

All items for the
Winter edition by
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2020

Stoke News

Autumn 2020

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For more news look at
www.stokestgregory.org

HOTV Report

At the time of going to press we are closing in on the milestone of completing the purchase of the Royal Oak. Indeed, by the time you are reading this article, it may have already occurred. That being the case it is planned to hold an open day for members of the community to visit the property to discuss and understand plans that we have for the building, in particular the orientation of the facilities. Current thinking, prior to access to the building, is that the Shop will be on the left and the Pub on the right, with the 'garden room common to both sides of the house.

Having started with the latest news it is worth revisiting the path that has led us to this point. In June despite the restrictions caused by the Covid situation we did successfully elect a management committee, a major condition of our benefactors. At the first meeting of this committee a decision was taken to proceed with the purchase of the Royal Oak. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter two of the elected members gave notice of their resignation, causing to committee to co-opt Chris Reah who had also stood in the election.

At the request Triodos Bank, one of our lenders, a revaluation of the Royal Oak was conducted. While this was confidential between the valuer and the Bank, we did learn that the value of the property had appreciated. Furthermore, a revised financial forecast reflecting both current shop trading and a reduced revenue stream from the pub has been approved by our lenders.

In the meantime, the shop (in a box) continues to trade well above the level predicted in our original business plan. Jo and Carolyn have developed a business plan that will build from the excellent foundations that they have established in the existing temporary accommodation.

You will read below that we are canvassing ideas from the community on what sort of pub people want the RO to be. This input will guide our plans as we start the process of creating the social hub that we aspire to achieve.

What sort of Royal Oak do you want?

There is a photo on the village website of the Royal Oak on VJ Day 1945. It has changed a lot since then and it is set to change again, not least because it will include the shop. Let us know what sort of a pub **you** would like to see in our village. Rather than ask you to fill in a tedious survey, the HOTV team would like to know:

What are your three favourite pubs, and why?

Properly analysed, the results could tell us an enormous amount about what people value in a pub, and help guide us in our reboot of the Royal Oak. (They don't have to be local pubs, but it would be good if at least one was.) We would, as always, love to hear any other suggestions.

Please send your answers and comments to
contact@hotvssg.org

Don't leave it too long if you want to influence the plans.

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

Parish Council Report

The Parish Council continues to hold **virtual meetings**. Members of the public are welcome to join the meetings to make contributions, as would be the case in normal meetings. The July meeting welcomed two members of the public who commented on planning applications.

There have been few **planning applications** to consider in the period, however two are worthy of note. An application to remove the restraint on retuning land to its original use at The Cottage, Meare Green was not supported by the PC. Use of the temporary accommodation granted to the previous owner, was dependent only on their continued use of the structure. With the sale of the main property this condition has now lapsed, hence the decision by the PC not to support this application. The PC did support the application for installation of a small array of solar panels at Green Gables, Curload. This would be discretely placed and will not be visible from the road. The PC stated that it fully supports the proposal as a contributor to a move away from fossil fuels.

In the **absence of an AGM** (and APM) this year due to the prevailing circumstances a motion was passed that all Councillors would continue in their representative roles on the various local groups. The only change noted was that Nick Sloan would represent the PC on the HOTV Management committee as Sara Sollis did not stand for election to this group.

In both the July and August meetings there was considerable debate around the proposals for a major change in **local government organisation** with the proposed unitary authority for Somerset. This proposal as you may well have read in the local press, abolishes both SCC and the four district councils and replaces them one, or possibly two, unitary authorities. The anticipated impact on Parish Councils is that they will have greater control over providing for the specific needs of their communities, albeit with an increased requirement to manage the resources that have been delegated downwards. So far, all of the running in this discussion has been made by SCC with little in the way of a coherent response from the districts up to the latest PC meeting.

STOKE ST GREGORY MEALS

A big 'Thank you' to the volunteers at Stoke St Gregory Meals, continuing during lockdown to cook and deliver for elderly and vulnerable customers in Stoke St Gregory and North Curry. Also the four temporary volunteers who are delivering meals whilst some regular drivers are unable to do so for health and age reasons. The service is so appreciated by the customers and their families particularly during this difficult time.

Parish Council Report (continued from page 1)

While there was a majority of councillors generally in favour of change, almost all expressed concerns with the speed at which this is being pushed and the consequent lack of discussion for clarification and understanding. As a small parish reliant upon volunteers it is not clear how we will best take advantage of the opportunities this important reorganisation offers.

After C19 restrictions were lifted **Speedwatch** has been able to resume and as such two sessions have been conducted at Meare Green. The suggestion was that with more walkers and cyclists on the road, maybe it is time for the issue of the 40mph speed limit in Meare Green to be revisited. This is covered in more detail in a separate article in this Newsletter

From Coates English Willow:

The museum has reopened and charges have been introduced to help cover the running costs: £4 per adult and £2 per child. The Willow Sculpture Trail is proving very popular with families of all ages, but there will be no guided tours until next year at the earliest.

A gentle reminder that if people are using the footpaths near the Centre and in the fields on the moor, to leave gates as they find them, as stated in the Countryside Code. There have been a handful of times when gates have been found closed when they should be open and vice-versa. It may well be down to visitors to the visitor centre rather than local walkers, but the cooperation of all would be appreciated.

The recent planning application has been approved – more news of the changes to take place in future editions of the newsletter.

Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute

Our lovely conscientious President, Sandra, has kept us fully informed online about what is on offer from the WI. Under her leadership, we also now enjoy reading our own village WI newsletter, which has a variety of contributions from members during Lockdown. It is enjoyable, fun and comforting to hear of the experiences of others in the form of memories, poems, photographs, quizzes and jokes. Lockdown has meant taking up new sporting hobbies like tennis for some as well as learning new skills like bricklaying. Thanks to technology, our Committee has Zoom meetings and the WI County News magazine is enjoyed online.

At village level, following a request, some members made beautiful cakes for Musgrove Hospital staff. These were very gratefully received. We have been able to access at home wide-ranging courses and sessions through our membership. Virtual talks on a subject like "Restoring Nature Across Somerset" rubs shoulders with sessions on Face Yoga. Visits and even a holiday near Cheddar sleeping "rough" in bunks are on offer in the county magazine. A photographic competition has been organised before the WI county calendar is designed for 2022. Let us hope that life is kinder to us by then. WI County Advisers support branches, offering help and advice. Sad news at national level is that the WI College, Denman, is to close because of financial pressures.

Stoke St Gregory History: THEIR FINEST HOUR

As we all look forward to an exciting new era of activities on our playing field, some will remember Stoke footballers' 'Finest Hour' - the Spring of 1966. While the national team was preparing for the World Cup, Stoke, with the help of players from North Curry and further afield, was taking the Taunton Sunday League by storm. Having played 23 matches, the team had won 19, with 3 drawn and only 1 lost, scoring 134 goals and conceding only 43. They won the 1st Division title and went on to beat Norton Nomads (from Norton Manor Camp - but before the Commandos arrived from Plymouth) in the Knockout Final at Obridge, on 17th April. On the day, with Mike Champion as Captain, the rest of the team was chosen from Royston Amor, John Bown, Mike Collard, Richard Harwood, Eric Hembrow, Roy Keirle, Tony Mills, Geoff Gerald & John Pipe, Phil Riley, and Horace Woodland.

Does anyone have a photo?

The Stoke 'Directory'

When we ran the shop, it was usual for us to be asked for some local information, or a contact number or whether the bus was on time. Since leaving the shop, I wondered if I could put together a 'directory' (working title!) for the village that contained useful information and contacts. Yes, a lot of information is now on-line but not everyone chooses this form of communication and, in any case, it's handy to have a paper copy to add to that pile of Chinese takeaway menus, receipts and the Blue Sheet.

So I have made a start. If you run, or are involved in any type of event, pastime, sport, or you provide a service or wish to share a little local knowledge please contact me on 07837 764367 or ian.upshall@gmail.com. The more comprehensive, but brief, the better. This is a not-for-profit enterprise so to cover publishing costs, I am also looking to local businesses to help through advertising. Contact me for more information. I hope to make available the first publication by end-September 2020. Thanks!

Insects

The Somerset Wildlife Trust has sent round to parish councils a report **Reversing the Decline of Insects**, and advice for local communities in helping to support their campaign to create the conditions for encouraging insects. Both may be seen on the News page of our village website stokestgregory.org.

As well as being an essential feature of the natural environment, insects are vital in pollinating crops and fulfilling many other crucial functions. We would be sunk without them.

Unlike many of the environmental challenges facing us at the moment, the decline of insects could be reversed quite swiftly given the right conditions. Approaches recommended include the avoidance of pesticides, more wild habitat and crucially, corridors of land (wild verges etc) connecting areas of habitat. The report contains many inspirational case studies which suggest how we could help as communities and individuals.

Thank-you Stoke!

Now that all the formalities of handing over our business to the Heart of the Village, Karen and Ian would like to say a big thank-you to everyone that has supported us during our tenure of The Village Stores.

We've had some challenges along the way but overall, I believe The Village Stores had a positive impact on the community. We are very pleased that there remains sufficient enthusiasm and commitment in the village to keep it going as a prosperous and essential amenity. We wish HOTV and the current managers Carolyn and Joanne, all the very best for the future.

Without the support of the community, village shops cease to exist. And without a village shop the lives of the more vulnerable members of our community are made more difficult. Some people may choose not to support their shop – but at least they have the opportunity of choice. No shop means no choice. Please continue to support the shop at the heart of your community.

Broadband

For many people in Stoke St Gregory, the quality of their broadband connection has been a major problem. This has been especially true over recent months when many of us have been working from home and trying to use Zoom. In the last edition of Stoke News I wrote an article about local broadband in which I invited all readers to let me know their own experience so that I could build a picture of the state of play. I received 20 replies (thank you), which hardly amounts to a statistically valid sample, but the conclusions such as they are as follows:

6 are using ADSL (non-fibre wired connection to BT network): all unsatisfied.

5 are using RBS wireless, of whom three are satisfied and two are not.

7 are using FTTC (fibre to the cabinet): all except one are satisfied.

2 are using a 4G mobile connection: one is satisfied, the other so-so.

These results are not surprising. If you are near enough to the cabinet to get a decent fibre connection over copper, your speeds will be reasonable even if reliability may vary. If you are further from the cabinet, your speeds will be low whatever the connection.

The RBS wireless network has been struggling to meet demand, which explains why the responses there are mixed. Extending and improving that network still looks like a good short-term strategy, but it has proved more difficult than expected. Some people who are too far from the cabinet to get a good wired connection have had good experiences with 4G, but this is very dependent on local conditions, and can be pricey.

Meanwhile, the promise of very fast full fibre connections is inching closer, though the picture is confused. I must confess to having been a bit slow on the uptake here. There is currently a voucher scheme (gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk) which some local communities have already taken advantage of. Chedzoy has access to full fibre from Truespeed and Thornfalcon are in the process of commissioning a number of fibre connections from BT. Research is ongoing on how we might be able to tap into this collectively, and an update should be posted on the website soon.

The Season of Mellow Fruitfulness!

As you may remember, for several years now we've been pressing apples for many people, producing lots of apple juice to take away. This has normally taken place at our home on various days through the Autumn with several people coming on each occasion; this year, however, will be more difficult as social distancing and rules over visiting other homes will be difficult to maintain.

Whilst we hope still to be able to have a few coming here we are also encouraging as many as possible to hire the equipment to press their own at home, perhaps working with one other family.

Everything you'd need from apple mincer to pasteurisers can be hired for £25 per day. Bottles can also be supplied if needed.

Please get in touch if you think you'd like to take part, letting me know roughly when you think your fruit will be ripe so that I can do my best to coordinate you with others.

Contact: Brian on 490623 or bandk@bkjeanes.co.uk



From The Parish Council:

Speed limit Meare Green

With the restart of the Speedwatch programme in Meare Green, first returns on the data collected show that most drivers are adhering to the 40mph speed limit that covers the section of road from Denman Hill to the bends. The question has arisen that given the increased pedestrian and cycling traffic particularly along the straight sections either side of the Willows and Wetlands Centre, whether a 30mph limit is justified. The PC would appreciate hearing your views on this as either residents or users of his road, as pedestrians, cyclists, or motorists,

Wells Hay

You may have noticed that the new housing development on Willey Road is being Marketed as Broomfield Park. Several people have spoken out against using this the name, not least as there are other Broomfields in Taunton. In reality we as the PC cannot impose a name, we can merely suggest to the developer. This has been discussed with the developer who has no objection in the longer term to registering the development under the name of Wells Hay, but this is one of the last steps in the process when the development is complete. In the meantime, all the marketing materials have been prepared and issued by GTH as Broomfield Park, so there is an obvious reluctance to change the name until the point of formal registration with SWTC.

The New Pavilion

The new pavilion has now been formally handed over to the Playing Field Management Committee. While it was not possible to mark this occasion with an appropriate celebration, this major asset for the village is already being used (subject to the necessary restrictions). Unfortunately, the first two Cricket matches were called-off due to rain.

Look at the village website
www.stokestgregory.org
www.facebook.com/StokeStGregory
for more news and information

Due to the Covid19 situation there are not really many notices of village 'events' for the autumn this year. However if things change and any events are planned for the next quarter (Dec 20, Jan/ Feb 21) please send details in to the editor by Friday 20th November. Thank you. ☺

Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

It's time to Play Your Way!

From now on, it's tennis on your terms. So grab a racket, big or small, and get hitting. Hit like no one's watching, hit like no one's judging. However and wherever, just Play Your Way.

The LTA have launched a national campaign Play Your Way to get people to play tennis & we want to encourage you to play your part & to pick up a racket - we have a court waiting for you to book!

Please take this opportunity to book a court, or become a member on the following link: -

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/StokeStGregoryTennisClub>

Both Pay & Play bookings & Club memberships are available, so why not give it a try!

SPECIAL OFFER for anyone making a booking for a Pay & Play Court for the first time! You will receive a FREE gift, while stocks last, of a new tube of 3 Wimbledon tennis balls 🎾🎾🎾. Offer is limited to 1 tube per household. After booking please email ssgtennisclub@gmail.com with your contact details, to arrange hand over of the tube of balls.

If anyone is interested in **Junior Tennis Coaching**, hopefully to start in September, please get in touch. Existing junior players & those new to tennis all welcome!

Updates & news will be posted on Facebook & the Village website.

For more information, contact Stuart Mark

490541 stuart.w.mark@btinternet.com

or ssgtennisclub@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Stokestgregorytennis>

Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church News

Greetings from all of us here at Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church.

Most of our Sunday services are still taking place on Zoom.

If you would like to join us at 10.30am one Sunday, please email Ssgbaptists@gmail.com and we'll send you a link and explain how you can join us.

Our building is open for quiet reflection and prayer on a Monday morning from 10am till 1pm so if you need a quiet place to be for a while, please come and spend some time in our lovely building. Someone will be there to advise you of the precautions in place to keep everyone safe at this time.

We are planning an outdoor service with communion on 6th September at 10.30am, weather permitting, in the chapel grounds.

The first service planned in our building is our Harvest celebration on Sunday 27th September at 10.30am. If you plan to come, please wear a face mask. We miss the families who join us for Twigs and Messy Church and will restart whenever the government advice tells us it is safe to do so.

We would love to pray for you, so if there is anything you would like prayer for, please email Ssgbaptists@gmail.com.

THE PARISH CHURCH of ST. GREGORY AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

New Incumbent:

Two candidates were interviewed by the panel. The members of the panel had reservations about the suitability of both of them. The vacancy will continue to be advertised and progress will be reported when available.

5 September:

Rev. John Tyler will lead a Thanksgiving Walk on 5 September to mark the start of the Harvest Season. The walk will finish at 1200 at Burrowbridge Churchyard where the Eucharist will be celebrated. Further details will be published beforehand.

Harvest Festival:

Because of the ongoing restrictions caused by the Coronavirus, there will be no Harvest Supper this year.

Church Services:

A limited number of shortened services are now taking place in Church. Face masks are being worn and social distancing is being observed. If you have any enquiries about regular services, marriages or funerals, which can now be held in the Church (although numbers will be limited) please ring Jane White on 490508.

Churchyard

Thank you all those who contributed to Churchyard maintenance this year. It continues to be kept in good order but if you have family graves there it would be much appreciated if you would check on their condition. Donations towards the cost of grass cutting are always very gratefully received.

Some headstones have had to be laid on the ground because of their unstable condition. If you have any queries about restoration please contact Jane White (490508) or Will Tilley (698229).

Remembrance Sunday:

This year the Baptist Church will be hosting the Service of Remembrance. Details will be posted on both Church Notice Boards when available, given the ongoing C19 situation.