Heart of the Village: Shop & Pub

HOTV: our community shop and pub. We now have over 150 members, and we are getting ever closer to our share offer target. We are very confident that HOTV is going to be a great success, but this will happen quicker and better the more support we have. Please join us now, to be part of something unique in Stoke St Gregory. See our News page and learn more on the website hotvssg.org or phone John Davison on 07836 327926

Stoke Stampede

Christmas is fast approaching and with it the New Year and the Stoke Stampede on Sunday 5th January. A real bright spot for the village in a long winter. Everything is on track for our 450 runners and we want to make the race a memorable experience for them all. So we need all of you in the village to come out and support, whether it is by volunteering to become a Marshall or just turning out to cheer the runners on. Please give us your support. We also need to appeal to the village to see if anyone has a Chapter Eight qualification to help us out with the road closure. If anyone has this qualification could they please contact Paul Morse on 07519 397133. Anyone wanting to become a Marshall please contact Tom Duxbury either by email on duxburvtom@gmail.com or phone him on 07714 696707. See you there Paul Morse (Race Director)

TABLE TENNIS FOR FUN & FITNESS

The table tennis group continues to flourish. We get together on Wednesday evenings, from 7-9pm at the Village Hall for a couple of hours of sociable exercise. All standards welcome. All equipment provided. Pay on the door, £3 per evening for adults (£1 for youngsters 12yrs+), including refreshments. Younger players particularly welcome. Why not give us a try? You’ve got to do something to keep you active on those chillier winter nights! First week free! Just come along, or for more info call Paul on 490565 or Terri on 490671.

Parish Council Report

The last quarter has been a quiet period for planning applications, with only several low key and non-controversial applications. The September meeting of the Parish Council was prefaced by a discussion on the extent and nuisance of irritating and unpleasant smells during the summer. While it is recognised that we live in a rural area and smells associated with farming activity are inevitable, the opinion was expressed that some of the occurrences during the summer constituted more than a nuisance. If we are to address this concern, better evidence needs to be gathered. However, the PC followed up on the complaint with Wessex Water. A reply received from them acknowledged a problem which has now been corrected. Coincidentally it has been observed that the nuisance has significantly decreased. As a further follow-up a short comment form has been produced which will be available on the village website and in the shop so that future occurrences can be more formally noted. During the regular planning application visits, the opportunity was taken to visit the new pavilion, which is being constructed by the developer of the houses in Willey Road. It is an impressive building and something that the village can be proud of. It will provide a springboard for the organisation of many activities which for years have been inhibited by the state of the existing structure. At the PC meeting it was agreed that some of the funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which are due to the PC would be allocated to support the whole project which includes a new access and parking, improved services and an equipment store.

Stoke St Gregory Women’s Institute

It has been a very heartening year for us, with new members swelling our numbers, but we would welcome even more! The last quarter of 2019 has also brought us lively, stimulating speakers to our village WI. We were told about the effects of climate change on nature in Somerset one month, followed by the history and creativity of driftwood art. In November it is “Comic Verse and Comedy” with an enigmatic F. Phelps- could be stand up or singalong? Wait and see... In December we look forward to our members’ annual Christmas lunch. We are fortunate again to be going to The Lemon Tree at Willows and Wetlands, where last year we enjoyed delicious home-cooked food.

This year we have enjoyed outings, visiting other local WIs for meetings, craft displays, quizes and sport- short tennis (look it up!) was particularly enjoyed. Members support all kinds of village charity/ voluntary initiatives as well as walks, the arts and sport. We now look forward to local WI carol services and to 2020!

Next year: Meetings are held in the Williams Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7 pm. Come along and give us a try.

Wanted – Stoke News Sponsors

If you would like your business featured in the next edition, please get in touch with Jean House; or Kelly de Silva, Parish Clerk, at ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk

Stoke News
Winter 2019

Contact Jean House
jeanhouse@btconnect.com
For more news look at www.stokestgregory.org
Parish Council Report (continued from page 1)
Consideration is being given to installing an electric car charging point in the village. This is at a very early stage with information being sought on how and at what cost, but with grant funding currently available it is felt that this does merit serious consideration.

The main discussion at the November meeting centred on the precept for next year and agreement on the details of the costs that contribute to this. One particular item of relevance was consideration of a mechanism for offering small grants and donations to causes within the Parish, Under the Local Government Act, it is within the remit of the PC to offer grants up to a predetermined total which is calculated per capita for the Parish. This is not a large sum, but we will try to ensure that it is distributed equitably. At the December meeting the PC will review a policy and grant application process for local groups for the coming financial year. Even including this amount little change is anticipated in the overall budget.

While it is not within the remit of the PC, concern was expressed about financial support for the school from local government. Stoke St Gregory Primary School is a successful and integral part of the community that provides the long-term foundation for relationships within the community. Failure to maintain the School consistent with the needs of the community will have a long terms adverse effect. For this reason, strong representations are being made with Somerset County Council, the responsible elected body.

With the work on preparing the site for the new houses on Willey Road advancing rapidly, questions were raised around the process by which local people can be assured of taking advantage of this development. While a list of individual needs was prepared to justify the planning application, it was agreed that this position would be reinforced through contact with the SWTC housing officer.

May next year will mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day. It is planned that several village events will take place to commemorate this date. As well as a village breakfast several other community events are being planned. If you would be willing to help with organisation of these events, please contact Sara Sollis or Janice Pearce.

It has become a regular occurrence that part of the PC meeting is allocated to surveys and questionnaires. This month we were asked to comment on our relationship with the local PCSO(s), via an on-line survey. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to offer meaningful comment. Continuing the legal theme, it was noted that some owners allow their dogs to roam free on the roads in the village. This is against the law as all dogs must be kept on leads if on a public highway.

Finally, there was discussion around potential PC support for the HOTV project which is widely seen as essential for the future wellbeing of the community. This item will be added to the agenda for the December meeting.

Local History: Quaker Roots
Did you know that Stoke was once a hotbed of Quaker activity, with a certain Alice Roman of the village being one of the first ‘Perceivers of the Truth’ in the county? It had its own meeting house and burial ground - the Society of Friends’ minutes record a discussion about ‘the great Meeting Houses that were built at Gregory Stoke and Ilminster, about the year 1670.’ Although no longer used for meetings, the 1840 Tithe Map shows the most likely location - a field called ‘Pit Acre’ in Lamley, reached by a track to the side of Wilments Farm. The burial ground is now part of the large field beyond Sharpham Lane. Between 1690 and 1724, thirteen people were buried there. Both these locations are on private land.

Life was not easy for the Quakers of Stoke. In 1683, ‘There were twelve more committed to prison, from Gregory Stoke meeting, by Henry Walrond, who, with his assistants, broke the windows, benches, gallery, &c. of the meeting-house, and carried out the materials, with the windows, doors, forms, &c. on the green, and there burnt them, carousing and drinking about the fire the mean-while.” The meetings in Stoke were discontinued in 1764, the building being converted to a dwelling. This was leased in 1766 at a yearly rent of 30/-, but annoyingly we don’t know the name of the tenant! Would anyone like to look into this further?

The View from The Stores …
This is the last time we write a column for Stoke News. As we have said, we will be closing the doors for the last time on this old established business on 31 December 2019. A sad day for us and one that we have tried our utmost to avoid for a number of years. But, unable to sell The Village Stores as a going concern, we had to make the very tough decision to close. A great shame nonetheless. This column allows us to make one final request to ALL our past and present customers to support the new venture – Heart Of The Village - in its quest to establish a successful community-run project which has the opportunity to ‘re-invent’ both The Village Stores and The Royal Oak. Evolution is a natural phenomenon and the change we will shortly see with these two long-standing businesses is no exception. A step-change it may be, but Karen and I believe there is a clear desire for their development, growth and diversification into exciting new ventures that will be valued for years to come. In fact, this village is going to experience a number of changes in the next twelve months and they will all contribute to the progression towards a thriving, caring, forward-looking community that will be better positioned to attract inward investment and support in a period of time where rural communities are becoming increasingly isolated and starved of external finance and services. Villages need an identity and this often stems from community-led enterprises whether they be a church, pub, shop, or any other number of activities. A well run shop and pub will reflect positively on our community and give it that identity. I think we all want to live in a caring and inclusive community that takes pride in itself and its people – not one that exists simply as a ‘green dormitory’ on the fringes of a soulless urban sprawl.

In the last few weeks Karen and I have been personally affected by the negative comments that some members of our community have unilaterally relayed to people looking to purchase in the area. Not only does a negative reaction reflect badly on our entire community, it is also disrespectful to those who have, and are, working so hard to make this a great community. I am sure we want to be part of a caring, welcoming and vibrant community and this project has the potential to deliver on all three. So please don’t be negative – be positive and support HOTV by purchasing shares now! Negative criticism, apathy and ‘put-downs’ from the side-lines will ultimately affect the wellbeing of us all. We are currently working with HOTV to ensure the transfer of the business to the new management as seamlessly as possible. There may have to be a ‘temporary arrangement’ put in place until the new location is up and running. We would ask that customers support the business during this time, but also understand that there will be some short-term differences in services and stock.

So, to finish, Karen and I would like to thank you all for your support over the (almost) nine years we have had the pleasure to run The Village Stores. Without you, the villagers and advisors too – some small and local, others national. We have had some laughs and one or two tears, but our aim was always to provide a happy place to come and shop, chat, gossip and moan whilst being safe and welcomed! We hope we have been successful in that. A Happy Christmas to everyone and an exciting New Year full of friendship, community spirit and positivity!

Christmas and New Year Waste Collections (SWP)
Normal collection Wed. 25th December > Revised collection two days later: Friday 27th
Normal collection Wed. 1st January > Revised collection one day later: Thursday 2nd
Usual collections resume w/b 6th January.
On Behalf of Ian & Karen’s Customers

By the time you read this Karen and Ian will be in to their last month running our village shop. In the time they have been here they have shown us what it means to be the ‘Heart of the Village’. It’s the shop, the pubs, the school, the churches, the hall, that matter - it’s the people who are involved there that make the difference. Karen & Ian are wonderful examples of this.

Yes, they run a clean, well-stocked shop, and will always try and source anything else we ask for, but Karen is not just a shopkeeper. She’s a person person. She remembers people’s names, remembers if a member of their family is ill or on holiday and remembers to ask after them. She remembers what people usually buy and reminds them if they may have forgotten it. She cares.

And, when we lose them, who will do all the ‘extras’ we take for granted? Who will make coffee for the postman, pass him parcels that are too big to go in the box, hang on to parcels for people to collect if they are out when the postman tries to deliver, receive people’s post if they don’t have a letter box, etc? Ian checks on the defibrillator regularly and both have basic first aid training for emergencies. They introduced the book for people to swap things or pass them on, have notices in the window for classes, things for sale, act as an information centre re road works, road closures and so on and give people directions as needed, etc. They also have a list of useful people - builders, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, handymen, etc. Ian does deliveries and often gives a helping hand to folks who have got into difficulties - power failure, getting something on their feet after a fall, needing something moved, collecting prescriptions from the surgery, and endless other things. They sell tickets for village events, have sponsorship forms prominently displayed, sell poppies, have free papers - Food Lover, pro

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Thank you all and we’ll see you all on the 5th January for Stoke Stampede.
Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

By the time you read this, resurfacing of the 2 outside courts at Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club will have been completed. Over the winter, the courts will have to remain black, but still able to be played on, with the colour painting added in the Spring when the weather has improved.

This is only part of our ambitious project to improve & extend our facilities for the benefit of the local communities. The next stage is to apply for planning permission for floodlighting of the courts. This will necessitate the raising of new funding. To assist us in this we would ask you to complete & return, to either the Stoke or North Curry shop, the enclosed leaflet. Thanking you in anticipation.

Advance notice of future events:
Sunday 12 Jan at 1.00pm – Frostbite Mixed Doubles, all welcome.
Monday 13 Jan at 8.00pm – Tennis Club AGM in the Baptist Church,
Stoke St Gregory, open to all.
New Year – junior tennis coaching to restart.
For more information please contact Stuart Mark 490541
stuart.w.mark@btinternet.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Stokestgregorytennis

NHS: Choose well this winter
If you or a family member feels ill this winter and it is not an emergency, remember that NHS111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.
You can also use the NHS111 online service to ask questions about your symptoms, find out where to get the right healthcare in your area, get advice on self-care, get further advice from a nurse or doctor on the phone or during a consultation.
If you need help at a time when your GP surgery or pharmacy is closed, call NHS 111 or visit www.nhs.uk

NOTICEBOARD

Stoke St Gregory Christmas Cracker
Saturday 7th December
2-4pm in the Village Hall
- Christmas gifts, crafts and food
- Free craft activities for children from the Messy Church team
- Festive refreshments
Raising funds for the Friends of Stoke St Gregory School

Christmas at The Royal Oak
CHRISTMAS KARAOKE DISCO PARTY
Friday, December 20th at 8.30pm
You know it will be a fun night and don't forget to wear your Christmas jumper!

BOXING DAY SKITTLES
Thursday, December 26th
Open at 12 noon.
Join us on Boxing Day for a friendly skittles competition. We aim to get the games started for 9pm. Let us know if you want to join in or just come along on the day.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE OAK
Tuesday, December 31st at 7pm
Come and party the night away and join us for the traditional Auld Lang Syne in the Square at midnight.

WILLIAMS HALL SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
FORTHCOMING EVENTS
SATURDAY 7th DECEMBER
CHRISTMAS FUN QUIZ 7pm for 7.30pm
Tickets £5
Teams of 6 or join up on the night with other people to make a team
Tickets £5 (Includes mince pie & mulled wine) now available from Village Stores, Withies Deli or phone Louise on 07761238933
Cash bar and raffle

SATURDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2020 7pm for 7.30pm
MY LIFE IN ANTIQUES with ADRIAN HOLT
Bring along your items to discuss
Tickets £5 (Includes glass of wine and cheese and biscuits)
Cash bar and raffle

SATURDAY 29th February 2020
VILLAGE BREAKFAST 9am to 11am
Adults £6
*****CHILDREN UNDER 12 EAT FREE*****
NB All children must be accompanied by an adult
Come eat, socialise and let us cook your breakfast for you

Tuesday 7th April 2020 Children’s Easter Crafts 10 am to 12 midday

Saturday 9th May 2020 VE Day Breakfast

More details on these events will be advertised on the Village Hall Website www.williamshall.org.uk and on posters around the village.

Merry christmas and a happy new year