

All items for the
Summer edition by
Friday 25th May
2018

Stoke News

Spring 2018

Contact Jean House
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For more news look at
www.stokestgregory.org

Stoke News Distribution

After more than 8 years of organising the distribution of Stoke News, Jenny and David Blackburn are stepping down from the position. Their hard work and commitment has been much appreciated: Thanks goes to them from everyone who enjoys keeping in touch with what is going on in Stoke St Gregory! Neil and Belinda Morgan have kindly agreed to take on the distribution, and will be starting the collation task and getting the newsletters out to the volunteer 'delivery people' from the summer issue.

Parish Council News

[December 2017-February 2018]

The biggest decision the PC has had to make for a long time is whether or not to proceed with a **community shop and/or a community pub**. By the time you read this, you may have received a survey asking for your views. I won't repeat the background and arguments here, they are listed on the survey itself, and in more detail on the village website.

It is really important that as many people as possible complete the **survey**, not only so that we have a clear picture of what the community feels, but also because the next step (obtaining grants etc) is dependent on being able to demonstrate strong community support. Any enterprise of this sort would be a massive challenge, but the potential rewards would be huge as well, and will affect the long-term future of the village. Additional survey forms may be downloaded from the website or collected from the shop, and there is also an online version. Please make sure that one way or another, you do let us know what you think.

A prominent item on our agenda for December was the application by the **Rose & Crown** for a **change of use**, which the PC opposed. We find ourselves in a very difficult position with regard to safeguarding the pubs. In the absence of sale to somebody who intends to continue the business/es, the most ambitious option is for the PC to buy the Royal Oak to serve as pub and shop (and more). While this might be viable with the Rose & Crown remaining in business, it would be more of a gamble, yet the PC is anxious not to do anything to compromise the future of either pub. When completing the pub questions in the survey, please answer on the assumption that the community pub may be the only option. **STOP PRESS: Page 3 >>>>**

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Tuesday 24 April. By that time the results of the survey will be known, and we are hoping to arrange a speaker from the Plunkett Foundation to talk about community businesses.

Ways to pay for Taunton Deane Borough Council Bills

From the 29th March, the cash machines in Deane House and Wellington Community Centre are to be removed and we are providing, as an alternative, a more modern system which is more convenient for customers, therefore if you still wish to pay cash for a Council Service then you will be able to use one of the many shops and convenience stores who are signed up to the Paypoint network or any post office. All you will need to do is take your bill which will have a bar code on it to one of the outlets and pay cash in the normal way. Alternatively It may be easier for you to pay your bill over the phone, we have a 24/7 payments line 01823 356598 or you can pay at any time online using our website www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

Village Spring Clean

I think you will agree, particularly those who walk around the village that the level of mostly plastic refuse that is distributed in the hedges and along paths takes away from the pleasure of living in the village. As a consequence it is hoped to organise a Village spring clean during the Easter period. Everybody and in particular, groups and societies will be asked to take responsibility for a small section of a road or path in the village. The greater the numbers of volunteers the easier it will be and the greater the impact. Tools and materials will be provided. If you are willing to help, please give your name or the name of your group to Graham Glead (490407 or grahiamgleed@gmail.com)

Community Orchard Planted

With the growing season creeping up on us, the hardy folks of the allotment have been out planting. Firstly a hedge has been planted around the Church Close end of the plot, and by the time of going to press the first fruit trees will have been planted in the community orchard. Thanks go to Faye Shoreley and Trevor Williams for organising this and also to Transition Athelney for sponsoring the plants. We also plan to plant a transition zone of shrubs at the Church close end provided by the Woodland Trust.

With the first turning of this seasons sod approaching, there are two plots available for those who fancy turning their hand(s) to horticulture. If you have an interest, please contact Robin Ferrett (07734752828) or Graham Glead (490407)

Broadband

Fibre coverage is still patchy in the area, but though the RBS wireless network provides tolerable speeds for most of those without access to fibre, there is the prospect of a much brighter future since Connecting Devon & Somerset signed up Gigaclear to deliver Phase 2 in the region. Indications are that Stoke St Gregory is covered by their rollout plans, but if you have not done so, it is well worth registering an interest on their website: www.gigaclear.com, since this could help prioritise us when they are deciding where to work next. You might also consider registering an interest with Truespeed (www.truespeed.com) who are also planning to extend their superfast fibre network. Their packages seem expensive, but if experience of BT has taught us anything, it is that competition in this area is a good thing.

Kids Gymnastics Classes

It is planned to start gymnastics classes in the Village Hall after school on Wednesday afternoons, beginning April 11th. These classes will be run by accredited coaches travelling from Yeovil who only recently retired from competing both nationally and internationally. There will be two consecutive classes, the first for reception years (one hour) followed by a two hour session for older children. Further details will be distributed in the coming weeks but, in the meantime, if you wish to know more contact Rebecca Stuckey at rebecca2000@btinternet.com

Parish Council News (Continued)

The second major discussion in February concerned the **report** written by Phil Stone about the **issue of farming practices** in the village, particularly heavy tractor traffic and the effect that this has on residents here and in North Curry. This has turned into a real bone of contention, and the PC was split down the middle over whether or not to publish. In the event, the farming majority, who found the report "too negative", prevailed.

It is a source of concern to me that there should be a gulf of misunderstanding between farmers and non-farmers in Stoke. This is and always has been primarily an agricultural village, but the nature of farming has changed radically. In particular, farms have become fewer and bigger, and the biggest have acquired land in many surrounding areas, so that traffic movements have increased greatly, as has the size of vehicles. Dairy farmers are forced to operate in an artificial market, where they are paid a derisory amount for milk, and depend on subsidies and economies of scale to make a profit, so they are under constant pressure to increase production.

Farmers have a lot to contend with and nobody wants to hinder them in conducting their business, but there is no getting away from the fact that the impact of a small number of large farms on the roads and on the majority of non-farming residents is significant. In fairness, most farmers are well aware of the issues and are doing their best to minimise journeys and ensure that their contractors drive carefully, but we need more creative thinking on both sides to see what scope there might be for reducing the problems further. The PC is supporting two farms in applying for a grant to install sand separators which, if successful, would minimise the delivery of sand for cattle bedding, as well as cutting a few slurry tanker journeys.

Another perennial issue that keeps being brought to our attention is **dog poo**. Many dog walkers are very good at picking up after their dogs, others stubbornly refuse to do so. This is not just an aesthetic issue: dog faeces carry microorganisms that can cause cows to abort and can lead to brain disease in sheep, quite apart from their potential effect on humans, particularly children. There is an obvious link here with the previous paragraph: we all have to share the land, and we all need to be considerate in how our use of it affects others.

Finally, on a brighter note: a replacement battery for the faulty **solar-powered bollard** between Church Close and the Williams Hall has been promised as soon the manufacturers receive stock. Just in time for the lighter nights!

A Flagpole at the Village Hall Some of you may have already noticed that a flagpole has been installed on the bank at the entrance to the Williams Hall. This initiative, which has been managed by David House, will permit us to celebrate a diverse range of events, such as Somerset Day or Women's Institute Anniversaries. The intention is to cater for all celebrations secular and otherwise with the opportunity for anyone or any group in the village to fly an appropriate flag for a particular occasion such as birthdays, visits or any other suitable event. Should you wish to fly a flag, please contact any member of the Village Hall Committee.

SOCIAL TABLE TENNIS - GET ACTIVE AND MEET FRIENDLY NEW PEOPLE

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. All equipment provided. Pay as you play, £3 per evening for adults (£1 for youngsters), including refreshments. We're a sociable group, so why not give us a try? If you're nervous about us, why not bring a friend too? First week free! Just come along, or for more info call Paul on 490565 or Terri on 490671.

Message from 'The Royal Oak'

The large rubbish collection bin on The Royal Oak carpark is a private bin for which we have to pay to have emptied. Some people have been using this bin to dispose of their own rubbish and recycling drinks glass bottles and cans. This is now presenting us with a problem of disposing of our own rubbish. We are being more vigilant but would like to ask for people to use their own rubbish bins.

With regard to the Planet Aid clothes collection bin, sometime this becomes full and Nicola tries to monitor this and contacts Planet Aid to request collection. If you do visit the bin and it is full, please take back home your bin bags full of old clothes and don't leave them in front of the bin in the car park. We are then left with the problem of having unsightly bin bags that are full of wet clothes when it rains.

Thank you for your consideration. Best regards, Nicola

WW1 100 *Sue Hembrow writes.....* Work has begun on planning our village commemoration.

We are delighted that an exhibition telling the stories of people from SSG who served in this conflict will be staged in the village hall alongside a tasty soup and cheese lunch. There is much work to be done and possibilities to be explored. This is a fantastic opportunity for us all to come together and make this a truly memorable and historic occasion.

Wanted

Artistic people to offer their skills

People to make/ serve soup

People to make/ serve cakes

Everyone to take part by offering to help in some way

Your village needs you

Contact: Richard & Emma Dobson, Ian Upshall, Jane White, Will Tilley or Sue Hembrow.

Did You Know about the Skimmerton Ride?

In May 1879 Bristol Mercury reported: "Skimmerton Riding - W Pearce, E Pearce, J Dare, T Boobier, J Boobier, W Hembrow, B Johnson, S Loveridge, L Hearne, W Chedzoy, J Burt, J Brewer, and W Hearne, all from Stoke St Gregory, were charged with rioting, and assaulting police. A police constable of that village, married for a quarter of a century, was alleged to have taken undue liberties with a young girl, the result of which she was enceinte, and virtuous indignation was aroused. A skimmerton riding was the result, and there was a serenading with tin pots, trays and 'drain pipes'. Seven policemen were despatched, but they were knocked about and severely ill-used by a crowd of 150 to 200 persons who belaboured them with heavy bludgeons. Several of them, as they were endeavouring to get away, were knocked down senseless."

Read the full story on Stoke's new history website -

Farming News –

A seasonal look at what has been happening on farms in Stoke St Gregory. The next few months starts to see a bit of greenery. Spring is on its way, what a wonderful time of year, it picks you up after the winter blues. Farmers are gearing up for one of the most stressful and busiest times of year. Dung is spread on fields; crops and grass are fertilized; Fencing and gates are checked and repaired and you will start to see more and more cattle grazing as the months go on and the ground begins to dry out. Grass Silage will be cut and clamped during May and ploughing/cultivating the ground for maize drilling and other spring crops will begin. This all means there will be several long days for the tractors on the roads and possible night work, as all this it is so weather dependent. In the meantime let's hope this cold spell doesn't hurt the lovely buds beginning to form on shrubs and trees and lets all enjoy the beautiful daffodils, crocuses, snowdrops and hyacinths that are a welcome sight this time of year.

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.

Planning Renovations This Year?

If you're thinking of a new extension, a bit of remodelling, or finally knocking down that old garage, have you checked for asbestos? Any property built or refurbished before 2000 could potentially contain ACMs (Asbestos Containing Materials). Commonly found in corrugated roofing sheets, it was also widely used in artex-type paint coatings, insulation material, floor tiles, other construction material, fixtures and fittings. Left undisturbed, these materials don't present a health risk. However, when damaged the fibres easily become airborne and can be inhaled. Exposure to these microscopic fibres can lead to severe lung disease and cancer. In the UK, around 5000 deaths a year are linked to asbestos exposure, and it can take years for symptoms to develop. Invisible to the naked eye and normally blended with other substances, professional testing is needed to ensure asbestos is dealt with safely. Somerset Scientific Services, part of Somerset County Council, offer free impartial asbestos advice as part of our commitment to public health and safety. We also offer an expert service to identify and project manage the removal of any ACMs. Samples of suspect material can be sent to our lab for analysis and we'll provide impartial advice on your next steps if asbestos is identified. For larger projects surveys can be completed on site by our specialist asbestos team if needed. Call the team or visit our website for expert advice – and to find out what other services we provide. somersetscientificservices.co.uk 01823 355906 SSSmailbox@somerset.gov.uk

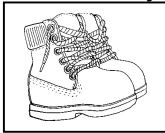
Village Walking Group

The summer walks will start again in April on the first Tuesday of the month.

The dates for spring / summer walking will be:
Tuesday 3rd April, 1st May, 5th June, 3rd July
All starting outside the shop at 6.00pm.

Anyone is welcome to join us. We usually walk for 3 – 4 miles followed by a meal at a pub.

If you'd like to know more please ring Liz Hembrow 490828.



ST GREGORY'S PARISH CHURCH OPEN WEEKEND

**Saturday 7th April from 11.00am to 4.30pm and
Sunday 8th April from 11.30am**

On the weekend after Easter the Parish Church will be open, as it is every day of the year, for anybody to come in and visit. On these two days there will be a little more to be seen and experienced than ancient architecture and the usual air of peace and quietness. We have arranged to have the Parish Records released from the care of Somerset Heritage. You are free to come and see these and look up items of interest in the historic records of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths. There will be people on hand to advise and help where necessary.

The bell tower will be open on both afternoons from 2pm to allow you to see the workings of the village clock that was installed to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

We also hope to organise a display of photographs of weddings and christenings that have taken place in the church. If you would like to share your memorable day at St Gregory's please contact Jane on 490508 or email them to janepwhite@hotmail.com

Also available (inevitably!) will be refreshments throughout the day and a Ploughman's Lunch between 12 noon and 2.00 in the Church

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 ssenarishclerk@hotmail.co.uk

Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute

The New Year has been lively so far for the WI in SSG with two excellent meetings. In January local author, Chris Ewan, writer of crime novels, told us about his life and career. It was followed by a lively discussion.

In February, after celebrating the 90th birthday of one of our members, Mary Taylor, we heard an informative account of Pitney Farm and its evolution from Lizzie and Rob Walrond. They diversified from a small mixed farm, gradually selling directly from their own shop, also Farmers' Markets, then opening a farm cafe. They believe in fully organic local food, tasty traditional breeds of animals and Fair Trade. They encourage people to learn how their food is produced, both meat and vegetables. Children can pick their own food then prepare and eat it in their farm cafe. (Farm open daily 9-5.30, closed Sunday. Cafe open Wed- Sat.) We were reminded how our search for cheap food comes at a price- huge stresses on the land and livestock. A thought provoking evening!

Next meetings:

Tues.13th March. "Nut crackers"- Carol Northover 7 pm

Tues.10th April. "ACWW talk"-Eileen Hurd 7pm

Tues.8th May. Annual Meeting and Resolution Social Meeting.7pm

Visitors always welcome to come to our talks.

Why not give us a try?

STOP PRESS: Rose & Crown Change of Use

On 28 February the Taunton Deane Planning Committee opted to defer for 6 months a decision on whether or not to allow the Rose & Crown to be given the change of use which would allow it to be sold as a dwelling or development site. This gives the community some breathing space to continue to demonstrate its value as a commercial pub. This has implications for the community shop/pub survey, since we still cannot be sure whether or not we will have one, two or no pubs in a year's time. We all want to see the Rose & Crown thrive, but we also need to know what support there might be for a community pub if it does not. Please complete the survey assuming that a community pub is the only option, even though we hope it will not be.

Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

Annual Open Day: Saturday April 7th 2-4pm

Whether you're an adult or junior, a beginner or experienced player, our Open Day is a chance to:

- Find out more about the Club & plans for the year ahead, including coaching
- Play some tennis
- Join or Renew Membership for 2018/19
- Enjoy some light refreshments

Annual subscriptions are *still* the same as last year, so are great value:

Family membership: £55, Single: £40, Junior: £20
If 7th is very wet, Open Day will be held on Sunday 8th

Coaching

Good news! Junior coaching will restart on Sunday mornings from April 15th, in 2 age-group/ability sessions.

10am – 10.45am Red: 5-8yrs + 9yr old beginners
11am – 12 noon Green & Yellow: 10yrs & over + 9yr old improvers

We have a new coach, Natalie Grinter, who will be running these sessions. The regular cost will be £4 per session for members of the Club, £5 for non-members...but the first session on April 15th will be FREE – so a great chance to give the coaching a try. Rackets will be provided, if required. Natalie was Somerset LTA Coach of the Year 2017. Check her out at www.natstennis.net

For more information, contact Kathy 490575
kathryn.davidson7@btinternet.com Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/Stokestgregorytennis>

WILLIAMS HALL SOCIAL EVENTS

IRISH EVENING - FRIDAY 16th MARCH

This will be an evening of Irish music and food. Live music for you to enjoy and dance to will be performed by the popular local Irish band Diaspora. The food will be homemade Irish stew and Guinness cake. There will also be a cash bar and raffle. Tickets are just £7.50 and are now available from the The Village Stores. The evening starts at 7pm for 7.30pm. Book early to avoid disappointment and all profit will go towards the running and upkeep of the Williams Hall. Look forward to seeing you on the evening.

VILLAGE BREAKFAST

Our next very popular village breakfast will be held on **Saturday 20th April from 9am to 11am**. We are maintaining our prices as for previous breakfasts which are

Adults £6 Children 12 and over £4 **Children under 12 eat free**

For further information contact **Louise on 07761238933**

Look forward to seeing you

THE PARISH CHURCH of ST. GREGORY

A Lenten Supper took place on 9 February, which was much enjoyed by all who attended. Captain Alex Morrice spoke about Climate Change and its effect on plants, bees and wine

During Lent, Compline will be said each Thursday at 6.30pm in the Church. Everybody is welcome. Wednesday Evening Prayer will not be said during Lent, and will resume the week following Easter.

Women's World Day of Prayer - 2 March at 7.30 in the Baptist Chapel.

EASTER SERVICES

Compline will be said at 6.30 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week
Maundy Thursday - 8pm - Eucharist and Stripping of the Altar.

Good Friday - Ecumenical Service at the Baptist Chapel

Easter Saturday - Church decorating

Easter Sunday - 0630 - Sunrise Service 1100 - Eucharist

CHURCH OPEN DAYS

The Church will be open on 7 and 8 April for visitors. Parish Records of Births, Marriages and Deaths will be available to inspect. There will also be a chance to visit the Bell Tower.

ROGATION WALK

The Rev. John Tyler will be leading a Rogation Walk on Sunday 13 May from North Curry to Athelney Abbey. All welcome, plus dogs!

ST GREGORY PLAYERS

The Players will be holding some Play Reading evenings to decide upon the next production. The first is on **Monday 19th March 2018 7.30 pm** at Chairman Jane's home in Taunton. Call 350737 or 490155 for directions.

Sunday 25th March 2018 2pm-5pm Stoke Village Hall - Jane Leakey is leading a Drama Workshop. This is almost fully booked but call 01278 685932 if you are interested.

Monday 16th April at 8 pm Our AGM is in the Hall Committee Room.
Come and join us.

Coates English Willow

Easter Extravaganza

At Willows & Wetlands Visitor Centre

Saturday 31st March 11.00am-4.00pm

Children's Willow Workshop Food, Drink and Craft Stalls

Easter Willow Sculpture Hunt

Summer Skittles at The Royal Oak

We are organising a Summer Skittles Competition which will be held on Friday evenings and will start at the beginning of June. If you are interested in taking part and can get together a 4 a side team with one reserve (teams can be all men, all ladies or mixed) then please talk to Nicola or Wesley to sign up.

North Curry Amateur Gardeners

March 1st "Rejuvenating a tired garden"

April 5th Herbaceous Plants

May 3rd Garden Visiting: A very English tradition

Outings: **Bowood House and Gardens:
Tuesday 22nd May**

Meetings held in the Pavilion of the Greenway Playing Fields 7.45 for 8.00pm
Everyone welcome! Coffee, biscuits and chat after!

North Curry Brownies

meeting at North Curry Village Hall
Mondays 5.30pm to 7pm

Why not join the adventure in a girl only space.

Outdoor cooking, drumming, challenges, and badges are just a few activities we have planned in the next term.

For more details contact Louise on
01823690271.

African Somerset 'FEAST'ival Saturday 19th May 2018 – Sunday 20th May 2018

A group of local friends have come together to organise 'African Somerset' which is an amalgamation of African feasting and camping within our beautiful Somerset village, on the playing fields. It is aimed at bringing our community together with a mutual love of fabulous food, great music, camping and cider drinking. So come and join us for a wonderfully rural weekend with family and friends. Visit: <https://african-somerset.ticketleap.com>, for more details and prices