

For a large print version of this edition please contact Dave Evans, 490698
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The Fire

As every reader will know, disaster struck the village on Saturday 15th March, in the form of a fire at the Rose & Crown. Apart from the obvious grief felt by the Brownings, Joanne and the rest of the staff, the whole village has been touched by the event. Conversations have centred on fond memories of the pub and hopes for the future of all the people affected by the fire.

Irene Browning writes:

"On a cold November day in 1979 the Browning's, Ron and Irene with their two sons, arrived in Stoke St Gregory to take over the Rose and Crown from Dennis, Eileen, Sally and Joanne Bown. The two families have been friends ever since. They worked hard to put their own stamp on the Pub, building up a good reputation for food and ale. The boys, after finishing school at Heathfield and catering college, took a year out to do Australia and Europe and then joined their parents to work and build up the business. Along the way they met and married two beautiful local Stoke St Gregory girls, Sally Quantock and Leonie Withams, and went on to have four little Brownings - Alice, Arthur, Milly and George, to carry on the name and pub.

"On Ron's and Irene's retirement the young families carried on working hard to maintain the standard of the Rose & Crown in their beloved Stoke St Gregory.

"On Saturday March 15th disaster struck and a fire wiped out the Rose and Crown.

"The whole family would like to express their heartfelt thanks to the firemen for all their hard work, friends and all in the village who have sent cards, letters, flowers and offers of support and help. **THANK YOU ALL. Watch this space. We will be back. We are working on it.**"

Easter Egg Hunt

Sue Hembrow, Dave Elliott and Tom Stobie were delighted with the turn out of approx 55 children (and parents) who braved the high winds and extreme cold to take part in this event on the Playing Field on Easter Saturday. Great fun was had by all, as the 200 hidden eggs were hunted down.

A huge thank you to all the "good eggs" that sponsored this event..... Doug and Angie at our village shop, Monkton Elms and Tesco Langport and Taunton.

"I really enjoyed it thank you for organizing it" Jenny Katte

"Really good, great fun, can we do it next year?" Katie Cross

Well hopefully we can but fingers crossed for some brilliant sunshine!!!!

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Parish Council meetings are normally held on the 2nd Monday of each month in the Williams Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

At the start of each meeting there is an opportunity for members of the public to speak.

The next 2 meetings will be held on 14th April and 12th May.

Briefly

Keep saving the stamps

(& remember to leave a 1cm border of paper). Collection points at Shop, School, Church, Chapel, PO & Coates' – raising funds for St Margaret's Hospice and the Air Ambulance

The Chapel car park has been used at night by kids riding around and doing wheelies. The gravel has been sprayed on to the grass which makes it difficult to cut. There have also been other inappropriate activities. For this reason a barrier has been put across the entrance to the car park. They regret having to do this as gates and chains look unwelcoming, but anyone wishing to visit a grave can still use the top car park.

Mrs Caroline Fry, from Isle Abbots, has joined the school staff and is working with Class 1. Caroline was previously at Hatch Beauchamp school.

Fashion Show The first joint function organised by the parents and friends of Burrowbridge and Stoke schools took the form of a fashion show at the Williams Hall on Wednesday 19th March

The school "New Build" is now complete and the children have started using the new outdoor play area - partly funded by the school share of the 2007 Ball proceeds. The school now hopes to raise enough money to fence the area so that it can be used for sports by the whole community.

Draft minutes of Parish Council meetings will now be posted as soon as possible on the Notice Board and the Website.

What's In Store?

Angela, Doug and Lauryn have been here now for six months and have settled into shop life well. They would like to express their thanks to the villagers not only for the support to the shop but also for their friendliness, suggestions, interest and sense of humour, all of which they appreciate and have made them feel welcome.

They have listened to their customers and now have fresh fruit and vegetables delivered three times a week. Fresh bread is in store on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and although this was one of the most requested products it needs a little more support to keep it a regular service. The Friday afternoon delivery service continues to be popular, customers leaving a list by Wednesday and Doug delivering from 3 to 5 on the Friday. These deliveries include logs and coal. Fruit and Veg boxes are also very popular.

The cotton shopping bags were a great talking point and success. "We are delighted to see them being used," says Angela, "and have noticed a reduction in use of the plastic bags. Please remember to bring them with you when you shop. The newspaper service is going well, but we are still looking for a person with transport to deliver to Meare Green, Curload and Woodhill, a round that takes approximately 40 minutes a morning Monday to Thursday (Start time negotiable). The round is being covered for the present but if this changes it could mean the delivery service will be lost in these areas during the week."

Big Little Eaters

The school dinner uptake has been consistently high with over 40 of the 67 pupils taking lunch each day. There are three sizes of meal available, the largest rarely being requested for primary schools. In Stoke most of the older pupils have opted for the large portion!

The staff are still working on the organisation, and there is still a vacancy for a lunchtime supervisor Monday /Thursday/ Friday, 12.00 - 1.00 pm

Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute

meet each month (2nd Tuesday), usually in the Village Hall, and listen to a speaker:

8 April: Sugaring by Rachel Hopping (this is not sugar craft/icing cakes, rather it is another way to remove unwanted hair)

13 May: Take a letter Miss Jones by Jenny Lane who points out how office equipment has changed radically in a comparatively short time (do you remember the dreaded Gestetner duplicator, and all those bits of paper when rubbing out typing errors on a top copy and the numerous carbon copies?!)

We meet on other occasions too (Alternative Fashion Show – see back page). We also have a Book Club which meets once a month, an active theatre/cinema group, a skittles group and in April we are having a day's taster on calligraphy.

We like to enjoy ourselves but also like to help our community (we gave the piano to the new Williams Hall last year).

Why not come along and see for yourself what the modern WI does. Visitors are very welcome. Contact our Secretary, Pat Hembrow on 490492 or our President, Mary Kelsey on 490550 - we look forward to meeting you.

Malawi Update

Charlie Limm writes:

"Hello there, just a quick update to let you know how Africa is going!

"Malawi is truly amazing and the children in the school are brilliant. Although teaching a class of 70 who don't completely understand English is hard work, its very fulfilling and we have some wonderful characters in our classes. We have also started a rugby, drama and creative arts club after school which is great fun!

"Our house is great, basic, but it has pretty much everything we need - toilet (thankfully no longdrop) a cold shower, two hobs and kettles, electricity and water which some of the other houses don't have so we have been very lucky! We live right on top of a mountain - the hill we climb to the house almost killed us on the first day but its ok now! We have monkeys living outside and we swear we saw a very big wild animal walk past our veranda last night (hopefully it wasn't a leopard!!). Food is fine - we have lots of fruit and veg in our local market. Mangos and pineapples have just gone out of season so its green oranges and avocados mainly now but in the main town of Zomba you can pretty much buy any kinds of food. We have tried the local dish nsima which is a mix of mashed potato and flour - v tasteless n horrible!!"

Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

The 2008/9 Season started with the club's Open Day on March 29th.

It is a small, though thriving and friendly Club open to all, no matter what age or ability, and new members are very welcome.

Membership entitles you to attendance on Club nights and at Club events, a key to the courts, and a list of other players. During the summer season members try to play on Wednesday and Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons - though members of the club play at other times with friends.

During winter months, weather permitting, play is on Sunday afternoons at 2pm.

The two courts are in a good standard of care and benefit from regular usage.

All of this costs just **£30** per year for a family, **£20** single and **£10** junior.

Williams Hall AGM – Tuesday 22nd April

Everyone is invited (7.30 pm) to hear the trustees' annual report on the hall and its activities. Bring along your questions and ideas for the future. The meeting will also elect the community representatives for the coming year.

Hall Funds – Alex Morrice writes:

“The Hall has now been in operation for nearly two years. I am sure most of you will remember that we have raised over £115,000 in the Village and as a consequence required an overdraft of only £25,000 (a friend in Surrey has just “completed” a village hall project which has an overdraft of £100,000!). Our aim is to clear that in 5 years – hence the continued fundraising. A new scheme is the “Hall Supporters Club” Once we get the numbers up this will raise a significant proportion of the income needed to cover the interest and capital repayments, which will allow the Trustees headroom to improve facilities in the Hall.

“Joining the “**Supporters Club**” involves a cost of £1 per week and the prizes are drawn 4 times a year. Our target is to get 100 members. So far we have 41 and in the two draws so far there have been £90, £80, £45, £40, four of £14 and four of £13.50. The target of 100 members would have prizes of £200, £100, and eight at £25 **four times a year**. These are very good odds – contact 490917 or 490932 to join.

“We are working on other ideas to bring in money, especially from outside the Village, and I am still filling in the odd application to funders to raise money for improvements.”

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish meeting will be held on **Tuesday 29th April** at 7.30 pm in the Williams Hall, Dark Lane.

This meeting gives all village residents the opportunity to find out what activities the Parish Council have been engaged in over the past year and how they have spent their money.

Invitations are being sent to all local groups/organisations in the village so that they can also let you know what they have been doing during the year and any plans they have for the future.

At the end of the meeting a glass of wine will be available free for everyone, which will give you the opportunity to talk to members of the Council or other organisations.

The Armistice – 90 years on

This year sees the 90th anniversary of the Armistice, the peace treaty signed to end the Great War. There will be an exhibition in the Hall and a memorial service in the Church over the weekend of Remembrance Sunday, 9th November. Can you help?

Research/Exhibition

A research project has been looking at the life and times of the men from the village who fought and, in many cases, died during the First World War. The memorial plaque in the church records 23 names, but 34 men have been identified with a direct connection to the village. Many records have been traced in relation to those who fought and survived, some of which allow a glimpse back in time to the lives, the families and indeed the village itself during those dark days. It is particularly hoped that this project will allow the Fallen to be, once again, recognised as the individuals whom they were, rather than simply a statistic or a name on a plaque. It would be wonderful if anyone having mementoes or photos could allow them to be borrowed, copied and immediately returned. Also, any documents or photographs relating to the village in the early 20th century would be gratefully received. If you can help, please contact Sue Hembrow at 16 Huntham Close, (01823) 490598. suehembrow@tiscali.co.uk

Emergency Plan

Like many others, our parish council has set up a planning committee to ensure that we can have a co-ordinated approach should the county and district authorities be overwhelmed by any civil emergency.

Gill Slattery writes: “We now have a selection of written guidance for everyone whose properties may be at risk of flooding. Please ask me for copies (698714). We would also encourage everyone living near the river to register with Floodline so that they will receive the appropriate phone calls to warn of flood risk.”

Green News

Scrap Metal Weekend – 3rd-5th May: Look out your scrap iron and steel (other metals will need to be separated). Location of skip to be announced - watch out for signs. Proceeds towards village trees and bulb planting. Help may be available with large items. Contact Trevor Williams (490 829) or ssrs@btoopenworld.com

Allotments: More requests are needed (to the Parish Council - Tony McKenzie 19 Church Close TA3 6HA) to show that there is a demand in the village.

Compost: The Willow Set now has a compost bin
Flower Pots: Plastic flower pots can now be recycled (and swapped) at Monkton Elms Garden Centre

Notice Board

Details of future events to Dave Evans
Stoke House, 490698
ssrs@btopenworld.com

BAPTIST EVENTS

Songs of Praise on the Playing Field will be on Sunday 22nd June. This is a joint service with the Parish Church and this year the Rev'd Tricia will be leading the service. The hymns are all old favourites, specially chosen. So join us for a good sing and bring a picnic to share afterwards.

The Strawberry Tea will be held on Saturday 28th June in the Manse Garden, weather permitting.

John and Brenda Courtie hope to join us and John will be taking the service the next day. This will be a good chance to catch up with old friends. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Deadline – 26th May for June Edition

TENNIS COACHING FOR ALL AGES, ALL ABILITIES with Licensed LTA Coach

JUNIORS on SUNDAYS 9.00-10.00am –starting 6th April 2008
ADULTS – 3-week REFRESHER COURSE on SUNDAYS 6th, 13th, 20th April 10.00- 11.00am

Further ADULT Sessions will be held on MONDAYS
Beginners 6.30 – 7.30pm Pros 7.30 – 8.30pm

For a 3 week session in MAY – Mondays May 5th, 12th & 19th
And for a 3 week session in JUNE– Mondays June 2nd, 9th & 16th. Cost for adults & juniors is £3.00 per session per person – Pay on the day. Book with ROBIN (490671) if you'd like to take part - or turn up at the first session!

WI Alternative Fashion Show, Saturday 5th April 2.30 pm, Williams Hall. Tickets, £3.50, from Mary Kelsey 490550

WENTWORTH WOODEN JIGSAWS

(www.jigsaws.co.uk)

SATURDAY 12th APRIL 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Beechcroft, Willey Road

Have a cup of coffee/tea and help to make a large jigsaw! Some ex-display stock at reduced prices. Proceeds to Macmillan Cancer Support

Football & Netball Tournament

Same place, same format, same time (4.00 pm), but Earlier - 22nd May
Sponsorship and home made cakes always welcome. Please contact the school

Safari Supper (14th June)

This popular event comes round every two years. The tickets (£15) will go on sale from the middle of April. Any queries to Sarah (490114), the Stobies (490609) or Morrises (490917)

KIM HICKS the Actress

New one-woman show based on the life of Amelia Blandford Edwards followed by Buffet Supper
Saturday 19 April in the Williams Hall
Tickets £15 from Shop, Post Office, 490152 & 490917

St Gregory Players Present 2 One-Act Plays

LITTLE EYOLF (Ibsen) with
St Gregory Youth Theatre's prize winning production
SYLVIA PLATH: A PORTRAIT
Saturday 5th April, 7.30 pm Williams Hall
Tickets £5 from Stoke Stores or Terry Finn 490155
Doors open 7 pm. Bar available

Beat Surgeries (Williams Hall)

16 April
2pm to 3pm &
28 May
8pm to 9pm

Williams Hall AGM Tuesday 22nd April

at 7.30 pm. All are welcome to find out what's going on and comment about the future of the hall

Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday 29th April at 7.30pm

Mobile Library Times

Monday 14th April
11.10-11.30 Meare Grn
11.35-11.50 Royal Oak
11.55-12.05 Woodhill
12.10-12.20 Polkes Fld
12.30-12.50 Curload
No visit in May

Rehearsals will begin shortly for the St Gregory Players' May production, **Improbable Fiction**, a recently released comedy by Alan Ayckbourn. This will be one of the first amateur productions of this very funny play. Performance dates are Thursday 15th to Saturday 17th May.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Sunday 20 July: Village BBQ (late afternoon/early evening family event)
Saturday 22 November: Theme Supper (after all the foreign food we thought this year we would have a "Somerset Supper" plus suitable musical entertainment)