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 complimenting 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)
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.
**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.

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**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.

**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.

**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

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**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.

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**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 out, but this is the concrete base laid before the planning permission runs out, but this is**
  - **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.**
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Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

Great British Tennis Weekend – Play Tennis for FREE – June 10th/11th. We shall be offering:

Saturday - Free Play for All 10-30am – 3.30pm
Club members will be around with advice (if wished), rackets will be available & balls provided.

Sunday - Free Junior Play/Coaching - “Bring a buddy”
9.00am – 9.30am  Tennis Tots (2 to 4 years)
9.30am – 10.30am  Red (5 to 8 years)
10.30am – 11.30am  Orange (8 to 11 years)
11.30am – 12.30pm  Yellow (11+ years).

Sunday - Cardio Tennis session 1.30pm – 2.15pm
This is a fun fitness class on the tennis court. With music playing, you can have a great cardio workout while hitting lots of tennis balls. All abilities including non-tennis players welcome. Come & give it a go!

Sunday – Parent & Child Fun Tournament 2.15pm – 4.15pm
Come & enjoy some fun competitive play with your children. Charlie, our coach, will be on hand, rackets are available & balls provided.

There will also be a Barbecue during this session.

Refreshments will be available throughout the weekend & some giveaways! Check the website www.lta.org.uk/gbtw for details or to book sessions in advance. Nos. for some sessions will be limited – but you can still turn up & see on the day if you haven’t booked.

Our annual Bunny Austin Tournament will be held on Sunday June 18th at 2pm. Non-members welcome. This is a mixed doubles event – partners drawn on arrival. Please let Kathy know if you’d like to join in. For further information, contact Kathy Davidson 490575 kathryn.davidson7@btinternet.com

WILLIAMS HALL SOCIAL EVENTS

Many thanks to all of you have supported our social events so far this year and it was good to see some new faces joining us. Our next event is

BARBECUE BAND AND BEER
Saturday 22nd July commencing @ 4pm
The cost will be £6 per person £4 for Children over 12 and FREE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12.

NB All children must be accompanied by an adult. Music will be by John and the General the duo that everyone enjoyed at last year’s 10th anniversary celebration. There will also be a cash bar. Tickets will be on sale at the Village Shop from early in June and as we need to know the numbers to cater for in advance free tickets must be obtained at the same time. We look forward to you joining us and having a good time in the summer sunshine.

Future Plans: We are hoping to hold another Children’s Craft morning in the school summer holidays and a Bingo session in the autumn, so look out for further information in future issues.

An End of Year Performance will be at the Village Hall on Friday 7th July at 6:30 pm. All welcome.

At Stoke St Gregory C of E Primary School our End of Year Performance will be at the Village Hall on Friday 7th July at 6:30 pm. All welcome.

A friendly welcome awaits you at the
Baptist Church
Family Summer Tea
Sunday 2nd July from 3pm

A talk by Chris Goodall
Why a Rapid Transition to Renewable Energy is Essential
6.30 pm to 8.30 pm
Monday 26 June 2017
Quaker Meeting House, Bath
Place, Taunton TA1 4EP
Doors open at 6 pm with light refreshments available.

£3 entry on door to help cover costs. Chris Goodall will cover the subject of his latest book The Switch. He is a good speaker and renowned expert on new energy technologies (www.carboncommentary.com). Presented by Transition Athelney, Taunton Transition Town, Transition Town Wellington and Wivey Action on Climate.

THE PARISH CHURCH of ST. GREGORY
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL COUNCIL MEETING

The APCM took place in the Church Room on 5 April. Jane White and Will Tilley were re-elected as Churchwardens. We were delighted to be invited to provide Teas and Plant Sales at the NGS Open Garden held at Hillcrest on May 6 and 7.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

CONCERT: There will be a Concert in the Parish Church at 7.30 on Friday 14 July. There will be refreshments and a retiring collection in aid of St. Margaret’s Hospice and St. Gregory’s Church.
PCC: The PCC will meet on 19 July at 7.30 in the Church Room.

Check out more events in the village Stores, on the website www.stokesstgregory.org and at www.facebook.com/StokeStGregory