

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Newsletter

For the parishes of Staple Fitzpaine, Bickenhall, Curland
and Orchard Portman with Thurlbear

Issue 45 - Autumn 2022



Welcome to the Neroche Villages' Newsletter, a quarterly publication delivered free to every household in Neroche Parish, helping the community to stay connected and up-to-date on local issues.

Editor's Update

Firstly, a huge thank you to everyone who sent us donations towards the ongoing cost of the Neroche newsletter – your generosity is very much appreciated by the Neroche Communication Action Group, and we are delighted that so many of you continue to find this an enjoyable read! As many of you sent us online donations, we are unable to thank you personally, although we hope this will be taken as a great big thank you.

As we continue to look at ways of reducing the cost of producing the newsletter each quarter, we have decided to distribute them without envelopes from this edition onwards. As we no longer include flyers with the newsletter (to help reduce waste and improve our carbon footprint), it didn't seem so important to spend the time and money putting each newsletter into an envelope – now we are following the good example of the Benefice magazine.

Lastly, it is wonderful to have so many interesting and fun things to share with you this time around, let's hope we continue to have more events across the parish over the coming months.

Of course, if you have anything you would like publicised in the next newsletter, do get in touch.

Take care

Karen Learoyd



Picnic Time with the Queen

St Peter's Church Fete, July 2nd

By Rebecca George

Mark and I loved putting on the fete at Winterwell and are pleased with the outcome – raising around £4000 for the church is brilliant, and even better is the feedback that we have had that people had a great time and enjoyed

themselves. However, it was our first effort, and we have a lot to learn before we do it again – perhaps in two years' time (previously the fete was held every three years). Chris Dunn has hosted the fete at the manor in the past and he was a tough act to follow. He and his team were fantastic – they handed over their files, all their contacts, and Chris came to Winterwell to give us some advice on how to run the day. We had an excellent committee too, who willingly took on getting raffle prizes, printing tickets, getting publicity, and providing much needed moral support.



Mark and I did what we usually do, play to our individual strengths. Mark did everything around Winterwell – preparing the fields, signs, mowing the Welly Wanging pitch, collecting hay bales, the BBQ, tables, chairs and crockery, sorting out the electricity, gents' loos, PA system, gazebos, skittle alley and tractors. I was on planning and admin including the raffle, organising the entertainment, and putting together the stalls, games and food and drink. We were told from the start that the raffle was vitally important – both as a fund raiser and also as a safety net in case the fete was rained off. Alan Covey was amazing – he found most of the raffle prizes and later sold masses of tickets.

Chris Baxter contributed by printing the raffle tickets and my secretary over in Kent bought the electoral rolls and sent out all the letters. You will all be seeing more about the raffle earlier next time, and some of you will be asked to pledge selling specific numbers of tickets!!



Once the raffle was out of the way, and a little matter of hosting the Platinum Jubilee Bonfire and BBQ, it was time to make sure that we



had all the people in place to run the day. I cannot thank all the helpers enough – running games which is horrendously hard work; selling plants, books, bric a brac, posh hats and frocks and produce; cooking burgers and sausages, serving drinks and cream teas all afternoon; supervising the tractors; managing the parking, risk assessment, being a steward, being on call for first aid. We had around 40 people who turned up the day before, on the morning, through the afternoon, and the next day to help us and we simply could not have done it without their dedication, enthusiasm and hard work. Also, a healthy sense of humour

drinking tea and coffee in the late morning in the kitchen whilst the rain beat relentlessly down.

However, by 2.00pm we were ready, just about! The Wellington Silver Band started to play whilst I was running about trying to find the bean bags which had gone missing, stock was still being put out, prizes distributed around the games, and people were already in and walking about! The afternoon just rushed by – a kaleidoscope for me of watching the Morris Dancers and Punch and Judy, checking out the fire engine and gypsy caravan, making sure the cash back card reader was working, belatedly remembering to put out the price list for ice lollies, grabbing my fiddle for the Badger Street Band session, giving out raffle prizes, and finally at the end of the afternoon sampling some of Mark's excellent cider.



St Peter's Church Grand Fete

By Jacq Wanstall

The rain looked set in, on the morning of Saturday 2nd July, and the sky was heavy and gloomy. Luckily by 2pm the sun was out, and despite dodging the odd shower, the weather pretty good for the much-anticipated St Peter's Church Grand Fete.

Held in the beautiful grounds of Winterwell, when we arrived at 2.10pm we thought we would be among some of the first to arrive. How wrong we were! As we were directed into the second field to park our car, I was very impressed and happy at the support this lovely event had gained.

Walking into the fete was like a scene directly out of Midsommer Murders, fortunately though, there were no bizarre or gruesome incidents at our lovely fete! The setting was wonderful, and it was delightful to see so many people, stalls and attractions that awaited us.

The music of the Wellington Silver Band was a perfect accompaniment to pottering around the fabulous stalls. Our first stop was to Fay Mackenzie's Jewellery stall- Alannah. Already wearing my earrings and bracelet purchased from Fay at last year's Craft Fair, it was clear I was a fan of her wonderful creations, next onto Alison and Anthony Brown's Book Stall. I had come prepared for this one, with a large bag, and I needed it as I went away with 10 books! Nicky Baxter's Preloved Frocks and Hats stall looked stunning and seemed to have an endless stream of eager customers. It was also very evident by seeing people walking around that the Plants & Produce stall, along with the Cake stall were also very popular! If you



got a little worn out with all the mooching around, with countless stops to chat to all your wonderful neighbours, then there was the lure of the cream teas, burgers, and more cakes.

We felt in a competitive mood, so decided to take on the Coconut Shy. After a few failed attempts, Mark came away victorious with 2 coconuts and his pride intact! Unfortunately, we weren't so successful with Splat the Rat!! What an amazing creation that was, it looked fantastic. After watching many people have a go, secretly trying to work out the best strategy to hit the rat and win the prize, we handed over our £1. I am either going to blame the wind conditions or poor eyesight, and despite spending a small fortune, not once did we successfully Splat the Rat!! I am now going to find out where it is to be stored over the winter months and get some practice in!!



We didn't take our beloved dogs along for the Dog Show, as they are getting older and their patience for such events is now lacking! We did, however, watch it and admire all the handsome and pretty contenders and the happy faces on their humans, when a rosette was awarded. Just before we left, we watched some of the Morris Dancing, which was simply splendid and thoroughly entertaining.

All in all, it was a wonderful afternoon out. I had been looking forward to the fete for many weeks, knowing how much time and effort had been put into it by the organisers, and it didn't disappoint. Pottering around a beautiful garden in the sunshine, chatting to all my lovely friends and neighbours, while being entertained by wonderful music and dancing, and buying some great bits and bobs from the stalls. What more could you ask for?

A huge thank you to all who helped arrange and host it, it really was a wonderful event and I for one cannot wait until the next fete.



ANNUAL VILLAGE CRICKET MATCH

**Stoke St Mary Cricket Ground
Sunday 11th September 2022
from 2pm**

**The annual competition between
Staple Fitzpaine, Thurlbear, Curland,
Orchard Portman and Stoke St Mary
for the Walker Cup**

**A great afternoon's entertainment with some
very competitive cricket!**

Update from your Councillor

By Ross Henley

I wanted to firstly thank everyone who elected Sarah Wakefield and I in the election in May. Even if you didn't vote for us, we are proud to represent the Neroche villages and everyone in the community. It was so nice going around talking to so many people during the election and hearing about the issues which matter to them.



I've taken on the role of an associate cabinet member for public health which is something I'm very passionate about as I'm a neurodiversity campaigner, and a trainer in mental health and complex needs, in my non council life. At Somerset West and Taunton Council I introduced a neurodiversity support policy for staff and for jobseekers which won a municipal journal national award last year, and I now want to use my role as a Somerset County Councillor to improve support for residents with autism and all types of neurodiversity. Somerset can do much better than it has in the past.

Recently I attended the Neroche villages Annual Parish Meeting, and it really was an uplifting event. Lots of positive plans regarding footpaths and village gateways were discussed and some new parish councillors were co-opted. Well done to Jane Hole and Fiona Gledhill for coming forward to join the existing parish councillors. Sarah and I are really looking forward to working with the Parish Council.

In my report to the Annual Parish Meeting, I was able to say that the petition that Sarah and I launched last year regarding the sale of Orchard Portman land to Taylor Wimpey, and regarding our opposition to large scale development at Orchard Portman, has been presented to Parliament. We remain opposed to large scale development on the site and will keep a watching brief on this as I think this whole business is going to be a long game. Also, I recently attended a public exhibition regarding the A358 dualling proposals. I am supporting the concerns many residents have about these plans and the detrimental affect it could have on our deeply rural area.

Locally I have been asked to take up a number of issues especially in the highways area which I have reported to the County Council.

Regarding the County Council, I'm attending a meeting at the Farmers Arms at West Hatch with representatives of residents and Parish Councillors to see how they can all work more closely together once Somerset becomes a unitary Council in April.

I look forward to seeing lots of you out and about this autumn. I love autumn especially the colours which are magnificent in our local area.



News from Forestry England

*By Rob Greenhalgh,
Community Ranger*



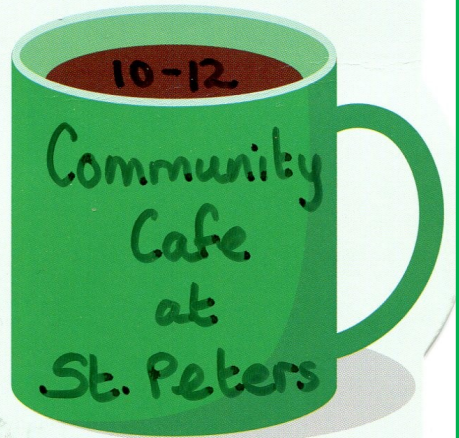
Well it's great to be back writing to you and we are sorry we missed the opportunity in the last edition. A lot has happened in our busy little team since the turn of the year. We regrettably say farewell to the recent addition of Dave Peck as Forester in the Blackdowns, as he has taken a new role within the South District based at Lyndhurst. He remains with Forestry England, and although his time here was short, he nevertheless made a positive impact to those who worked alongside him. We wish him all the best. Currently we are recruiting for a new Forester and hope to appoint within the next couple of weeks.

It is also with a heavy heart that I too must say farewell in my role as Community Ranger as I will soon be starting a new role as well. It has been a fantastic 6 years and I feel we've made some great friends, partners and positive steps forward during my time here. I will be very sad to leave, particularly the office here at Smokey Bottom, although hope to continue to support the Blackdowns in my next role. We will look to appoint a new Ranger in the coming months and hope to have them introduce themselves in the next edition!

In other news, harvesting has taken place within Wych Lodge, with a particular focus on Piddle Wood and Orchard Wood – and boy did it need doing! Although beautiful, quiet corners of the wood, these areas have long needed attention. Woodland management is vital to the continuation of healthy, resilient forests as we move forward into uncertain climatic events with new pests and diseases threatening our trees. Never have we paid so much attention to the improvements in biodiversity and habitat management as we do today. And this has

been a principal reason behind our recent harvesting works. The ancient and veteran trees within Piddle Wood have undergone an intensive 4-year management programme to clear the vegetation swamping them, with the amazing support of Neroche Conservation Volunteer - and this work will continue! Phase two has been to clear and remove the beech crop trees around the ancient giants – this has been our most recent operation. It was a sensitive time and we have had to stop the operation in previous years because of wet weather and the potential of soil damage. However, I am pleased to say this year we have been successful – and it truly looks like a new world up there! I'd encourage you to take a stroll up to see the site as the summer sun pours through – but only when the harvesting has been complete, of course! A similar story will unfold within Orchard Wood as we look to thin the forest and allow the beautiful lime trees and bluebells to flourish in coming years.

Enjoy your Coffee Morning, whatever your reason



Countdown to
* **30th September** *
or whatever day
works best for you

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Neroche Scarecrow Festival

In homage to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, this year's theme was 'A Royal Presence', probably a little more challenging than in previous years, although one that still led to a variety of royal themed entries. Unsurprisingly, Queen Elizabeth II was well represented in several of the creations, with tea being a major influence, probably inspired by the fantastic Queen with Paddington sketch during the Jubilee weekend!

There were also several entries which played with the theme a little more.

In total 14 scarecrows were entered, across Staple Fitzpaine, Curland and Bickenhall, ensuring that the tour covered most of the parish. From the first Saturday you could see people out walking, in cars or on horseback, with their maps and voting forms in hand. Getting up close and personal with each scarecrow was really important to appreciate all of the finer touches that the makers had included, many of which wouldn't have been seen from the inside of a car!



HRH



The Queens' Jockey



King Canute



King Arthur



Britannia

Historical scarecrows included King Arthur and King Canute, as well as Britannia, while our current Queen took tea at a number of parties over that week. The Royals were seen on the balcony, as well as with the corgis, and watching the Queen's Jockey riding her favourite horse. The RSPCA went to town and made a huge number of animals to

represent the work they do, while we had a stupendous golden coach transporting the Queen on her visit to Staple Fitzpaine (local residents were out in force to welcome her – were you on that board?) The cooler “King” Steve Mc“Queen” was aloft his motorbike in Whitty. There was also a visually spectacular Royal Mail special edition stamp, featuring the scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz. All in all, a great demonstration of the creativity of those in the community.



Steve Mc“Queen”

The mid-week tea at Battens Farm was well attended, even though it was a scorching day. There was also a great turnout for the BBQ at St Peter’s on the Sunday evening, not least in part to Rebecca and Mark Porter for providing a TV, so that we could follow the England v Germany Euro Women’s final. The cheers when the Lionesses eventually scored their winning goal was wonderful. Plenty of food was eaten, drinks consumed, and we settled to hear the results.



The Royal Visit to Staple Fitzpaine

First Place – The Royal Visit to Staple Fitzpaine (Harriet and William Lister)

Second Place – Royal Mail Special Edition (Learoyds and Carole Wensley-Dodd)

Third Place – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA West Hatch)



Royal Mail Special Edition



RSPCA West Hatch

Children's Award – The Royal Visit to Staple Fitzpaine



Who Is Coming to Tea?



Best Friends High Tea

Alison noted that 105 voting slips were submitted, and the results were indeed close, with every scarecrow awarded points. She also gave thanks to all the helpers including Jon Bell, and Rebecca and Mark, and to the sponsors, Adsborough Builders (Taunton) Ltd and Bickenhall Consulting Ltd. Special thanks also to Jane Lister for making goodie bags for all the children who took part. Over £750 was raised over the week for the church, and a lot of fun was had by all. Well done, as always, to Alison for all her hard work and energy in making this happen – it truly is a highlight of the year.

Roll on the next one!

Pop-Up Café

**St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine
Every Friday, 10am to 12pm**

Come along for a cuppa with biscuits and delicious home-made cakes.

Meet old friends and make new ones

For more information contact

Tricia Dryden
tricia@witchlodge.co.uk



Parish Council Update – August 2022

***By Emily York,
Clerk to the Parish Council***

It was brilliant to welcome 22 members of the community to the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on 5th July at Neroche Hall. The meeting was centred on encouraging community support and what can be achieved by working together as a community.

Parish Council Chair, Cllr Mark Palmer, provided those present with a recap of the work the council have undertaken recently, including installation of the new defibrillator and completion of the fingerpost project. Updates were received from Somerset County Councillor, Ross Henley, regarding the new Somerset Council; Cllr John Parsons, regarding the A358 development and Cllr Daniel Macey, regarding the proposed Taylor Wimpey development at Orchard Portman.

We were pleased to welcome Mr Ken Brown, former Chair of Corfe Parish Council, who spoke about his project to reduce the speed limit through Corfe from 40mph to 20mph. The project was not for the faint hearted, taking 3 years to complete. It was inspiring to hear how the community pulled together to fund raise and support the project at significant benefit to the whole community.

Reports were received from members of the community regarding changes to the Village Hall Committee, proposed plans for a village gateway, and the creation of both a Public Rights of Way group and a Biodiversity group before the meeting was opened to the public forum. Full minutes of the APM can be found on the Neroche Villages website.

Following the APM the council were pleased to receive offers of support from prospective councillors, who were co-opted onto the Parish Council at the meeting on 14th July. We welcome Cllr Jane Hole for Curland, Cllr Fiona Gledhill for Staple Fitzpaine, and Cllr Malcolm Prosser for Bickenhall.

There is still one vacancy remaining on the Parish Council, please contact your local councillor if you would be interested in finding out more about the role.

Following advice from the Somerset Association of Local Councils, the format of the Parish Council meeting Agenda has been amended. The meetings will now commence with a public forum at 7.30pm which allows any member of the community to attend and raise comments and questions for the council. These may be responded to in writing by the Parish Clerk following the meeting, or added to the agenda for the next meeting if they require further discussion. If Parishioners wish to raise items for discussion at a forthcoming meeting of the Parish Council, they may do so by contacting either their local councillor, or the Parish Clerk.

A full list of councillors and their contact details is on the Neroche website or Emily can be contacted at Nerochepc.org.uk@gmail.com

Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**



1st September, 6th October, 3rd November

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a superb home-cooked lunch in wonderful company for just £7pp (transport and special diets can be arranged). Meet old friends and make new acquaintances - ideal for both long term residents and those who have recently arrived in the community. A wonderful way to spend a weekday lunchtime.

Advance booking is essential by the Monday prior to the lunch to book for catering purposes. Contact Alison Brown 01823 480441 or aabrown.battens@gmail.com

Platinum Jubilee Bonfire

As part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Rebecca George and Mark Porter hosted a wonderful evening's entertainment at Winterwell. As well as the pre-requisite bonfire (which was huge), we were treated to glorious views across the Quantocks on a beautiful June evening, a splendid barbecue, and not to be left out, an appearance from the Badger Street Band who played some great tunes that had us all humming away (or possibly singing a little louder).



There was quite a turnout, lots of families and groups of friends, and everyone had a great evening, listening to the music and getting prepared for the lighting of the bonfire – this proved quite stupendous and could be seen as far as Stoke St Mary (witnessed by the Churchwarden on his evening stroll).



Just a few days before, I received an email from a resident who was involved in building the bonfire 70 years ago for the coronation, when everything had to be dragged up the bank by hand to a point above Shutes Farm in Staple Fitzpaine. How lovely to think we repeated the bonfire all these years later, albeit with the aid of mechanical devices!



Neroche Hall Fish 'n' Chip Quiz

Friday, 30th September

Doors open 7pm for prompt start 7.30pm

Maximum of 6 per team -
£3 per person entry
(Food extra)

BYO beer / wine and a glass!

Advance booking essential from 1st Sept on

01823 480286

Email: r.davies507@btinternet.com



THE B.E.A.R. CENTRE

Deep amidst ancient woodland at the south-east edge of the parish, a unique venture in heritage education and research is beginning to take shape. Meetings are taking place in leafy glades and proposals are being fine-tuned as the Blackdown Experimental Archaeology Research Centre, the BEAR Centre, moves steadily from concept to reality.

Taking 100 acres of little used Forestry England woodland, the BEAR Centre will turn Middleroom Wood into a living classroom, a leafy outdoor museum. Visitors will be able to experience the forest homes of our ancestors, learn new skills in traditional building and forest management and experiment with ancient technologies and crafts. As a dynamic, open-air site exploring 10,000 years of woodland heritage, the BEAR Centre will be unique in the UK, possibly in Europe.

Three time zones will be created at Middleroom, each focussed on a separate settlement. Starting in the Mesolithic, visitors will be taken back to the Stone Age dawn of our relationship with the dense and all enveloping woodland in which we once lived. A small cluster of huts will be low-key, almost part of the woods themselves. Moving through the trees, visitors will also move through time. Some six thousand years later, although still firmly in prehistory, a Bronze Age village will grow around a group of roundhouses. This slightly larger settlement will be more demanding of the surrounding forest environment. The journey through our woodland past will culminate, some 2,000 years later, at a Saxon Hall. This fine timber building, set within a cluster of other structures from the period, will demonstrate a time when woodland crafts reached whole new levels of sophistication and skill.



*A small Saxon dwelling, built by
BEAR Centre members*

In order to create these three settlements, raw materials will be sourced from the woodland site itself. The construction of the buildings, even the skills needed to select, source and process the timber, will

form part of the BEAR Centre training programme. Wherever possible, only traditional methods and hand tools will be employed. No chainsaws here. From the start this will be an almost silent building site and school of ancient crafts and skills, self-contained and completely sustainable.

Utilising this unique woodland setting, complete with its collection of historic settlements, a story can then be told to primary school groups, college and university students, families, anyone in fact who wants to know more about our woodland heritage. Old skills will be taught again, skills that are still vital in an age rightly focussed on sustainability. What is undoubtedly a beautiful woodland site will also offer a calm and restorative setting for anyone in need of a retreat from the hubbub and distraction of a modern and less leafy world. Through archaeological experiment and research, The Bear Centre will strive to help develop a better academic understanding of our rich woodland history. Valuable partnerships are already being established with regional colleges and universities. The project aims to provide a national, if not international, hub for all aspects of woodland heritage research and teaching. With people and woodland at its heart, the key BEAR Centre aim is to unite our past, our present and our shared future.

How will it all work?

To accomplish these goals, the BEAR Centre has been set up as a CIC, or Community Interest Company. This administrative structure provides the best opportunity to offer both a wide range of education and experiential opportunities and a research resource of national status. Any profits will be used to further benefit the two interwoven BEAR Centre interests: people and woodland.

Why?

Using various methods, the project intends to benefit local, regional and national communities, reconnecting people with their woodland heritage and re-establishing lost construction, forestry management and craft skills. This will bring individual physical and mental wellbeing, and at a wider economic and social scale, offer hard-pressed rural communities fresh employment and business opportunities. If nothing else, the BEAR Centre will also provide a deeply attractive and generous space in which to reengage with the story of our past and benefit from the ongoing beauty of our surviving woodland environment.

Who?

Even at this early stage the BEAR Centre is the creation of the people who support it. This includes the numerous volunteers who have put their names forward to help with the initial preparation and development of the site. Many have also offered funds to ensure the project has a future, and our profound thanks goes to these benefactors.

However, all projects, even those with the community at their heart, need someone at the helm, and

The BEAR Centre is no exception. Leading a small management team, Marc Cox began thinking about a home for the teaching of woodland skills while studying archaeology at Exeter University. He has since worked at outdoor museums across Europe, engaging with experimental work and building historic structures ranging from Bronze Age roundhouses to Medieval Halls. The rest of the management team come from varying backgrounds, including archaeology, forestry conservation, education, rural crafts, accountancy, even midwifery.

The BEAR Centre is an active member of EXARC (an international experimental archaeology group). The management team also includes members of the Heritage Crafts Association, the Carpenters Fellowship and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

As the BEAR Centre is a relatively new venture, we are working hard to establish links and partnerships with various organisations and groups in the region. We have so far approached and received support from the Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset's Young Archaeologist Group and the Blackdown Community Shed (part of the Blackdown Healthy Living & Activity Centre). The BEAR Centre is also very grateful for the expressions of support from Curland parish councillors. Training programmes have been established with the Land Based Studies department at Bridgewater and Taunton College, and research and teaching partnerships will be sought with other local and regional colleges and universities. Locally, we are already building official partnerships with the regional team at Forestry England, the South



Marc Cox at Middleroom Wood

West Heritage Trust and the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

When?

While measures to establish BEAR move on apace, there are still the inevitable formal steps needed before work at the woods can begin in earnest. Preliminary planning proposals have been presented to the local Council, and resultant discussions are ongoing. The necessary ecological and other studies are also being put in place before full plans are submitted. Generous offers of funding to date is making this possible. It is then a case of finalising agreements with the woodland owners, Forestry England, and The BEAR Centre team would like to thank FE staff for their invaluable help over the last year. If all goes well, at least one bear will soon return to British woodlands.

We hope to provide an update on developments in future parish newsletters and look forward to meeting readers soon amongst the coppices, spinneys and glades of your BEAR Centre woods.



Marc Cox



The Balcony



Royal Corgis



CRAFT FAIR



**Saturday 29th October 2022
10.30am to 3pm**

NEROCHE HALL, BICKENHALL TA3 6TY

**Lots of different gifts and crafts
including jewellery, natural skincare,
decorations, books, homeware, pottery,
art etc.**

Buy your Christmas presents here

Free admission and free parking

**Refreshments on sale including Coffee,
Tea, Cakes and light snacks**

News from Your MP

By Rebecca Pow

Hello again

It's been a busy time in the constituency which has included attending superb local events such as Taunton Flower Show and Wivey Fayre – and it's been a dramatic time in Westminster since I last wrote.

Wellington Rail Station Site

I had an informative meeting and walk around the proposed site of the Wellington Rail Station with developer Chris Winter. The planning application for the wider development on the site adjacent to the Longforth Farm Estate is being prepared now in close liaison with Network Rail, with the aim being to submit it to the Planning Authority in the autumn. Locals have just been sent information to garner views.



This is genuinely exciting progress, and I am proud to be part of the team that is bringing this forward, and I shall continue to play my role as the link between activity on the ground in the constituency and the Department of Transport in Westminster.

Phosphates

Whilst it is welcome news that a package of measures has been recently announced by Government to tackle nutrient pollution and unlock stalled planning permissions, recent discussion with developers in the area is highlighting movement is slow.

There are three actions Government has instigated: obliging the upgrade of water treatment works in nutrient neutrality areas; a strategic mitigation scheme; and clarifying the application of Habitat Regulations assessments for post-permission approvals.

The ball is now largely in the court of local planning authorities like Somerset West and Taunton, and they need to have the confidence to use the new guidance and start to progress planning permissions with

appropriate mitigations to counter the environmental impact of each proposed housing development. The authority has also been awarded £100,000 to employ an advisor to help.

Opening of the Farmers Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme



Yalham Hayes Farm

On the 30th of June, the SFI scheme opened for applications in England. The SFI will help farmers move towards sustainable farming practices over time, supporting them to build the health and fertility of their soil and to reduce soil erosion, both of which are essential for sustainable food production, helping to bolster food security and the longer-term resilience of the sector. I continue to work closely with our farming community to ensure government understands its needs and would encourage the industry to join the new schemes and to continue to take part in the countryside stewardship schemes where the rates were recently increased.

Local Dental Provision

At last, after months of meetings and discussions with Health Ministers to stress the unacceptable state of the dental sector here, NHS England has announced a range of reforms including measures to help ensure high performing NHS practices can increase capacity and allow more patients to be seen. Full details of the reforms can be found here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/07/better-access-to-nhs-dental-services-under-new-reforms/>

Whilst this is a welcome first step there remains much more to do, and I will continue to press on this.

Standing down as Environment Minister

As you may be aware, I was one of the 56 who resigned recently. I took the desperately difficult decision to resign as Environment Minister given the positive work I was involved with in DEFRA working to make this the greenest government ever. Critical to this is the world leading Environment Act which sets in motion levers to clean up our water and air, reduce waste and critically restore nature. I was proud to steer this

weighty piece of legislation through Parliament over two years working with 300 officials. However, it was for other reasons of integrity, trust and honesty that I was driven to step down.

Leadership Contest

By early September we will have a new leader to progress work on what matters to people: cost of living issues in particular escalating energy prices, tackling inflation, ensuring we have the skills we need for the future especially in delivering renewable energy, addressing climate change, rural levelling up and much more. This is why I've been supporting former Chancellor Rishi Sunak: <https://www.rebeccapow.org.uk/news/my-statement-leadership-election>
As ever please get in touch if I can be of any help.

The Neroche Village Website Needs Your Help

It is over ten years since the Neroche Villages Website was created to help improve communication within Neroche Parish. Today its goal remains the same, although we need your help to keep important sections up to date so that it serves our community well.

The News and Events pages let readers know what is happening locally. For these to work well please make sure that you let us know, via our contact page, if you have an activity you wish publicised or news you wish disseminated. Also please check if your group is listed in the Community section so others can find you. Remember too that Neroche Parish Council's official website is part of our website. It has lots of information, including how to contact a councillor; the agenda and minutes of the council meetings; how to ask for a matter to be discussed at a meeting and how to attend; and planning applications.

There have been many changes in the area since the Crown Estate left, especially in the business community. We wish to ensure that all businesses in the parish, big and small, know that they can have a free entry on our Business pages. Also, if they wish, they can have an advertisement on the website alone, or combined with one in the Neroche Newsletter. Please check whether your business is on the website and that your details are correct; if not, let us know and we will sort it out.

To reach our Neroche Villages website please go to:
www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Reflections on the Life of Doreen and Alan Marsh

Collated and written by Anne Perry

Doreen and Alan Marsh lived for over 40 years in the Neroche area and believed passionately in helping others and working to sustain a good strong community.



Together they treasured the natural world, and their knowledge was extensive. As a tribute to their commitment to our community, those who were fortunate enough to have had Doreen and Alan as neighbours have put together some memories which we hope capture their zest for life.

Many people enjoyed a chat with Doreen or Alan at the gate and children were no exception. Theo Lewis loved the Pooles Cottage garden and really enjoyed Alan telling him about the birds that had visited the garden that day. Alan understood children and had a great sense of humour. He wrote what he called a 'long long letter' to Maya Lewis which she was excited to open. It was a thin piece of card folded up to 2 metres long! Ann Bartlett remembers Doreen patiently teaching her granddaughter Emily, who was very young at the time, to sew in the garden of Pooles Cottage.

Francis Alford went often for coffee and a chat with Alan and Doreen and her strongest memory is of their home-made bread smelling and tasting delicious. Francis also remembers Doreen sharing many recipes, plants and Alan's little book which recorded books that he had 'lent' out to people. Anne Perry remembers telling Doreen about her interest in sewing and textiles when Alan disappeared to one of his many, well stocked bookshelves and produced a book on the history of quilting which she was allowed to 'borrow' because she had collected a prescription from the GP. 'Lending' people books was his way of saying thank you to people. Anne still has the book because they would not take it back!

Everybody remembers their wonderful productive garden. As members of the gardening club, they would have a plant sale and

everybody around here has plants from those sales. Doreen often pointed out that if a plant grows in her garden, then it must grow well in ours as 'we have the same soil!'

John and Gill Wheller remember the time they went away, and their sister came to cat sit. They forgot to tell Alan who immediately spotted the strange car and as the Neighbourhood Watch person he went to 'investigate'. In order to prove that she really was the sister of John he asked her to name the cat! John's sister passed the test thank goodness.

Alan was an avid Rugby supporter and would often go to Roger and Mary's house to watch the Rugby Internationals along with 'Church Mouse', his nickname for Ann Jones, and other neighbours. He knew every detail about every player and their opponents as well as the gossip.

We all remember fondly the time of year when the carol singers came. Many neighbours were invited to sing outside their house. We all took a plate of food and after the carol singers left us, we would go into their cosy welcoming home and eat and drink and take part in Alan's Christmas Quiz. We never got home before midnight. Fun, intelligent with good community spirits. We will miss them.

By Jane Hole

Doreen and Alan were great supporters of Neroche Local History Group. Doreen was a very active and wise member of our small organising committee; her encyclopaedic knowledge of local history was extensive. She remembered the smallest detail of all the oral stories she and Alan had been collecting for their book. Over the years they had also put on several fascinating exhibitions at Neroche Hall. On one occasion Alan had borrowed a valuable item from the then Taunton Museum for one of these exhibitions and he slept overnight at the hall to keep it safe! That was real dedication to local history!

If I walked past Alan working in his garden, he would always stop to chat. His knowledge and enthusiasm would mean the chats were lengthy and would usually end up on a subject completely different from the one we had started with!

Their wonderful book 'In the Shadow of the Blackdowns' is full of stories from local people and information of how lives were led in previous decades and is a great read. This will surely be one of their many legacies to the local community. Copies of the book are still available from Alison Brown or from the Somerset Heritage Museum.

Other interesting info

Doreen Marsh passed away in the summer of 2021 and Alan in June 2022.

Childhood sweethearts, they married in 1949.

Alan lectured in Agricultural Economics at Leeds University for many years before taking on pastoral work at Leeds and then later at Bristol University.

John Bartlett coincidentally met Alan for the first time at Leeds when he was a student there....a small world!

Doreen spent most of her working life as a marriage guidance counsellor in Leeds and Bristol.

They had 4 children and 6 grandchildren.



		First Race
2022	Wednesday 26th October	1.55pm
2022	Thursday 10th November	1.15pm
2022	Thursday 24th November	12.48pm
2022	Thursday 8th December	12.28pm
2022	Wednesday 21st December	12.50pm
2022	Friday 30th December	12.55pm

The June meeting saw Claire Stenhouse of Coombe Dingle Nursery, Coombe St Nicholas come along with a wonderful array of plants and demonstrations on potting-up pots and hanging baskets. She told us her story of getting into horticulture, her role as a Head Gardener in a large house which had lots of scope for change. The owners were very keen for her to design and build new water features and beds. However, she left this role to start her new venture running the nursery back at her family farm. Claire explained how the nursery evolved and the running of it.



Our July meeting was a double delight as it took us back to Sharon Bradford's wonderful garden she has created with Neil. Not only were we treated to another trip around their garden, we also had a fascinating demonstration of the potter's wheel and use of the kiln in Sharon's pottery shed. She also described how she started making pottery and her development.

EVENTS

For the Jubilee celebrations we went to the Castle Hotel for celebratory afternoon tea, most enjoyable.



We were very disappointed when the county fun quiz was cancelled, so we were delighted that Kingston St Mary WI organised a quiz for Somerset WI's. This was a very well attended and enjoyable event and as a team we tied for 1st position, only to lose on the tie break!

SPORTS

Netball is back - we are now playing at King's College on a Tuesday evening. A taster evening (to help us get back into it, it has been a long time!) was arranged in June with the Head of netball at King's College, Sammy Kemmish, she ran our sessions when we first started, while working for England netball.

The long-awaited **skittles** league is also back. We start the first rounds of the knock-out competition in September.



Tea at the Castle

Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month, at the Neroche Hall

*if you would like to join our meetings, please contact Tricia Dryden
tricia@witchlodge.co.uk*

Also contact Tricia if you would like a programme of our events for the year.

We hope to see you at one of our meetings.

THE FLOWER GUILD NEED YOUR HELP

WANTED

The flower guild is trying to stop the use of oasis as it's not a biodegradable product. As mentioned in a previous article we are trialling different methods of displaying flowers. Last month Candy and Peta produced a lovely display in a large old water jug.

We are looking for old or new large containers with a country/rustic feel e.g. small milk churns, stoneware pots, jugs, vases and even buckets to display flowers. If you have anything you could donate to the church for the flower guild, we would be very grateful. We are willing to collect if you could contact me:

jacqueline.kolkowski@btinternet.com Thank you

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee at St Peter's Church

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

On Friday, 3rd of June, St Peter's Church hosted a wonderful Jubilee event. It started with uplifting and joyful songs of praise organised by Alison Brown and the choir. The well-chosen program of songs and hymns, sung by the choir and congregation, ensured a wonderful service that gave thanks to the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

We then held a special Jubilee POP-UP-CAFE. This included the sale of our normal scrumptious cakes, with a Jubilee twist. We had crafts for the children which included "decorate a crown" and "decorate a Jubilee cupcake" with Carole.

I have never seen the Church so full at the Friday café, and we lost count of the number of children decorating crowns, cupcakes or colouring royal themed pictures. We even gave crown kits to children to take home if they did not manage to make one in the church. Thank goodness we put the plant sale outside as we would not have had any room in the Church.

Thanks must go to Alison and the choir, Candy, Peta and Carole for the crafts, and Karen, Andrew and all the plant donors on the plant stall. Thanks also to the very busy cafe ladies Pauline, Fran, Tricia, Tina and Win along with all the bakers.

A big thank you to all that came to our celebration in the Church, and we hope to see you there again soon.



News from Neroche Hall

By Karen Learoyd

It's all change on the Neroche Hall Committee! At the recent Annual General Meeting, we welcomed a new Treasurer, Jacq Wanstall, and a new Booking Secretary, Mary Palmer. Jacq was previously Treasurer for The Warehouse Theatre in Ilminster, so has plenty of invaluable experience, and we know our finances will be in good hands! Jacq is also a former editor of the Newsletter and Clerk to the Parish Council, so will know many of you from that, or her walks around the villages with Woody and Wesley. Mary also lives in Bickenhall and runs a holiday let at Dairy House Farm, so arranging bookings should be a doddle. We also welcomed Ned Binding and John Learoyd to the committee, both of whom bring a variety of valuable skills to our group.

Kingsley Beck decided to stand down from his role as Chair, and I am proud to have been elected as the first lady Chair of Neroche Hall. I'd like to thank Kingsley for his stint as Chair, and for the passion and enthusiasm he has always demonstrated for the building. He has been instrumental in maintaining the Hall, whether painting, arranging work with contractors, or even doing the cleaning! As he mentioned in his last report, several improvements have already been completed, and we are in the process of upgrading the ladies' toilets over the next couple of months.

I am also delighted that a number of former committee members have re-joined us, so we have a great mix of valuable experience, and new ideas coming to the fore. We will continue to host popular events like the Fish 'n' Chip quiz and Craft Fair although are looking at ways of enhancing the Hall's use as the community hub and hope to hold more music or arts events in the coming months. Unfortunately, the company we used for film nights are no longer able to support us, so we will be looking at other options to restart those.

If you have any suggestions for events or activities at the Hall, do drop me a line or contact one of the committee members. Thanks also to everyone who has returned to using the Hall – we love having you back.

Karen.wensley@gmail.com

Quantock Builders National Three Peaks Challenge, 2-4 July 2022

Saturday, North to Scotland



Bags packed and loaded in the minibus, we headed north from Taunton on the M5 by 8am on the Saturday morning – destination Glen Nevis Hostel, Fort William, 522 miles to go!

Traffic was light and moving so good progress was made till we got a rear wheel puncture in the middle lane of the M6! A quick swerve onto the hard shoulder, it took us a wee while to find the wheel brace and jack and eventually we put on the (low speed) spare wheel and limped into Kwik Fit Chorley. An hour later, new tyre fitted and back on the road again.



The rest of the journey was uneventful and we got to the Hostel just before Reception closed at 9.30pm. Tired from the journey although excited for the day ahead, we checked kit and packed rucksacks ready for the morning and turned in for the night.

Sunday AM, Ben Nevis

Quick breakfast and last minute kit checks. The weather conditions, as expected, looked challenging - wet and very poor visibility with low cloud hanging above us in Glen Nevis and no sign of what lay above.

Start/Finish: Footbridge over River Nevis in front of the Hostel

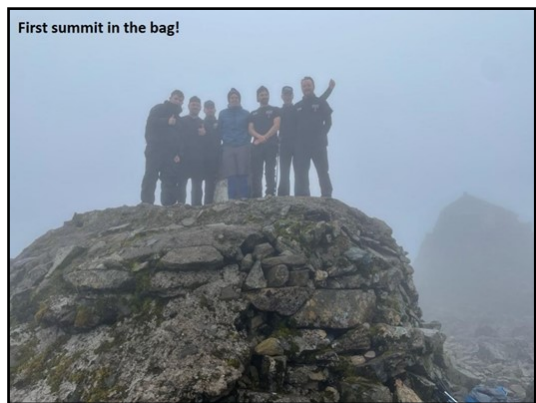


8.06am we crossed the bridge, clock ticking, ideally we needed to be back off the Ben in five hours in order to stay on track to complete the challenge in 24 hours.



Weather improved, cloud lifted a wee bit to give us glimpses across the Western Highlands.

Steep, rocky and relentless with a few patches of snow on the summit plateau, we got to the top in three hours - great! Low cloud and wet so not a place to hang around – quick Team QB photo and down we go.



The descent was really tricky and tough, with everyone taking a few tumbles on the slippery wet and polished granite. We were 20 minutes over schedule getting down although confident we could make that up on the next leg.

No hanging about - wet kit off, bags in the van and heading south ASAP!

Next six odd hours: Eat & Drink, Sleep or Drive, England here we come!

Sunday PM, Scafell Pike

Start/Finish: NT Car Park, Wasdale Head, Lake District



Sunday evening, NT Car Park, Wasdale Head

Scheduled start time was 8pm. We were actually walking out of the car park by 7.53pm, magic, lost time on the Ben made up and now seven minutes early.

Weather pretty much the same as before, low cloud and drizzle. Conscious of the fading light we were keen to get as much of this leg done before the sun set, so heads down and full steam ahead!

The route up was pretty straightforward, although the fading light, swirling mist and low cloud made it very atmospheric.

The final few hundred meters were across rocky broken ground with no discernible path but eventually the summit cairn came into view – brilliant, on the top in just under two hours.

Once again, a quick team photo and head down, slightly off line in our haste which was quickly corrected.

Despite having to don our head torches we made good time on the descent and were back at the CP by 11.25pm.

Now 25 minutes ahead of schedule we were keen to get on the road ASAP – Wales and the final leg here we come!



Heading up Lingmell Gill, West Water behind us



Second one in the bag!



Descent by torch light

Monday AM, Snowdon

Start/Finish: Pen-y-Pass Car Park, Snowdonia

Frustration – lots of road works and delays. Should have been walking by 4am, didn't get to CP till two minutes past. Pressure really on – need to be back before 8.06am. Very quick turnaround, boots and bags on

and heading up the Pyg Track by 17 minutes past.



Weather – repeat as per the Ben and Scafell Pike!

No messing about now, really up against it. All blowing hard and stepping out as fast as we can.



Seemed to take a lifetime to climb up the final stretch of the Pyg Track to join the main tourist path for the last few (wet and windy) hundred meters to the summit.



At last the final summit photo!



Just over two hours gone, quick photo and about turn – it's going to be really tight.

The descent a blur; no stopping, no chatting, just shouts of encouragement and leg muscles screaming. Car park seemingly never getting closer, going as fast as we can, everyone giving all.

Collapse in the car park, phones out check time

We can't believe it, 8.01am, five minutes under the 24 hours!

Final Stats:

Ben Nevis:

8.6 miles, 4,347ft climb, 5:20hrs

Scafell Pike:

5.5 miles, 2,959ft climb, 3:38hrs

Snowdon:

6.8 miles, 2,375ft climb, 3:44hrs

Totals:

20.9 miles, 9,681ft climb, 12:42hrs

The Team:

Simon & Jason Dennehy, Shaun Laverton, Tom West, Marcus Hodges, Mike Aspray and Finlay McKie



Total raised for Breast Cancer UK: £2,924 (as at 31 Jul)

See our page at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/QuantockBuikers3PeaksChallenge>



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Events for your calendar

(Venue is Neroche Hall unless stated)

September

Thursday, 1st - Community Lunch

Thursday, 8th - Neroche Parish Council Meeting

Sunday, 11th - Annual Cricket Match at Stoke St Mary

Wednesday, 14th - WI Meeting

Wednesday, 21st - Quiz Night at The Greyhound

Friday, 30th - Macmillan Coffee Morning at St Peter's Church

Friday, 30th - Fish 'n' Chip Quiz

October

Thursday, 6th - Community Lunch

Wednesday, 12th - WI Meeting

Wednesday, 19th - Quiz Night at The Greyhound

Saturday, 29th October - Craft Fair

November

Thursday, 3rd - Community Lunch

Wednesday, 9th - WI Meeting

Thursday, 10th - Neroche Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, 16th - Quiz Night at The Greyhound

For latest updates visit www.nerochevillages.org.uk/events-calendar



SCHOOL TERM DATES

1 September to 21 October

31 October to 16 December

Local Communication and Information

Websites:

Neroche Villages www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Community website run by the Neroche Communication Action Group. It has an up-to-date calendar of events; a news section; information about residents' action groups, including broadband, traffic; a business section and advertisements.

The website features a comprehensive list of clubs and organisations, including details of those in neighbouring parishes. It is also the website of Neroche Parish Council and lists its activities, agenda, minutes and reports.

Neroche Hall www.nerochehall.org.uk

The website lists the coming events, facilities and availability for hire of our village hall, and has an online booking form.

Church of England Seven Sowers Benefice www.sevensowers.org.uk

Has a calendar of events and church service times for Staple Fitzpaine and Orchard Portman churches, as well as other churches in the benefice.

Email Information:

The Neroche Communication Action Group runs an Email Alert System for sending information to those wishing to receive it. **Please note the email address for the EMail Alert:** nerocheemail@gmail.com

The Parish Magazine:

Full information on benefice matters, a great source of news, coming events and general information, and details of many local businesses and services. For new subscriptions phone Alison Brown on 01823 480441.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this Newsletter.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Neroche Communication Action Group. Publication of an advertisement in, or with, the newsletter does not imply the Action Group's approval of the goods or services.

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