

Distribution of the Newsletter – More Volunteers Needed!

We hope that you enjoy receiving the newsletter through your door every three months with updates on what is happening in Stoke St Gregory and surrounds.

As you probably know, Stoke News is delivered by volunteers living in different parts of the village.

Many people have volunteered over the years, and at the moment we are lucky enough to have a great team of people going out and about delivering in their area.

However things do change, and we would like to say thank you to Derek Davies, who has been distributor for part of Meare Green over the past four years, and is now stepping back from the job. We have another volunteer, who has kindly agreed to deliver in this area, in place temporarily; but will be pleased for anyone else from Meare Green to come forward to join the team and help out. Deliveries can be done on foot, by car, on two wheels or even when walking the dog?!!

Sometimes extra cover is needed if someone happens to be away or unable to deliver for some reason. So if you would be happy to give some time to help with deliveries four times a year, or just stepping in occasionally as 'cover' for any part of the village, please contact Jean House jeanhouse@btconnect.com or on 01823 490349

Parish Council Report November 2020

The PC continues to **meet virtually** using the Zoom platform. We have welcomed members of the public to several recent meetings. We continue to emphasise that all are welcome to join us. If it is the technology that worries you, we would be happy to arrange introductory sessions if you feel you would like to participate.

Our daily lives continue to be greatly modified by the **ongoing pandemic**. While we must consider ourselves fortunate to live in an area where incidence of the virus is relatively low in many respects this tends to make us more vulnerable as it is easier to be caught off-guard on the basis of 'it can't happen here'. The PC would encourage everybody in the community to remain vigilant, take the necessary precautions and abide by the guidelines, bearing in mind that 'anyone can get it; everyone can spread it'.

Planning applications have been running at a low level with few new applications of significance. An application for a separate garage at Lovell's House was approved by the PC. An amendment to the planning application for layout of the ground floor at the Royal Oak was submitted and conditionally approved by SWTC before the PC could comment, however this was plainly not an issue. One of the major uncertainties facing planning at the minute is the consequences of a broad swathe of the region being classified as having excess phosphates. Recognising this, SWTC has declared an ecological emergency. Precisely what the impact will be on future planning applications remains unclear

Heart of the Village (HOTV) Report

Since the last Newsletter there has been tremendous progress in our project to create a commercial and social hub in the centre of the village. The purchase of the Royal oak was completed and a highly successful open day, which was attended by over 120 people, was held where plans were unveiled.

Immediately following this a project team guided by John Davison and Nick Sloan set about making the renovations necessary to relocate the shop to the Royal Oak. Based upon the amended plan this will be on the left of the building in an area that presented the biggest challenges in the form of its legacy condition. It was rapidly determined that damp ingress was principally due to the poor state of the render on the West and South exterior walls. A decision was taken to remove this render which had a number of positive consequences. Firstly, a doorway was discovered in the west wall, which apparently provided access to the kitchen of the original building, which can now provide access to the shop. Secondly, and particularly now that it has been cleaned, a very characterful red brick and blue lias building has been revealed, which as someone put it, 'looks at home in the village square'. Finally the damp has almost entirely dried out.

Work has been moving at pace inside the building substantial rewiring and installation of security/fire detection systems are nearing completion. The heating system is working.

The shop area has been completely redecorated and new floor laid. New windows have been installed in the shop and café area.

None of this would have been possible, without the energy and dedication of a large band of volunteers. The MC wishes to express their heartfelt thanks to all of those who have made in many small and not so small ways, a major contribution to our progress.

Work is currently in hand to reopen the shop in the Royal Oak on Nov 30th. Carolyn and Jo have a number of ideas following opening and in the run-up to Christmas so look out for promotional information. The Café will open as soon as permitted.

Work on renovating the pub has been postponed until after Christmas with the intention of holding some events in the pub during the period. The search for a landlord continues.

As we draw towards the end of a momentous year in the life of this project I believe the whole community can reflect with pride and anticipation on what has been achieved and what will be delivered to the benefit of all who live in our community.

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 (Cont. from pg 1)

Following up upon the high level of concern expressed regarding the **speed and density of traffic** on Meare Green the PC requested a formal speed assessment from SCC. This was conducted over five days in October. The data from this strongly suggests that a 30mph speed limit along this stretch of road would be enforceable. At the November PC meeting it was agreed to proceed despite a cost which could amount to as much as £8000. The project will now be formally scoped and costed and approval to implement will be proposed on this basis. Again, in the arena of highways, the PC is pleased to report that Stoke St Gregory will be in the first wave of schools to have a formal 20mph limit outside the school. This will be implemented in the coming month.

Increasingly the PC is becoming involved in issues relating back to the environment and specifically responding to the challenge of the **Climate Emergency** declared on the regional and county level. Although the PC feels strongly that actions should be taken to address the challenges that exist, as a small voluntary organisation how best to make an impact is not clear. If you care about our unique natural environment and would be prepared to contribute to maintaining it, then the PC would like to hear from you (see separate entry in this newsletter)

With the **Remembrance Day** services severely curtailed by social restrictions, the wreath laying ceremony was held at the new pavilion. In a brief but poignant service the wreath was laid under the new plaque on the wall of the pavilion recognising the role of the playing field as a memorial to all who served.

With the old Village stores now a private residence, the **defibrillator** in the village square has now been moved to the wall of the Royal Oak. Its precise location is to the right of the porch on the right of the building as you look at it.

Stoke St. Gregory Women's Institute

Life has continued much as it began in March when everyone had to adapt to a new way of living. Meetings including the SCFWI AGM, are still being held on the virtual platform. The education of women remained a priority for NFWI. A great variety of classes covering history, cookery, arts and crafts, exercises for the energetic and the more contemplative, talks about books by authors and literary experts, awareness of certain medical conditions and the progress being made in Cancer Research. Our Reading Group managed to squeeze an actual physical meeting in to discuss our books before we could no longer meet in groups of six by dividing into two groups of five. What a pleasure that was. A few of our members made up shoeboxes for the Shoebox Charity Appeal, another has one of her photos in the 2021 WI Calendar and is putting together a photographic record depicting the progress of the refurbishing of The Royal Oak. One of our other members has potted up and donated four planters to add to the appeal of the premises. Unfortunately, Denman was closed, Wilton Lodge sold and the SCFWI Head Office moved to Bridgewater.

Two sessions of Christmas Wreath making are planned with Edwina for the 7th December. Fingers crossed.

The aim for the SCFWI is "To Build Back Better" and that is what we will do.

Stoke St Gregory History: My Village - My Shop - The 1st 100 Years

In 1840, Jacob Williams, baker, moved from Swell to the building that became Stoke Stores. He married a local girl, Elizabeth Hunt, of Woodhill. By 1851 they had Henrietta, 5, Flora, 4, Albert, 3, and Mary Ann, 2. By now, Jacob was listed as Baker and Grocer. He was following the trend of diversification as the local residents needed to buy more of their weekly goods.

In the 1880s the Williams family divided the building, went into the drapery business, including the sale of boots and shoes, and took on the new village Post Office. Henrietta became Sub-postmistress.

The drapery business flourished during the last decade of the century. In 1901, two drapers' assistants and an apprentice were living with the Williams sisters. Maud Pullyblank, aged 32, from Meavy, Devon, and local girl, Emily Batten, aged 16, were the assistants. The apprentice, Mabel Pearce, aged 14 was also from Devon. A fourth assistant, from Stoke, was Mary Garland.

In the 1930s the Williams sisters retired. Stoke Shop was taken over by H S (Harry) Chedzoy, brother of Hugh Chedzoy of Slough Court. Harry's entry in the 1939 Kelly's directory was as Grocer, Draper, and Boot & Shoe Dealer. His advert in the Parish Magazine read "*If we have not got it we will soon get it.*" Eighty years later, Stoke Shop is moving back to the Square, under Jo & Carolyn's management. What will their strapline be? Good luck to you both.

If anyone has memories of Harry Chedzoy's time, or of the later owners - Followes, Colt-Williams, Scotland etc, please get in touch with Dave Evans 490 698.

The Stoke St Gregory Green Gazette – Available Now

The recently published 'Green Gazette' started life as a list of contacts that may be useful for anyone living in the village. However, whilst we were working on it over the 'lockdown', we realised there was so much more information that could be documented. There was then a suggestion that it may be useful to produce a 'welcome pack' to new arrivals in our community. After much thought and discussion, we have put together ready source of information that will be of interest to anyone living in, or around, Stoke St Gregory.

The 'Green Gazette' is a forty-page handy guide that provides information on everything from local groups, clubs and interests, to travel information, businesses, amenities, services and even local places of interest. We have tried to provide as much contact information as possible, including: names; phone numbers; email addresses and websites.

It is true to say that much of the information is available online, but there is no single information source that is specifically focused on the people in our community and our village. The 'Green Gazette' is now available to anyone at the very modest cost of £1 (this income will be donated to the 'Reeve's Feast' charity that can be used to assist local people who require a small grant to enable them to manage a particular crisis in their lives). If you would like your very own copy of the new 'Green Gazette' and make a donation to a local charity, then please contact Ian on 07837 764367 or email ian.upshall@gmail.com

As you may be aware, the government has now invited Somerset County Council to submit its business case for local government reform in Somerset. There are currently two proposals - one from Somerset County Council (One Somerset) and one from the four district councils - on the table for submissions. **One Somerset** would see the county council and four district councils replaced by a single, new council. The article below sets out the case for **One Somerset**.

One Somerset: Together we can work as a united team

Somerset: It's a county of contrasts but it works as a whole - not two halves. If asked where you are from, you may say your town or village, your county. It's your identity.

That's just one of the reasons why One Somerset, a single new council for the county, works. It makes sense. It unites Somerset as a single team with a strong and clear voice and sense of place and belonging.

All are agreed that the current, three-tier system (county, district and town or parish) is past its sell-by date, that reform is needed and that unitary is the way forward. It makes sense that it's a single unitary under one Somerset flag.

The plans have been developed with the people who know Somerset - like the County Council teams who provide three quarters of local government services and city, town and parish councils who are right at the heart of communities.

Together we can: work as one in a crisis. Since March, Somerset like the rest of the country, has been rising to the challenge of the pandemic. But it shouldn't take a crisis to bring Somerset together - such as flooding or coronavirus. When these happen, it takes time to bring every council, agency or organisation on board at a time when we can least afford to delay.

As a single council Somerset would have one strong response from Day One, harnessing the strength of our long-established partnerships with health, care, education and blue-light services.

Together we can: realise ambitions. One Somerset is aiming high - it's about making life better for people in Somerset with people in Somerset. It's giving people in their city, town or village the power to do more at the grass roots. Local Community Networks would bring parish/town/city councils together with the unitary council as well as voluntary and community groups. Together we can get things done.

Together we can: keep supporting the mums-to-be, the vulnerable children, adults and families and deliver quality services that ensure ALL people, whether young, old or somewhere in between get the respect and care they need.

Together we can: invest in Somerset with a unitary bonus of £18.5m each year. This is cash that can be spent on issues that really matter from addressing climate change to caring for the most vulnerable. One Somerset's sums add up: the savings are realistic.

Together we can: stay as Somerset. One Somerset doesn't want to split up the county, build a new bureaucracy or create more confusion. One council equals one strong Somerset voice, one point of contact for customers and one, united team to serve the residents, communities and businesses of Somerset. Together, we can.

Issued by One Somerset



The Parish Church

The Athelney Benefice is delighted to announce that we have appointed our new Vicar - but, as yet the identity must remain a mystery. Further information on the Church Noticeboard when confirmed in a few days.

More good news in that we are now allowed to sing carols in the open air so the PCC has agreed to move our service (which could only have included recorded music inside) outside to the open areas around the village hall. This will take place at 2.30pm on Sunday 20th December. We look forward to welcoming many more than could have been accommodated in the church but must stress that we all need to conform to social distancing regulations and also wear a mask. We suggest that you come well wrapped up, bring a garden chair (and possibly an umbrella) and maybe even a flask with a hot drink. There will be buckets in evidence for gifts to ARC, the Taunton Association for the Homeless.

We have been sorry to say farewell to Mrs Liz Moorsom who, as the Head Teacher of our village school. Liz has done much (before Lockdown, of course) to increase contact between the Church School and the Parish Church. We welcome her replacement, Mrs Dawn Baker and hope to work closely with her in the future.

After the very muted Harvest Thanksgiving service in early October we were able to take a generous donation of "store cupboard" goods to the Bridgwater Food Bank, along with some equally welcome cash. We shall be making another collection before Christmas, please contact the Church Warden on 490508 if you would like your offerings collected.

On Wednesday 4th November we were able to welcome our newly ordained Revd Dr Jane Sutton to St Gregory's to conduct her first service of Holy Communion in the Benefice. This replaced our usual Evening Prayer and was a very moving way to begin Lockdown Mark Two the following morning.

The church has been closed for public worship again throughout November although it remains partially open for private prayer on Wednesdays and Sundays. Christmas services are obviously difficult to plan at present but do keep an eye on the notice board in the square for up to date news. We hope to hold a form of Carol Service on Sunday 20th December. This will definitely include readings and some music but, unless there is a change in Covid regulations, there is no congregational singing allowed. We shall have one service only over the Christmas period which, rather than Midnight Mass, will be termed The First Mass of Christmas and will be held at 10pm on Christmas Eve, Thursday 24th December, and conducted by Rev Keith Powell. **PLEASE LOOK ON THE CHURCH NOTICEBOARD FOR INFORMATION NEARER THAT DATE.**

The Churchwardens, PCC and members of St. Gregory's Church would like to wish you all a Peaceful and Blessed Christmas and New Year.

HOTV Shares

When the formal share offer, inviting people to become members of the HOTV Community Benefit Society closed in March it was on the basis of the project having reached its goal for the community contribution to the financing the project. This does not mean that it is no longer possible to purchase shares. For people who were maybe reticent due to uncertainty around the success of the project, as well as those new to the village the opportunity to purchase shares remains open.

If you would like to purchase shares, the share application form can be found on the documents page of HOTVSSG.org or you can email contact@hotvssg.org for more information.

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

Due to the Covid19 Lockdown and restrictions there are no notices of village 'events' for the period covered by this issue. However if there are any events planned for the next quarter (March , April, May 2021) please send details in to the editor by Friday 19th February 2021. Thank you very much.

Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

Over the last few months we have happily played tennis at SSG Tennis Club in a Covid secure environment in accordance with Government & LTA guidance. As well as Club sessions, members play & coaching, non-members from the local community have regularly booked courts for their own play.

Sadly this all came to a stop on 5th November following current lockdown restrictions being applied. However, with (hopefully) the lifting of restrictions on 2nd December, the courts will again be open for play.

When we reopen please take the opportunity to book a Pay & Play court. Alternatively, short term monthly & 4 monthly memberships are available. See the following link: -

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

If you are new to tennis or haven't played for a while, a small group have got together to play on Sunday mornings, known as Rusty Rackets session, & coaching for them will be available midweek. If interested please get in touch, you do not have to be a member. Similarly, adult coaching is available midweek for more experienced players.

Plans for Junior Tennis coaching have been delayed due to COVID, but it continues to be our intention to start when conditions allow.

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

During the summer, we held several services outdoors in our church grounds and enjoyed worshipping God together surrounded by God's beautiful creation. We held our Harvest celebration in our church building at the end of September and thanked God for His provision. We collected items to donate to the local Foodbank. During lockdown 2, we have returned to hosting services on Zoom including the Remembrance service on 8th November. Graham Gleed laid the wreath on behalf of the village by the new pavilion and we all watched on our screens as he did so. If you would like to join us on Zoom one Sunday at 10.30am, please email ssgbaptists@gmail.com and we will send you a link.

We look forward to the day when we can restart Twigs, our toddler group, Messy Church, our lunch club for older members of the community and all of the other things we do including supporting the school. Below are our plans for Christmas services (some dependent on what the government guidelines are by then). For up to date info, please see our website: ssgbaptists.com

20th Dec 6pm Traditional Carol service on Zoom
24th Dec 6pm Christingle service on Zoom
25th Dec 10am Christmas Day service in the chapel

Services will then resume on 3rd January, either in the chapel or on Zoom. Please check our website for details nearer the time.

Williams Hall Social Events Committee
Wish you all a Happy and Safe Christmas



and a
Healthy
New Year.



We hope to return with events in 2021
Restrictions allowing

Climate Emergency

You may be well aware that there is increased emphasis on protecting our natural environment. SWTC and SCC have declared a climate emergency in our region, among many local authorities who have done similar. Here in Stoke St Gregory it is apparent that our efforts to support mitigation of the impact of climate change have been limited compared to others. There is a wealth of information and guidance which is available through Somerset Climate Action Network. As a Parish at the centre of an important ecological area it is important to contribute to these efforts, but we are a small parish, working almost entirely on a volunteer basis. The capacity to undertake work in this key area is entirely proportional to the effort we are able to apply.

For this reason, the Parish Council would like to hear from anyone, young or old, who feel they would be able to contribute to a more concerted effort in the parish to address the impact of the climate emergency. If you wish to contribute, please contact the Chairman or the Clerk of the Parish Council.

Coates English Willow

At the time of the newsletter going to press it is thought that: The Shop and Museum at Coates English Willow should be open from Thursday 3rd December for purchases and visits at the usual times, as long as the second Lockdown has ended and Covid19 restrictions permit. We look forward to seeing you.

If the rules do not allow us to reopen, then if anyone would like to buy baskets and other goods please phone the office on 01823 490249, to order and arrange collection.