

Village Fete and Fun Day

Taking place on the Playing Fields this year on Saturday 16 September.

As ever, we are seeking people to help set up and take down on the day, run their own stalls to raise funds for village organisations and, above all, to become active members of the organising committee. This really is a desperate plea.

A little history for those who don't remember the details. SSG used to have an annual Church Fete held originally in the Vicarage garden and then in other private gardens and entirely organised by the Parish Church with a band of energetic helpers. As the active church members have become older, fewer and less active it was agreed that a Village Fete would be a more inclusive type of event and this was first held on the Queen's Golden Jubilee weekend in 2012. People throughout the village had always been welcome at the original fetes but this far more public event held now on the Playing Fields has seen an increase in visitor numbers and a much broader group of fundraisers for all sorts of interests other than the Parish Church.

I think the transfer has generally been greeted as a great success and it is the only annual event which can really be said to bring together the whole village community. However, members of the current committee have run out of steam and ideas and are more than ready to step down. The whole affair needs fresh blood; people with energy and enthusiasm to inject fresh life into it. Dare I say – younger people? Please talk to one another about assembling a group to take this on. There will still be help and support from many of those currently involved but we need new leadership and YOU can make it bigger and better for the future.

Give Jane White or Will Tilley a call (490508 or 698229) because, if there is nobody willing to step into the breach, this year will be the last Village Fete and that would be a great loss.

Annual Parish Meeting A very lively APM was held on 25 April, when we were addressed by Andy Marsh, the Chief Constable of Avon & Somerset Constabulary. We received an insight into the activities of the Police, including what a surprisingly low percentage of their activity is crime-related and how few murders there are in the counties. By contrast they have to deal with about 8,000 missing persons reports per year. It was acknowledged that the Police are spread very thin in this area, but we are lucky that our need is not greater than it is.

Annual Parish Council Meeting This is the meeting which comes up every May where the chair, vice-chair and various PC representatives on other bodies have to be elected. Nick Sloan was re-elected as chair, and Heather Venn having stood down as vice due to other pressures, Graham Gleed was elected vice. I'd like to thank Heather for her unique and valuable contribution over many years; long may it continue.

Parish Council Notes (continued from page 1)

We recognise a need to better understand the needs of the village in terms of housing, and to predict the effects of limited development—and of no development—on the long-term viability and health of the community. With this in mind, the PC has decided to set up a working group to gather information and report back with a recommendation on what we need to do to ensure that the village thrives well into the future. We will keep you informed, and seek views from all quarters in due course. Tractor Driving One area where we do depend on the Police is to keep our roads safe. Following many complaints over the last year and much talk to farmers, contractors and others, I think I detect a slight improvement in the consideration of drivers, but so long as such large and potentially dangerous vehicles have to share narrow lanes with the rest of us, the problem will never go away. PC Dan Cox from Bridgwater, who is the national Police lead on agricultural vehicles, is well aware of the problem. He has invested a lot of time in talking to farmers and contractors, but is now concentrating on monitoring the roads with a view to prosecutions. While appreciating the majority of farmers who drive well, we would encourage anyone who witnesses illegal or inconsiderate driving to report it ~~directly to the Police~~.

The Garden at Hillcrest, Curload

will be open in aid of the **RED CROSS** on 11th June 2 - 5 pm, and on the weekend of 24/25th June for the **Somerset Wildlife Trust** also 2 - 5pm.

There will be teas and cakes at all events. Admission is £4 (children free) to all the openings, with all the proceeds going to the charities involved.

From the Stores Well, we are still here and still on the market searching for a buyer to take over the baton of The Village Stores! The public meeting held a few weeks ago reinforced everyone's view of both the need for a village store and its important role in the community. We are desperately hoping we can find the right people but it is taking a long time ... so if you are interested or know someone who would be interested in purchasing a vibrant and well supported business (and house!) let us know! Parking is becoming a thorny issue in the Square. We would urge anyone using the limited space outside the shop to consider both other road users and our customers – some of whom have mobility issues. We often have cars parked outside all day and this causes difficulties in access for some people (let alone deliveries). If you are organising an event at the Church, for example, please urge them to use the Church car park.

One last whinge ... if you stop outside the shop could we ask that you turn off your engine? We are finding the shop is being flooded with noxious exhaust fumes which is unwelcome. In addition, it causes noise pollution outside people's private residence and is in fact an offence under the Road Traffic Act. Thanks for your cooperation.

We would like to thank you for your continued support – it is that support over many years that enables this community to retain its own independent village shop and the benefits it brings. Please continue to support us as this is what will make The Village Stores an attractive prospect for future owners.

Farming News –

A seasonal look at what has been happening on the farms in Stoke St Gregory

As ever the weather has been an influential factor in farming life over the past few months – a dry, warm April meant that the spring flush of grass growth was useful for a ‘good bite’ for the cows. Turn out is always an uplifting time with the herd coming out from their winter quarters onto the green field – it is lovely to see the cows skipping around and kicking their heels up, then hear the munch, munch of them grazing the new juicy growth. It is amusing to see even the old stagers – the oldest, 14 years- jumping around and enjoying the fresh grass.

The dry weather also meant that the young stock could be moved from their sheds to graze on fields at Curry moor – some were taken in a trailer behind the tractor, whilst a group of about 20 were moved along the droves in time- honoured fashion. The SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) moor ground provides very good herbage with deep rooted native plants, as well as grasses, and the cattle seem to thrive on it. This year the fields have benefited from there only being a few short periods of flooding during the winter which did not damage the plants to any great extent, unlike in previous years – very good news that the dredging of the rivers has helped, along with the lower rainfall amounts.

With the welcome rain of mid- May the grazed fields are growing back well and the grass silage- season is also upon us, so we hope for sunny days which will improve the amount of sugars in the leaves, and therefore energy content of the forage. After silage-making it will be the turn of the muck spreader to get busy – the farmyard manure produced on the farm is seen as ‘brown gold’, replenishing the nutrients in the soil and leading to further grass growth – and so the cycle continues. *This is the news from Dykes Farm, an organic dairy farm, courtesy of the editor!– if there are any other farmers in the village who would like to contribute to the newsletter please contact Jean House on the email address on page 1.*

Playing Field Management Committee

The date for the 2018 Stoke Stampede is Sunday 7th January. Other news from the PFMC:

Phase 2 of the children's play area will be completed during early July. There will be a new climbing structure for the younger children and a three bay swing system.

We have applied for a grant from Sport England to cover the majority of the cost of building the proposed new pavilion. Unfortunately a condition of the application is that we are unable to begin any preparatory works whilst we are waiting to find out if we have been successful. We had hoped to get the concrete base laid before the planning permission runs

SOCIAL TABLE TENNIS

Need some exercise? An opportunity to get you away from the election TV or Wimbledon? The table tennis group gets together on Wednesday evenings, from 7-9pm at the Village Hall. All standards welcome - we have players from teenage to 70+, from beginners to slightly more experienced. £3 per week for adults (£1 for youngsters), including refreshments and use of equipment. We're a sociable group, so why not give us a try? First week free! Just come along, or for more info call Paul on 490565 or Terri on 490671.

From Willows and Wetlands: We are working towards expanding the basket shop, this should be fully open early in the summer. Anyone who has been in the shop since Christmas will have noticed the alterations already. We are expecting new tenants to move into Unit 2 very shortly. This new business is going to bring something new and exciting to the centre. We are planning to open another craft workshop space available to rent later in the summer. **A Farmer's Market with Spring Produce will be held on Saturday 17th June 10 am – 2pm.**

Stoke Walking Group

The evening walks started in April and we've already had two enjoyable walks: to Curload and around Swell Wood.

A member of the group writes: ‘This month we enjoyed a wonderful walk organised by Liz Hembrow. The group set off led by Alfie- a canine visitor to the village, from Swell Wood. It was a golden evening and the circular walk took in Five Head Meadow, where the RSPB board informed us that the orchids in amongst the cowslips were Green Spiked Orchids- a deep purple colour. (Think I remembered correctly.) Splendid views and frisky bullocks behind electric fences marked our way. We ended the walk with a viewing of the herons nesting from the new hide in Swell Wood. The meal at The Canal hostelry ended a very satisfying experience.’ Our next walk on Tuesday 6th June will take us up to Curry Rivel followed by a meal at a pub.

Walks are on the first Tuesday of the month: 4th July, 1st August, 5th September, starting at 6pm.



Meet outside the Village Shop in Stoke at 6pm to share lifts. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute

After a lively talk about the pitfalls of becoming a WI speaker by Dr Francis Burroughes in May, we look forward to watching a film in our June meeting. It will be about life in Taunton in the 1920's. Please come along and join us if you are interested in your county town's history. In our July meeting we have the return of Emma Duke, who last time gave us such a fascinating account of driftwood, its origins and artistic uses. This time she will be speaking about "The Lost Somerset Coast."

June Meeting: Tuesday, 13th June at 7pm

July Meeting: Tuesday, 11th July at 7pm

North Curry Amateur Gardeners

We don't have any meetings over the summer months but we do have some outings. We are going to the Harold Hillier Garden on 20th June and Hampton Court Castle and Gardens (not the London one!) on 19th July. There's also an evening outing to Lift the Latch in Chard on Tuesday 8th August. There may still be some places available on these trips and if you're interested please contact John Miles Taylor on 01823 490595.

Our next evening meeting will be in the North Curry Playing Field Pavilion on **Thursday 7th September** when Adrian Hutchison will be speaking on “Weeds and their control”. Meetings start at 8.00pm and new members and guests are always welcome.

All items for the
Autumn edition by
Friday 18th August
2017

Stoke News

Summer 2017

Contact Jean House
jeanhouse@btconnect.com
For more news look at
www.stokestgregory.org

Withies Delicatessen are pleased to be able to sponsor the Summer edition of the Stoke News.

We have many years' experience of running an award winning business focusing on regional producers and delicious, wholesome food and are excited to tell you about our exciting new venture opening in July at the Willows & Wetlands Centre.

Withies Delicatessen are proud to showcase the best of the South West with products from lemonade to lavender, Natural Spring Water from the Quantocks to Culmstock Chillies. Of course we wouldn't be a deli without a magnificent range of cave aged Cheddars, runny brie, goats and sheep cheese alongside the best of the region's cured meats and mouth-watering European antipasti. We're also pleased to offer Smith & Evans wines, Harry's Cider and Hudnotts spirit blends alongside local craft beers and specially imported French and Italian wines. We'll be packing all this plus our in-house Gluten Free baked goods, fresh roasted coffee and hand blended tea into gift bags, picnic hampers and B&B welcome boxes so visitors can dive into a tasty bit of the South West here and at home.

We're blessed with a wealth of fine foods in this region and hope to compliment the ethos of the Willow & Wetlands Centre by keeping it local and hand crafted and also look forward to working with the Lemon Tree Café on some fun events in the near future. If you can't wait to get your hands on our produce Like us and Follow Us on social media and keep your eye on our website where we'll be putting produce up for sale as and when we get it.



We're having so much fun visiting local producers and pulling recipes together, we hope you'll also enjoy 'cooking with the best'.

Stoke St Gregory Allotments

Since the last newsletter there has been rapid progress at the allotments. The area has been fenced and of the twenty plots initially marked out only a few remain. So if you are interested in one of the remaining plots they will be allocated on a first come first served basis, then a waiting list will be established. Cultivation has begun in earnest only hampered by the uncommonly dry weather and certainly not for the lack of enthusiasm. What has been both surprising and rewarding has been the number of young families who have thrown themselves into horticulture, alongside longer term enthusiasts.

Work continues to develop the infrastructure including a water trough and a hard standing for cars at the Slough Lane entrance. Funding applications have been made including to Tesco under their 'bags of help' scheme. If you shop in Tesco please make sure you vote for us!

Wanted – Stoke News Sponsors

Are you a local business? Would you like to sponsor a future edition of Stoke News and have your business featured? For further details, please get in touch with Becky Goodchild, The Parish Clerk, on 690235 or at ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk

Parish Council Notes

There are at least three good news stories this time around, all of them the fruits of long drawn out campaigns: first, the new allotments are now in full swing (see Graham Gleed's report elsewhere in the News), secondly the wireless broadband network is serving an increasing number of those residents unable to receive fast fibre broadband, and thirdly, by the time you read this, the new village website should be launched at the old address:

www.stokestgregory.org.

Broadband The deadline by which CDS vouchers have to be redeemed has been extended to the end of June, though the deadline for *obtaining* vouchers was 30th November 2016. This only affects those whose current speed is 2mbps or less. With or without a voucher, anyone can approach Rural Broadband Southwest and ask for a survey to establish whether they can currently receive a signal. The speed on offer is about 12mbps, but is likely to rise. We are currently seeking agreement from the EA to put a relay on Curry Moor Pumping Station to extend coverage along the Tone, and we aim to reach anywhere in the village where there is a demand.

Website After far too long a wait, the new website should now be up and running. It was built as an apprentice project by Sam Palmer of Teapot Creative in Hambridge, and we are extremely grateful to Teapot for generously making their expertise available. Since they only started the job in the middle of January, they have actually been pretty speedy. On launch, the site should be functionally complete, but lacking a good deal of content. Some of this has still to be transferred over from the old site, while some of the existing content will be enriched with more photos and text.

The aim is a site that is clearly designed and easy to navigate, on PCs, tablets and phones. Both Nick Sloan and Graham Gleed have full access, so let us know if there is anything you would like added or corrected. We would also like to encourage people to edit their own pages, so if you run a group or a business that is or should be represented on the village website, and would like to be able to keep your own page up to date, let Nick know and you will be given all the information you need. It is our intention to make the website the nerve-centre of the village. There is a News page which we aim to keep constantly updated, and a calendar listing events throughout the village over coming months. Comments welcome.

Housing We are aware of a shortage of smaller houses in the village, available for purchase as starter or retirement homes. **(Continued on page 2)**