

“Working Together for a Better Community”

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Issue No 11

Newsletter

February 2014

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

Your trusted and highly valued deliverer may be battling through the winter weather to ensure you receive your February copy of the Newsletter, but don't be too dispirited, for spring is on its way:

Spring is coming
Soon to arrive.
Fowls to their nests
And bees to their hives.
Birds serenading
With their odes.
Caterpillars.
And loads of toads.
Twirling butterflies.
Flowers in bloom.
The sun will return.
Spring's coming soon.



By Walterrean Salley

Welcome to the 11th issue of the Neroche Villages' Newsletter, which hopes to satisfy the need identified in the Parish Plan for a 'hard copy' local news and information medium delivered free to every household in Neroche Parish. The aim of this publication is to improve communication within the Parish by providing news and information on a wide variety of subjects and issues.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Foreword

By: Wally Torrington (Project Coordinator) & Alan Perrior (Editor)



As we enter 2014, with Issue Number 11 of the Neroche Villages' Newsletter, we wish to thank all the organisations and individuals who have supported us since Issue Number 1 was published in April 2011. In particular: the Parish Council; Neroche Hall



Committee; our regular contributors; the clubs and organisations who produce articles/reports and regularly post notices of their forthcoming events; local businesses who use the Newsletter to deliver their flyers; those residents who have made generous donations; and our '*never to be forgotten*' loyal readership.

Finally, extra-special thanks to our steadfast group of committed deliverers, without whom the final product would never reach your post-boxes.

The Newsletter, together with the Community Website and the Email Alert System (all established and run by the Neroche Communication Action Group) has become 'the shop window' for most of that which takes place in Neroche Parish.

Due to its popularity, the Newsletter has grown from a modest 20 pages in April 2011 to the bumper 52 page edition you are reading now. Also, we have progressed to all-colour, which has attracted an overwhelming positive response from our readership. We've also managed to keep the Newsletter pages free of commercial advertisement, enabling us to include more articles and general information. But above all else, **IT'S FREE!!!**

If you are a frustrated journalist and wish to join the Newsletter production team, then please contact wallytorrington@hotmail.com

News From Neroche Hall

Richard Davies, Chairman of Neroche Hall Trustees, has agreed to produce a regular article for the Newsletter.

As 2013 drew to a close we, as a committee, were looking forward to 2014 and starting to plan ahead in relation to the events we hoped to stage. Fund raising is, of course, one of the main aims of the committee, as it provides our community with a valuable resource. We always try to appeal to a wide spectrum of tastes, and this year is unlikely to be any exception. Old favourites such as our Quiz Night, Film Night and Take Art are on the agenda, in addition to the usual array of events put on by others who hire the hall.



I thought I would take this opportunity to briefly talk about our monthly film night, which is held on the last Friday in the month. This has been a great success since we started several months ago, with a varied choice of films being presented. However, we are aware that there has been concern about the sound quality, some people having found it difficult to hear the dialog.



This has possibly put some of you off, with the result that you may have stopped coming, so I would like to assure all who may fall into this category that we are taking this very seriously. In order to try and improve the overall sound we have commissioned two separate surveys of the hall from experts in sound and acoustics. Being an old chapel, with such a high roof/ceiling, it does present us with some unique issues that may require remedial work, involving acoustic tiles and other sound absorbing materials.

Needless to say, such things come at significant cost, which may, in the absence of a grant, be beyond our current means.

The film showing on 31st January will also enable a third sound expert to attend, to see if improvements can be made by using different speakers or positions within the hall, looking to explore all avenues in order to improve the quality. Not many of you will be aware that the hall has a 'hearing loop' incorporated within the hall's own speaker system. At present, it does not link directly into the Moviola system, and we are looking to incorporate this so that, in future, those with a compatible hearing device should find the sound a great improvement.

Finally, I would remind everyone that news of forthcoming events can be found in both the Newsletter and on our website: www.nerochehall.org.uk

Neroche Hall Quiz (with Fish'n'Chips)

Saturday 15th March 2014
7.00pm for 7.15pm start



Featuring your own fab quiz master

Mr Colin Croad

B.Y.O. drink

Teams of up to six

£2.00 per person (food extra)

www.nerochehall.org.uk



The last quiz (on 11th October) was won by a team captained by David Spears; other team members were Alan & Jill Perrior, Mary Bainbridge and Dai & Yvonne Rees. *Can they be beaten?*

Heroche Resident's Double Achievement



Most of us would have been delighted with a just single major attainment in our teens; so it was marvellous news to hear that a local lad has just picked-up not one but two prestigious national awards. Greg Wilgar, of Curland (his family moved to the village last summer) has achieved both his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and his Queen's Scout Award. Later in the year he'll be attending a ceremony in Hampshire to receive his D of E award, and a parade at Windsor Castle in April to be conferred the honour of Queen's Scout.

Greg joined the Scout Association as a Beaver when he was six. He worked his way through Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, became a Young Leader when he was sixteen, and at eighteen became an Assistant Cub Scout Leader. He represented his district at the '100 Years of Scouting' celebrations at the O2 arena in 2007, and in 2011 was chosen to go as part of the Hampshire contingent to the World Scout Jamboree in Sweden. In the same year he was recognised for 'Achievements and Excellence in Scouting' by Basingstoke West District Scouts. In October 2012, Greg was presented with an award by Basingstoke Voluntary Services for his 'Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community' for his work within scouting.

It is no surprise that Greg enjoys many forms of outdoor pursuits; his current love is surfing, and he is a keen mountain walker. On the sporting front, he was in the school rugby team (second row) from 12-16yrs.

Greg has trained as a kick-boxer since the age of eight and is a First Dan Black Belt. Whilst at university he is still training three times a week under the supervision of a former world champion.

During his less energetic moments, he enjoys playing the guitar and listening to music. Greg has just turned nineteen; in September last year he started at Bangor University and is reading Zoology. He is very interested in conservation and ecology (*I've already slipped his name to the team at the Blackdown Hills AONB*).

(In the August Issue of the Newsletter we promise to post pictures of his two award ceremonies.)

*Annual Meetings for the Parishes of Bickenhall,
Curland, Orchard Portman with Thurlbear, and Staple
Fitzpaine*

Thursday 1 May 2014

Neroche Village Hall – Doors Open 7.00pm

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, every English Parish must hold an Annual Parish Meeting between 1st March and 1st June each year, and it must take place after 6.00pm



The Annual Parish Meetings is one of the most important local events of the year. An occasion when: residents can make their voices heard; meet their Parish, Borough and County Councillors; learn more about local, social and sporting activities; and be updated on the progress being made by local Action Groups. It is also an opportunity to find out about all the excellent work going on in the parishes and the wide variety of activities that are taking place, and, more importantly, become involved if you so wish. There will be guest speakers, and stands for all the clubs and social organisations in the parishes to advertise their activities. Free refreshments, including wine and

cheese, will be provided for everybody attending. It is most important that as many local residents as possible attend. This year's event will be taking place during the evening of Thursday 1 May 2014 in the Neroche Hall; **please put the date in your diary.**

***YOUR ATTENDANCE AND SUPPORT IS
ESSENTIAL; PLEASE BE THERE!!!***

Gardening Corner

Rebecca Pow, a local garden writer and broadcaster on national radio and television, has kindly agreed to write a regular column for our Newsletter on local horticulture and craft skills. For more information on Rebecca go to www.rebeccapow.com & www.rebeccapow.org.uk



Rambling through Thurlbear wood, there are few spring like signs yet, although I love the stark drama of the tree trunks and bare branches at this time of year. And driving around the lanes of Staple Fitzpaine and Curland the hedges are still quite bare, as the green veil of leaves has not yet arrived. But whilst it may look plain, there is plenty of wildlife sheltering in our wild places. Similarly, there is plenty in my garden, or at least there ought to be! That's because I garden with wildlife in mind. I don't do the annual tidy-up that many conventional gardeners carry out in late autumn or early winter. I leave most of the foliage in my borders throughout the winter months, and don't cut anything down until this time of year (more specifically, the end of February or even early March). So, my busy time is due!



I do this to benefit wildlife. The foliage provides precious cover for wild creatures like overwintering Peacock and Red Admiral butterflies and shelter for a range of birds. The larvae of Small and Large Skipper butterflies (found on the Blackdowns but venturing into many of our gardens) can overwinter as larvae in cocoons in areas of rough grass (I leave areas for them) and some other moth and butterfly larvae will survive the winter, buried in leaf litter or the soil near their food plants.

Gardens are a-whole-meal-on-a-plate for a multitude of birds. Sunflower heads will provide seeds for greenfinches, chaffinches and house sparrows; teasel seeds are adored by goldfinches; and berries are a boon for all birds, whether they be on pyracantha, cotoneaster, holly or spindle, which grows like a weed in parts of the Neroche countryside.

I leave log piles too, for overwintering butterfly chrysalides, pupae of some solitary bees or dormant queen bumble bees and ladybirds. Perhaps a hedgehog may find a welcome winter hibernation site here too, although, sadly, their population has crashed dramatically, and I've only seen one in the locality in the last handful of years.



Rotting foliage provides home to a world of, perhaps, less endearing but equally important soil creatures, including nematodes, spring tails and many of the 27 species of worm found in the UK.



An amazing 800 insect species can be found in gardens. They all play their part in helping to break-down plant material, recycle it, aerate it and facilitate drainage. Bees and other flying insects, including hover flies, are crucial later in the season for pollinating our crops; without them we would actually starve! Bees also need all the help they can get, having suffered a nightmare 70%

decline in their population recently.

Why do I care about adopting this method of gardening? In the winter I do feel like posting up a sign saying **“Yes, this looks a bit of a mess but I’m doing it for the wildlife!”**

Our wildlife needs our help. Our wild species are in crisis. Populations of birds, bees, bats, insects, butterflies, moths, reptiles and amphibians have gone through a dramatic period of change. 60% of UK species are in decline. In Somerset, 97% of flower rich meadows are gone, a ¼ of every species of flowering plant is in decline, 94% of woodland birds are in decline (even on the Fivehead Ridge and in Thurlbear Wood, populations are changing.) Only a 1/3 of woodland plants are left and there are 52% less breeding



birds in our farmland than in 1966. Where species do survive they are often in isolated fragmented sites that make it difficult for them to find mates for breeding.) The reasons for the decline are many-and-varied but amongst them are changes in agricultural practices, (more monoculture, less winter stubbles), road and house building, and the spread of industry, in fact all the demands of modern day living.



So, what can gardeners do to help? There are an incredible 15 million gardens in the UK covering 1 million acres (270,000 hectares) or 4% of the land. In Somerset alone, there are 125,000 gardens covering 19 square kms. This area represents a fantastically valuable habitat for our threatened wildlife, and if we garden with the birds, insects, bats, frogs, newts and toads and all the other rich diversity of nature in mind, we could make a real difference to their future. So, when you are thinking of your autumn tidy up, hold back; wait until spring and your fellow creatures will thank you. As a gardener, I think it makes the perennials and herbaceous plants stronger as well, so there are some horticultural gains.



Blackdown Hills Natural Futures. There may be some potential to develop some community wildlife gardening projects through the new *Blackdown Hills Natural Futures* project. The team working on this is based in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is looking for project ideas that will help locals to share their knowledge of the local countryside, discover more about wildlife on their

doorsteps and help to look after it. Fuelled by seed corn money from the Heritage Lottery Fund, consultant Claire Reid is canvassing for potential ideas such as developing community orchards, wildlife nature trails or wildlife gardens. “The scheme will run over 3 years and we have the opportunity to unlock up to £288,000 to spend in the area, so it would be well worth anyone interested getting in touch” says Claire. In Stoke St Mary, in 2012, the community made a village garden, which has given the village a central focal point and, being filled with flowers for at least nine months of the year, provides valuable nectar for a wealth of insects. It might be the kind of project that could be copied in the Neroche villages, as part of the Natural Futures Project.

If it benefits not only the people of the area but also the wildlife then it must be worth a try!

The Somerset Wildlife Trust. This organisation also has a Wildlife Gardening arm and can supply useful hands-on wildlife gardening hints. They are also running a butterfly appeal to help save some of our precious and threatened species, many of which, like the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Silver Washed Fritillaries, were once widespread in the area, the latter feeding on Common Dog Violets.



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

To find out more about the Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project contact Pippa Rayner on 01823 680681 or blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk.

For information on the Somerset Wildlife Trust go to: www.somersetwildlife.org and www.somersetwildlife.org/butterfly-appeal

THANK YOU!!!

Newsletter Donations



Very many thanks to all readers who completed the Donation Form included with the November Issue, to help secure the future of the Newsletter. Your contributions were greatly appreciated by the Neroche Villages' Newsletter Team.

If you missed your chance, donation forms can still be obtained by contacting: wallytorrington@hotmail.com

NEROCHE THURSDAY LUNCHEAS AT NEROCHE HALL

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a great home-cooked 2-course lunch. Meet people from the locality, take time out from your busy daily routine *and* enjoy conviviality & friendliness at a community lunch.

Lunches will take place on Thursdays at 12.30 for 1.00 pm
6th February, 13th March, 3rd April, 8th May

Please phone or email to book (need to know for catering purposes).
Transport / special diets can be arranged.

Contact Alison Brown tel: 01823 480441,
Email: alison-anthony@battensfarm.fsnet.co.uk

Organised by Friends of St Peter's Church

ST PETER'S CHURCH STAPLE FITZPAINE

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Neroche Hall
7.15 for 7.30 pm
Tuesday 4 March 2014



Adults £8 Children £4
Raffle Quiz
Tickets from

Alison Brown - 01823 480441.

Mal Lee - 01460 234282

Please bring your own favourite tippie



COMING SOON TO NEROCHE HALL

FRIDAY 4th APRIL

NEROCHE TAKE ART

Presents

'Cosmic Sausage'

An evening of fun with these talented musicians and comic performers.



Appearing as a gentle folk band and armed only with acoustic instruments, the Cosmic Sausages ambush their audience with a barrage of pop classics, circus, slapstick and crowd participation. They have performed their street shows over 250 times and appeared at Glastonbury five times.

Tickets £8 from:

Anne 01460 234377, Jane 01460 234410 or Sheila 01823 480758

or email anne@poolesfarm.eclipse.co.uk

Neroche Local History Group

In the 100th anniversary year of the start of the 1st World War we invite you to a talk on some new and exciting local research.

Blackdown Hills War Memorials Project

**Andrew Read BA (Hons) MA
Co-Director, Blackdown Hills War Memorials Project**

**Wed 26th March at 7.30pm Neroche Hall
All welcome non members £2.50**



The Project was set up to catalogue and record all accessible War Memorials within the Blackdown Hills AONB, to enable further research on a local and national level. Andrew has studied war memorials for several years. His wide ranging and informative talk will cover what a war memorial is, why they are important and why it is necessary to keep the memories alive both locally and nationally. It will include memorials near us, including those at Staple Fitzpaine, along with many others in the area.

News From Neroche Parish Council

Our Clerk to the Parish Council, Gillian Midworth, has kindly agreed to produce a regular feature for our Newsletter.



Background to Precept Planning.

The winter months are a time when the Parish Council looks forward to the spring and plans its budget for the new financial year, which starts in April. A small working party meets to discuss probable expenditure, taking into account any projects that the Parish Council wishes to undertake in the financial year, and presents its proposals to a full council meeting. Once a budget has been agreed, a precept is levied to meet this expenditure.

The precept is requested from the Borough Council who collects it via the Council Tax system, so the amount each parishioner pays will vary, according to the rating band of their property. Furthermore, in April 2013, a new localised system of Council Tax Support was introduced, which reduces the tax base per parish depending on how many Council Tax Support claimants are within the parish, and the level of support they receive. Potentially, this could lead to an increase in the amount that individual parishioners pay, as the precept is levied on fewer properties; but to date, Taunton Deane Borough Council has provided a Council Tax Support Grant to parishes, which cushions the impact of these changes.

The tax base of each parish will vary each year depending on a number of factors. For example, properties which may have been extended, and now fall within a higher rating band, will result in an increase in the tax base and, as mentioned previously, an increase in Council Tax Support claimants will reduce the tax base.

As a result of this, although a Parish Council may levy the same precept each year, your Council Tax bill may show slight variations over the years.

Extraordinary Parish Council Meetings

In addition to the scheduled Parish Council meetings, there are occasions when an additional meeting is necessary to discuss items of importance to the community, such as planning applications.

One such meeting was held in early December, when the Parish Council met to discuss a planning application to convert an agricultural building in Curland to a holiday let. A large number of parishioners were present to express their views, and voice their objections.

One of the roles of a Parish Council is to represent the views of its parishioners, and in recognition of the strong public opinion shown regarding this particular application, the Parish Council forwarded its objections to the Planning Officer. The high turnout of parishioners shows how improved communication within the community is working and, moreover, that the residents are interested in local matters, looking to the Parish Council to respond to their views

At the time of writing, no decision had been made on the application.

Parish Path Liaison Officer

Would you like to assist both the Somerset Rights of Way Team and Neroche Parish Council by keeping an eye on our local rights of way network and feeding back any problems, such as missing sign posts, paths obstructed by fallen trees, or difficult-to-use gates and stiles



etc? If so, why not volunteer to be a Parish Paths Liaison Officer (PPLO)? By being a PPLO, you will be actively involved in ensuring our local rights of way network remains open and easy



to use for everyone to enjoy. The scheme has been designed to be flexible, so you can get involved as little or as much as you like. For more information please contact Gillian Midworth, Clerk to Neroche

Parish Council, neroche.pc@nerochevillages.org.uk

Local Girl Stars in 'Cats' Musical

(by Wally Torrington)

16 year old Curland resident, Heidi Parsons, is in Year 11 at Taunton School. She auditioned and was offered a place at a top London Drama school at age 13 but decided to remain at Taunton. She is a member of the Youth Music Theatre and has performed in Edinburgh and London. She has just been awarded the Hilda Memorial Cup for the overall best piece of drama at The Taunton Drama Festival, for the second year in succession. 'CATS' is Heidi's 7th Taunton School production; she played the part of Carlotta in the previous musical production 'Phantom of The Opera'. As well as being a talented actress, Heidi is also an all-round sportswoman, excelling in hockey, netball and cross country.



Local girl, Heidi Parsons, was cast as Demeter, one of the leading roles in the highly acclaimed production of 'Cats' staged by Taunton School at the Brewhouse Theatre just before Christmas. It ran nightly, to sell-out audiences, from 3rd to 7th December. It was the first show at the venue since it closed-for-business in February. In her review of the show, the County Gazette's Daisy Blacklock wrote:

"Taunton School's über-talented young performers shocked the theatre back to life for a show week of CATS, a challenging cornerstone of the Lloyd-Webber canon if ever there was one. And what a stunning way to shake the dust off.



This was like no school production I'd ever seen; the cast, miked-up and donning the definitive striking costumes of the CATS aesthetic, looked, sang and danced like they'd come out of a West End finishing school. True to the Lloyd Webber stamp, this musical was wall-to-wall song without dialogue, with the added hurdle for the cast of moving, leaping and bounding with feline grace, caution and curiosity. It was seamless."



The School Headmaster Dr Newton said: *"What amazes me is the quality of the detail: the excitement of the choreography, the power of the voices, the quality of the costumes. The delivery of a show to a demanding public audience has taught my pupils backbone and high standards. I congratulate the whole team in proving that we can lift pupils of school age to such a magnificent level of performance."*

In the programme notes, Heidi wrote: *"...I am currently studying both GCSE Drama and Music. This production has been a great challenge for me and the whole cast. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed creating it."* We certainly did enjoy it Heidi, and we can't wait to see Taunton School's next production.

News From Somerset County Council

Ross Henley, our Somerset County Councillor, has kindly offered to write a regular column for our Newsletter.



Since writing my piece in the November issue of the Newsletter, I have been out-and-about a lot in the Neroche villages. I attended the Thursday Lunch Club at the Village Hall, early in November. This was a fantastic event with a great two-course lunch followed by cheese and biscuits, all for £5; excellent value. It was a great opportunity for me to meet lots of people and introduce myself as your new County Councillor; also, I very much enjoyed saying a few words to the Club diners at the end of the meal.

Following that, I attended the Craft Fayre, also at the Village Hall. It was a great showcase for craft skills in the area. I bought myself a Christmas pudding from the Women's Institute stall, and I am looking forward to attending their meeting in February. I will get there early to join-in the singing of 'Jerusalem'; it's always been one of my favourite hymns.

A few Saturdays ago, I got the chance to call-in at the Artisan Bakery in Bickenhall, and bought some of the nicest bread I have ever eaten. What a great facility to have in our area. I will be returning again and again to purchase more of its excellent produce.

At the November meeting of the Neroche Parish Council, we had a chance to discuss the future of Orchard Portman Nursing Home. Representatives from the management, and concerned relatives of residents were also present. It's very upsetting for residents when they have to move from their home, and very stressful for carers and relatives as well; I have a lot of sympathy for them.

I was also given a full guided tour of Taunton Racecourse, which is also in my Division. It was most interesting to see everything backstage, and find out about the course and the business in general. I was most grateful to the Directors and staff of the course who made me very welcome.

Finally, I hope you all had a happy Christmas and New Year, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in 2014 .

Bickenhall & District Women's Institute



Members of Bickenhall & District WI have been extremely busy over the past few months.

A skittles team has been formed, playing both in The County League and friendly matches.

A number of members attended the Annual County Meeting at Westlands in Yeovil. It was reported as a very enjoyable day with a speech by Janis Langley, the national chair, and also a talk by Tamasin Day-Lewis, journalist, film maker and cookery writer. Attendees were impressed by the part of the morning entitled "Inspiring Women" where a number of young women spoke about their enthusiasm and membership of the WI.

The Annual Carol Service at Wells Cathedral was attended by a number of our club, where more than a thousand county WI members came together to celebrate Christmas in the traditional way.

Other December activities included the monthly meeting, where business was swiftly dealt with and included information for voting on the national annual resolutions. Members then had great fun when the speakers were artists from Art to Art from Taunton. All members



present decorated and painted tiles which were then taken away to be fired and later returned to members.



We then enjoyed our "Fun for a Fiver" fundraising evening, where monies raised are shared between county and the club. The evening took the form of a Family Fun Bingo Evening. Fabulous prizes were won and great fun was had by all. The bingo-caller for the evening was Chris Baxter, who kept people entertained with his calling and anecdotes about bingo.

Christmas activity was then wound-up with members meeting to enjoy a seasonal viewing of White Christmas at the home of one of our members.

A varied and extremely interesting programme has been organized for the forthcoming year, including: Help for Heroes; Hypnotherapy; Cookery; Crafts; Fashion; and much more

Bickenhall & District WI are always pleased to welcome new members, or indeed any enquiries. We meet most months at Neroche Hall or sometimes at the Greyhound Inn. President, Pauline Phelps, is always pleased to speak to people interested in WI, and she can be contacted on 01460 234 455

WI Antiques Valuation Evening - with Nic Saintey

(by Nicky Baxter)

Nic Saintey is a Director of fine art auctioneers Bearnes, Hampton & Littlewood of Exeter and has appeared as an expert on BBC's 'Bargain Hunt' and 'Flog It'.

Members of the public and other WIs joined Bickenhall WI for a special evening where guest speaker Nic Saintey, an antiques expert, talked about objects people had brought along for inspection, discussion and valuation.



Nic Saintey gave an outline of exactly what his job involved as an antiques valuer and auctioneer. Much of his work involves managing expectation that

people have about their belongings. The items presented for inspection were described as an eclectic collection.

In describing objects, Nic gave the audience a number of very interesting anecdotes and historical facts. For example, whilst speaking about a pottery drinking vessel he explained that in the past people would drink more alcohol on full moons because they could see better to get home. While talking about a wooden carving, he stated that Switzerland was a very poor place before Thomas Cook arranged travel there. When describing a pottery bowl, he stated that the British stole valuable pottery during the Opium Wars.

It quickly became clear the items were more than just objects, but were about social and personal family history. For example: the life of one member's grandfather as a coal miner was represented by a plate given to celebrate the coming-of-age of the mine owner's son; a first edition book, with a photograph of the author and a brooch that had belonged to her, reflected the life of that person; a teddy bear who was nearly a hundred years old showed signs of the love received from many children in one family; a beautiful 1908 book about health care for horses showed another family's passion for all things equine down the years.

Other interesting and fascinating items included, among many other things: a pre-war glass item made by Rene Lalique; a Satsuma bowl; an Edwardian toy pram; high quality bronze casts of German composers; a silver tipped riding crop; a delightful Meisen cup and saucer; a German coffee pot; and a small landscape of Venice.



Maureen James and Nic Saintey with the "exquisitely carved wooden bull from the Black Forest"

When asked which of the items there was his particular favourite, he picked an exquisitely carved wooden bull from the Black Forest.

Nic was then willing to give private valuations. He was warmly thanked by WI President Pauline Phelps.

Neroche Hand Bells

(by Di Grabham)

The first tuned hand bells were developed by brothers Robert and William Cor in Aldbourne, Wiltshire between 1696 and 1724. Originally, these bells were used by change ringers to rehearse outside their towers. Tower bell ringers' enthusiasm for practicing the complicated algorithms of change ringing can easily exceed the neighbours' patience, so in the days before modern sound control, hand bells offered them a way to continue ringing without the aural assault.



The hand bell sets used by change ringers had the same number of bells as in the towers - generally six or twelve, tuned to a diatonic scale.

But ringers soon became interested in using the bells to ring melodies. Simple arrangements of hymns and folk songs began to appear, written for newly formed bell choirs. By the end of the eighteenth century, nearly every village in England had its own hand bell choir.

I expect many of you enjoy the melodious sound of the hand bells ringing our favourite carols during the festive season.

Neroche Hand Bells were started by the late Edna Grabham, back in the late fifties. She had her own set of bells and devised a method of ringing-by-numbers, so that those



Edna Grabham

who couldn't read music were able to play. However, it is far easier if one has a sense of rhythm and musicality. I joined under duress, back in the eighties, to make up the full team, and have been hooked ever since!

After Edna's death, we did not wish to give up, and so one of our new members lent us the money to buy the bells. We then had to earn the £3,000 to pay her back, which took several years.

Jenny Trood took over the task of conductor, and we practise weekly. Our venues include Nursing Homes, Old Peoples Clubs, as well as Churches.



The Large

We have two octaves and play with one bell in each hand. It is better to not touch the brass of the bell, so it is necessary to handle them by their leather straps. The only place we can get the bells tuned is Whitechapel in London, and it is extremely expensive. Bells 'one' and 'two' are heavy to use and control their deep sound; 'fifteen' and 'sixteen', the highest bells, are extremely light, but need plenty of strength to get a full sound.



The Small

There are those of us who have learned to play all the bells over the years. For approximately the past two



years we have managed to keep our team members constant, and so have managed to extend our repertoire to more classical pieces, which is very fulfilling.

We hope that you were able to hear and enjoy our ringing during the Christmas Season, and perhaps now appreciate their sound more fully.

Neroche Local History Group

The Lost Houses

(by Wally Torrington)

On the evening of 27th November, in Neroche Hall, the Local History Group gave a fascinating presentation on ‘The Lost Houses’ of Curland, Staple

Fitzpaine and Bickenhall. However, it must be said that the audience got ‘far more than their monies worth’, with a detailed insight into the local area plus tips on how to go hunting themselves for historical facts on local properties.



Alan Marsh, Doreen Marsh, Jane Hole

Jane Hole (the Chairman) strongly supported by Alan and Doreen Marsh (highly respected local historians), took those present through a journey of local history. It started with an explanation of how maps are essential to the work of historical searches (albeit, it was pointed out, that early maps couldn’t always be relied upon for accuracy). On display was a cartographical treasure trove spanning the past 400 years, with a 17th century map of Somerset and Devon, through to images produced by the modern LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) system.

With the aid of some extremely illuminating and informative slides, the audience were shown a variety of documents, depicting the wealth of historical evidence available at the Heritage Centre in Taunton. The main source of information are the tithe maps,¹ together with the apportionment details. Between these two documents it is possible to trace some of the houses, their

¹ *Agricultural tithes had been around for many centuries, based on one-tenth part of the income usually paid “in kind”. The tithe went towards the upkeep of the incumbent of the parish church. In 1836 this was changed to become a rent charge. One hundred years later in 1936 tithes were extinguished altogether.*

owners and occupants and all of the fields, their names and boundaries. Cross referencing with the 1841 and 1851 census gives more information about who was living there at the time. Jane also showed photos of properties that no longer exist, and some of houses that still do exist but looking very different to how they present today.



Britty Farmhouse ruins, now almost entirely disappeared.

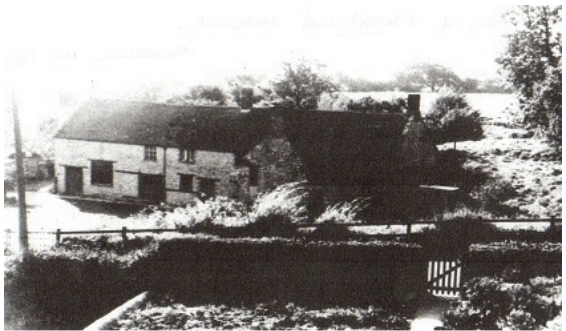
Of course, the main theme of the evening was our 'lost houses', and to this end, Jane went through varying degrees of evidence of properties that



Old Curland Inn, now Crossways Farm

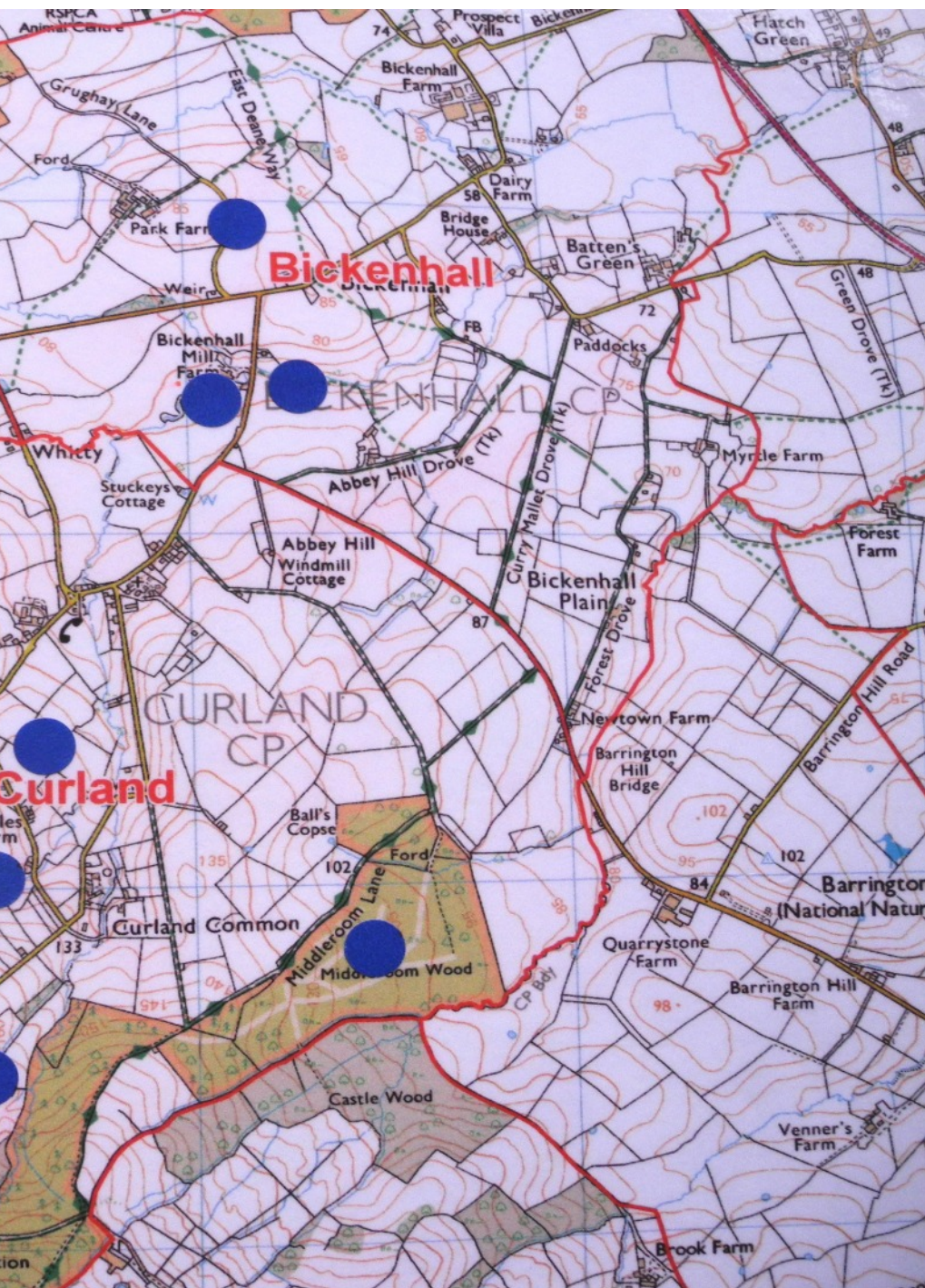
certainly did exist in the past to those that may have. A most interesting map was produced (and replicated on the centre pages of this Newsletter) showing the approximate location of some of these sites. Most of these lost properties are not named so the map just shows the approximate location of where a property is thought to have been.

To a great extent, it's now 'over to you', the local residents, to help in this ongoing project. From the knowledge you have of your immediate area, can you add to this list of lost properties, and, more importantly, would you like to help the History Group in their search for more information on these sites? If you have more information and/or you wish to help in the pursuit of greater knowledge of this wonderful landscape in which we live, then please contact Jane at jane.hole@tiscali.co.uk



Bickenhall Mill and Farm demolished in 1960's.

the "known" lost houses in the parish.



Neroche Winter Craft Fayre 2013

(by Alison Brown)

A Craft Fayre was held at Neroche Hall on 16th November 2013. There was a very good turn-out of traders, with twenty stalls booked. The hall was well filled and there was a variety of goods available. Sadly, the weather was cold & miserable and the visiting public were thin on the ground.



Alison Brown, admiring the 'Ladybird Life' stall

items made by Barnie's Forge, mostly fashioned out of recycled horseshoes, proved very popular.

The Fayre ran from 2pm to 4.30pm. Most of the traders were reasonably busy. Wrought iron work, walking sticks, pictures, skin-care products, cards and jewellery were some of the attractive products on sale. The

Numbers of public being low may be due to the present economic climate, but more likely that there are now an increasing number of Craft Fairs at this time of year. However, the event was a good showcase for our lovely Parish Hall, and monies raised were for the benefit of Hall funds.

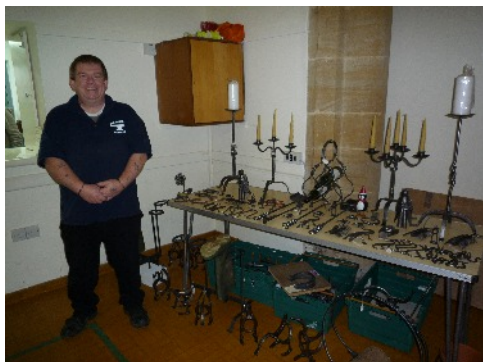
The committee wishes to thank County Councillor, Ross Henley for supporting our event, and all the stallholders for putting-on such a super display:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Graham Wright | Walking sticks etc |
| Lindy Reynolds | Embroidered pictures |
| David Orme | Acorn mirrors |
| Bickenhall WI | Cakes & preserves, |
| Jean Broadbent | Stained glass items |
| Jubes Originals (Jan Daniels) | Mosaics |
| David Spears | Photos & related gifts |



County Councillor, Ross Henley

Ian Lines	Photos
Suzanne Llewellyn	Jewellery & skincare gifts
Dianne Hood	Honey & allied products
Jill Perrior	‘Animal Country’ cards & hand decorated items
Sara Crabb	‘Ladybird Life’ - paintings, prints, mugs etc.
Hazel Jackson	Baby & dolls clothes-knitted
Kate Roberts	Vintage cake stands & small dishes
Midge Tancock	Knitted characters, Christmas wreaths
E Gratton/Lynn Searle	Skin Care products (Neal’s Yard Organic Remedies)
Barnies Forge	Wrought iron-work & horse shoe creations
Lorraine Scott-Collins	‘Scottsi & Boo’ - hand-made Crafts and Gifts
Tami Boden Ellis	Gifts for charity fund raising
Phoenix Trading	Christmas cards & stationery



Barnie's Forge, Traditional Blacksmith



Jill Perrior of 'Animal Country'



A gorgeous selection from the local WI,plus some delicious cakes

St Peter's Church Staple Fitzpaine - Carol Service 2013

(by Mal Lee - Churchwarden)

The theme of the carol service was 'Light in the Darkness' and it came to pass that the evening of 18 December was very stormy. The rain lashed down causing flash floods and the wind brought down branches across the country roads and lanes. However, the dark weather did not stop the eighty five people who came to enjoy the Carol Service and to hear again the story of Christmas. The church was beautifully decorated with festive greenery and candles flickered giving out their soft light.

The service opened with a greeting from Rector Paul Reynolds and Lottie Michaels sang the first verse of Once in Royal David's City. This set the scene for a beautiful service. The choir and organist gave the lead to the congregation who responded joyfully. The readings varied from Bible readings to whimsical dialogue; and Rev Mary Godin gave us her thought for Christmas. The readings and talk gave us cause for reflection about what we had heard. There was a large choir and their individual songs were sung with harmony and feeling with a wonderful rendition of Ring Christmas Bells, which gave us all something to think about. People afterwards were very positive about the service.

After the service most people enjoyed refreshments and chatted about the service, the weather and their plans for Christmas. There was a wonderful sense of community and togetherness – and although some people had to head off early to sort out fallen trees or negotiate flooded roads, it felt as though, on this darkest of nights, we had seen light.

Carol Singing by St Peter's Singers & Friends

(by Alison Brown)

On 21st December 2013, the annual Carol Singing around Staple Fitzpaine & Curland was supported by approximately 30 singers ranging from the elderly (yours truly) to the very young (Theo Glasper, 5 yrs).

Transport was provided, as usual in my green horsebox, and there was just enough room for all. The standard of singing was very high, with a number of carols being sung in harmony (I think that is what we should call it!).

Visits were paid to Lady Acre, Staple Fitzpaine Manor, William Portman House, Pooles Cottage, Cromwells & to some houses in Curland. Following tradition the tour finished at The Greyhound Inn, where strong renditions of various carols reminded the diners of the celebration of the Birth of Christ.

Thanks are due to all the hosts who provided seasonal refreshments to the singers and many generous donations were made contributing over £200 towards St Peter's re-ordering fund.

Thurlbear School

(by Jo Moore)

Christmas Jumper Day

The school took part in 'Make the World Better with a Sweater' Day raising money for 'Save the Children'. For a donation, children and staff were able to wear a festive jumper for the day!



Primary School's Christmas Concert - Wells Cathedral

On Tuesday 3rd December pupils took part in the annual Christmas Concert in Wells Cathedral.. The children formed a large choir made up of pupils from different primary schools from across the Bath and Wells Diocese. The concert was led by the Director of Music at Wells Cathedral School.

Taunton Deane Borough Council News

John Williams, Borough Councillor for Neroche Ward and Leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council, has kindly offered to write a regular column for our Newsletter.

John Collins VC DCM MM. In the November issue I wrote about a John Collins who was awarded the VC in 1917 for bravery during fighting in Palestine; the only First World War VC holder to be born in Somerset. His birthplace was thought to be West Hatch; however, after some detailed research by local historian Tom Mayberry, it now transpires that John Collins was



born in Bickenhall on 10 September 1877. He was the ninth child of Thomas Collins and his wife Mary Anne (a labourer and a glover respectively) who, at the time of John's birth, lived in the Abbey Hill/Batten's Green area of Bickenhall, not far from the church. A more comprehensive article, together with details of how John Collins achievements will be celebrated by the Parish in 2017, the 100th anniversary of his award, will feature in a future issue of this Newsletter.



.....

The Brewhouse Theatre. I am pleased to report that the Brewhouse Theatre was successfully re-opened for a production of *Cats* by Taunton School, and what a

fantastic show this was (please see separate article on page 16). Congratulations to the producers, cast and Somerset College, as it was a truly professional and stunning show. I added Somerset College to the credits as its students were responsible for all the make-up of the cast, so it was a truly hands on experience

as part of their training to become professionals. This demonstrates the real value of the Brewhouse Theatre, involving the community for the community but equally it forms part of that all-important night-time economy to attract visitors to Taunton.



The ongoing future of the Brewhouse has hopefully been secured as the Council has agreed to lease the building to the Taunton Theatre Association, subject to

finalising the Lease Agreement. The intent is the future operation will be truly a community theatre incorporating both voluntary groups and professional shows. I know that Taunton Theatre Association is particularly keen to draw on the talents of our local schools and encourage their participation.



Joint Management and Shared Services with West Somerset. The two Councils of West Somerset and Taunton Deane have now taken the formal decision to share management and services but remain independent as democratic organisations representing our communities. By doing this it is calculated we can save £1.6 million per annum in direct management and services, with more to follow as we integrate the delivery of services from the single management structure.

As tax payers of Taunton Deane, this should make little impact on the services you receive, as the above saving is mainly about delivering more efficiently and so minimising any cuts to front-line services that would cause a direct impact on what we provide. This helps both Councils meet the challenges of Government imposed reductions in grant funding, but also remain viable and sustainable into the future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any clarification or comment on the above or if you have any other queries in respect of Council services.

cllr.j.williams@tauntondeane.gov.uk

On Our Doorstep

There are numerous activities taking place within the Parish that are well advertised in the Parish Magazine and on the Community Website, however, there are many more happening 'On Our Doorstep' that you might not know of; here are a few that you may find of interest...

Blackdown Hills AONB Events Programme.

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership produces a programme of activities titled '*Blackdown Hills Countryside Events*'. The published programme for 2014 is packed with a variety of activities; why not join them on one of their programmed events (for full details of these and many other events, go to www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk) :

1 Feb 14 'Hedge Laying Course' Location: Yacombe



Learn to lay hedges in the Devon style. This is a very "hands-on" course taking place in the East Devon countryside. Each pair of students will team up with an experienced hedge layer to lay a length of hedge on a Devon bank. Suitable for complete beginners and intermediate hedge layers with an eye to taking part in our annual "Skills of the Hills" competition.

9am - 4pm Cost: £35. Booking essential.

Location: Meet at the Village Hall, Yacombe

For more information: email hedgcourses@bhha.info

or see the web site www.bhha.info

8 Feb 14 'Valentine Spoon Carving'

Location: Hemyock



From living wood to a bespoke hand-made spoon! You will use simple tools to whittle a spoon from a single piece of wood, which you can personalise with your design and a pyrography pen. Full step-by-step tuition provided in a heated workshop, bring wellies for harvesting the wood. 10am - 4pm

Cost: £40, to include lunch. Booking essential. Location: Seville's Croft, Hemyock, EX15 3QX For more information: Contact Richard and Alison Whiteside, 01823 680931 Wildside Experience

11 Feb 14 'Combe Wood Countryside Volunteers'

Location: Combe Wood (Meet every fortnight on a Tuesday until the end of March)

Come and join the ranger team carrying out woodland management work in Combe Wood. Tasks including hazel coppicing, cherry and laurel removal and brush burning to encourage woodland wildlife including bluebells and dormice.



Meet every fortnight on a Tuesday until the end of March 10am-3pm

Limited parking at the site. Please meet at entrance gates to Combe Wood, Grid ref ST 162 017 at 9.45 am. Tools provided. Bring a packed lunch and suitable outdoor clothing.

Contact Kate for details 01297 680507 or kate.sheard@nationaltrust.org.uk Visit our Blog on <http://nteastdevon.wordpress.com> Find us on Twitter: @EastDevon NT

19 Feb 14 ‘Half term history - Discover the Romans

Location: Membury



*A fun and active morning for older children (age 8-12) discovering how the Romans lived in the local area. Children can have a go at Roman building, Roman recipes, dressing up and art, and learn about the recent Roman discoveries at Membury. With archaeologist Cressida Whitton.
10am - 12.30pm*

Cost: Under 16s free. Accompanying adults £5. Booking essential.

Location: Membury village hall

For more information:

*Contact the Blackdown Hills AONB team
on 01823 680681*

or email: blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk

23 Feb 14 ‘Make a Rustic Hedgerow Chair’

Location: Buckland St Mary

With Ivor Hancock, discover how West Country folk used to make, strong, comfortable hedgerow chairs with materials from hedges, woods and gardens. The secret of their craft was in selecting the right shapes of branches for the different parts of their chairs. Cut green from the hedge these ‘grown components’ had great inherent strength and, when fitted together in a cleverly devised sequence, produced a chair of proven strength and reliability. Materials and tools supplied. Take home your own hedgerow chair.



Cost: £50. Booking essential. 10am - 4pm

Location: Village Hall, Buckland St. Mary

For more information: email craftcourses@bhha.info or see the web site www.bhha.info

1 Mar 14 'Footsteps of the Past' Location: Whitestaunton



Look at the landscape in a different way as we join archaeologist Marc Cox to explore how people shaped the Blackdowns through history. Discover what the countryside's lumps, bumps and patterns can tell us,

and hear from Marc about his recent work on centuries of iron industry in the Blackdown Hills. A circular walk with lots of stops to talk, ending with a cup of tea and a chance to handle the evidence of iron workings. 10.30pm - 12.30pm

Cost: £5 per adult, £3 under 16s. Booking essential.

Location: Newhaven Farm, Cinder Hill, Whitestaunton TA20 3DT

For more information: Contact the Blackdown Hills AONB team on 01823 680681 or email blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk

29 Mar 14 'Mother's Day Eve, Woodland Tea'

Location: Madford, near Hemyock

The day before Mother's Day... toast marshmallows over the campfire, play games in the woods, treat your Mum to toasted teacakes and make her a special Mother's Day wooden necklace. All in a beautiful setting. 2pm - 5pm

Cost: Adults £8, children £4. Booking essential

Location: Seville's Croft, Hemyock, EX15 3QX

For more information: Contact Richard and Alison Whiteside, 01823 680931



16 Mar 14 **‘Morning Walk Around Membury’**

Location: Membury

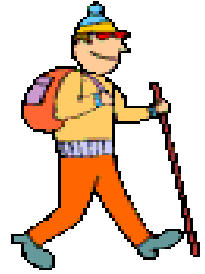
Short walk taking in the Iron Age hill fort of Membury Castle.

10am - 1pm.

Cost: £3. Booking not required.

Location: Membury village hall car park.

For more information: Contact Jo and Tony Bailey, 01404 881274.



The Square and Compass, Ashill.

The Square and Compass hosts a vibrant and diverse range of musical events, spanning the full range of musical styles. Events from February onwards, include:

28 Feb ‘The Blues Band’; 16 March ‘Talon Acoustic’; 15 April ‘Stackridge’; 24 April ‘Three Bonzos & a Piano (most of the Bonzo Dog Dooda Band)’; 23 May ‘Martin Turners Wishbone Ash’

For full information on these concerts and many others, go to www.squareandcompasspub.com



8 Mar 14 **‘Trad Jazz Evening at Hatch Beauchamp’**

Tony Green, of Capland, is hoping to start regular ‘Trad Jazz’ evenings (with licensed bar) in Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall and has, rather sensationally, managed to book the world famous Jazz clarinettist, Pete Allen, for the first event on 8th March at 7.30pm. ***Pete Allen specialises in New Orleans and Dixieland Jazz and is an Honorary citizen of New Orleans, he is acknowledged as one of the most exciting Jazz clarinettists in Europe.*** For tickets, please contact Tony on email: tonymgreen@fsmail.net or tel: 01823 481111 or fax: 01823 480682. Tickets for the Pete Allen concert are £10 in advance or £12 on the door. If this first foray into Jazz promotion is successful, Tony will organise regular events (one Saturday per month) using local bands.



Taunton Racecourse (Next meeting 6th February)



We are most fortunate to have England's youngest National Hunt racecourse, and one of the most beautifully located in the country, situated within Neroche Parish. Grandstand Ticket £15.00 (access to all areas other than members & private hospitality boxes). Centre Course/Picnic area £10.00 (Available on the day only). Full-time students under the age of 25 admitted free on production of student photo ID. Day ticket for junior members (16 to 24) £9.00. Accompanied children under 16 admitted free. All Car Parking free.

The race day package is an ideal gift offering great value; it includes a Grandstand ticket to the meeting of your choice, a food and drink voucher for a snack with a drink (beer/wine/soft drink) of your choosing, a race card for the day and a tote £10 betting voucher - all for £30. **Packages must be booked in advance.** To purchase, call now on 01823 337172 or book online. Savings available for online booking. For full details of fixtures, ticket prices, facilities etc go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk

2014 Racing Programme

Day	Date	First Race	Last Race	Details
Tuesday	28 Jan	1.40pm	4.40pm	Come Racing for £10
Thursday	6 Feb	1.30pm	4.50pm	
Tuesday	18 Feb	2.05pm	5.20pm	Half Term Holiday Meeting
Thursday	27 Feb	2.10pm	5.10pm	Royal Bath & West Raceday
Monday	10 Mar	2.20pm	5.20pm	Landlords Day
Monday	24 Mar	2.20pm	5.20pm	
Thursday	3 Apr	2.10pm	5.35pm	Ladies Day
Thursday	10 Apr	2.10pm	5.10pm	Injured Jockeys Fund Charity Day Sponsored by Tote Pool
Wednes day	23 Apr	5.10pm	8.10pm	Evening Meeting
Wednes day	29 Oct	1.10pm	4.10pm	Half term Meeting
Thursday	13 Nov	1.10pm	4.10pm	
Thursday	27 Nov	12.35pm	3.55pm	
Thursday	11 Dec	12.40pm	3.40pm	Festive Fixture
Tuesday	30 Dec	12.40pm	3.55pm	Christmas Meeting

Car Boot Sales.

A car boot sale is held every Sunday at Taunton Racecourse, 52 weeks a year and in all weathers. Gates open at 11.00am (09.00am for sellers). Cars £5, vans £6. For more info call Tracey on 07778 275998.



Ilminster Arts Centre

The Ilminster Arts Centre is situated at the Meeting House in Ilminster. It has a full programme of exhibitions, concerts, workshops, crafts and produce markets, and a thriving craft shop and café. For full details of their forthcoming events and extensive programme, go to www.themeetinghouse.org.uk



Friday 7th March FOLK at 8.00pm (pre-show supper at 7:00pm) The Time and Tide Theatre Group present "Two Nations" Tickets £10 (£21 including pre-show supper)

Friday 14th March JAZZ - Ronnie Jones' Quartet at 8.00pm (pre-show supper at 7:00pm) Tickets £10 (£21 including pre-show supper)

Friday 21st March FOLK - Flying Folk Evening at 8.00pm (pre-show supper at 7:00pm) An evening of folk. Tickets £10 (£21 including pre-show supper)

Saturday 12th April CLASSICAL at 7.30pm - Maiastra Tickets £15 can be booked on 01460 54973

Friday 18th April JAZZ - at 8.00pm (pre-show supper at 7:00pm) Ken Peplowski and Julian Stringle with The Craig Milverton Trio

Peroche Friday Film Club

(in association with Moviola - entry £5)



FRIDAY 31st JAN



ABOUT TIME

At the age of 21, Tim Lake (Domhnall Gleeson) discovers he can travel in time... The night after another unsatisfactory New Year party, Tim's father (Bill Nighy) tells his son that the men in his family have always had the ability to travel through time. Tim can't change history, but he can change what happens and has happened in his own life.

FRIDAY 28th FEB



LE WEEKEND

Jim Broadbent and Lindsay Duncan star in a fearlessly truthful tale of a crumbling marriage. When we first meet Meg and Nick (Lindsay Duncan and Jim Broadbent) they are on the Eurostar to Paris the city of lights and lovers with young canoodling couples ...but Meg and Nick are not young!

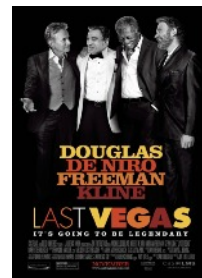
FRIDAY 28th MAR



PHILOMENA

Based on the 2009 investigative book by BBC correspondent Martin Sixsmith about the lost Child of Philomena Lee. A child born out of wedlock and given away for adoption in the USA. Starring Judy Dench and Steve Coogan and Directed by Stephen Frears.

FRIDAY 25th APR



LAS VEGAS

Michael Douglas, Robert De Niro, Morgan Freeman and Kevin Kline get together again for real old times' sake and a few laughs when elderly millionaire Billy decides to marry his beautiful 30 year old girlfriend and takes his three chums for a stag party in Las Vegas.

**Please reserve your seat with NICKY 01823 480675 or by
E-mail to anne@poolesfarm.eclipse.co.uk
ALL FILMS START AT 7.30PM**

Hatch Beauchamp & Neroche Garden Club

(By Maureen James)

We now have some 30 plus paid-up members and are hoping some more keen gardeners will join during the coming year. We are pegging our annual subscription at £5.00, and renewals are due in February.

Looking back on the past year, we have been a bit like the changing seasons - something for everyone. Some experts passing-on knowledge and tips with talks at Hatch and Neroche. Relaxed summer evening garden visits and an appropriate end to the year's meetings with Pam Martin's home made wines - how to make and how to enjoy - which the non-drivers among us certainly did!

Our donations to Neroche and Hatch Beauchamp village halls have resulted in both having a bit of a face lift. Neroche have successfully screened their heat exchange units and Hatch have tidied up the hall frontage with tubs sporting perennial shrubs under-planted with summer bedding, which will eventually be replaced with spring bulbs.



Looking ahead to next year. The committee are still in the process of formulating the programme. The AGM will be held at Neroche on Wednesday 26 February, and we are hoping for a good turn-out, and also looking to our members to tell us what they would like to happen in the club. All ideas and suggestions are welcome and will be considered. Give it some thought as you partake of the usual delicious selection of home made biscuits and nibbles. During the course of the evening there will be an interesting and entertaining talk all about bats. A reminder will be sent off to members in good time.

I have been contacted by the Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs, and they are holding the 2014 AGM on Thursday 22 May at Combe St Nicholas, if any of our members are interested, more details will be sent to me in their next newsletter.

Somerset Garden Trust The Trust Annual Plant Sale will be held for the third successive year at GLEBE COURT West Monkton on Sunday 1 June 2014 from 2pm - 5pm. This is an opportunity to purchase plants propagated by Trust members from all over Somerset. Glebe Court garden is a very large, well established garden including many unusual plants and trees. Cream teas will be served and there is ample parking space - A bit of forward planning - I will send a reminder nearer the time!

Happy New Year and good gardening from

Maureen James - Secretary, tel:01823 481111, email: maureenjames@fsmail.net

Taunton Vale Foxhounds - Boxing Day Meet

(By Mike Vacher)



(photo courtesy of John Doe)

The Taunton Vale Foxhounds have met in the centre of Ilminster for many, many years and always attract a good crowd of followers and well-wishers.

At the Boxing Day (2013) Meet some 30 riders turned



(photo courtesy of John Doe)

out along with approximately 250 enthusiastic members of the general public.



(photo courtesy of Richard Martin)

It is reassuring that, with such support, the future of our local Hunt is assured.

It will be apparent to anyone interested in hunting that we are labouring under the most difficult circumstances since the imposition of the 2004 Hunting Act. However,

in spite of current difficulties, we aim to operate entirely within the law and thus we always have, and always will, conduct only lawful activities.

“Our First 36 years in Curland”

By Rob Larkman

*When Rob was approached to write the foreword for this issue of the Newsletter, he jotted down a comprehensive list of fascinating notes, covering much of his experiences since moving to the area in 1977, and sent them to me as his ‘initial thoughts’. It made such an enthralling read that I found it impossible to précis, so Alan and I decided to publish Rob’s jottings in full, as a separate stand-alone article. It’s an absorbing read; combining the themes of ‘A year in Provence’ and ‘Darling Buds of May’; just ‘perfick’. So, make yourself a cup of tea, pull-up a seat in front of the log fire, and enjoy sharing in Rob’s enchanting reminiscences. **Wally***



Having got over the initial surprise of being asked to provide the foreword for this month’s Newsletter, I was happy to take up the invite. The following ‘jottings’ outline our time, memories, experiences and interests over the past 36 years that Joy and I have been at Mount Pleasant.

Back in the 70’s we regularly enjoyed spring and summer holidays at Greenway farm at Luppitt in Devon, eventually making the decision to move to the West Country at the earliest opportunity. We were living in Hadleigh, Essex where I was employed by Access in Southend as a computer systems manager. At that time, Debenhams were planning to update their credit card systems, and I took up a post working at the Bedford House centre in Taunton, starting in October 1977. This necessitated a weekly commute from our home in Essex, until we found a suitable property in the area. After much unsuccessful house hunting we were getting desperate, until a chance meeting late in the day at Greenslades produced outline details of Mount Pleasant, that was coming up for sale together with 4 acres. Deciding to view it that evening, we set about trying to find it on a windswept rainy evening in November, and more by luck than judgement, we located it first time. It was certainly not like any other house we had seen, and our initial thoughts were negative, as we discussed it over a drink at the Greyhound. That was

an experience as well, with just a few locals in the smoke filled bar peering at the newcomers, and with the sign outside creaking away in the wind; we thought we were in the Jamaica Inn on Bodmin Moor. However, we came back next morning in the sunny daylight, and the combination of open fields, forest and outstanding views caused us to have a major rethink.



With the education of three young boys to consider, the local school became a deciding factor, and the moment we saw Thurlbear School, its location and the staff, we were bowled over. The Head Mistress, Mrs Williamson, was the ‘down-to-earth’ ‘no-nonsense’ type, who believed in the ‘3 R’s and a

smacked bottom’, which was fine by us. It is worth noting that all our sons went to Thurlbear, as did 4 of our 6 grandchildren a generation later. As a result, we bought the house and moved in on January 6th 1978. Within two days a blizzard started that went on for some thirty hours, resulting in snow over 6 feet deep! All the downstairs windows were blacked-out and the doors opened onto a wall of ice. With little opportunity to get into town and stock-up, we viewed our situation with some concern. However, we made the most of it, relishing the challenge; within 4 days the roads were partially cleared, enabling us to get back to civilisation.

Over the course of the next 8 years we undertook ‘the good life’ through breeding cows, pigs and raising sheep from orphan lambs, together with chickens, ducks, geese and, on two occasions, turkeys for Christmas. We started with one jersey cow, which was hand-milked twice a day. The first calf was also a Jersey cow, resulting in two milkers, with subsequent Simmental crosses for beef. Great success was enjoyed with the ‘Welsh White’ pigs, producing large litters that were either sold at market or destined for the freezer. Only few of the orphan lambs failed to survive; we eventually attained a flock of some 28.



This was largely due to Joy's TLC and the whole family bottle feeding the little ones. The turkeys proved to be a rewarding experience. Our plan was



to have 6 poults but we were informed that they had a high mortality rate when young, so we purchased 12 from Gabriel's at Holcumbe Rogus. In the event all of them survived and were a welcome sight in the garden, always together and nosing into whatever you were doing; many a time I turned round only to have 12 pair of eyes staring at me. Christmas became a major hand-

plucking exercise; after the first 3 my fingers were screaming at me. Geese have always been with us, and I cannot imagine Mount Pleasant without them. We brought 3 with us from Essex, eventually increasing the number to 18. In addition, we raised many breeds of chickens, ducks, bantams, pheasants, guinea fowl, guinea pigs, rabbits and, of course, dogs. Sadly, we eventually had to review all this when my employment was relocated to Bristol, involving daily commuting, together with driving to many parts of the UK, and necessitating overnight stays. The cows we sold but most of the rest were not replaced when 'time took its course'. We currently have 8 geese, 5 bantams and 5 ducks, plus the amazing guard dog, Murphy, going on 16, and "Trubble" the Jack Russell.

From my early teens I regularly played senior cricket and football. At 17 I had high hopes of playing cricket for Essex, until I seriously fractured my wrist playing football at White Hart Lane of all places. I was in plaster for 4 months, followed by a long recovery period, which put an end to my dreams. I had no intention of taking up either game on coming to Somerset, certainly not in the short term. However, following a conversation with the local rector, David Hunt, a chance remark about cricket led to my playing for Stoke St Mary CC over the next 4 seasons. With a number of the team playing for Civil Service FC, I also found myself playing football for them over



the next 17 years. From 1982 I played for Taunton Deane CC, before moving to Broadway in 2005. I maintained a role at Taunton Deane as a youth coach until 2011. It is pleasing that 6 of my protégées, including grandson Joel, will be playing 2nd and possibly 1st team level at the Deane next season. One other cricket event worth mentioning is that Staple Fitzpaine won the first inter-village match some 30 odd years ago, with a side including Alan Marsh and 4 Larkmans.

The indoor bowls club has been running for over 25 years, playing from October to March, with a break over Christmas. In an earlier edition of our splendid Newsletter, our winning of last season's Taunton & District 2nd division was reported in full. The league consists of teams from Taunton and the outlying villages, and great friendships have been made with most of them over the years.



Ornithology is another serious past time, although I would add that I am no authority, just a keen enthusiast. Together with a colleague from North Curry, we visit many sites in Somerset. As well as the Neroche forest and, with kind permission of the Pope's, Staple Farm, we travel further afield to RSPB sites that include Sedgmoor, Shapwick, Ham Wall and Greylake. Seaton Estuary is also a good winter site, as is the estuary at Exmouth, where we annually take a Stuart Line boat trip up to Topsham at low tide. There is always a wealth of



waders, ducks and seabirds to be seen, and sight of some 200 Avocets taking off is an unforgettable experience. At the moment, the Fieldfares and Redwings are out in force clearing up the mass of fallen apples in the orchard.

Referring to the orchard, the planting and maintenance of trees has always been of interest, with some 100+ specimens planted. Most of them have

flourished but some could not cope with the challenging Blackdown soil. My best specimens are the conifers planted side by side for each of my 3 sons, and will eventually become towering trees. These are 2 Monterey Pines and one Wellingtonia already well-established and prominent.

I have been asked to say something about why I like living at Mount Pleasant. As previously mentioned, the landscape and forest, together with the outstanding views, is an outlook and pleasure that I never take for granted. Added to this is the influence of nature itself, and the feeling of freedom that it generates. I never tire of the ever changing impact of the seasons and the wild life around. The regular hooting of the Tawny owls, the bark of the deer, the scream of the fox and, my favourite, the cock pheasant on a frosty morning giving out his clucking call whilst flapping his wings and ruffling up his feathers are sounds that always give me a real buzz. The long and loud pneumatic drill like call of the Nightjar outside the bedroom window at 2 a.m. one morning gave me a different sort of buzz!



Even if I could, I would not change anything. I am happy to embrace nature and enjoy its ever-changing wild, unpredictable and glorious course by ‘taking it as it comes’. The extreme weather conditions we suffer from time-to-time is just nature’s way of letting us know who’s really in charge. Long winter periods of rain and damp can make things a bit dismal at times but then, I remind myself that ‘it’s the bad days that makes the good days good’.

Finally some past memories: *the post office and shop in Curland; Curland chapel where the boys had Sunday school with Mrs Spiller, and the Harvest Festival produce evening auction; the annual church coach trip to Dawlish; the many dairy herds that were around; and the hunt meeting at the Greyhound on Boxing day.* Must go, it’s time to feed the geese!

Email Alert Parish Notices

If you wish to be kept informed of all that is happening in the community (including: crime alerts; road closures; community activities; local events; important meetings etc etc) then why not add your email address to the 160 plus individuals that have already signed-up to the service.

Your details will be kept secure, as all Email Alerts use the BCC address system so that nobody sees the full list.

If you are not on the list, then you are missing-out on 'up-to-the-minute' information on all that is important and happening in the immediate area in which you live.

*To join, send an email to
wallytorrington@hotmail.com
with the message "please add me to the list".*

*We look forward to you becoming a fully-informed
Neroche resident.*

www.nerochevillages.org.uk

This is **YOUR** website covering the local parishes of Bickenhall, Curland, Orchard Portman with Thurlbear, and Staple Fitzpaine.

The website contains a wealth of information, including: local news; 'What's On'; local club details, societies and organisations; information on local churches; a history of Neroche; maps; useful telephone numbers and links to the Neroche Hall and Parish Council websites.

So, if you need to know where, when and what is happening in the area and who to contact, you'll find it on the website.

Household Recycling & Refuse Collections Bank Holiday Day Changes for April 2014



Usual Recycling Collection Day Wednesday 23rd April
Revised Recycling Collection Day Thursday 24th April

Recycling Centres

Chard - Beeching Close, TA20 1BB (Closed Tues / Wed)

Taunton - Crown Industrial Estate, TA2 8QY (Closed Tues / Wed)

(Taunton Recycling Centre has a "queuecam" which shows a live view of the entrance. Check www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/sites/opening/taunton-queuecam/ to avoid visiting when the site is busy.)

Library Services

The mobile library no longer visits our parish.

However, anyone wishing to use Taunton Deane's Library Services should visit the libraries in Paul Street, Taunton or Ditton Street, Ilminster. Full details of opening times and facilities can be found by phoning the helpline on 0845 345 9177 or on the website www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries.

School Holidays

It is always useful to know when the school holidays are taking place. The dates below include, where appropriate, the weekends either side, as these are equally affected by the school breaks, especially regarding family holidays and road traffic.



15 February to 23 February
5 April to 21 April



Events For Your Calendar

February

- 1 Neroche Walking Group (see [www. nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk))
- 6 Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see advert on page 11)
- 6 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 8 Police Beat Surgery; Neroche Village Hall 10:30 - 11:00
- 18 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 26 Neroche & HB Gardening Club AGM (see article on page 42)
- 27 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 28 Neroche Friday Film Night (see advert on page 41)

March

- 1 Neroche Walking Group (see [www. nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk))
- 4 Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (see advert on page 11)
- 8 Trad Jazz with Pete Allen (see article on page 38)
- 10 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 13 Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see advert on page 11)
- 13 Parish Council Meeting (go to www.nerochevillages.org.uk)
- 15 Neroche Hall Quiz (see advert on page 4)
- 24 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 26 History Group - Blackdown Hills War Memorials (see page 13)
- 28 Neroche Friday Film Night (see advert on page 41)

April

- 3 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 3 Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see advert on page 11)
- 4 Neroche Walking Group (see [www. nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk))
- 4 Take Art 'Cosmic Sausage' (see advert on page 12)
- 10 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 23 Taunton Racing (go to www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)
- 25 Neroche Friday Film Night (see advert on page 41)

May

- 1 Annual Parish Meeting (see advert on page 6)
- 3 Neroche Walking Group (see [www. nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk))
- 8 Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see advert on page 11)
- 8 Parish Council Meeting (see [www. nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk))



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, e.g. on 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 official documents.

Neroche Hall– www.nerochehall.org.uk

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

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

This website 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 systems for sending information to those wishing to receive it. It forwards information of a general nature about local events and issues - please use the contact form on the Neroche Villages website if you would like your name added.

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 Kate Reynolds on 01823 444023.

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.

Project Coordinator: *Wally Torrington*

wallytorrington@hotmail.com

Editor: Alan Perrior

nerochenewsletter@yahoo.co.uk

Official Photographers:

David and MadeleineSpears

david@cloudshillimaging.com