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the Stoke News

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## The Queen's Jubilee

Her Majesty the Queen will be celebrating her Platinum Jubilee, 70 years on the throne, starting February 6th, but with events centred upon a four-day weekend from Thursday 2nd June. While this is still some time away, thoughts are turning to events that will be organised in the Village. The Parish Council will undertake to coordinate activity and to contribute to the festivities as necessary. So far plans include

- A Jubilee Breakfast at the Village Hall
- Cream Tea at the Baptist Church
- A Village Picnic, with food and entertainment, on the Playing Field

We are still looking for creative ideas, possibly prompted by events that have proved successful in the past. So, if you have suggestions in this regard, or are willing to help please let us know.

## Young People's Meeting

It has long been recognised that the downside of living in a rural idyll is the lack of things to do for young people. While we are very grateful for an active Beavers/Cubs/Scouts programme, there is little in the way of facilities for young people to meet and arrange activities on an informal basis. As a first step in trying to address this there will be a meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup> to which all young people, in the age range of 10-16 will be invited. This meeting will set out to explore what are the needs and how to address them. The meeting will be in the Royal Oak with pizza and soft drinks supplied. Any young person wishing to attend unaccompanied will require a parental consent form.

## Parish Council Report

The December PC meeting was postponed. With no time critical items on the agenda and in the absence of clear guidance on meeting protocols against the backdrop of the then emerging Covid Omicron threat, a decision was taken to carry forward agenda items to the January meeting. The normal meeting schedule has now resumed

There have been only two new **planning applications**. The first to convert a garage and build a small single storey extension on the East side of 9, Huntham Close. The second to build a new garage to the rear of The Old Stores, Meare Green. Both were supported by the Parish Council

During the February meeting the allocation of the final **social housing properties** in Broomfield Park prompted a lengthy discussion on the allocation process, particularly for local residents and those with local connections. Two divergent views were expressed. On the one hand, having taken an active role in identifying the need and actively promoting the development the PC is entirely excluded from the process of allocation. Conversely the choice based letting system is managed by professionals according to government guidelines, and as such is independent of any bias that a local process may engender. All agreed that it was pleasing to see that so many local people had successfully applied, but equally that there is insufficient suitable housing to meet the ongoing demand.

Following the summary of responses to the community survey on use of **CIL funds** three clear areas of interest have emerged: fitness and health, pathways and bridleways, and the environment. There is no immediate pressure to make a quick decision on the best use for these funds, and we continue to encourage input from the community on the best use of the funds available to us. With the impending elections for the Parish Council due in May, it was agreed that while data gathering should continue no decision would be taken until the new Parish Council is installed.

At the January meeting it was agreed that the **Give Back at Christmas** initiative instigated by Anne Merritt was an outstanding success despite the short lead time. A number of families received gifts of toys, food and vouchers. These were given in the context of a Christmas gift from the community and not intended to be seen as charity. Several key lessons were learnt which will be applied next year, not least to try to cover a broader age range. The PC recoded its thanks to Anne for her efforts and the community at large for the gifts kindly donated.

The progress toward a **reorganisation of local government** continues, however the implications for small parishes such as Stoke St Gregory remain to be defined. While participation in Local Community Networks such as the proposed Heart of the Levels network, is a means of exerting more direct control over the allocation of key resources to communities, it will rely on extensive participation from local volunteers.

We have been informed that work on changing the **speed limit in Meare Green** has unfortunately been postponed until April. While on the subject of road safety, with the long winter nights persisting for some weeks yet, concern has been expressed to the Parish Council regarding the number of individuals, both pedestrians and cyclists who are not wearing high visibility apparel when traveling around the village, particularly in the early evening and morning busy times. To address this the PC has purchased **Hi Vis vests** which are available free of charge at the shop for those who need them. Distribution will be on a strictly one per person basis.

### 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 (cont.)

Recent weeks have seen a proliferation of **road works** in and around the village. While we usually receive notice of these this is not always the case, such that works can occur that are not notified. This past week (February 14<sup>th</sup>) has been particularly severe and despite the considerable best efforts of the Parish Clerk information received has often been conflicting and incomplete, with the one.network website being discounted as never up to date. While all of this is most unsatisfactory, please have patience and try to accommodate the inconvenience.

In the February meeting it was agreed that the PC would fund the purchase of tools to enable the footpaths group, which is part of the Stoke Environmental Group, to **maintain footpaths** in the village. We also have been told that the hazardous steps on path T25/15, part of the East Deane Way, will be refurbished and a handrail installed.

Finally, the PC has agreed to start the process of adopting a **Green Charter** for the Parish. This will be on the agenda for the March meeting so if you have a contribution to make to this discussion, please come along to the meeting on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

## Elections

The transition to a single unitary authority continues at pace. The current schedule makes it almost certain that local government elections including Parish Councils will occur on May 5<sup>th</sup>. It is a cherished value that the community of Stoke St Gregory has traditionally had a choice of candidates that they can vote for, rather than an uncontested election where there are less candidates than places available. If you have an interest in helping to make the community of Stoke St Gregory a better place, your application to be a candidate in the upcoming election will be welcomed. Please contact the Parish Clerk, [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

**Stoke St. Gregory WI** had an excellent start to the New Year by welcoming two new members to our group.

Everyone gathered in a positive frame of mind, looking forward to 2022 being the year in which COVID restrictions would become less arduous and we would find a way of managing our lives to live with it.

Our Programme began on January 11th with an inspiring, informative talk by Ian Upshall of the Stoke Environment Group.

Ian emphasised that the venture is a community one aimed at encompassing all ages and people from all walks of life to come together to protect our local environment and make an impact on climate change no matter how small they think it may be; it will make a difference for our generation and generations to follow. Our WI were available to serve refreshments in the afternoon of January 29<sup>th</sup> when the Stoke Environment Group planted a hedge along the fences at The Williams Hall.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> the WI Programme continued with 'Upcycling Crafts' - another facet of helping to protect the environment. Our Speaker, Jenny Barham, gave an impassioned talk on how to recycle any unwanted items we may have. On display were many decorative wreaths made from old bicycle wheels, coat hangers, hose pipes and bamboo from the garden. They were adorned with fabric from old dresses, ribbons, anything that sparkled and even the mesh used to hold fruits such as lemons and tangerines and came in all shapes and sizes. It was an entertaining evening. Forthcoming meetings:

**On March 8<sup>th</sup> Vanessa Linnell : A talk on St. Giles Rescue Centre.**

**April 12<sup>th</sup> Pam Martin will demonstrate The Art of Stick Weaving.**

**On May 10<sup>th</sup> Mark Woodcock will talk about Open Door.**

We are a small, growing, happy WI in the Taunton Vale Group of The Somerset County Federation, entering into the spirit of "fun, friendship and learning" that comes with joining the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Meetings are every second Tuesday of the month and start at 7pm in The Village Hall. Doors open from 6. 40 pm. Visitors are always welcome to come along to discover whether they might be interested in becoming a member. The charge is £3 plus 40 pence for tea and biscuits and £1 for a raffle ticket if you choose to buy one. Benefits of becoming a member include outings organised by our own WI and the SCFWI, a County News Newsletter and a National WI Life Magazine. Most of all the community spirit and support network formed is invaluable. Sandra Gleed -President.

## **Stoke St Gregory History:**

**Stoke School** was built in 1857, on land given by the Rev. Richard Watson Moor, who was then simply a 'Perpetual Curate', the only local 'Vicar' being in North Curry. It had the plural title of 'Stoke St Gregory Schools', as there were deemed to be separate provision for boys and girls. When it opened it catered for 140 children, who (officially) stayed up to the age of 14, although children as young as five were employed stripping withies. Some might stay on as 'pupil teachers', when they would be given some more education while looking after some of the younger ones. The average attendance in 1894 had dropped to 107, but increased again after 1900. Walter Ernest Pullen was headmaster for over 41 years (his wife Annie also taught in the school), until December 1918.

Read more about the school in Victorian times in next Sunday's History Spot:

[www.gregorystoke.org](http://www.gregorystoke.org)

## **News from Coates English Willow**

The dry winter has meant we have had the best harvesting conditions for at least 10 years. We are well ahead and have even managed to do some tidying in the withy beds which is virtually unheard of this time of year.

Easter and the longer days mean that we will soon be moving to summer opening times in the shop and museum.

Work on the new Willow Heritage Centre is progressing well, the building is almost complete. So now behind the scenes we are working on the interior and design for the exhibits.

We have a vacant shop space. Unit 2 is now empty and is available to rent. If you are interested, please contact Nicola or Diane on 01823 490249 or email [info@coatesenglishwillow.co.uk](mailto:info@coatesenglishwillow.co.uk)

**Jubilee Celebrations-** watch our social media and website for details of our events over this special weekend.

## **Dog Poo!**

One of the consequences of both the lockdown and the increase in the village population due to the housing development is a dramatic increase in the number of dogs in the village. While most owners act responsibly in clearing up after their animals, there are still a few that fail to do so. This is particularly unpleasant when it occurs in public places and on footpaths, in particular opposite the school. Failure to clear up after your dog is actually a public order offence and can be the subject of a fixed penalty notice.

If you own a dog, please ensure that you fulfil your obligation to the wider community and clear up after it. There are dog poo bins located at the entrance to playing field and the village hall. These are emptied weekly, so please use them.

## **THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY**

After many years of volunteering their time for the charity, Margaret and Philip Quantock have stepped down from organizing the collection of boxes from contributors, but are pleased to say that Jenny Priddle (34, Polkes Field, Stoke St Gregory) has agreed to take over responsibility for the boxes. Many existing supporters are continuing, but if anyone else wishes to have a box in which to put coins/change – they are collected in and emptied annually and the total given to the Children's Society– please make contact with Jenny.

## Langport Mummers perform at the Royal Oak

The Award winning, Community owned **Royal Oak** pub in Stoke St Gregory, is proud to present a celebration of the Spring Equinox, when Spring begins, at the pub on **Sunday 20th March @ 12:30pm.**

This FREE event will be led by the Langport Mummers who are well known for their "hilarious" interpretation of ancient customs.

England has a number of traditional plays performed exclusively by male non-actors (including female parts) from within the community, handed down in oral tradition with lost origins. These take a number of forms.

The traditional folk plays are known as 'The Mummers' Play' and are often based on the legend of Saint George. This is claimed by some as an ancient tradition but seems reliably to date back to the early 18th century. In fact, the title describes a wide variety of plays handed down by word of mouth with varying forms and costumes. Mummer's plays are in fact mystery plays like the Christian ones of Medieval Britain with a cultivated air of strangeness.

Mummers' plays are performed by males exclusively in a bold, exclamation style without actorly pretence. Originally the players were drawn from the working- class community in groupings, so for example the Plough Monday plays were performed by Plough Hands and so on. The performers carried on family participation handing down the roles on death or retirement. It was a matter of pride and continuity to take part within the family. The revived form of Mummers from the twentieth century onwards is typically more middle class in nature as it is a deliberate rather than spontaneous communal act.

Mummer's plays are often comic in tone with a formal structure but allowing for many comic asides and there is an element of community celebration and humour in the performances. However, the plays are not pantomime in nature and taken very seriously by the performers.

Many of the costumes for the Mummers hide their faces and this acts as both increasing the mystery and liberating the performers around those they would know and love. This is consistent with the concept of 'guising', going in disguise as part of festivities. So masks, streamers, hats with strips hanging down and blackened faces are variously used to strange and beguiling effect.



Above: The Langport Mummers

## Footpath Group

Members of the footpath group are planning to walk the East Deane Way from Burrowbridge to North Curry and from North Curry back to Burrowbridge on Sedgemoor and Curry Moor. This will be done in several sections on different days during the spring.

If anyone is interested in participating in any of these sections please email me on [ssrs@btopenworld.com](mailto:ssrs@btopenworld.com).

Many thanks - Sarah Evans

## HOTV

The period from early December through to the Stoke Stampede was an outstanding trading success. From the Christmas Fayre through to the last customer in the Pub after the stampede the business has performed at or beyond expectations. Our thanks should go to Carolyn, Jason, Jo and Phil, for their contribution to this success. In overall financial terms, in the quarter ending Dec 31st, (YTD in brackets) shop sales were £94,301 (£266,188) at a margin of 34.7% (32.8%) giving a gross profit of £32,735 (£87,198). For the Pub there was a significant uptick in business coincident with the start of the food offering late in November. The corresponding numbers for the Pub are sales of £20,211 (£41,725) at a margin of 52.2% (51.45%) giving a gross profit of £10,542 (£21,452).

While the combined gross profit of £108K YTD is undoubtedly impressive it is also true to say our costs have been higher than anticipated. Salaries are by far the biggest administrative expense, but also major increases in the price of electricity and to a lesser extent gas have contributed. It is true to say that our estimate for consumption of electricity was vastly understated, even before the recent major increases in price. And as yet, with the long nights and dull days, understandably we are not seeing any major impact from the PV cells. The other cost factor to bear in mind is that repairs and renovations have cost considerably more than anticipated, mostly in terms of equipment and fittings purchased. This number would have been higher without the support of our team of volunteer handymen who have contributed magnificently.

Overall, going forward, it is anticipated that the shop will maintain performance, and the Pub, which is probably around six months behind where we originally planned, for very obvious reasons, will continue to build trade. We are also pleased to have started a lunch time hot snack service in the Café from Wednesday through Saturday which has been well received. Success, in the long run, will only be achieved by providing services that the community want, and that being reflected back by participation of the community in the venture. Discretionary spending will be closely monitored as we look to build back reserves.

We are pleased to welcome Ruaridh (pronounced Rory) Moss who has joined us as part of the Government Kickstart programme for young people. Ruaridh lives in the Village and has started his contribution under the guidance of Carolyn and Jo.

Those of you who regularly visit the shop will have noticed the construction of our fresh produce display area. This has been built by Roger Brown with help from Trevor Hooper. This permits the fresh produce to be moved from the cafe and the space restored to its intended use.

Finally, the doors from the café to the garden have at last been replaced. This permits construction of disabled access directly to the café.

## STOKE ENVIRONMENT GROUP



**Wildlife Photo Competition** Just submit a photograph, taken in the Parish of Stoke St Gregory, that captures an example of the natural world. More details: [www.envirostoke.org/photocomp](http://www.envirostoke.org/photocomp) and on our notice board. Photos, at least 2Mb, accepted in digital format at any time until 31 May 2022 - anything from an earthworm to a sunset! Send to [envirostoke@aol.com](mailto:envirostoke@aol.com)



**Compost Workshop** Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022, 10am-2 pm, Williams Hall. Many of us already make compost, but we can all perhaps learn from an expert. Composter, Nicky Scott, will be running a workshop which will include hands-on demonstrations. Watch out for posters, or follow the project on [www.envirostoke.org/compost](http://www.envirostoke.org/compost)



**Community Infrastructure Levy** This is the £64,000 that the village has been given as a result of the Broomfield Park development. The group put in an 'Expression of Interest' some time ago. The discussion is still very much open on how the money should be spent, so please get in touch with Fi McQueen, group secretary ([envirostoke@yahoo.com](mailto:envirostoke@yahoo.com)), with any spending ideas. The group can then firm up its proposals for specific projects.



**Williams Hall Spinney** Following the successful planting of a new hedge at the Village Hall, work has started on the Spinney next to Church Close. Originally planted as a sound barrier between the estate and the new hall, it now needs some TLC, to increase the number and diversity of wild creatures & plants. It will also be a great opportunity for the whole community to be involved in a small, but very visible environmental project. Coppicing has started and with more light getting between the trees we shall be able to encourage a better habitat on the ground. There will be plenty to do over the coming months, so all help welcome, especially from our younger villagers.



**Dates for Your Diary** Next Meeting: Thursday 17th March 2022, 7-9pm, Baptist Schoolroom. All welcome, and your own ideas.  
**Environment Fair:** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June 10am-4pm, at the Williams Hall.

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 June, July  
and August by Friday  
20<sup>th</sup> May

## WILLIAMS HALL SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 9am to 11am**

### Village Breakfast

Adults £7

\*\*\*\*\*CHILDREN UNDER 12 EAT FREE\*\*\*\*\*

NB All children must be accompanied by an adult  
Come eat, meet friends and let us cook your breakfast for you

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 7pm for 7.30pm**

### Quiz night

£5 per head (includes interval snack)

Teams of 6

Bar and raffle

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> or Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June**

*(Actual date to be advised when the final programme of events is agreed)*

### Village Breakfast to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee

Adults £7

\*\*\*\*\*CHILDREN UNDER 12 EAT FREE\*\*\*\*\*

NB All children must be accompanied by an adult

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 07761238933

*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 contact Louise on 07761238933**



@williamshallevents



@williamshallevents

## Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

**Junior tennis coaching** with Dan is now available every Sunday during term time. There are still places available for these regular Sunday coaching sessions:

9am - under 10 years

10am - 10 years & over

This term's remaining sessions will be charged on a pro rata basis, with a further 50% reduction for a block booking, thanks to the support from Somerset Community Foundation. Pay & Play for one-off lessons is possible, but will be charged at the normal rate.

Please book via Luke Andrews: [Latennis@hotmail.com](mailto:Latennis@hotmail.com) 07437 404242

Or enquiries to: [ssgtennis@gmail.com](mailto:ssgtennis@gmail.com) 07956 981679

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

In the event of bad weather necessitating cancellation of any session, you will be contacted by the coaching team.

## Local embroidery group welcomes new members due to moving to bigger premises.

North Curry Embroiderers meet every 2 weeks and include members who are brand new to needlework, spreading right through to professional needle women, and all stages in between.

Workshops teaching new skills and trips are held several times each year, and members support each other with individual projects.

It's a very friendly group, and for further details ring Pat Vian on 01278 662150 or email [gill99slattery@gmail.com](mailto:gill99slattery@gmail.com)

## Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

### *Dates for your diary:*

#### **Messy Church Easter event**

Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> April starts at 10am with breakfast. Crafts, singing, Bible stories – fun for all the family!

#### **Good Friday service**

Joint service of reflection with St Gregory's Church at 2pm in St Gregory's Church.

#### **Easter sunrise service**

Sun 17<sup>th</sup> April 6am behind the Baptist Chapel. Come and enjoy the view and celebrate the resurrection. Alternatively if you are feeling energetic, join the sunrise service on Burrow Mump!

#### **Easter Day celebration service**

For all the family, Sun 17<sup>th</sup> April 10.30am.

#### **TWIGS Babies and toddler group**

For babies & toddlers and their carers, every Thursday in term time 9.30 to 11.30am.

#### **Luncheon club**

Every other Wed 12noon

For more info, please contact Liz on 490828 or Alison on 490380.

*We look forward to seeing you soon!*

## NORTH CURRY TODDLER GROUP

**North Curry Village Hall  
9am- 11am Mondays (term time only)**

**A friendly and welcoming toddler group for all parents and carers with babies, toddlers & pre-schoolers.**

£1.50 donation per family suggested for each session.

**Toys, activities and a snack for children.  
Tea, coffee and biscuits for adults!**

For More Information contact  
[alsclifford@gmail.com](mailto:alsclifford@gmail.com)

Donations (or pay per term) at  
[justgiving.com/crowdfunding/north-curry-toddler-group](http://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/north-curry-toddler-group)