, representing the village and village activity groups is responsible for the day-to-day running and maintenance of the Hall. Further building alterations have taken place since the last appraisal. In 1993 the old 'lean-to' kitchen area and storage was reconstructed, providing a bar and dressing room area and much improved storage facilities, utilising not only some increased floor space, but excellent storage area in the roof area with good access. The total cost of this work was over £30,000, grants being received from County, District and Parish Councils, with approximately 25% of the cost having to be raised within the village by fund-raising events and donations. Following a surveyor's report in 1995 the roof area was treated for beetle infestation. In 1999, maintenance costs for re-decoration and general repairs exceeded two thousand pounds. In the same year the main hall heating was updated with new gas heaters replacing the old ones. Fortunately, this was paid for in total by a grant from the National Lottery Charities Board. Back in 1990 Dorset County Council in conjunction with the Arts Council introduced ARTSREACH in the county, its object being to bring the Arts to villages. Shipton Gorge was one of the smaller villages to take up the offer, and since then various dramatic and musical entertainment have been successfully staged two or three times each year in the hall. Fund raising events continue to be held from time to time to meet any shortfalls in the running costs of the hall. The 100 Club, which has been running for the past 15 years, continues to be fully subscribed with 100 people buying a £10 ticket yearly. It contributes £500 per annum to hall funds.

## **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

### **The New Inn**

The pub continues to be owed by J C & R H Palmer and run by a tenant landlord and his wife. It is still a busy village pub and a valuable meeting place. During the mid 1990's extensive refurbishment was carried out when the two bars were combined to form one large area. In common with most village pubs, the New Inn offers a range of home cooked meals. It supports two darts teams, a quiz team, two table skittle teams and runs a Christmas Thrift Club administered by the retired village postmaster. The pub also organises regular fund raising events for local charities. In 1999 a village street fair was re-introduced by the Village Society and centred round the New Inn.

### **Village Society**

The Society was originally formed back in 1987 as a result of the amalgamation of the Preservation Society, Community Association and the Flower and Vegetable Show. All residents in the Parish were automatically members and no membership fee was charged. The Society flourished and many successful and enjoyable events were held each year until in 1996, due to dwindling support, it was decided at a public meeting that regrettably the Village Society would cease. It must be pointed out that this was not an isolated happening and for whatever reason other communities were facing similar situations. Four trustees were appointed to administer the funds belonging to the Society. It was not however long before it became obvious, within the village, that the past events could not be allowed to disappear for ever and so in 1999 a group of residents got together and reformed the Society which is currently organising a number of village events throughout the year. The affairs of the Society are run by a committee of fourteen residents who meet bi-monthly in the Village Hall. These meetings are open to everyone in the village and include an Annual General Meeting held each May.

### **Table-tennis Club**

Table Tennis continues to be played in the Village Hall on Tuesday afternoons each week from October to April. Membership is relatively small (10 - 12) and is made up of mainly retired male members. In 1998 the Club purchased a Championship style table which replaced the multipurpose tabletops and stands which were a legacy of the W.I. days.

### **Ladies Afternoon Club**

Attendance declined over a two-year period after which the club ceased to exist. A few ladies continued to meet for keep fit sessions but these too have now finished.

### **Allotments**

Following Magna Housing taking over control of the properties formerly owned by West Dorset District Council, the allotments at the rear of the houses have remained uncultivated, although partly due to the poor quality of the soil only one or two had been cultivated in the past.

### **Football Team**

Although there is no longer a formal Shipton Gorge Football team, games are still played in the field beside Bonscombe Lane on a regular basis.

### **Other activities**

There are a wide range of hobbies, sports and pastimes that residents participate in as part of a local club or organisation, mainly in Bridport or the surrounding areas. There were over 52 different activities mentioned ranging from swimming and golf to lip reading and yoga, showing a wide variety of interests.

## **VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

### **The Bride Valley News**

This magazine is produced monthly by the Bride Valley Team Ministry and distributed to every household in the parish. As well as information on church services throughout the valley it also contains notices of events taking place in the villages and other matters of general interest. A wide range of advertisers supports it. The Shipton Gorge correspondent is currently Joy White. It is widely read with 123 of the 136 respondents reporting reading it. As in 1989 it is the main source of information for people living in the village.

### **Village Notice Board**

The village notice board is also a source of information for many people, with 102 responses indicating that they looked at it regularly.

### **Sense of Community**

As the village no longer has a shop and post office, the New Inn and the Village Hall are now the two main meeting places for people, where local information and views can be exchanged. During the period from 1996 until 1999 when the Village Society was not active, many residents missed the lack of regular contact at events. There was a feeling that, along with the loss of the shop and post office, this had lent to there being less of a sense of the 'village community'. It is hoped that the reforming of the society with regular events planned will help to rectify this. In the replies to the questionnaires the hope that another village shop or post office will be opened was by far the most widely voiced plea. It would seem that this has been seen as the most crucial loss to the sense of community in the village.

### **Questionnaire responses**

The majority of the questions asked were of a factual nature and the responses have been included in the text of this document. However, there were three questions where villagers were asked for their suggestions for improvement – to the village hall facilities, the playing field area and a general question as to ways the village might be improved with regard to the environment, services and activities.

The suggestions made for improvements to the facilities in the village hall and playing field were very varied and these have been passed to the committees concerned for their consideration.

There was a wide range of suggestions made regarding improvements to services and amenities in the village, with the following being the most voiced opinions: -

- A village shop and post office
- Improved roadside verge, hedge and drain maintenance
- Speed restrictions
- Concerns over on-street parking

It was good to also note that several responses simply said that they wanted the village to stay just as it was and that they enjoyed living in the village!

### **Consultation with the village**

Following the preparation of the draft of this document, it was presented to the village at the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2000. Copies were provided for all those attending and residents were asked to note any errors or omissions found so that they could be rectified. Following this the final edition was compiled and published at the end of 2000 with copies being distributed to every household in the parish as well as local authorities and other interested organisations.

We hope that this Village Appraisal will be of interest to everyone with an involvement or interest in Shipton Gorge.