

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

Issue 43 - Spring 2022



'February Blossom' © David J Dalley

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.



Volunteering at RSPCA West Hatch

By Karen Learoyd

A couple of years ago, before the onset of COVID, I noticed an advert for volunteers at the RSPCA Centre at West Hatch. I had been looking for something different to do locally, and this seemed an interesting opportunity to investigate. While the RSPCA are often looking for people to help in various capacities, this was a new role as a Receptionist in the Wildlife Centre. With the Centre open from 8am to 9pm daily, the task of answering the phone and booking in animals, usually falls to the staff who are caring for those already admitted. The team were looking for people to help cover this role during the particularly busy periods between 10am-2pm.

Having been successful in my application, the start of my volunteering was delayed by a year due to COVID restrictions, although I finally started last April, after a short induction process. Equipped with an RSPCA blue shirt and a mask, I nervously started my regular Friday shift, unsure of what to expect. It's fair to say every shift proved very different! At first, I felt that I was more of a hindrance than a help, when every phone call meant I needed to ask someone how to respond, and every admittance required me to call on the experts for guidance in identifying species of birds, so they could be logged accurately. I was surprised by just how busy those times could be. The vast majority of the wildlife admitted are brought in by RSPCA Inspectors, who collect from vets, RSPCA centres and members of the public, all across the South West and Wales. As one of a handful of Wildlife centres in the UK, West Hatch is first port of call for a very wide area. In addition, members of the public bring in wildlife they have found locally, quite often these will be fledglings or hedgehogs, although I even had roe deer and a snake! Bearing in mind, most wildlife is admitted in a box (or cat carrier), I usually called on one of the staff to carefully open the box, and ensure we logged the right species, and made a guesstimate on its age. Every animal or bird admitted is then seen by one of the vets (who are amazing!) before treatment is determined, and they are taken to one of the many areas where they are so carefully nursed back to health.

As the weeks wore on, I became much more adept at providing advice to those who phoned in or admitting the wildlife without asking too

many silly questions. Those times when the Inspectors came with a vanful of birds or animals could be quite manic, as every one is logged individually. It wasn't unusual to have around a dozen boxes in reception, all moving about, and with lots of noises coming from within! The variety of wildlife brought in is quite extraordinary, obviously no domestic animals, although so many different garden birds, hawks, gulls, owls, deer, seals, all in desperate need of help.

The goal of the Centre is to release back into the wild, so I also got to see the times when the seals were loaded up ready to release back into the sea, or 50 seagulls were getting ready for their return to the marshes, and otters being taken back to the rivers. It's heart-warming to know that all the effort put in by the staff can have such wonderful rewards.

And just a word about the staff at West Hatch. They are the friendliest, most helpful, and dedicated team I could have wished to work with. It's not unusual for someone to take home a hedgehog, bird or small animal that needs overnight care. And they were always willing to answer my questions or show me just how everything works behind the scenes. It's such a full-on job caring for all those little creatures, and they are passionate about their work despite all the challenges they face.

I'm looking forward to starting my role again this Spring, hopefully with more experience to bring to the party. I would highly recommend volunteering at West Hatch in whatever capacity would suit your situation.



SCHOOL TERM DATES

28 February to 8 April 2022

25 April to 27 May

6 June to 26 July

Marianne Bray – Reflections of a Life

In memory of Marianne Bray, who sadly passed away in late November 2021.

From Sheila Green

I wish I had got to know Marianne earlier in my life. It was following the death of my husband, Richard, some nine months after Marianne's Bill passed away that we began to meet up for coffee. She was so supportive and helpful – having the same life experience – and she often came round for coffee with her border terrier, Jessie. My cat began to look forward to these meetings as much as I did.



We both sang in the same choir and were on the village hall committee, of which she was Treasurer. Marianne started playing badminton at the Hall – hesitant at first although gaining skills and confidence very quickly. She was good fun and willing to 'have a go' and I counted myself lucky to have her as a friend. We did many things together lunches, coffee, and a few walks.

We decided that we got along well enough to try a holiday together – a short cruise on the Queen Elizabeth with a group from the village – and what a wonderful time we had. It began in the cabin when she produced a bottle of gin from her suitcase – I had the tonic of course. We then decided that we could try a coach trip and booked a trip to Northumberland which was very successful. She was a great travelling companion always willing to see new places and experiences. She was well organised and had a very calming influence. I miss her very much.

From Diana Davies

A mutual love of singing was the starting point of my friendship with Marianne. At that time, she was already a longstanding and valued member of the West Somerset Singers. I joined the choir with her and a short time later we were joined by Julie (Pope). It proved to be a most enjoyable period with many laughs, lasting a number of years until the choir was temporarily forced to stop with the first 'lockdown'. Almost as

a reciprocal gesture, Marianne then joined the local St Peter's Choir. Again, we had many laughs together and I will never forget her hearty spontaneous laughter. She exhibited a great sense of humour and always enjoyed a good time. She spoke to me about her intention to throw a party to celebrate her 70th birthday later this year, although sadly this was not to be.

Marianne was immensely proud of the hard work her husband Bill invested in converting their home, Cromwells, from the basic cottage they moved in to, to the modern house it is today. She was also very busy at that time, pursuing her nursing career and bringing up their three young children. After losing Bill she said on more than one occasion she would never move from her home and fortunately she never had to.

In addition to her singing Marianne had a variety of interests. She was a longstanding fan of cricket and following her retirement was a regular visitor to the County Ground. She was a member of the local Garden Club and had begun to develop her own garden, becoming the proud owner of a new greenhouse. We were delighted to welcome her to the Friday afternoon badminton group, which was often the excuse, amongst others, for a glass of sherry and a slice of cake when one of us had a birthday to celebrate!

Many of you will remember seeing Marianne at the Thursday Lunch Club and numerous Neroche Hall events. I was on the Hall committee with her for a number of years and it was always a pleasure to work alongside her. As always, she was totally dependable and willing.

Marianne's greatest joy proved to be when her grandson William was born. Unfortunately, the time she was able to spend with him was limited as his home is in Yorkshire. In spite of the distance and thanks to technology, he gave her so much pleasure and she managed to achieve her greatest wish which was to spend his second birthday with him. Sadly, by this time Marianne was very unwell and died a short time later.

Marianne encapsulated everything anyone could wish for in a friend and I know I am not alone when I say how very much I miss her. She will be a hard act to follow.

News from St Peter's Church

Having been shut down since December 2020, St Peter's Church Clock is going again at last. That is the most important news of the last month! On 29th January, I walked up the path to the church, coincidentally at 11.58am, and then I heard the wonderful sound of the strike of 12 noon. As I gave a loud cheer I saw the first two daffodils in full bloom on the west corner of St Peter's. Obviously they were celebrating also! Though to have daffodils open in January does make one think perhaps there is something in "the Climate Change theory" after all. The repairs have been carried out by the Cumbrian Clock Company; thanks are due to Mark Porter for getting it all organised.

Friends of St Peter's from the Neroche villages will be preparing for the fasting of Lent by attending St Peter's Annual Pancake Party on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, 1st March, at Neroche Hall, a fund-raiser for St Peter's Church. It is always a fun evening. Tickets are still available as I write. Thanks will be due to all those involved behind the scenes to make the evening a success. Do call Alison on 01823 480441 if you have not booked already.

St Peter's annual meeting of the Parochial Church Council will take place after the 10am service on 3rd April. All worshippers and supporters of the church may attend, although only those on the Electoral roll may vote. The past year to 31 December 2021 will be reviewed; the election of officers will take place; activities and ideas for the year ahead will be put forward. The churchwardens welcome all parishioners who would like to come along. The meeting will start at approximately 11.15am.

Services at St Peter's:

Sunday 6th March Family Communion 10am and Baptism

Sunday 13th March Holy Communion (BCP) 8.30am

Sunday 3rd April Holy Communion 10am followed by Annual Parochial Council meeting

Easter week:

Friday 15th April Devotional Service at 10am

NB Our pop-up Café will move to the Saturday of the Easter weekend 10.00-12.00

(Sunday 17th April Sunrise Service at Scouts Hut, West Hatch 6am)
Sunday 17th April Easter Communion Service at 11am

On Easter Saturday our talented Flower Guild will be getting to work with Easter activities for children at the same time. St Peter's will be dressed in flowers for Easter Sunday, when we will celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Traditionally, we use lilies in our Easter displays. **If you would like to purchase a lily in memory of a loved one**, and to support St Peter's, a suggested donation of £5 will be gratefully received. Please contact Jacqueline (01823 481326) or Alison (480441)

Alison Brown, pp the Churchwardens

A Plea to Help Us Celebrate 150 Years of Thurlbear School

This year Thurlbear CoE VA Primary School celebrates 150 years.

We are hoping to mark this wonderful occasion with celebrations during the summer term.

Being a rural school, we are aware that many generations of the same families have attended Thurlbear over the years, many of these still living locally. Indeed, some of our current and former colleagues have either attended, or whose children have attended.

To give our children a true taste of 'Thurlbear Through the Years' we are sending out a plea.

If you, or anybody you know has any photos, facts, stories, memories, or any information about the school over the years, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact the school office, during term time on 01823 442277 or email thurlbear@educ.somerset.gov.uk

We are hoping to gather as much information as possible to help us celebrate the wealth of history our school has gathered over the last 150 years.



You are invited to
St Peter's Shrove Tuesday Annual Pancake Party



Featuring St Peter's Pancake Tossing Competition!

Neroche Hall

Tuesday 1st March 2022

6.45pm for 7.00pm

**2 Course Supper including Pancakes,
Raffle and Bar**

Adults £10 Children (under 16) £5

**Ring Alison Brown 480441 for details & to book tickets
Tel: 01823 480441 or email: aabrown.battens@gmail.com**

In aid of St Peter's Church funds

Wardens Report for Mount Fancy Butterfly Reserve

As many of you will know we had a bad year last year where we failed to keep on top of the bracken, apart from a couple of small areas. If you have walked the reserve recently you will have noticed a very big change. Over two days in January, two remotely controlled roboflails were set to work and what a huge difference they have made.

These flails were targeted at dense clumps of bracken overgrown with bramble, and then other small areas cleared of bracken with linking paths between them. The flails reduce the bracken/bramble to a fine mulch which we fully expect the ground cover plants will grow through and flourish. Fresh young shoots are already appearing. Cannot wait for Spring to fully reveal what we have regained.

With the bramble and bracken removed the grazing ponies have more freedom to feast on the young stalk shoots they prefer although our grazier for the two Exmoor ponies has had to withdraw them. Instead, we anticipate there will be a number of Shetland ponies that will again move around the three parcels of Wessex, Shutes and Mount Fancy. It is expected that they will be joined by the Longhorn cattle for short periods of time, to churn up the ground and encourage a more diverse plant species cover.

We have had a busy few weeks as a contractor is due to be in Wessex cutting back the willow regrowth, chemically treating the stumps, in two large areas. Still more to do of course. This will ensure that we retain the open ground in these swampy areas that wet loving plants require.

As Wardens we have also had to respond quickly to a stile and gate damaged by a wind-blown fallen tree that threatened to let the ponies escape (now repaired), and yet another that fell across the Herepath blocking that route.

Looking ahead, this summer is going to be challenging in the work that will need to be undertaken. To keep on top of the bracken in these now cleared areas, in places where contractors cannot easily work, volunteers are going to be needed to knock back the young still growing bracken in July, and again around September for any of the



second growth. This tactic should very much weaken the bracken over subsequent years.



Butterfly Conservation lease the reserve from Forestry England (Shutes & Mt Fancy) and from Wessex Water. Both leases expire either February or March of this year. Butterfly Conservation are hoping to negotiate new lease agreements with both landowners. There are important national changes afoot regarding funding for environmental landscapes. It appears neither landlord is in a rush to complete these negotiations. Until new ten-year leases are in place, I am reluctant to proceed further with arrangements I had been making for volunteer work on the reserve. This situation could change at any moment. So do keep a look out for any notice that Mount Fancy Reserve volunteer tasks are now active!

April of course is the official start to the butterfly flying season. So once again our valiant transect walkers will be out weekly, on fair days, noting the species and numbers of any butterflies seen. New members are always welcomed. The group are happy to share their identity spotting skills with you. Interested? Then do contact Meg in the first instance at: mechteldvanheck@yahoo.co.uk.

Some origins of Easter Traditions

Eggs at Easter - signify rebirth and new life, and the hatching of chicks symbolise the coming of spring. As Lent was a time of fasting and eggs were forbidden, eggs were considered a feast at Easter to celebrate the risen Christ.

Dyeing or painting eggs - originated in pagan times, with the worship and celebration of spring to Eostre (see page 15) and continued throughout history, particularly in Europe.

The Last County Councillor of Neroche

By John Thorne



It sounds like a movie title, 'The Last County Councillor of Neroche'. Something which would have been directed by the likes of Scottish film director Kevin Macdonald. He did, in fact, make the Academy Award-winning 'The Last King of Scotland', a 2006 film about the late Uganda dictator Idi Amin. Amin claimed the title 'King of Scotland' for himself. I am not sure why. Perhaps I could now lay claim to the throne - after all, I was born on one of the smaller Scottish islands, so probably have more right to it than did Amin!

Some years ago, I worked with a lovely old chap called Jack Burge, who had previously served as a British Colonial Police officer. Jack almost put a stop to Amin before he became the brutal dictator depicted in the movie. He was the officer in charge of a detail sent to arrest Amin on various charges of criminality while he was still 'only' a senior officer in the Uganda military. Apparently, it was a nervy affair with Jack and his men anticipating a possible shootout because Amin was protected by a cohort of soldiers as he returned from a trip somewhere. However, Jack said Amin just laughed and went quietly into his custody. Jack and his squad took him back to wherever the holding cells were located, and then very shortly afterwards he learned that Amin had been freed and allowed to leave. The rest, as they say, is history.... The story is maybe confirmation of the 'six degrees of separation', the theory that we are all connected to anybody and everybody in the world by a chain of six or fewer people.

But, in the words of the late great Ronnie Corbett, 'I digress.' The point of this article is to reflect on the upcoming passing of an era, something I had not imagined when you elected me as your county councillor five years ago. Little did I know then that it was

the final time in 133 years that Neroche residents would elect a county councillor. For, the elections coming up in May will be to elect your first ever unitary councillors, although for the next 12 months they will still technically be county councillors.

In April of next year, Somerset County Council, founded in 1889, will be no more. Neither will the four district councils, as all five authorities are being merged into a single new Somerset Council which will run all local government services in the county.

Although I was not around at the time of Jack Burge arresting Idi Amin, nor the establishment of the county council, I was there when the district councils were formed in 1973-74. I was a cub reporter on my local newspaper and started writing about council matters from the very start. Little did I know then that I would be around to see the demise of the districts 50 years later, nor that I would be a councillor on the authority taking over!

I have been really proud to be your county councillor over these past five years, working with your parish council and helping individuals all over the parish with a myriad of issues from how to respond the A358 proposals and Taylor Wimpey's threat of thousands of new houses being built, to fixing potholes and keeping footpaths open. I hope to be able to continue and make more history as Neroche's first unitary councillor, although that will be down to residents to decide in May.

Regular newsletter readers and attendees at parish council meetings who know me - and don't forget that each of you should be connected to me by far fewer than six people - will appreciate that I have always told it straight, given my thoughts on issues regardless of politics. I have never flip-flopped with my views just to suit what I think voters might want to hear.

OUR BUSES ARE UNDER THREAT

April 2022 was meant to augur in a new era for our buses. It was the month when the £3 billion as part of Bus Back Better, National Strategy for Buses for England, could be used to improve bus services. People would be invited to abandon their cars and opt for the 'greener' option of going by bus on journeys to nearby towns and villages.

To improve buses across the county, Somerset had put in a bid for £163 million of Bus Back Better money. That was the sum of money Somerset needed because Somerset bus services currently are the worst rated of any county in England. The Bus Back Better fund has been over subscribed 8 times by all the bids from across England and so it's unknown how much money Somerset might get. It's unlikely to get anything like what Somerset needs.

The 2 years of Covid with endless warnings not to use buses has seen bus passenger numbers down 40% on pre Covid levels. This has meant the Government has had to step in and subsidise bus services in order to keep them running. To fund this the Government has diverted more than half of the £3 billion pot allocated for transforming our bus services to just maintain our current bus services.

Worse still, the Government has still not said whether it will keep funding our existing bus services from April.

If it doesn't, then without this subsidy, bus services across the county (including here in Somerset) could "fall off the side of the cliff" (as said by Wera Hobhouse, Bath MP). It's been estimated 30% of bus services would go. Some bus services could even disappear completely.

Without this Covid Bus Recovery Grant, a leading bus operator has said, "The bus sector is hurtling towards disaster."

So, what can we do?

Could you please ... today ... send an email (doesn't need to be long) to the Government Buses Minister demanding that the Covid-19 Bus Recovery Grant funding is continued beyond April. Send it to BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON (Buses Minister) - email verec@parliament.uk.

Also copy your email to your MP: REBECCA POW (Taunton Deane) - email rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk

Please also copy in Somerset Bus Partnership to any emails too. Our email address: somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com .

Additionally, if you should speak to any of the candidates for the Somerset Unitary Council May 5th elections, please ask them what their plans are to protect and improve our bus services here in Somerset. There's never been a time when our bus services in Somerset have been at so much risk.

Somerset Bus Partnership Team

Neroche Woodlanders' Wellbeing Work in the Woods

Here's a little more information about what goes on up the track beyond the Young Wood sign at Badger Street...

Our wellbeing work is all about immersing people in a natural landscape, and giving them the space, freedom, and support to be themselves. At Young Wood we work with families on low incomes, and those with children with special educational needs (SEN), through our 'Wild Explorers' programme. We also run a charged-for 'Young Saplings' parent and toddler group.



We support adults with mental health issues and other life challenges through our 'Wild Wellbeing' sessions, which help to counter isolation and anxiety. For all these groups we lay on a bus from Taunton, provided by Knight Bros, as transport is one of the key barriers for many people to accessing the forest and what it has to offer. While in the woods we do craft activities, coppicing, cook healthy meals over the campfire, play lots of games with the kids, and just provide space to relax, chat, or just have some quiet contemplative time.

During the holiday periods we run ‘Happy Healthy Holidays’ sessions for children on free school meals, together with ‘Short Breaks’ events for SEN children, and those with various learning difficulties, long-term illnesses, and disabilities. We also support the parents to allow them some respite time, a cuppa and a friendly chat.

The staff costs, transport, food, and other costs of running these services are met through grants and commissions from local organisations like Somerset Community Foundation, family and adult support services and agencies in Taunton and the wider county. However, we can’t do our work without the help of volunteers. Aside from the practical volunteer days spent looking after the woods, we have a team of wellbeing volunteers who work alongside the staff team, chatting with participants, playing with the kids, helping with cooking, and keeping the kettles filled.

We welcome new volunteers and if you feel that you could offer a few hours, please get in touch. We run regular volunteer training dates for new volunteers, so no special experience is needed – just a liking for being outdoors and supporting other people – it can be very rewarding. If you think you might be interested, drop a line to sarah@nerochewoodlanders.org

Sarah, Jenny, Gavin and the team at Neroche Woodlanders
www.nerochewoodlanders.org

Some origins of Easter Traditions

Hot Cross Buns - the story goes that, in the 12th century, a monk marked the rolls he was baking for Good Friday with a cross. The custom has continued ever since.

Easter Bunnies - these were a symbol of spring in pagan worship to the goddess of fertility whose name was Eostre, from which name the word “Easter” is thought to have developed. The rabbits were probably not chocolate then!

Easter Fashion Parade - it was considered to bring good luck for the whole year to wear new clothes on Easter Day. Fashion parades became a custom in mid-1800’s.

Sunrise Services - Mary Magdalen found the open tomb at dawn in the gospels. This gave rise to the first sunrise service in 1732 in Germany.



Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir presents



Voices Unlocked



Neroche Hall, Bickenhall

A concert
in aid of
St Michael's Church



St Michael's Church, Orchard Portman

Saturday 19th March 2022
7:30pm (doors open 7:00pm)
at Neroche Hall, Bickenhall

Tickets £10

Contact **01823 421269** or **01823 282688**
tauntondeanemvc.com



It's Spring – Let the music begin!

Topping Out Celebration for Neroche Heritage Fingerpost Project

By Jane Hole

On a cold morning in late November the fingerpost team were delighted to celebrate the completion of this stage of the project. Our “topping out” included a visit to the new fingerpost near Neroche Hall which



replaces the post that disappeared some years ago.

Many of the local people who had made donations to the project attended, and along with the team, we had a fun time as all returned to the hall for mulled wine and nibbles. It was a special occasion to mark such a successful and positive local initiative in restoring and safeguarding these iconic fingerposts. All done by the power and determination of local volunteers!

The culmination of the party was the truly spectacular and unique cake made by Carole Wensley-Dodd. Surely worthy of a place in the GB Bake Off.....



The project was made possible by local fundraising and a grant from Somerset Community Foundation, match funded by Neroche Parish Council. In all, two complete new posts have been erected, and seven other posts renovated. 15 new arms, one top finial and a new upright at Badger Street complete this phase of the scheme. However, the team will continue to maintain all the posts, as they need to be kept free of road grease and lichen growth, and any damages repaired. The

older cast iron posts will need regular de-rusting and a fresh coat of paint.

If you would like to join the fingerpost team please contact jane.hole@outlook.com



Fundraising for St Margaret's Hospice

By John Learoyd

Each year, it becomes more difficult for Karen and I to find Christmas presents that the other really wants. So now we try to find experience gifts that we can both enjoy. This year Karen got tickets to the Commonwealth Games and I'm getting thrown out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft!

Well not literally, my gift was a tandem skydive from 15000 feet as part of St Margaret's Hospice Skydive and Wingwalk Day on the 2nd April. Glad it wasn't the 1st, or I would have thought it was a real joke.

People who I have already told about this often say "is that something you really wanted, wouldn't get me doing that". Well, it's actually payback, as I had previously bought a skydive for Karen a few years ago. As a supporter I got to see all the terrified faces leaving in the plane, and then returning to base with grinning faces, having got such a buzz from it. I must admit I felt a little envious, so yes, it is something I really wanted.

As the Skydive event is primarily a fundraiser for the Hospice it came with an added goal to raise £400 in sponsorship for them, which got me thinking about how to raise the money required. So, I decided to call on my skills - I freely admit admin, motivation and organisation are not my forte, although doing practical handyman hands-on stuff is. I decided to offer my skills, helping around the community with those jobs that have been on the list for years, but have never been tackled, or being unable to find someone willing to do the work. You may have seen this in the Email alerts or on the Staple Fitzpaine Community Facebook page. Quite simply, I do the work and donations are made to my JustGiving page in return, it's a Win Win Win.

My sponsors win as they get the jobs done, the Hospice wins as they get the sponsorship money and I win as I get to reach my fundraising target. To date I am proud to say I have raised over £1400 from gift donations and the jobs I have completed, far exceeding my target, and I have the added bonus of making a lot of people happy with the work I have done for them.

My tasks to date have been very varied such as renovating a gate, fitting a loft ladder, preparing and making good oak flooring and window boards, hanging shelves, correcting badly fitting doors and locks, making a new kitchen worktop, to fitting a weather seal to a garage door. And I have plenty more work in the pipeline!



Whilst I have no intentions of setting myself up as a local handyman, I have found that there is a definite need for such a person. The majority of people who have contacted me have told me it's difficult to find tradesmen to do the work. It's either too small a job or they are not interested. Good in some ways as I don't wish to deprive people of work, it's not my intention to tread on anyone's toes, although also sad that we seem to have a shortage of skilled craftsmen that can.



So, thank you to all my kind and generous sponsors and if I survive the jump, I'll write a follow up article for the next

newsletter and if I don't, Karen will be writing my obituary and checking the life insurance policy.

If you would like to donate to this worthy cause, please go to my JustGiving page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/john-learoyd



Neroche Hall Fish 'n' Chip Quiz

Friday, 25th March

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

BYO beer / wine and a glass!
Bar available

Doors open 7pm for prompt start 7.30pm

Advance booking essential on 07895 002185
Email karen.wensley@gmail.com



News from Neroche Hall

By Kingsley Beck, Chairman

Between being in the depths of winter and the depths of Covid, it's no surprise that there hasn't been a great deal happening at the village hall at this time of year. Back in November, the committee thought that a jazz evening would brighten our spirits in February although disappointingly, we are either not a community of jazz lovers or the temptation to stay at home by the wood burner tipped the scales. Either way, sadly, we had to pull the plug on that one. Luckily, we do still enjoy quiz nights and so we have another one on the evening of March 25th.



Our thanks, as always, to all our regular hirers such as the badminton groups, hopefully a mutually beneficial arrangement, keeping their fitness and our funds in better shape.

For many of us, the major event this summer will be the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations based around the Bank Holiday the first weekend in June. Our hall will be open for a meeting on Monday 28th February at 7.30pm and everyone is welcome to come along and put forward ideas for a long weekend of celebrations around the parish, the church and the hall. Most importantly though, making it all happen.

On a personal note, after six months in the chair at the hall, I can't help feeling it's meant as some sort of punishment, like a cricketer who's been made captain or a teacher who's promoted to head, inevitably you find yourself embroiled in lots of (the word I'm thinking of rhymes with TOOLKIT) and a long way from the more satisfying things that you signed up for. All the problems that you thought you had escaped in retirement, health and safety, risk assessments, public liability etc, they're all back again! Despite all of that, there

remains for me the same enthusiasm to ensure that this lovely old building of ours is always looking it's best and a place where our visitors enjoy spending time.

To this end, the committee and I would like to re-establish a "friends of the hall" group based around volunteers who would like to help at some of the events that we put on at the hall and help with some of the maintenance jobs which we need to do occasionally. I would love to hear from you if you have a spare hour or two to come along, probably meet some new neighbours and work up a thirst! Please contact me at kingsleybeck1@gmail.com if you would like to get involved.

My final words are to say thank you and farewell to one of ours and the hall's best friends, Marianne Bray, for many years a committee member and our treasurer. Her commitment and hard work at the hall will be evident for a long time to come.

Thank you, Marianne. X

Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**



March 3rd, April 7th, May 4th (Wednesday) & June 9th

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**



Spring Serenades

Fauré - *Requiem*

and *Cantique de Jean Racine*

Mozart - *Laudate Dominum*

Elgar - *Serenade for Strings*

Saturday 2nd April - 7:30pm

St Mary's Church, Taunton

Tickets, information and much more at
www.tauntonchoralsociety.org.uk



Pre-concert talk at 7:00pm

Registered Charity - Number 900173

HOLD THE DATE FOR ST PETER'S CHURCH FETE!

July 2 2022
at Winterwell
Winterwell and Badger Street

Attractions will include:

Fun Dog Show

Music and dancing

Market Stalls

Running Races

Jubilee Hat competition

Cream Teas

Bar

Raffle

If you would like to get involved, help to organise including the raffle, support on the day, make donations etc please contact

rebecca@indinet.net

Proceeds to St Peter's Church,
Staple Fitzpaine

Parish Council Update

**By Mark Palmer,
Chairman of Neroche Parish Council**



This being the spring issue of the newsletter means that we have passed the winter months and will be looking forward to warmer weather and longer daylight hours, losing a layer or two, and I for one will be looking forward to walking the byways around the local area with our two dogs. This brings me onto the subject of footpaths around the parish and how we use and interact with them.

I feel we are lucky living in Somerset which has such a wonderful range of footpaths and bridleways to enjoy. However, these footpaths do not maintain themselves, there being a high number of volunteers and landowners looking after and maintaining the footpaths in addition to improving their access.

As I'm sure you will be aware, the network of footpaths and bridleways are a link to the history of the area, marking forgotten routes to places of work, homes or for worship. Some footpaths are hundreds of years old and are marked on Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 maps and their routes are marked on the definitive map held by Somerset County Council. The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal record of the location and description of Public Rights of Way, any discrepancies found on rights of way can be reported on the following link <https://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map>.

The landowner has a lot of hoops to jump through regarding things they can and can't do on land they own or rent regarding animals grazing in fields with rights of way across them. Section 59 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 bans bulls of certain breeds and permitted bulls must be accompanied by cows (other animals including horses that may follow or threaten walkers are also not permitted in fields with a right of way). Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that members of the public should not be put at risk by work that is taking place in these fields, to name two. We then move onto the arable side of farming, the ground must be prepared, the fertility of the soil has to be checked and adjusted, seeds to be sown and after all that, young shoots are prone to attack by all manner of insect and

animal before any thought of yield can be contemplated some months down the line. Crops at certain stages can be damaged beyond repair by a single footfall. Therefore, it is important that walkers on public rights of way follow the path and not deviate into a field of crops for anything other than a very good reason. In return the farmer (should) clear the path through fields with crops with a path that has a minimum width of 1 metre for cross field and 1.5 metres for field-edge paths, bridleways are 2 and 3 metres respectively.

Walkers using the public rights of way do so on the understanding that the path has a limited width and to wander too far off the route can be considered trespass. Many of Somerset's public rights of way cross fields used by farmers to grow crops or graze their animals. On the whole, they welcome people walking their dogs on these rights of way so long as they are kept under close control and their owners clear up after them. Unfortunately, we often receive complaints about irresponsible dog owners that have not cleared up after their dog and let them chase farm animals and wildlife, or damage crops.

By clearing up after your dog, you can prevent the spread of some very nasty infections and diseases. Dog mess can contain one million microscopic Toxocara Eggs. Toxocaris is highly infectious, especially to children. Typical Toxocaris symptoms include dizziness and nausea, asthma, and epileptic seizures. More seriously, it can lead to serious eye damage, even permanent blindness. Dog mess also harbours parasites that can harm farm animals especially cows and sheep. Please be responsible and don't let your dog foul a public right of way or open access land. It is very easy to train your pet to go in your garden before taking it out for its walk. If your dog is caught short, please clear up its mess and dispose of it in a dog bin. If there isn't a bin nearby, please don't leave it behind. Instead, dispose of it safely at home by double wrapping it and putting it in your standard household refuse.

The Countryside Code highlights that your dog should be kept under close control. There's no definition of what close control actually means, although it's good practice to ensure your dog is trained to respond to your commands and walks close with you. If your dog wanders off out of sight and doesn't come back when called, then it should be walked on a lead.

While you're out, especially around lambing time, you may come across a sign politely asking you to put your dog on a lead. If you see one of these signs or a farmer asks you to put your dog on a lead, please do so. What a great way of showing what a responsible dog owner you are.

Always bear in mind that it is an offence to allow your dog to worry or attack livestock and remember, as a last resort, a farmer is legally entitled to shoot a dog if they can't stop it chasing or worrying their farm animals.



ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA?

Here are the different ways you can find out what's happening in Neroche from the Communication Action Group:-

Neroche Newsletter is delivered free to every household each quarter – full of upcoming events, articles on recent events, and updates from local Groups and leaders. Contact us at nerochenewsletter@gmail.com

Neroche Villages Website - the place for information from the Parish Council including planning applications, meeting minutes etc. You will also find information on local groups and clubs, events, News, local businesses, and details of the Blackdown Hills and Neroche Woodlanders. www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Neroche Email alert – distributed every 3 to 4 weeks, bringing you information about local events, information from the Parish Council, and details of what's happening in our neighbouring villages. To sign up for the Email alert, just send your details to nerocheemail@gmail.com.

Welcome to Neroche

By Jacqueline Kolkowski



Our last meetings of 2021 were “crafty!” After the Annual Meeting in November, and with the support of Candy and Peta, we made Christmas lights with recycled jam jars and Epsom salts. What a lovely set of lights we produced too. In December we tried our hand at ceramic painting of Christmas baubles with expert help and advice from Helen Emery of the Painted Dragonfly. Although some of us had attended workshops before with Helen, we still found it difficult (well I did anyway!)

Peta made us knitted crowns which had to be decorated for the competition! The winner was Pauline, whose crown was decorated with knitted Christmas puddings. Excellent seasonal nibbles and mulled wine ensured the evening went well.



The year ended sadly for us with the death of Marianne Bray. We fondly remembered her at this meeting. She always debated well in discussions and always gave a good balanced argument. She will also be remembered for her courgette cake that she would make for the cafe in the Church.

For our first meeting in 2022, we held our birthday supper at the Farmers Arms. Also, we announced the 2021 Competition Winners (drum roll please) 1st Candy Janes by just 1 point, from Peta Trott in 2nd, and Pauline Phelps in 3rd.

In February, our speaker was Fiona Mahoney of Reminiscence Learning, a charity based in Wellington. They specialise in Dementia Care, Activity and Reminiscence Training and Community projects. She spoke at length on her Archie (the scarecrow) Intergenerational dementia Awareness project, linking primary schools with care homes and the community. The charity run Respite Activity sessions supporting carers. They also run Forrest School Outdoor activities,

along with so many other carers support groups, plus training talks, and activity and awareness courses. Fiona and her team are passionate about what they do and how their services and activities can support someone with memory impairment, as well as supporting their carers. For further information and help go to www.reminiscencelearning.co.uk

In the second half of the meeting, we held a discussion regarding the resolutions put forward by the national federation. After the discussion the members vote and the chosen resolution will go to the national meeting for debate, after which the chosen resolution will be championed by the WI nationally.

The cup for the 2021 competition was presented to Candy - other prizes to be presented in March.

Somerset Federation Events

Some of our members attended the federation's Annual meeting. The speakers included Alan Stewart, Estate Head Chef at The Newt. He talked about his journey of discovery with food and his passion about what we eat and how we source our food. Sue O'Donnell of Taunton Scrubbers was inspiring as she spoke about how a desire to help the NHS on a personal level, led her to sew scrubs during lockdown. This grew to a huge operation spanning counties, age groups and skills.

OPEN MEETING ALL WELCOME WEDNESDAY APRIL 13th at 19.30

Candida Adkins will give an entertaining and illustrated talk about the life of her amazing mother, Jackie Moggridge, who lived in Taunton. She was a pioneer aviator and spitfire pilot.

Jackie flew as a pilot in WWII with the Air Transport Auxiliary and later with the RAF Voluntary Reserves.



She was given her RAF wings in 1953 and became the first female airline captain flying passengers all over the world.

She furthered the cause for women in aviation when women were not thought of as equal.

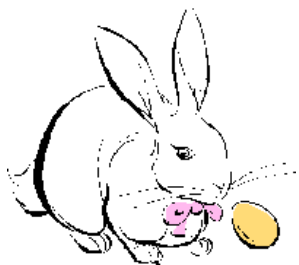
She wrote a book entitled Spitfire Girl: My life in the Sky

Candida will also bring lots of her mother's fascinating memorabilia.

For further information on Jackie's story visit
www.jackiemoggridgespitfiregirl.com

Visitor fees £5.00 including refreshments

Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month, at Neroche Hall. If you would like to join our meetings, please contact Tricia Dryden tricia@witchlodge.co.uk



EASTER FAMILY BINGO

THURSDAY 14th APRIL 2022

(6.30pm FOR EYES DOWN 7pm)

Neroche Parish Hall

RAFFLE and BAR Bring your own nibbles

Booking essential Email tricia@witchlodge.co.uk

News from your District Councillor

By Ross Henley

As I'm writing this, we have just endured some of the worst storms in living memory. Back-to-back storms too, Storms Eunice and Franklin. These storms had a huge impact on the Blackdown Hills and Neroche communities. Many people lost power, some for several days. Many trees fell, some of them blocked in entrances to properties with residents being trapped inside until they were cleared. Once again, the local community pitched in to support each other in all sorts of ways. Clearing trees, checking on vulnerable people and supporting one's neighbours. This is a community which really cares about each other.



Social media really came into its own with the storms. The various community sites in the villages updated residents with prior notice of storm warnings, updates on loss of power issues, and letting people know if a resident needed help, which people quickly responded to. Plus of course Western Power staff who worked tirelessly in appalling conditions to reconnect power to those who had lost power. Lots of thanks to all of those out there who helped support people at this time.

On another topic, I wanted to thank the many people who signed the online petition that I and my Council colleague, Sarah Wakefield, launched to raise awareness and register opposition to large scale development on the previous Crown Estate land at Orchard Portman. Nearly 25 per cent of residents in the Neroche villages have signed this petition. That's a really high number for any petition. Thank you very much. This is an issue that will run and run, and I will continue to campaign on this issue. I've always had an

interest in the Crown Estate land since a few years ago when I campaigned over tenancy issues which caused so many people so much stress at that time. I even remember driving to East Anglia to swap notes with Crown tenants there who were facing exactly the same issues. I would also like to thank everyone who completed my resident surgery by post or online.

Once again there are some outstanding social events taking place in the Neroche villages soon. I'm looking forward to attending the village lunch which is always excellent and the Quiz fish and chips night. I always enjoy this event and thanks to Alan Perrior for inviting me to join his team again. Also, we have St Peter's Church Fete to look forward to in July, and the Easter family bingo at the village hall. I'm really looking forward to seeing lots of you out and about in the next few months.

Take care

Ross Henley

Somerset West and Taunton
Councillor

Hatch and Blackdown ward



Poetry Corner

Butterflies and Pebbles

*Go into this week
with the attitude that
your peace,
your health of mind,
and your heart
mean more than
getting everything else done.
That your smile matters,
That feeling rested matters.
That holding the hand
of your loved ones matter.
So pause lots,
function at a pace
that doesn't pull you apart.
Honour the things that
make you feel good inside,
the things that make you feel
alive.
Give time to those things this
week.
Make time the gift it is,
by giving it to what really
matters to you.*

— S.C. Lourie

Forestry England Update

*By Robert Greenhalgh,
Community Ranger*



This spring has raced through, pushed on by the recent surge in storm activity, it's been a bizarre and unsettled start to the year. I spotted my first snowdrop in flower on Tuesday 18th January, and daffodils in full bloom just the weekend later, near our coastal sites in East Devon. As beautiful a time of year as it is to see the flowers bloom and the trees unfold, I can't help thinking, yet again, this is much earlier than last year!

As I write in the quiet between the storms of Dudley and Eunice, I anticipate many more trees to tumble over the ominous hours ahead. And it is to that topic that I feel we should focus this time. Recently, we have been completing the removal of dangerous trees from areas that pose significant potential to cause harm. Each year our small team survey every single roadside tree and all the trees that lie adjacent to well used tracks, back roads and neighbouring residential and commercial properties that adjoin our 37 forests throughout the Blackdowns and East Devon. This is a mandatory task that we must complete to fulfil our duty of care to protect anyone interacting, or indeed passing by, one of our forests. Sadly, we are sometimes forced to make the difficult decision of removing significant or venerable trees because of disease or instability. This can be a difficult decision to make as we are aware how important some of these trees are to you as our neighbouring community, and indeed to us. Many of these trees are friends to you and have grown up alongside us. We appreciate the emotive response that some of this work can cause, and we hope to work harder to inform and involve local communities in any future decisions we make regarding significant tree removal. Please take solace in the fact that each of these decisions is made with a great deal of compassion and it is keenly felt by the team here when such a tree must be removed.

In other news, the work to protect the ancient and veteran trees is progressing wonderfully. Neroche Conservation Volunteers again helped with a session in early February, and we are uncovering more

and more of these giants each time. Thank you again for all the team's hard work and we would encourage you to visit Piddle Wood within Wych Lodge to admire the great work carried out to preserve these veteran and ancient trees.

We've also reviewed our policy towards running events on Forestry England land as we aim to protect and enhance wildlife at our sites. This has led to some difficult conversations and decisions around allowing certain events to happen at particular times of year. In essence, we have a 'red', 'amber' and 'green' season; any event wishing to take place within the 'red' season (i.e. the months of March-June) will likely be rejected on the grounds of possible disturbance to birds, mammals, and other wildlife during this critical period. There are exceptions to this, i.e. if the event sticks to public rights of way and/or hardstanding forest roads it may be permitted, although this is at the discretion of the local team and ecologist. This change in policy is geared towards protection and enhancement of our natural environment and is not meant as a blocker to our partners. Rather it is a step-change as we seek to lead the way in environmental preservation and sustainable forestry.

We look forward to seeing you in the forest!

Pop-Up Café

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

Except for Easter weekend it will be on Saturday 16th April

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



News from RSPCA West Hatch

Wildlife Centre – open for admissions every day 8am-9pm

Animal Centre – adoptions by appointment only

With spring just around the corner we have been busy trying to get the centre in shape for the coming year. Can you help? We are currently looking for gardening and maintenance volunteers to join our friendly and caring team.

Our maintenance and gardening volunteers play a very important role in keeping our animal and wildlife centre operational, safe, and looking spick and span, helping our wildlife and domestic teams to focus their attention on looking after the animals in our care. Could you help us keep our animal and wildlife centre grounds neat and tidy? If you want to keep active, make new friends, build on your confidence or use your skills to help others, one of these roles might be perfect for you. It doesn't matter if you can't commit a great amount of time each week, any help will make a huge difference to us.

If you are interested in becoming part of our team and you would like to find out more about the above roles, copy this link below into your browser <https://volunteer.rspca.org.uk/opportunities>

Then simply enter your postcode, and all of the volunteering opportunities near you will be listed. You will be able to read more about our gardening and maintenance roles and apply online from here.

This is where we always list our volunteer opportunities, and they are updated often, so if there isn't a role that suits you currently, please do check back again soon.

If you would like more information on either of the above roles, please email tina.huntington@rspca.org.uk

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Animal Centre news

We welcome people sharing information on the animals in the centre that are in need of new homes. At the moment we have a wide range of animals looking for a new start – you can read more about them on our main website here: www.rspca.org.uk/findapet. Shared below are a couple of individuals we want to highlight just now that would love to move on from centre life.



Firstly, here is Lacie. She was found tied up outside the home of a staff member, cold and emaciated and with sores on her body. After lots of veterinary attention and a good diet she is now fully recovered and looking for a new home to call her own.

Lacie would like the company of someone who is at home most of the time to housetrain her and teach that it is ok to be left for short periods. She would be suitable to live with older teenagers, but not cats or small animals due to her high prey drive. We have found that Lacie mixes well with other sight hounds. She seems to generally feel more at ease in their presence, which in turn means that she copes better in stressful situations. For this reason we feel that it would be really beneficial for Lacie to live with a suitable sociable dog who can give her the reassurance she needs and show her that the big wide world is not as scary as she thinks.

Lacie is full of life and very playful despite everything she has been through. She travels well in the car, and will either look out of the window or lie down. Lacie is looking for patient, understanding adopters to carry on the training and socialisation we have started at the centre. She is such a sweet girl and thoroughly deserves to find a loving home and a comfy sofa to lounge on. Potential adopters must live within a reasonable distance of the centre, Taunton, Somerset, as Lacie will need to meet her new family several times to get to know them.



Kendrick is a male Japanese quail who was found as a stray. He has since been paired with Lamar who also arrived at the centre as a stray. Kendrick is full of character, being an inquisitive and vocal boy who loves to crow while investigating his grass run. Lamar is a little more reserved and although timid, is not too shy. They could be rehomed as a pair

on their own although would also probably appreciate living as a larger group with other female quail.

Quail will need secure accommodation such as a chicken coop or rabbit hutch with an attached run where they can safely scratch about on grass, dust bathe, and exhibit natural behaviour.

Please get in touch if you think you can offer a home to any of these animals.

Wildlife Centre news

The winter has been busy with grey seals and one pup in particular was in need of special care and attention. 'Hessian' was brought to us on 15 December having been collected by the British Divers Marine Life Rescue team. He was found entangled in netting on a beach in Cornwall. He had a very large infected neck wound as the photos show.

Thankfully this responded well to antibiotics and veterinary care and he has made great progress in the



Hessian Before



Hessian After

centre. Big thanks go out to the kind volunteers that saved the day for this vulnerable seal.

Another animal to fall foul of human activity was a guillemot caught up in crude oil pollution. This beautiful seabird was washed by our experienced staff - as shown in the photos below - and then progressed to the next stages of rehab.



As you can see a lot goes on at the centre. Why not follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with all our news. You can find us by searching for RSPCA West Hatch Animal Centre and also for RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife. Thanks.

St Peter's Church Flower Guild

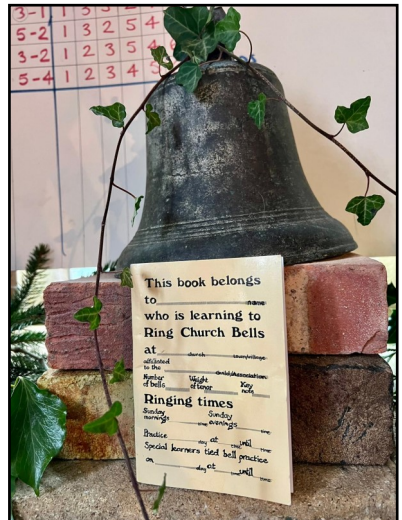
By Jacqueline Kolkowski

It was lovely to be able to hold our "Come Decorate our Christmas Tree" for the children in the parish and their grown-up helpers. They decorated small terracotta flowerpots and clay stars that sparkled on the tree. The Cafe was in full swing with Carole running her "Come Decorate your own Christmas Cup Cake".



The whole morning was a community event with groups decorating a window in the church in the theme of a carol or Christmas song. The windows were just wonderful. As you would imagine the bellringers window was "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and had in its display the bell from the old schoolhouse.

The WI produced "Deck the Halls" and the Café "We Wish you a Merry Christmas" complete with knitted figgy puddings, while the Thursday lunch club produced some wonderful snowflakes for "Let It Snow".





A flight of reindeer pranced across the window for the Badger Street Band's "Jingle Bells" and "Light the Candles Around the World" shone brightly for the window of the St Peter's Singers. The RSPCA produced "While Shepherds Watch their Flocks by Night" at very short notice.

During all this the Badger Street Band got us all singing. It was such a lovely morning full of people from across our community. Thanks to all those who designed and produced their wonderful displays, and to Candy, Peta, Molly and Pauline for supporting the crafts. A very big thank you to all the Flower Guild who produced the other greenery and candle decoration and displays within the church. Candy and Peta for the porch and the display outside the church door, Karen for the garland displays on the screen and pulpit, with Carole making the pew ends. Finally, thank you to all the members of the Community Cafe for providing such wonderful Christmas delights.



I am so pleased to report that we have a new member of the Flower Guild, Tina Warren, who has joined us and produced her first stunning pedestal for February.

SATURDAY 16TH APRIL

**Crafts for Children accompanied by their grown-up helpers
help us decorate the Church for Easter
The Community Cafe will again be providing
scrumptious Easter delights
10.30am - 12.30pm**

News from Your MP

By Rebecca Pow

Hello again,

There's a real sense of change on the Covid front since I last wrote back in November and thanks to everyone's supreme efforts we are getting through. I have continued to focus on my work in the constituency to help grow the economy, provide the skills and training that lead to jobs with higher wages, and create the kind of sustainable environment I know from my work as the Environment Minister, we all want to see.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Following an incredible effort to deliver booster vaccinations, at the time of writing, more than 90 per cent of over-70s and 86 per cent of over-50s in England have now received their booster. This added protection is making a difference, and we continue to see falling numbers of

infections, hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19, and my recent visit to Musgrove Park Hospital to meet the dedicated staff who have played such a crucial role in the pandemic confirmed that this is indeed the case.

The decisions to relax the Covid-related restrictions, encouraging everyone to get back to a normal life are welcome with the onus now on each and every one of us to take our own informed decisions. This is a sensible and balanced decision, based on the latest data, and has my full support. As Covid-19 becomes endemic, legal requirements will need to be replaced with advice and guidance. All current Covid-19 regulations will be reviewed and shortly the Prime Minister will be presenting the Government's long-term strategy for living with Covid-19. He has said that, provided the current encouraging trends in the data continue, it is the expectation that the final domestic restrictions can end earlier than initially planned.





CONSTITUENCY VISITS

I'm so glad to be back to some semblance of normality out and about in the constituency. In recent months, this has included meeting a delegation from the UK Hydrographic Office, a world-leading facility responsible for generating most of the world's shipping charts and marine services, and they are based right here in Taunton. I am proud that when I first became the local MP, I worked to ensure the UKHO would remain in Taunton rather than being moved to Exeter. With almost 1000 people working at the UKHO, it remains a key employer in the constituency, and I have been engaging with Ministerial colleagues on their behalf.

I also had a great visit to the Maidenbrook Country Park and Somerset Wood at West Monkton, which is a phenomenal asset, providing vital green space for the surrounding new housing developments. A recently awarded £62,000 grant from Somerset County Council's climate emergency fund has enabled a Forest School, complete with eco-building to be developed and a lake which will be a rich wildlife habitat.

HEALTH CARE

I had an informative visit to the Wellington Medical Centre where staff have worked unstintingly to deliver their services throughout the pandemic, and to Taunton Vale Medical Centre where they have



developed an innovative new model linking to a new community pharmacy. I was also delighted to join Secretary of State of Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid on a visit to the new eye unit at Musgrove hospital, and to see progress with the other significant developments taking place at the hospital including the new endoscopy centre, maternity unit and theatres. With Government support all these projects are progressing well, with long term plans for the total upgrade of the site underway too.

BOOST FOR SOMERSET SCHOOL FUNDING

Sticking to education, I strongly welcome the news that schools in Somerset will receive extra support as one of 55 new Education Investment Areas under plans to Level Up education for disadvantaged children and young people across England. Education Investment Areas will be prioritised for new specialist sixth form free schools – ensuring that talented children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the learning they need to progress into training or higher education. They will also be eligible for retention payments to help schools maintain the best teachers in high priority subjects.

The Government is targeting investment and support as we build back fairer – helping to level up education standards, ensuring children and young people across the country, including here in Taunton Deane, can fulfil their potential. I've campaigned continuously for a fairer playing field for education in rural areas like ours and this recognition is welcome.

DEFRA MINISTERIAL ROLE

In other news, I have been working in my Ministerial role at DEFRA on a range of subjects, including a serious animal welfare issue, namely that of introducing stronger measures to tackle the barbaric activity of hare coursing. This activity, whereby criminals use dogs to chase and kill wild



brown hares (one of our priority listed species and in decline) attracting big money through betting, particularly online, is causing a blight in many rural areas including the West Country.

The animal cruelty inflicted is also too often accompanied with intimidation, violence and theft in our countryside which is deeply upsetting for many. We are now working through the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill, to increase penalties, both in fines and introducing prison sentences for the first time to make offenders pay police costs and to bar offenders from owning dogs. Police in rural areas have been working hard via the Wildlife Crime Unit which is co-funded by DEFRA and the Home Office, to combat hare coursing, with Avon and Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner, Mark Shelford prioritising rural crimes like this, and these new tools will be vital in the drive to make our rural areas safer.

In my capacity as Environment Minister, I have launched several consultations recently including on Biodiversity Net Gain - the new measure that will require every new development to put back 10% more nature than was there when they started. This will make a major contribution to improving nature and will provide vital green spaces where we live. Also, earlier this year DEFRA published their response to the Glover Landscape Review and announced that a new charity is being formed as a single, strategic body for all National Trails (which includes the South West Coast Path). It will share knowledge and experience between the trails and open a package of measures to strengthen focus on nature recovery and access. During lockdown our trails and rights of way proved invaluable to many and this new focus on them will offer real benefits.

As ever please do get in touch if there is anything I can help you with. You can either email me at rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk or telephone my office on 01823 443062.

Best wishes,

Rebecca

Household Recycling & Refuse Collections



Usual collection day	Revised collection day
Good Friday 15 April	Saturday 16 April
Easter Week Monday 18 April to Friday 22 April	All collections one day later (inc Friday pick-ups on Saturday 23 April)
Early May Bank Holiday Monday 2 May to Friday 6 May	All collections one day later (inc Friday pick-ups on Saturday 7 May)
Spring Bank Holiday Thursday 2 June	Saturday 4 June



Ella Foot Health Mobile Clinic

Foot Health Practitioner (RFHP)
Offering foot care and advice:

Nail trimming and filing
Difficult toe nails
Callus and corns
Fungal infections

*Call Ella on 07729 733452
to book a home visit*

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Country pub with rooms

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somersetelectricians@gmail.com



Lending with Heart and Mind

Somerset West
and Taunton

Somerset West and Taunton Council fund a not-for-profit loan scheme for homeowners and landlords*.

We understand the expense of maintaining your home and we work with you to take the stress out of funding repairs, improvements or adaptations.

For a no-obligation assessment or more information visit www.lendology.org.uk or call 01823 461099

*subject to eligibility

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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