

All items for the  
Spring edition by  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February  
2022

# Stoke News

Winter 2021

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

AN EXCEPTIONAL NEW OPPORTUNITY TO...

Join our NEW  
Somerset Heating  
Oil Buying Club!



SAVE up to  
10% on your  
heating oil cost!

- FREE TO JOIN
- Independent of suppliers
- Order for more than one location
- Pay the supplier direct
- Local suppliers and depots
- Fortnightly reminders and opportunities to place orders
- Monthly budget scheme available
- Our sister club in Wiltshire has over 950 members and buys 1.5 million litres annually!

FOR MORE INFORMATION & FREE REGISTRATION  
[www.somerset.oilbuyingclub.com](http://www.somerset.oilbuyingclub.com)

**SPONSOR FOR THIS ISSUE: The Somerset Oil Buying Club** It is just over a year since I started the Somerset Oil Buying Club, and to date we have over 50 members across Somerset. Our prices are consistently the most competitive. However, if a member is able to buy cheaper within 24 hours of the order confirmation, we will cancel your order. Orders are collected over a 10-14 day period for delivery during the following fortnight. If you order just before the order collection closes and mark your order Urgent, then the delivery could be with you in as little as five days. By working with local depots who know the area, the number of vehicles passing through our villages is reduced as orders are collated. If you have a village hall, or a neighbour or relative who struggles with IT and is not able to take advantage of the offers that the internet bring, you can add them on to your order. If you are currently a member and are satisfied with our service, do tell your friends about SOBC. Conversely, please do let me know. [sarawillan@gmail.com](mailto:sarawillan@gmail.com) 07919 566 968

## Stoke Stampede: A note for your diaries. 9th January 2022.

The Stoke Stampede is back. We already have 450 runners signed up to take on the 10km route.

To the new members of our community, the Stampede is a 10km race around our village. This is a marvellous event which attracts runners from all over the south west who say it is the one race they really look forward to.

We hold this event to raise funds to maintain our wonderful playing field for the benefit of all of you. If you wish to help in any way, we can always find jobs to do. Please contact either Tom Duxbury on 07714 696707 or Paul Morse on 07519 397133.

Alternatively, please just come out and support, enjoy the event from 10.30am. Look forward to seeing you all there.

Paul Morse Race director

### 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](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

## Parish Council Report

In the November PC meeting there were two **planning applications** to consider. The first of these for a wooden garage at Reed's Barn, Meare Green was supported, however the second for an extension and carport at Brae Barn, Curload was more problematic. While the PC does not normally stand in the way of individual property development, errors in the application around the property line would have created access and parking issues. As a result, the PC felt it could not support this application.

Thanks to the comprehensive proposals submitted by Kelly De Silva, we were successful in receiving **£1500 from the SALC** (Somerset Association of Local Councils). This money will be redistributed among the Scouts, the Environment Group, The Tennis Club and the Baptist Church. Ironically a request for funds for the Church Room was declined due to archaic legislation that prevents the PC contributing to Church assets. We have also been successful for a further phase 2 application which requested £5000 for the Willowset.

The **Budget precept** was agreed and submitted. A 10% increase was proposed which closely matches the increase in the number of households in the village as a consequence of Broomfield Park. Any individual household should therefore see minimal change in the contribution paid to the Parish. It was also decided not to fund the young people's initiative through the precept, but to seek grant funding for this. PC reserves will also be impacted by funding the 30mph zone in Meare Green which could cost between eight and ten thousand pounds.

It was agreed to proceed with the **young people's initiative**, and to engage with The Community Youth Project to design and plan a first meeting to which young people will be invited so that their needs can be better defined. It is anticipated that this will take place early in the New Year.

Following the PC meeting and after over a year of inactivity SCC highways have started work on the project detail for the **30mph zone in Meare Green**. The project now appears to be moving forward with some momentum. The next step will be to understand the costings and approve the expenditure.

At the end of September, we had the opportunity to participate in a conference that introduced the project to move to a **single (unitary) authority**, replacing the current district and county councils. While this is superficially a simple concept the transition is a complex activity with high levels of uncertainty, particularly for a small parish like ours. There may be considerable benefit to be realised, but how this will be achieved against the aggressive timeline envisaged will be subject to clarification over the coming months.

An urgent need has been expressed to replace the **broken bench** at the bus stop at Polkesfield. There will be a site inspection this month. If this does not result in progress, the PC will move ahead to purchase a bench as a Parish asset.

I hope it has not escaped your notice, but the **Phone Box** at the playing field has at long last been refurbished and painted. Thanks are due to Trevor Hooper who volunteered to undertake this work and a fine job it is! We are happy to receive any suggestions as to how you think this space can be best used.

Finally, for those of you who walk the **paths and byways** of Stoke St Gregory, with or without a dog, I am sure you would wish to join the thanks to the footpaths team in the Environment Group who have been steadily cutting back overgrowth at styles and gates. A small but very noticeable improvement.

## The Queens Jubilee

Next year Her Majesty the Queen will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee marking 70 years on the throne. The Village would like to commemorate this extraordinary event in an appropriate way. While the event is still 6 months away, we would like to start planning and organising this event. The PC would like to hear from any volunteers who would be willing to help. If you would like to contribute, please contact Kelly the Parish Clerk [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

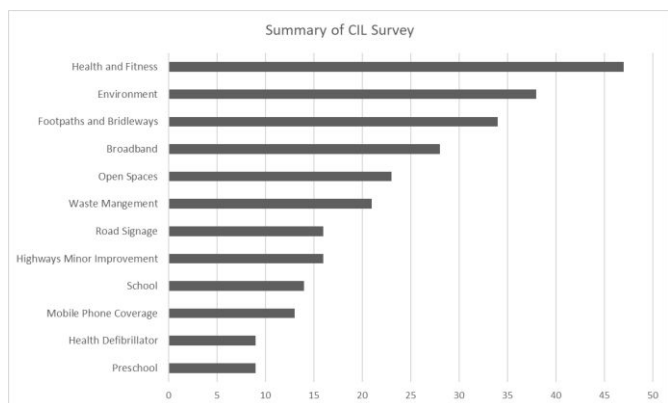
## Results of Community Survey on Allocation of CIL Funds.

The results of the survey have been reviewed and collated and were presented at the PC meeting this month. It is true to say that we are disappointed that only around 25% of households responded to the survey. For an issue which has generated considerable discussion, it can only be interpreted that it does not figure in people's priorities given all the other current challenges. However, we do believe we have sufficient data to draw valid conclusions.

In analysing the results, we only counted contributions that were positive indications of support, rather than neutral or negative comments. We also removed comments that are covered by existing budgets. The outcome of the survey which is as follows.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this data are as follows

- In the category Health and Fitness there was strong support for the provision of a multi-use games area at the Playing Field which can be used by all age groups
- In the Environment category, a strong desire was expressed to identify (and purchase) a plot of land that could be converted into a 'wild space' for community enjoyment
- The provision of better gates and stiles on footpaths also received significant support.
- While no decisions have been taken on spending, it was agreed that we will start to explore possible options for the first two of these listed.



## Stoke St. Gregory Women's Institute

A very successful return to Group Meetings in the Hall in September was followed by a more controversial subject in October when the Speaker, Alan Foster, introduced us to the world of UFO's and Crop Circles. He shared a wealth of historical information, photos and videos of unusual events. He was passionate about the validity of most of the claims made and facilitated an open-minded discussion that left all of us to make up our own minds about the subjects.

The November Group Meeting was led by Graham Farrington. It was a hands-on, interactive event with all of our members trying to make an origami box, decorative and practical water-lily napkin and crane with moving wings. It was thoroughly enjoyable to be part of a group relaxing and learning together under the watchful eye of a very patient teacher who even treated us to chocolate for the box.

The next time we meet will be for a Christmas Celebration Lunch on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

2022 will begin for Stoke St. Gregory W. I. on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January when Ian Upshall will talk about the aims and achievements of The Stoke Environment Group. Visitors are always welcome to come along to a meeting, enjoy good company in a social and educational setting and discover whether they might be interested in becoming a member. Sandra Gleed President

## Stoke St Gregory History: Crooked Drove

If you walk the public footpath from Hook Bridge, round the back of Turkey, along Crooked Drove, and across the railway to Baltmoor Wall, you will be following the main channel of the original River Tone. The river then meandered across Salt Moor, turning right at West Yeo. It joined the Parrett near Manor Farm. If you walk back down Cuts road to Athelney Bridge you will be following a smaller channel of the Tone, which then curved round below Athelney Hill and joined the Parrett near the present confluence. Between your start and finish points is a stretch dug and embanked in 1374-5 to lessen the flooding on the land of the Abbot of Athelney. When Baltmoor Wall was added, Saltmoor (part of the Athelney Estate) was even more protected from flooding, but the owners of land on Stanmoor (then Stathe Moor) were not happy, as their property was much more liable to be flooded. Not only was all the water coming down from Taunton and the hills beyond now very near their property. The Tone was also entering the Parrett at a place where it was already not deep or wide enough to cope with the volume of water arriving from its own headwaters. Read more on the Stoke History Site: gregorystoke@aol.com

1<sup>st</sup> October was the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> year of

## Stoke St Gregory Meals,

an independent, non-profit-making organisation providing freshly cooked mid-day meals delivered twice a week to people in houses in Stoke St Gregory and North Curry. All cooks and drivers are volunteers and the cooks, who cook in their own kitchens, have food hygiene certificates. As from 1<sup>st</sup> December the cost of a meal is £3.90.

If you, a relative or neighbour is interested in finding out about the service, please phone: Carole Joll (490077) or Judy Blair (490222) or Vicki Fielding (490565)

## Community Christmas Food/Toy Bank

As this festive season approaches with all of its trappings of food and gifts it is well worth reflecting on those who struggle to find the resources to participate in the festive cheer. At the initiative of Anne Merritt, the suggestion is that we set up a community food and toy bank, which will be overseen by the PC, such that those who are less fortunate and in particular children can benefit from the generosity of fellow members of the community.

Donations can be left at the Shop or the Pub at any time where they will be stored prior to distribution during the week before Christmas. Toys and games of all description would be particularly appreciated, provided they are new or in very good condition. If you wish to donate fresh produce to be delivered before Christmas this can be ordered through the shop. In anticipation of a positive response the PC would like to thank all who are able to contribute.

Pamela Merritt It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Pamela Merritt. Pam passed away on September 21<sup>st</sup> in Musgrove Park Hospital, three days after her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Pam had lived in the village almost continuously from a very early age following her parents move from Drayton. Pamela attended the village school and went on to become a maths teacher at Bishop Fox's school. Pamela is probably better known for running the Post office and shop at the top of Griggs Hill until it closed in 2011. Widely known for her love of animals and in particular, cats as well as gardening, Pamela was also extremely well versed in history and classical art and until two years ago still travelled widely in Europe seeking out specific works of interest. Stoke St Gregory will be poorer for the loss of a character widely known in the community.

**THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY** We have decided, after 15 years, it's time to retire. Accordingly, we have collected all BOXES during October and November and have retained them. They will be available together with all relevant documents for whoever carries on. Thank you to all the loyal BOX HOLDERS. Some have supported this worthwhile cause for well over 25 years.

Margaret and Philip Quantock. Rosedale, Windmill, Woodhill, Stoke St Gregory. 01823 490432

## **PRIDE OF SOMERSET**

The **Stoke Saint Gregory** Community Group, known fondly as the Heart of The Village, HOTV, are the proud winners of the Somerset Medal 2021.

**Stoke St Gregory**, with a population of only 942 is celebrating a positive village success story, worthy of that award. Our village was in danger of losing its remaining Shop and Pub just before the pandemic started.

As a result, concerned residents set up a community company, **HOTV** Stoke St Gregory Ltd, to pump life back into the heart of the village. The Heart of the Village project aim was to buy the Royal Oak, transfer the shop into it and run both shop and pub. A unique feature of this particular enterprise is combining the shop and pub into a community hub alongside a Cafe.

The coronavirus pandemic has fostered "a greater sense of connection", spurring villagers to volunteer to help others in the community. Faced with this adversity, we could have become more divided and looked for others to blame.

This crisis has brought out the best of community spirit. We saw it in the daily acts of kindness playing out across the village, whether that's delivering food parcels or phone calls to those who are lonely and isolated at home.

The resilience and ability of Stoke St Gregory's residents to adapt and mobilise will shape positive outcomes for the Village Community now and in the future. The presence of our new hub @The Royal Oak, provides a positive local impact, by ensuring the provision of a community space and a variety of services that would otherwise be lacking in the area, including a visiting Post Office service.

Our Pub, Shop and Café, run by the community and for the community help bring people closer together. Importantly, they are a space for older, vulnerable and more isolated residents to access important local services and feel part of their community.

**A truly Award- Winning Community Project.**



Carolyn and Mike receiving the Medal on behalf of the village community from the Chair of Somerset County Council

## **News from Stoke Environment Group**

Thank you to everyone who came along and supported the very first Stoke Envirofair in October! All in all, we believe it was a great success and we received very positive feedback from both visitors and exhibitors. In case you missed it, we welcomed a wide range of groups and organisations including the Somerset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Somerset Waste Partnership, Coates English Willow, the School, Somerset Beekeepers, Somerset Wildlands, Dykes Farm, the Parish and Baptist churches, and Willow Set. We are now planning the next fair which we hope will be held in June 2022. We want this to be as inclusive as possible and we would like to invite all groups to attend and demonstrate their environmental credentials! Contact us for more information.

Stoke St Gregory Parish is now officially 'on the map'. "Well, of course it is" I hear you say – but this map is to be used to assess the 'Somerset State of Nature', which is being managed by the Somerset Environmental Records Centre and Somerset Wildlife Trust. We are the first parish, outside Taunton, to be included in the project and the prospect of making a valuable contribution is very exciting. More details to follow, but in brief, it is based on citizen science – and that's where we all individually come in. By using a free phone app, we will be able to record sightings of nature and upload them so that community resources can be used to provide targeted help to the environment where it is most needed. We are just finalising the process and SEG hopes to launch this initiative very soon. Look out for more information on our Facebook page: Stoke Environment Group.

Our work on footpath clearing and mapping continues – I am sure you have noticed the difference! We are now identifying signage and making improvements. We live in fantastic countryside and the best way to experience it is to walk it. Easy-to-use guides are being produced to help us navigate our way around.

We are currently awaiting our new hedge whips for the village hall boundary, and we hope to organise a family hedge planting day so that everyone can contribute to this ground-breaking project! There will be a few trees being planted too – we hope this will be the start of something bigger.

Well done to the Brownies who, during half-term, learned all about one of our favourite native species – Mr Hedgehog! With the expert guidance from George who works for Secret World, the young environmentalists got to know this prickly friend, where they live, what they eat and they then made some hedgehog homes. If you look very closely, you may see some Hedgehog Hotels around the village!

Now that the COP conference has finished, there will be much for governments to consider in the fight against climate change. SEG was formed as a result of the need for our community, amongst others, to take on the challenge. Our efforts may be considered small on a global scale, but every tree planted will make a difference, every use of a footpath rather than a car journey will make a difference, every purchase of a local product will reduce carbon emissions. SEG hopes to encourage all of us to re-think our actions – if we do nothing, even on a small scale, we will be responsible for the severe consequences that our children and grandchildren will unquestionably inherit.

Please contact us to stay in touch and, if you can, help us to take care of our wonderful Parish.

**Next Meeting: January 20<sup>th</sup> 2022. For more details**

**Email us on [envirostoke@yahoo.org](mailto:envirostoke@yahoo.org) or telephone 07837 764367.**

## **HOTV Report**

At the beginning of October as significant Milestone was passed in that competitive skittles returned to the Royal Oak. We are very happy to host two female teams and hope to welcome one or more men's teams when the schedule is clarified. Thanks are again due to the team of volunteers who prepared the skittle alley for competition.

The summary of our financial year end, as approved by AC Mole, versus the plan that was in effect for the last year has now been published. The figures show that we actually performed better than anticipated but with a different mix of contributions. We are now actively into a new planning cycle to chart our progress from start-up to a fully functioning enterprise delivering the offering that was originally anticipated. On behalf of the Management Committee and all members I would like to thank the diligence and persistence of David Crabbe in putting together this clear and accurate statement of our financial health at year end. The results are presented in a way that is self-explanatory and are available at <https://www.stokestgregory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Act-v-Bud-2020-21-final-plus-commentary.pdf> but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to forward them to [contact@HOTVSSG.org](mailto:contact@HOTVSSG.org) or [accounts@HOTVSSG.org](mailto:accounts@HOTVSSG.org)

The Plunkett Foundation have just released their annual reports on the health of Community Businesses in the Shops and Pubs sector. It makes for very interesting reading and is an opportunity to benchmark ourselves against other communities engaged in similar projects to HOTV. Although we seem to be fairly unique in overlapping between both reports. It is good to see a photo of the shop on page 18 of the Pub Report (credit to Lin Silcock)

If you wish to read the reports they can be found at

<https://plunkett.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Plunkett-Foundation-Better-Business-Report-2021-Community-Pubs.pdf>

<https://plunkett.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Better-Business-Report-Community-Shops.pdf>

We recently received an unannounced visit from the SWTC Public and Environment Health team to evaluate our hygiene and allergen practices in the shop. I am very happy to tell you that we were awarded a five-star rating at the conclusion of this visit. Congratulations to Jo and Carolyn for the work done to achieve this success at the first pass.

The Solar PV panels now have been installed on both sides of the roof above the function room. They were switched on Thursday evening October 25th. It is a joy to see the meter, given the present cost of electricity, whirring round, even when it is raining. Thanks go to Somerset County Council Climate Emergency Social Fund for the grant that permitted this improvement.

Finally, as the world holds its breath, work is progressing towards starting our food offering later this month (November). Plans are well in hand. What we wish to avoid is a prejudicial reaction due to trying to do too much too quickly, thereby compromising customers' perceptions. It will be a low key start but plans are well in hand to ramp this up as experience and demand evolve.

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

# NOTICEBOARD

Events for March, April  
and May 2022 by  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February

## WILLIAMS HALL SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm**

We are pleased to announce that we have been able to arrange another concert of Christmas music with the

### GLASTONBURY BRASS BAND

Tickets £8 including mulled wine and mince pies will be available from the village shop  
Many of you were very pleased with their last concert 3 years ago and we hope you will join us again.

For those of you who missed their last performance or are new to the village we can assure you that you will have an enjoyable evening and there is clip from that performance on the VH website via the following link

[www.williamshall.org.uk/brassband](http://www.williamshall.org.uk/brassband)

**19th February 2022**

Line dancing in the Village Hall  
7 for 7.30pm  
Tickets £7

Further details of the above and all our events are available on the Village Hall website  
[www.williamshall.org.uk](http://www.williamshall.org.uk) and on posters around the village.

If you have any queries contact Louise on 0776123893

NB. Due to the current covid situation we may need to cancel events if the committee believes it is not safe for the event to take place

We are also looking for new members for our social events committee. If you are interested, please give Louise a ring on 0776123893

Follow us on social media



@williamshallevents



@williamshallevents

## Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

*Everyone is welcome to any of our Christmas activities. We wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas!*

**Messy Church:** 10am Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December. Fun for all the family to enjoy together. Join us for breakfast followed by crafts, story and songs.

**Traditional Carols by Candlelight service:** Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 6.30pm. Readings and carols. Refreshments served afterwards.

**Carols in the square:** Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 6pm. Enjoy singing carols together outside. (a joint event with St Gregory's Church)

**Family Christingle service:** Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December 6pm. For those who like to dress up, this is your chance to come dressed as a nativity character. Not compulsory to dress up though!

**Christmas Day service:** 10am. Short family service. Feel free to bring a favourite present to show everyone.

**Boxing Day:** no service today.

*We look forward to seeing you!*

For more details, email [sonyacsetchell@gmail.com](mailto:sonyacsetchell@gmail.com)

## JUNIOR TENNIS COACHING AT STOKE ST GREGORY TENNIS CLUB

Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club in partnership with Somerset Community Foundation are able to offer a significant reduction in normal charges for Junior tennis coaching for children residing in Stoke St Gregory / North Curry & immediate surrounding areas.

We are able to fund a subsidy on prices for Luke Andrews' Christmas Tennis Coaching course over 5 days, December 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> 9.30 to 10.30am, reducing the cost from £25 to £15 per child. We then hope to offer subsidised regular weekly coaching on Sundays in the New Year.

To book a place on the Christmas holiday course, go to

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/LATennisCoaching/Coaching/Course/1bc7e375-e04f-4185-831a-a940689ef1d2>

For technical reasons, you will need to pay the full amount online, but SSG Tennis Club will make a £10 cash refund to all local participants on the first day of attendance.

What are you waiting for?

For more information, contact Stuart Mark 490541 [stuart.w.mark@btinternet.com](mailto:stuart.w.mark@btinternet.com)  
or [ssgtennisclub@gmail.com](mailto:ssgtennisclub@gmail.com)

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

## North Curry and District Amateur Gardeners

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December** when **Nina and Stephen Locke** will be "**In search of the Black Iris. A journey through Jordan**".

This illustrated talk describes a trip through Jordan to find the elusive Black Iris. From the Syrian border in the north to the desert of Wadi Rum in the far south, Nina and Stephen show us some of the beautiful landscapes and varied habitats which are home to numerous wild flowers in addition to the Irises; and something of the history of this ancient kingdom.

*Just a reminder that this meeting will again be in Stoke St Gregory Village Hall, possibly for the last time before we return to meetings in North Curry.*

*Come a little earlier than usual and join us for some festive mulled wine and mince pies at 7.30pm before the talk. We look forward to seeing you all.*

## The Parish Church News Stoke St. Gregory

We are delighted to report that the Revd. Dr. Simon Bale has now been installed as Vicar of the Athelney Benefice. The Service of Installation took place on Wednesday 17 November. Representatives of SSG, North Curry, Lyng and Burrowbridge took part, and we welcome Revd. Simon.

### Charity Lunches:

The Monday Charity Lunches have re-started, and we were delighted to welcome so many to the first one which took place on 25 October in aid of the RBL Poppy Appeal. If you would like to host a future lunch for a Charity or Organisation, please contact Annette Gage on 01823 490297.

### Christmas Services:

19 December – Service of Christmas Carols and Readings, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.  
24 December – Christmas Eve – 3pm. Crib Service. 10pm. The First Mass of Christmas

### Future Dates:

1 March 2022 – Shrove Tuesday. Traditional Shrove Tuesday Supper in the Church Room.  
The Speaker will be the Vicar.  
Please check the Parish Magazine for more details.

Early May – By kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sundquist, Hillcrest gardens will be open under the NGS scheme. Further details in 2022.

**The Vicar, Churchwardens, PCC and members of the Parish Church wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year 2022.**