

All items for the  
Spring edition by  
Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February  
2018

# Stoke News

Winter 2017

Contact Jean House  
[jeanhouse@btconnect.com](mailto:jeanhouse@btconnect.com)  
For more news look at  
[www.stokestgregory.org](http://www.stokestgregory.org)

## Stoke Stampede

The Stoke Stampede will be run on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018 (07/01/2018) and as usual The Square will be closed from 10.30am until 12.30pm for the protection of our anticipated 400 runners.

This event could not take place without the help of our volunteers. We need marshals around the route and people to man the drinks stations. If you would like to be involved please contact Tom Duxbury in the first instance by email to [duxburytom@gmail.com](mailto:duxburytom@gmail.com) or by phone on 07827 813363 with your contact details and Tom will get back to you as to how you can help.

We are anticipating another wonderful event but we do need your help. Paul Morse (Race Director)

### CAN YOU COOK? DO YOU ENJOY COOKING?

Are you able and willing to give up one day a month to help others?

If so, why not have a chat with us about joining **Stoke St Gregory Meals** as a volunteer cook.

You only have to cook one day a month, we pay for ingredients and you don't have to deliver the meals.

We also have vacancies for volunteer drivers.

**Stoke St Gregory Meals** - Carole Joll 490077,  
Vicki Fielding 490565 - Judy Blair 490222

### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION? Why not HELP YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE?

1st Stoke St Gregory Scout Group need your help. Can you spare some time to help with fund-raising? Or could you help the leaders at Beavers/Cubs/Scout meetings at the Village Hall on Monday or Tuesday evenings? Or maybe you were a Scout in your younger days and would like to support a youngster financially by making a donation to subscriptions? If you'd like to help in any way, please contact our Group Scout Leader, Mike Long on 07958463283, Kath Long (Beaver Leader) on 07811522932 or Simon Gittins (Scout Leader) on 07919 095505. Ever wondered what we get up to? Well this term our Beavers and Cubs spent a memorable evening caving in Williams Hall. A few hundred boxes put together as a maze of tunnels with look-out towers, dead-ends and ball pits to scramble through by the light of glow sticks. Over 50 young people were involved - all had a fantastic night and not one got wet, muddy or lost! Thanks to the Willows and Wetlands Centre for providing many, many boxes!! Not to be outdone our Scouts this term have spent an evening doing Archery at Huish Woods Scout Campsite, visited the Somerset Cider Brandy Company to find out how cider and cider brandy is made and spent a great evening at the Willows and Wetland Centre making, and then racing go-carts!

### Winter walks

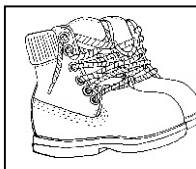
Join us at the Willows and Wetlands at 1.30pm and walk for about 1 – 1.5 hours, finishing with tea and cake at the Lemon Tree.

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February

Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.



## Poppy Appeal 2017

This year's house to house poppy collections and the donations made during the Remembrance Service at the Baptist Chapel, along with the collections from the school, the charity lunch, local pubs, the Village Stores, the Lemon Tree Café, and the Parish Council, have come to a grand total of £2330.67. This is a very impressive sum which is even larger than the record amount raised last year. I would like to thank everybody in Stoke St Gregory, Burrowbridge, and Lyng who contributed so generously to this most worthwhile cause. I would also like to thank everybody who braved the elements to undertake the house to house collections; who helped with the charity lunch; and who allowed us to use their counters and bars to host collection boxes. Without you, it would not be possible to achieve such a terrific result.

Next year will be the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ending of the First World War. We therefore need to put our collective thinking caps on to see how we can commemorate this special occasion. If anybody has any suggestions, please do get in touch with me (491601).

Richard Dobson (Poppy Area Organiser)

### Luncheon Club in the Baptist Schoolroom



It's been good to welcome new people to Luncheon Club this year. We hope they've enjoyed the meals as much as we've enjoyed cooking them.

Luncheon Club meets every other Wednesday at 12.00 for a cup of tea followed by a hot, two-course meal. The dates in the New Year are: Jan 10, Jan 24, Feb 7 and Feb 21 and the cost is £3.50.

We have spaces for a few more guests, if you have a friend who you think might enjoy Luncheon Club, please do invite them. All are welcome. Just let us know in advance. Transport can be arranged. Please ring Alison 490380 or Liz 490828.

### Allotment Year End

The growing year officially finished on Oct 30th, so irrespective of the fact that grass is still growing, the first year of the allotments has ended. Starting from literally a green field site in April, prodigious effort from all concerned produced crops to be proud of. And not least a strong sense of community among those sacrificing wet Sunday mornings in pursuit of the runner beans, not to mention many varieties of squash. To mark this year end the first AGM of the Allotment association will be held on Thursday, December 7th at 7:30 pm in the conference room at the Village Hall. All are welcome, particularly if you have an interest in a plot as several will become available.

If the thought of growing your own produce appeals to you, please contact Graham Gleed (490407), Robin Ferrett or Faye Shorley.

Meanwhile plans are moving forward to plant the community orchard within the coming weeks.

**First Aid Classes** The first aid classes announced earlier will take place in the Village Hall on the evening of Tuesday 16th January, from 6 till 9:30pm. There are a few places left. If any organisations or individuals would like to apply, please email Becky Goodchild: [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk).

## Parish Council - A Message from the PC

Since rumours have been swirling around recently about various radical moves by the PC, including plans to sell off the Playing Field, I would like to devote the whole of this report to setting the record straight.

It is the belief of a majority on the Parish Council (and many outside) that the village is at a critical fork in the road. The Rose & Crown, the Royal Oak and the Village Stores have been on the market for several years without finding buyers. This is not a state of affairs that can continue indefinitely, and we face the real prospect of losing all three. We also have a shortage of smaller houses, which makes it difficult for young people to set up home in the village or for older residents to downsize without leaving. Furthermore, the playing field, while still well supported, does not attract the numbers that it once did: there is no longer a village football team, the Cricket Club struggles to recruit members, and plans to build a new pavilion are on hold.

On the other side of the balance sheet, a huge amount of dedication over the years has been put into the pubs and shop, which are excellent businesses and deserve more custom. The Stoke Stampede goes from strength to strength, and the success of the Willow Set, the School, the Village Hall and the Allotments among many other things demonstrates that there is no shortage of energy and community spirit available.

It is our belief that tough decisions need to be taken in order to solve particular problems with village services and housing, that these issues are all interconnected, and that doing nothing would lead to a much diminished village in the future. To those who are fearful of change I would suggest that the village is changing in any case: it is better to acknowledge and react to the change than merely to let it happen.

In response to these challenges, the PC has set up a Forward Strategy Group including PC members and others, as a sort of think-tank to discuss and evaluate the options. It is important to understand that this group has no executive powers: its sole purpose is to gather information and inform the PC.

One of the options being investigated in connection with the threat to pubs and shop, is the viability of a plan to buy one of the businesses and run it as a community enterprise. This would be a massive undertaking which would require a lot of support from both volunteers and customers, but it is the sort of thing that has succeeded elsewhere, and which we believe the village is capable of pulling off. I should stress that this is very much a contingency plan: our preferred option would still be for as many of the businesses as possible to remain commercially successful, and we will assist where we can in ensuring this.

A second strand in our approach is to encourage a limited amount of development, particularly of smaller houses. We believe that this would enable those with connections to the village at both ends of the age range to stay here, as well as attracting some of the new blood which any village needs to keep it from fossilising. Not only would a slight increase (and a better balance) in the population provide more children for the school and more customers for the businesses, the Community Interest Levy payments associated with development would help to fund projects such as the pavilion. There are major planning hurdles to be jumped before any housing development could take place, but in the current climate we believe that these will prove surmountable.

Where any new houses are to go is obviously a massive and potentially contentious question. The only readily available land is privately owned, so a commercial development seems the most feasible option at present, though the PC would only support an application which met our criteria. Furthermore, no development would be likely to succeed unless it received wider community approval.

The Playing Field is held in trust by the PC, and one of many ideas on the table would be to pool it with other land so that any part of it used to build houses could be replaced by an equivalent area of land elsewhere. In other words, if it should be felt that there were advantages in doing so, the Playing Field could move. There are three things to underline about this: 1) it is only one suggestion among many, nowhere near being a decision, 2) it is not a decision that the PC could take without the agreement of the Playing Field Trustees, 3) it is not a decision that the PC or the PFT could take without calling a public meeting and having it approved by majority vote.

Everyone should clearly understand that while the PC is quite rightly gathering all the information it can and trying to assess all the options, however radical, no decisions have been made, and nor can they be without wider consultation. If you hear that the PC has done this or is going to do that, treat the information with extreme scepticism and refer to the minutes of the latest meeting, which will be available on the website.

In addition, we always welcome comments and suggestions, whether written or in person. This village belongs to all of us, and its future should be very much a mutual concern.

## MAINTENANCE OF HEADSTONES IN THE PARISH CHURCHYARD

Following a recent check on the condition of memorials and headstones in the churchyard a number were found to be very unsafe and shifted to a dangerous degree with the minimum of pressure. The Churchwardens are legally required to make this inspection at intervals and to secure or else lay flat on the ground any that are found to be potentially dangerous. As a consequence, we have been obliged to lay down eight headstones, all of which were in a seriously unstable condition. None of the stones have been damaged in any way by this.

We are contacting families in cases where we can identify close relatives. However, if you have family graves in the churchyard we would ask that you check as soon as possible to see if yours are any of those in question and if they are to contact a monumental mason to have them safely reinstated.

Any queries may be referred to either of the Churchwardens – Jane White (490508) or William Tilley (698229)

## TRANSITION ATHELNEY: 10 YEARS OF PRACTICAL and AWARENESS WORK

On **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January in North Curry Village Hall at 7.30pm**, TA will be holding its AGM. The brief formalities will be followed by ‘**Chasing Tomorrow**’, a short, quirky film about two Frenchmen exploring England to meet pioneers of a sustainable future. It is a tribute and follow-up to ‘Demain’ which we showed in October to a large and appreciative audience. Please join us for this free event.

We will be celebrating a decade of activity in the area. Our work has spanned numerous films and talks covering a wide range of subjects on how we can build a stable and enjoyable future without fossil fuels. Equally varied have been our projects, lasting and on-going, to help implement these values.

Collaboration is a vital part of Transition. On **Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30** TA members Adrian Tait and Phil Stone with another speaker from Exeter University will be contributing to an event titled ‘**Taunton, Floods and the Future**’. This is in the Creative Innovation Centre, Paul Street, Taunton and is organised by the East Deane LibDems. Free entry; cash bar.

Contact: Brian on 490623 or email [ta@bkjeanes.co.uk](mailto:ta@bkjeanes.co.uk)

## Did You Know . . . that Stoke's clock was installed 120 years ago?

The county Gazette reported on the occasion, which was combined with the annual fête and ‘Club Day’ in celebration of Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee: *“The appearance of the village was of quite a holiday character with its tasteful decorations, while the day was observed as a general holiday, and seldom indeed have the inhabitants entered into an event with such a zest as on the present occasion. The clock is estimated to cost about £145, and will naturally be of great benefit to the villagers. The chimes are special in character, having been written by Dr Martin, organist of St Paul’s Cathedral, at the invitation of the Clock Committee.”*

In their catalogue, the clock makers (Potts of Leeds) advertised the Stoke chimes as one of three options, the others being the traditional ‘ding dong’ and what became known as the Westminster chimes. As far as we know, the only other church in Britain that has the Stoke chime is St Patrick’s in Rempton, a small village not far from Shep in Cumbria.

## PC News: New Parish Councillor

The vacancy left on the council by Bill Carpenter has now been filled by Sara Sollis. We are very pleased to welcome Sara, and look forward to putting her considerable skills and energy to good use.

## Road Closure

Highways have informed us that there is to be another major drainage scheme in North Curry, which will result in the daytime closure of Stoke Road for three weeks from 8th January, blocking access from Stoke to N Curry. The road will be open overnight, from 3pm until 9am, to allow school buses and commuters through, also at weekends.

The closure will be from White Street on into the centre of N Curry, but cars should still be able to access White St and use Helland as an unofficial diversion. Please see the village website for any updates on this.

## Farming News –

A seasonal look at what has been happening on farms in Stoke St Gregory. It's that time of year again, the days are getting shorter, the shoot season has begun and most farmers are settling into their winter routine after a busy summer. Maize was cut in September/October in what was relatively good conditions for a very short window, so it was all a little hectic for a few weeks with tractors and trailers everywhere, but as the traditional saying goes... 'make hay while the sun shines', that is also very true for many crops we farm. With wheat and barley in, a bumper crop of maize in and the last fields cut for silage, we move onto nourishing the fields with muck spreading, ready for replanting or simply putting nutrient back into the soil for the grass before winter arrives. The mild weather well into November has meant the sheep have been busy trying to graze down the grass (known as grass keep or tack grazing). Farmers often use sheep to manage their grass well into the winter months; unable to utilise any of the grass to be cut for silage, as it's too damp on the ground to get in the fields, many farmers will use this form of grass management. The predicted forecasts on weather looks set to be a chilly one this winter so farmers will all be checking and lagging pipes, storing up on grit and salt and using the slightly quieter months to service farm machinery, and as ever will be checking feed and stock prices for the forthcoming year. Merry Christmas from us all.

*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.*

### North Curry Coffee Shop

This is a Community Benefit Organisation which is self-funding and run by volunteers. Since opening in May 2006 over £110,000 has been raised for local, national and international charities nominated by each volunteer. We currently need more volunteers to join our friendly team preparing food, serving customers, clearing tables, washing up and selling the arts and crafts. The amount of hours a volunteer works is up to the individual and no regular commitment is needed. Some residents from Stoke are already working in the coffee shop so if you fancy joining them, then contact Janet Bennett on [01823 490057](tel:01823490057) to find out more. We look forward to hearing from you. Also if you want to pop along and view our Christmas range of Arts and Crafts on sale now, you're more than welcome.

**Statement from The Village Stores:** Many customers have read that the Parish Council has 'nominated' the Village Stores as a community asset which, on the face of it, sounds a positive initiative. Some customers are now asking when we will become a 'community shop'! However, becoming a registered 'community asset' carries with it quite specific legal obligations on the part of the owner. Given the fact that we are currently on the market, and that we have been very clear that our preferred outcome is to sell the shop as a profitable going concern, this nomination is unwelcome. Especially insofar as we were not consulted in advance of the nomination. Thus, we have not had the opportunity to discuss or to reiterate our preferred outcome and we now find ourselves unable to reverse the decision – despite our protestations at the November Parish Council Meeting where members voted unanimously to continue the deeply flawed, and some might say undemocratic, process. The issues are complex and we believe they deserve further consideration regarding the implications for us personally, for those of the business and the community. We prefer always to work in close co-operation with all stakeholders in an open and transparent way but this nomination puts at risk this strategy. As always, we will continue to put the long-term future of The Village Stores at the top of our agenda even if it is sometimes to the detriment of our personal lives. Thank you for making The Village Stores what it is and please continue to support this valuable community asset! Happy Christmas from Karen & Ian.

**Wanted – Stoke News Sponsors** If you would like your business featured in the next edition, please get in touch with Jean House; or Becky Goodchild, The Parish Clerk. on 690235 or at [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

### CALLING CURLOAD

One or two volunteers are needed to deliver The Stoke Newsletters in the Curload area, as Joe Williams has moved away. If you could spare a couple of hours for this please contact Jenny Blackburn on 01823 490733 or email [JennyBlackburn@btinternet.com](mailto:JennyBlackburn@btinternet.com)

### Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute

Our WI year is drawing to a close and preparations are in hand for our Christmas lunch at The Royal Oak. We are being entertained there this year by a group of handbell ringers who will bring us all some festive cheer I'm sure.

We ended our year of guest speakers in November with Michael Brown, who spoke about elvering, under the title 'Moonlighting'. What a wonderful speaker he was!

From being taught elvering as a young man near The Black Smock to running an eel smokery, shop and restaurant, as well as writing books on the subject, he took us through his life with eels.

Michael stressed how important elvers were to the rural poor in the early years, so nutritious and plentiful then. Some members remembered the slithery little eels in buckets being washed before eating. Another had been told that skinning an eel was akin to the unpeeling of a stocking! Michael told of stories of the supposed aphrodisiac qualities of eels. He rounded off his talk to include information about eel migration, depleted stocks and attempts to address the problem, as well as his flooding experiences. Fascinating!

Somerset WI will be 100 years old next year, so many exciting events are planned, beginning with Ann Widdecombe speaking at a lunch at Somerset County Cricket Club.

2018 January meeting: "Life of Crime" with Chris Ewan

February meeting: "Pitney Farm" with Lizzie and Rob Walrond.

### Donating Your Winter Fuel Payment – An Idea Worth Warming To

Somerset Community Foundation has launched this year's Surviving Winter campaign, encouraging people to join the growing number of contributors who donate some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment each year to help local people living in fuel poverty.

Last year, over 400 older people in Somerset were helped to keep warm and better connected through the winter months, thanks to local donors and pensioners who gave to Surviving Winter.

When a person receives their Surviving Winter grant, it doesn't just go towards paying the heating bill. It is also the first step towards connecting them to a local community partner; this can become the foundation for a new relationship that can help to overcome the isolation and loneliness many older people experience.

Help Somerset Community Foundation reach their target of raising £100,000 to help 500 isolated and vulnerable older people this year.

To donate to Surviving Winter, visit [www.somersetcf.org.uk/winter](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/winter) or call 01749 344949. Gift Aid forms are also available to download from the Somerset Community Foundation website.

**The Willow Set:** The Willow Set has gone from strength to strength over the last year. Our Holiday club in the summer was at full capacity on several days, creating a fantastic environment of fun for all ages. We had 2 year old children playing games with 12 & 13 year old children, a wonderful play/learning mix, all linked together through the Moor Fun Club which provides holiday club care for children 2 -14 years of age and very successfully manages to engage all age ranges in a variety of planned activities throughout the day. September 2017 brought us a record high intake for the Pre-school 32 lovely little people joined us ready to play, learn and thrive in our outstanding village facility, all thanks to our fantastic and enthusiastic team. We are all excited to see what the New Year brings. Our holiday club is open during the Christmas break 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Please contact us for further information: (01823) 490311 or email: [admin@willowsetpreschool.org.uk](mailto:admin@willowsetpreschool.org.uk).

Check out more events in the village Stores, on the website [www.stokestgregory.org](http://www.stokestgregory.org) and at [www.facebook.com/StokeStGregory](http://www.facebook.com/StokeStGregory)

# NOTICEBOARD

Events for March, April and May 2018 by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February

## THE PARISH CHURCH of ST. GREGORY CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Service of Carols and Lessons Sunday 17 December - 6.30pm.  
Carols in Square with Father Christmas!! Wed. 20 December - 6pm.  
Crib Service Christmas Eve - 3.30pm  
Midnight Mass Christmas Eve - 11.30pm.

A note for your diaries: SHROVE TUESDAY SUPPER will take place in the Church Room on Friday 9th February 2018. The speaker will be Captain Alex Morrice. Further details in February Magazine.

**The Churchwardens, PCC and Members of the Parish Church wish everybody a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

## Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

*Winter Club Sessions* continue on Mondays at 10am, Wednesdays at 2pm and Sundays at 2pm (or earlier as light dictates).

*Winter League* – We have entered the Winter League for the first time this year & are giving many of our newer members the chance to play in these matches. Home matches will be played on 6 Saturdays at 1.30pm – dates on noticeboard by the courts.

*Junior coaching* – We are still looking for a new coach to replace Charlie, so that we can reinstate regular coaching sessions.

*Raffle at Stoke Stampede Sunday January 7th* – As is customary, the Tennis Club will be running the raffle during this event, with profits going to the Playing Fields. Any offers of raffle prizes will be gratefully received - please contact Kathy to arrange collection.

*Frostbite Tournament* – Sunday January 14<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 1pm. This is a popular friendly event early in the New Year. Non-members are very welcome to join us.

For further information please contact Kathy Davidson on 490575.  
[kathryn.davidson7@btinternet.com](mailto:kathryn.davidson7@btinternet.com)

## There's a lot going on at your Baptist Church.....

**Quiet Space** - Time for reflection in this busy world  
Monday's - Dec 11th, Jan 8th, Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 9am - 5 pm

**Who let the Dads out?** - Dec 9th, Jan 13th, Feb 10<sup>th</sup>

Dad's and kids enjoy cooked breakfast, newspapers, toys and chat.

**Sunday 17th December** - Junior Church Christmas presentation followed by a buffet bring and share lunch. Everyone is welcome to join us.

**Christingle - Christmas Eve 6pm** Join us for this magical family occasion and enjoy Mulled Wine and nibbles afterwards.

**Christmas Day** -Family Service at 10 am

**Messy Church** - Friday 19th January - 3:30 pm

Crafts, Games, Singing, Worship and we cook you a scrummy meal!

**Children's Film Afternoon** - Saturday 17th February.

A bit of fun at the end of half term + hot dogs.

*A very warm welcome awaits you at all of these events. Help us to build and strengthen our village community by coming along.*

## North Curry and District Amateur Gardeners

Dec 7<sup>th</sup> "Gardens of the Rich and Famous" with David Moon. Mince pies and mulled wine at 7.30 followed by the presentation at 8.00pm.

Feb 1<sup>st</sup> "Gardening on clay" with Neil Lovesey which might be of particular interest to those living at the top of the hill! Starting at 7.45 for 8.00pm

All our meetings are held in the Pavilion of the Greenway Playing Fields, North Curry at 7.45 for 8.00pm and everyone is most welcome.  
Stav for a cup of coffee and a chat afterwards!

## The Royal Oak

**Sunday, December 24th**

Christmas Eve Karaoke Party 7.30pm -  
Come along to wish friends and neighbours a Happy Christmas and don't forget to wear your Christmas jumper!

**Sunday, December 31st**

New Year's Eve Party 8pm to late. Join us at The Royal Oak and dance the night away. We will all be in the Square at midnight for our traditional Auld Lang Syne.

## New Pilates Class!

*If you've never tried Pilates before, now is your chance to find out what it's all about!*  
From January 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 there will be a new weekly Pilates class at Williams Hall on Thursdays at 13:30pm. The classes will aim to improve stiff/painful lower backs, hips, necks, knees and joints overall, as well as provide a balanced mixture of abdominal work, flexibility, strengthening and relaxation. All abilities and ages are welcome - you are never too young or too old to do Pilates! Cost is £7 per session payable on the day or subscribe for a block of 5 weeks at £30 per course payable in advance.

Places are limited, please register [polina@elementalpilates.co.uk](mailto:polina@elementalpilates.co.uk), call 07739638156 or visit [www.elementalpilates.co.uk](http://www.elementalpilates.co.uk).

## Coates English Willow

### Christmas Fayre

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December

10am to 5pm

at The Willows and Wetlands Visitor centre including willow workshops for children and music throughout the day

*Unique handcrafted Christmas gifts  
Delicious locally produced food and drink & The Withies Deli*

*Festive Fairy*

*Puppet Show*

*Over 50 festive stalls*

All proceeds from the event donated to Friends of SSG School