

All items for the
Summer edition by
Friday 19th August 2022

Stoke News

Summer 2022

Contact Jean House
jeanhouse@btconnect.com
For more news look at
www.stokestgregory.org

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TABLE TENNIS – JOIN THE FRIENDLY WINNERS!

The Wednesday evening table tennis group is flourishing, with some welcome new members, and a league-winning team! Come and join us, every Wednesday evening from 7-9pm at the Village Hall for a couple of hours of sociable exercise. All ages (currently 14-70+) and standards welcome. All equipment provided. Pay on the door, £3 per evening for adults (£1 for youngsters 12yrs+), including refreshments. Younger players particularly welcome. Why not give us a try? First week free! Just come along, or for more info call Paul on 490565.

The Trustees of the Williams Hall

Are looking to appoint a Treasurer and
Secretary

as the existing Officers have announced plans to step
down

If you would like to contribute to our
community, please consider coming forward
for one of these roles

There are but five meetings a year (including the
AGM)

Please contact Graham Gleed (01823 490407) if you
would like to discover more

Parish Council Report

Following the local elections on May 5th a new **Parish Council** was installed at the May meeting. There were only eight candidates nominated for nine seats. Therefore, they were all returned unopposed, with a further vacancy to be filled by co-option. The Parish Councillors who took office at the Annual PC meeting on May 11th were, Heather Venn, Ann Finn, John Hembrow, Peter House, Janice Pearce, Anne Merritt, Ian Upshall, and Jason Morgan. At this same meeting Janice Pearce was elected Chairperson supported by Anne Merritt as Vice Chair. Graham Gleed, Sara Sollis and Simon Dauncey stood down from the PC at the election.

Our **Parish Clerk**, Kelly de Silva, has now received confirmation that she has passed her CiLCA (**Certificate in Local Council Administration**) to become a qualified CiLCA Officer. The Parish Council congratulated Kelly on achieving the qualification, which involved a significant study commitment. From May 2022; the PC will be able to adopt the General Power of Competence (GPC) which allows local authorities a wider range of powers to deliver more for their communities. It is known as the power of "first resort."

During the past three months, three new **planning applications** were considered. The first for a replacement two storey extension to the rear of Deane Cottage, Meare Green was approved. The second, for retention of works following the installation of two windows in the gable end of number 17 Church Close was not supported, as the work is in breach of the original planning application conditions, when the house was previously extended. Finally, an application was received which describes conversion of a barn at Holly Farm, Meare Green under Class Q consent to create a retirement residence. The Parish Council fully supported this application.

After what seems an eternity the **30mph speed limit** has been installed from Denman Hill through Meare Green to the former 30 limit boundary. A triumph of persistence which will hopefully reduce potential risk to all road users.

FOOD AT THE ROYAL OAK

Feeling Peckish...Or Just too Busy to Cook?

Why not try the Royal Oak

Dine in and carry out options available

Evenings and Lunchtimes

Themed nights on Wednesday, Saturday Steaks and
Sunday Roasts

Priced for those without the deepest of pockets

Full details at www.royaloakssg.co.uk

Call Phil on Phone: 01823 490602

Email: pub@hotvssg.org

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.)

In March a consultation sponsored by the PC, was held with the **young people of Stoke St Gregory** to investigate ways which the young people of the village can be better supported. A summary and update of the outcomes of the meeting are available to view on the village website: <https://www.stokestgregory.org/young-peoples-meeting-feedback/>

Although, there were no surprises, it is now important to maintain traction moving this project forward. It was recommended that a working group is set up requesting representatives from local groups including the PC, HOTV, PFMC to explore options to provide facilities and structured activities for the young.

The **footpaths group** within the Stoke Environment Group has been steadily making significant improvements over the past several months which the PC was more than happy to support through the purchase of equipment for the maintenance of footpaths in the Parish. It is pleasing to report that the extremely hazardous steps on path 25/15 have now been completely rebuilt with the addition of a handrail.

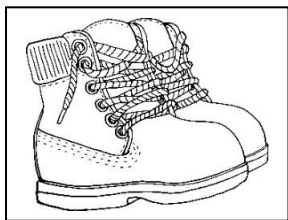
Wessex Water have contacted the PC regarding a proposed **water mains replacement scheme** within the village that could commence from July 2022 and run for 31 weeks, along the axis of Slough Lane as far as Bull Place. This is to replace existing cast iron water mains originally laid in 1933 which have reached the end of their serviceable life. Wessex water wish to determine if any additional measures could be implemented for what will be a period involving some considerable disruption.

Footpath Group

Eight walks of varying lengths are currently available in the cafe alongside the shop and in the Royal Oak. There are written directions and maps. All have been tested. Any donations for the cost of paper and printing would be much appreciated. They are also available on the website - www.envirostoke.org - so you can print your own copies.

VILLAGE WALKING GROUP

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month. Lately we have been meeting in the afternoon but this may revert to evenings followed by a pub meal, depending on who is leading the walk.



The next dates are:
Tuesday 7th June
Tuesday 5th July
Tuesday 2nd August
Tuesday 6th September
Tuesday 4th October

Anyone is welcome to join us; well behaved dogs are also welcome.

We usually walk for 3 – 4 miles.

If you'd like to join us please ring Liz Hembrow 490828 for more details and starting times, etc.

Stoke St Gregory History:

JUBILEE HISTORY NOTES - 1952

Lano Coward was the vicar at the time, and he must have had a telephone at the vicarage. He heard the news that the King had died and rode round the village on his bicycle spreading the word. In Stoke, as all over the country, there was genuine grief at the loss of a King who had stood by his people during hard times.

Mr J L Burrows was in his last term as Headmaster of Stoke School, soon to move on to Winscombe. Mr & Mrs Burrows had been involved in all aspects of village life, and Mr Burrows had founded an "Old Pupils' Club", and had helped re-form the football team after the War.

The Milk Marketing Board was in operation, to secure a fair payment for farmers' milk. We drank silver top, gold top, or TT tested milk, and Ernie was the Fastest Milkman in the West. There were 44 farms and smallholdings in the village, and most of them had milk collected in the churn - daily.

See more on our 'Jubilee' page
www.gregorystoke.org/jubilee

News from Coates English Willow

Spring and early summer is a busy time in the willow calendar, bringing important tasks such as planting and whitening. To learn more about willow whitening have a look at the fascinating Facebook article Dave Evans shared to the Stoke St Gregory Villagers page (15th May)
<https://www.gregorystoke.org/withystripping>

Planting willow is no longer the backbreaking job it used to be as we now have a bespoke planting machine. This makes the job much easier for everyone involved and is much quicker, although it is still a labour-intensive task. Once the willow bed is established it can last up to 20 years, so well worth the effort that goes into creating it. The theme of our new summer sculpture trail is Alice in Wonderland, it is bright and wacky, it will certainly make you smile. For full booking details please see our website www.coatesenglishwillow.co.uk During the summer months the Lemon Tree are offering new Picnic bags, perfect to take if you are doing the sculpture trail or just out for a walk. Check the Lemon Tree website and social media for the menu and ordering details. If you have visited recently, you may have spotted the new shop selling antique original paintings as well as modern and old glass, mirrors and other decorative pieces. Keep an eye on this shop as it continues to take shape. Unfortunately, Pallker Art Glass is closing soon as Lu has decided to re-gain her freedom and return to her old home studio in Westonzoyland. The shop will be available to rent, if you are looking for a workshop and retail space and are thinking of relocating to the village please contact the office.

Did you know that as well as offering a range of willow workshops we also now have Charcoal drawing workshops in the Haymoor Studio?

During Jubilee weekend there will be a special celebratory chocolate fountain at the Somerset Chocolate Co. shop, Edwina's Flowers is offering a mini flower crown workshop and the Alice In Wonderland Sculpture Trail will be underway. Author Dot Walford will be at the Willow Shop to sign copies of her book Somerset 50 Mile Parrett Trail on Saturday 4th June. Recently the Parrett Trail has been given a new lease of life by South Somerset District Council and a team of volunteers.

The best way to keep up with what is happening here is to follow us all on Facebook and Instagram

Stoke St Gregory Parish Church

OPEN GARDENS Hillcrest, Curload Saturday 7th/Sunday 8th May
St Gregory's PCC was again very grateful to have been invited to supply "Cake and a Cuppa" at Charlotte and Charles Sundquist's Open Garden event early this May. We also had a small table of plants for sale. The combined stalls raised approximately £1400.00 for church funds, an essential boost for our general running costs. The Committee would like to thank all those who baked and came to help on the day. Again, it could not have been done without a lot of people's help.

SONGS OF PRAISE

This is an annual service we always hold with our Baptist friends in the open air on the Playing Fields.

We have decided to take the opportunity of celebrating the Queen's Jubilee by holding this year's shared service during the Jubilee Weekend at 1100 am on Sunday 5th June. Please come along and sing your hearts out. Don't forget to bring your picnic lunch to join with others from the village on the Playing Field after the service.

Re-introduction of the Communion Service at 0830 each 2nd Sunday of the month By popular request it has been decided to return to our custom of holding a Communion Service using the traditional format and words from the Book of Common Prayer. First Service is on 12 June.

Luncheon Club

meet once a fortnight on Wednesdays at the Schoolroom in the Baptist church.

For £5 you can enjoy a two-course, home cooked meal with tea and coffee provided.

We can cater for most dietary requirements.

If you'd like to join us, please ring and book a space. We'd love to welcome you.

Liz 490828, Alison 490380

The next dates are:

Wednesday 1st June, 15th June and 29th June, 13th July and 27th July.

HOTV

Recently the challenges that we are facing in these uncertain times of inflation and supply chain disruption have been highlighted. We have a highly successful venture that is the envy of many communities who have similar aspirations; however, the current headwinds are challenging. Sales in the shop since easter have been soft, but the Pub is steadily building trade. The offering in the Pub has been expanded to provide themed food nights on a Wednesday (Italian, Curry) as well as the already successful Steak Saturday and Sunday roast. Carry out meals are now available and full details are available on the new website www.royalokssg.co.uk.

At the recent Public Meeting the level of member feedback was addressed as a specific concern. There is little indication how either members or the wider community feel about the various elements of our business. It was felt that it is maybe appropriate to put a dedicated effort into raising the profile of our community business. While the success of the venture cannot be understated in terms of its contribution to the community there is undoubtedly work to be done to engage with all in the village to realise the potential of the whole venture.

With the financial year-end on March 31st, a first analysis of our operating performance for the past year has been estimated. The key conclusion is that while there is a steady improvement in gross profit from the overall business, we are still falling slightly short of the level required for breakeven when one totals up our fixed costs. Shop sales over the last year, exclusive of VAT, were £334K compared with £268K the previous year. Estimated gross profit is £111K equating to a 33% margin on sales. Pub sales for the first year of operation are £70K and have shown very strong growth across quarters (thanks to Phil, and Jason). The pub margin is about 60%. Although the performance of both businesses has been extremely healthy, we must pay overheads of around £16K a month (mostly salaries, energy costs and loan repayments) to break even.

The HOTV Management Committee are looking to co-opt somebody onto the Committee to be responsible for Marketing HOTV.

Working in conjunction with the respective Managers of the Pub, Shop and Café. The brief is to raise our profile by making sure we are visible in all local publications, in social media and even mundane methods such as billboards and notices displayed at and in the vicinity of the shop along with any other ideas. This will be a key role in developing the profile of our enterprise to encourage interest that will result in greater footfall and custom to the Shop, Cafe and Pub. The Management Committee is a friendly energetic team of volunteers and would give full support to any prospective new member. If you would have an interest or know somebody who would be interested in taking on this challenge, we would welcome that contribution. If further explanation of the scope of this role is required, please do not hesitate to make contact (HOTVSSG@gmail.com)

News from Stoke Environment Group

By the time you read this, Stoke Environment Group will have been in existence for a whole year! It was formed as a result of an initiative by the Parish Council in response to the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategic Plan. In the past twelve months we have discussed and agreed the Group's objectives and vision for our community. Not only that, with the help of many great volunteers, we have achieved some significant successes. The Group is run entirely by SSG volunteers who have a wide range of backgrounds, knowledge and experience. We would, of course, like to welcome more supporters and helpers to achieve even more success in the next twelve months. Please see our Facebook page (Envirostoke) or website (envirostoke.org) for more information.

The next 'big event' to be run by SEG is 'Envirofair 22' which will take place at the Williams (village) Hall on 25 June 2022 between 10am and 4pm. You may recall the first Envirofair which was held in the same location in October 2021? This was a great success, for which the Group receive some very positive feedback. We have used this feedback to make Envirofair 22 even better (if that's possible!).

Envirofair 22 will be particularly focussed on family fun. We have more exhibitors coming along, including the RSPB, Somerset Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, Butterfly and Bee Conservation groups, Chedzoy Fair Share Project, Fields Studies Council, Somerset Waste Partnership (with Fixy McFixface the repair van), Nationwide e-bikes, to name but a few. In addition, we will have presentations from Sharandy's Bird Rescue who are bringing along rescued owls (and you can even dissect some pellets to see what they eat!), Somerset Wildlands and the Butterfly Conservation. There will be plenty of children's activities too, with wildflower bomb making, bird box and bee house construction, badge making, nature iSpy, Messy Church and Marion from Growing Minds. To top it off there will be refreshments and a raffle where you can win a year's membership to Somerset Wildlife Trust, a garden water butt, a home composter or various vouchers.

We would love to see everyone at Envirofair 22 which will have something of interest for everyone – and don't forget its free entry!

In late September we will be running Great Big Green Week where we hope to organise a number of activities and events – keep an eye out for more news!

Just to finish off, we would like to invite you to join SEG as a supporter or a helper. We realise that not everyone wishes to dig holes, cut brambles or replace hedges, but we have lots of other tasks that need to be done to keep the Group functioning. Please speak to one of the Group at Envirofair for more information.

Arresting the harmful impacts of climate change may appear to be an impossible task for us as individuals – but it isn't. Imagine if, for example, you made one less journey in the car each week – for example, by walking to the shop instead of driving. In a year that would be 52 less journeys. And imagine you did this for the next ten years – that would be 520 less journeys. And if everyone in Stoke did that it could be 10,000 less journeys. THAT would make a difference! If we can all make small changes, then as a collective caring community, we can make a significant impact!