

Stoke St. Gregory Baptist Church: Report for the Parish AGM 2022.

While not immune from the lingering effects of the lockdowns and Covid restrictions we have all suffered over the last two years, those of us who make up the Baptist Church here in Stoke St. Gregory continue to get back into the swing of things as we relaunch those regular community activities we have hosted in the past.

Firstly, though, I would draw your attention to the part we are playing in celebrating our Queen's Platinum Jubilee. On the Saturday afternoon of the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend, June 4th, we will be hosting a **Jubilee Cream Tea** at the Chapel, for which we continue to pray for good weather. Please feel free to join us in that heartfelt prayer!

So far as regular activities at the chapel are concerned, we have successfully relaunched our toddler group, **TWiGs**, which meets on a Thursday morning between 9:30 and 11:30am. All who find themselves caring for a pre-school child at that time are more than welcome to bring their little bundles of joy along to the chapel and to enjoy meeting other carers in similar circumstances.

For those who would benefit from some company and a home-cooked meal, **Luncheon Club** has also restarted. It meets at the chapel every-other Wednesday at noon, providing a hot meal and company for a small charge to cover costs, cooked and served by members of the dedicated team. There are still places available and the team would be delighted to welcome you. For further details and to book your place, please contact **Liz Hembrow** (01823 490828) or **Alison White** (01823 490380).

Families with children are very welcome to join us for **Messy Church** which generally runs one Sunday morning every other month, beginning at 10am with breakfast, before offering a number of craft activities for the whole family to enjoy and ending with a story and a song. We are planning to run a couple of outdoor **Messy Church** gatherings over the summer, in July and August, the banner will be flying and details will be posted on social media and on our website beforehand.

As a church community we continue to meet for worship every Sunday morning at 10:30am and all are welcome to join us.

Additionally, our minister, Sonya, and many members of our church community continue to contribute to village life in various other ways including, but not limited to supporting our village school and volunteering at the village shop.

As a church community living amongst you, we continue to pray for our community and to look to find other opportunities to serve and bless the village of which we are a part.

Sonia Setchell

Williams Hall AGM. Chairman's Report for 2021

Following the unprecedented curtailment of bookings for the Hall in 2019 and 2020, the year of 2021 became a year of restore and recover as the effects of the pandemic were eroded by the gradual return to businesses usual. Initially use of the Hall was subject to strict restrictions around hygiene and safe distancing backed up with a hazard analysis. However, as controls relaxed, we were able to gradually extend the use of the Hall back to its former state. At year end many if not all the regular users of the Hall had returned. There is strong calendar of bookings both local and external going forward. Of particular note was the Selection of the Williams Hall by SCC for the first of their road shows on the subject of the Unitary Authority

One area of contention during the year has been the requirement for hall users to remove their waste at the end of their booking especially with the reduced frequency of refuse collection. Emphasis on the terms and conditions of hire and more rigorous treatment of booking deposits appears to have redressed this situation.

While it is true to say that the Covid 'storm' has been weathered, the same could not be said of Storm Arwen in November when a large section of the ridge along with surrounding tiles blew off. An initial repair was similarly afflicted by storm damage before a full and final repair was completed. The cost of this repair was largely covered by a claim on our insurance. Further damage was also incurred to the soffit and brickwork on the west side of the building apparently due to over enthusiastic use of that wall as a football goal. This damage is currently scheduled for repair. Both events have highlighted the importance of maintaining adequate financial resources to cover the increasingly likely possibility of significant investment to maintain a facility which is now nearing fifteen years of use.

Both EV charging points and in particular the solar panels continue to make an important revenue contribution as well as supporting the reduction of the carbon footprint. The hall has also welcomed the contribution of the Stoke Environment Group who have planted a hedgerow corridor from Dark Lane around the perimeter of the Hall to the allotment gate. Improved management of the Spinney next to Church Close with a view to creating a more diverse ecology is another positive contribution.

The roll call of trustees remained unchanged during the year. I would like to thank all who have contributed to the ongoing success of the Hall as an asset of which the village can be proud. I would like to offer my particular thanks to Judith Roche for her assiduous effort as Treasurer and Sandra Gleed for her diligence as Secretary, Both Judith and Sandra have expressed a wish to Stand down as soon as replacements can be identified, so my thanks are not just for this past year but also for the many years they have contributed. Mention is also appropriate for Louise Grinter and indeed the whole 'Grinter Gang', for their tireless efforts in bringing events to the Hall, as well as Paul Fielding for his contribution as Bookings Secretary and administrator of the Hallmaster system.

Having overcome the challenges thrown up by Covid we can again look forward with optimism in the knowledge that we have a well-used facility which is once again meeting the needs of a broad spectrum of users both near and far. However, one trend that has emerged in the past year is increasing emphasis on maintenance to keep the facility at a level consistent with the expectations of these users. This will become an increasingly important consideration going forward.

Graham Gleed
May 2022

Stoke St Gregory Playing Field Management Company Report for Annual Parish Meeting

We were delighted to have eventually managed to officially open the new pavilion in 2021 and were thrilled with how the event went, it was really great to see so many of the community come out to support us and each other. A big thank you for the help on the day, special mentions for Ann Woods for organising Marcus, Graham Gleed for manning the BBQ and Tom for the organising the football tournament. The event helped us raise some much-needed funds after a difficult couple of years.

Bonfire night was another successful event which brought the community together. Stoke Stampede was a roaring success despite the conditions raising over £6k for the playing field and continues to grow year on year. The feedback we get from runners is always positive and they all especially mention the support they receive from the local community on the route.

We now have two cricket teams regularly using the field along the tennis club and a Under 14's football team and we continue to promote the facilities hoping to attract more users. We are also seeing more individuals hiring the pavilion for smaller events and are delighted that St Giles will be using the pavilion as part of their bike ride in October.

Our main areas of focus this for the rest of the year are to make good the ground where the old pavilion stood and convert the old shower room into some storage, to provide a disabled parking space next to the pavilion and to improve the access and safety of the pedestrian gate from Willey Road but installing some steps and handrails, we are hoping that this will be completed in June.

Neil Sollis

TENNIS CLUB REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 26th 2022

Play: The courts were reopened end of March 2021, following a period of Covid related closure. Club sessions continue on Sundays, Mondays & Wednesdays, with the Rusty Racket group playing on Friday & Sunday mornings. The Rusty Racket group sessions have been very popular for both new & inexperienced players. At other times players, both members & Pay & Play, have to book their own courts via our ClubSpark website.

We were able to start the new season with an Open Day on April 2nd 2022, which was well attended with the courts being open for free play.

Membership: We have welcomed several new members, some joining in with our Club sessions & one playing in some league matches. Our aim is to capitalise on our now excellent courts & the new Pavilion to increase our new membership numbers, whilst retaining existing members.

Committee: Our AGM was held on February 7th, there having been no Committee changes, with Stuart continuing as Chairman & Howard Roche as Treasurer.

Yeovil & District League: 1 mixed doubles team was entered into last years Summer League, division 4. We finished a respectable 3rd out of 6 teams in our division.

We also completed our 10 matches in the mixed doubles Winter League, in Div. 4 of 5 divisions, however we narrowly came last. We are again competing in the Summer League, so far having completed 4 of our 12 matches, yet without a victory, but matches have been closely fought & enjoyed. Unfortunately, due to injuries & other commitments, our pool of willing lady players has been very depleted, so much of the play has fallen on the few. New blood is much needed!

Coaching: Currently we have Rachel Apsey providing adult coaching on Thursday mornings. She is a very experienced coach & player, regularly representing GB in her age group. We are extremely lucky to have Rachel & have learnt much from her, which we feel has benefitted our competition play - & we all enjoy her lessons.

Junior coaching is run by LA Tennis. Following successful grant applications towards the end of last year we are able to subsidise the cost of junior coaching, making it extremely attractive for young children to play. We are giving 50% discount on termly block bookings – but, under the terms of the grant given by Somerset Community Foundation, only for children living in Stoke St Gregory & surrounding parishes. We are very grateful to SCF & also to the Parish Council, which enabled us to receive a smaller grant from the Opening up Safely & Reconnecting Community Fund.

Junior coaching takes place every Sunday morning 9am for under 10's & 10am for 10 years+. Numbers are good, despite the occasional weather- related cancellations. Spaces are still available.

Day or half day junior tennis holiday camps are run each holiday & half term break, which are normally well attended, the next being on May 31st.

Fees: Annual fees have largely remain unchanged for this season, with some minor increases to the short-term packages to encourage members to join for the 12 months. In addition, further options are given to juniors & students who may only wish to play during the Summer. Plans are in hand to subsidise junior membership prices to benefit local youngsters.

Courts: Continue to be in excellent condition. Long term we would like to provide floodlighting, but we are not currently in a position to proceed due to lack of funding.

LTA: Our registration with the LTA has been renewed for another year. Safeguarding is given top priority by the LTA; Kate Jackson keeps us up-to-date with safeguarding regulations.

Publicity: We post on Facebook & Nextdoor fairly regularly & put notices in the various local village newssheets & school newsletters. Our Clubspark website is also kept updated.

Annual Parish Meeting 2022 - REEVES FEAST

This is a local charity, specific to Stoke St Gregory. It has a small amount of funds that can be used to assist people requiring a small input of cash to allow them to get through a particular crisis in their lives. For example: offering assistance in car parking fees if a member of the family is hospitalised and personal funds are not sufficient to allow visiting. Access to reading materials was given during the Covid crisis, which was unusual but necessary. The fund is usually given to local individuals.

The funds are administered by Heather Venn and Gill Yaskin. Awareness of people in significant need can be raised to either of these people and actions can then be discussed. You are our eyes. The Community is essential to our administration of the fund, clergy and Village agents are also key. Anyone can highlight to us if they are aware of a problem within our Village.

The funds are limited. Funds have been received from members of our community offering their fuel payment each year, historically, as well as a regular contributor. Any contributions to it are welcomed.

Details of payments made in and out of this fund, are not made public, for obvious reasons. The management of offering assistance is carried out with care and compassion. The receipt of funds is also discrete, although we are clearly very grateful for these. Should you wish to make a contribution, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Heather Venn

www.gregorystoke.org - History Group Report

Stoke's history pages have been on the web for many years, with occasional new material and occasional expressions of interest from readers. Since January 2021, however, around 60 Sunday posts have been made on social media relating to new weekly pages on the site. Apart from raising general awareness of our village's history, there were three new aims: 1. To remind people and get people talking about family & friends, and past events in the village; 2. To offer a link to those who have left the village, both those who have 'passed through' and those with strong family links; 3. To create something of a 'back story' for those new to the village, not only recording what happened, but also demonstrating the very 'nature' of Stoke St Gregory.

The last twelve months have seen a huge upsurge in visits to the web site, the number now standing at around 1000 per month. About half are via mobile phones, with the rest being on computers and tablets. Nearly half the hits are via the Sunday posts on Facebook. More than half the visits are from the local area, but we are followed around the world. During one month, when the Great Western Railway was featured, we attracted over 300 visitors from India. From Canada we have a regular 40 or so visits each month.

We have had many favourable comments from around the village, and more material has emerged, both photos and memories, as a result of the new web pages. However, there must be so much more historical information out there. It is difficult to pester people when they have just lost loved ones, but if you are clearing out anyone's house please remember us. Contact Dave Evans 01823 490698 or email gregorystoke@aol.com

Dave Evans