

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Newsletter

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

Issue 47 - Spring 2023



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.

Neroche Community Review Needs You

By Jane Hole and Alan Hyde

Thank you to those of you who kindly provided ideas on what matters most to you in Neroche. We had an encouraging response. This information has helped the Neroche Community Review Steering Group form the questions that will be going out in an online survey to all households in the parish in March. The main topics and concerns will be centred on what you have told us so far, including:



Climate change and the challenges facing the environment and wildlife

Reducing road speed

Rights of Way

A Stronger Community

Broadband speed

Parish Council and Somerset Unitary Authority affairs

It is over to you for the next vital step which will be filling in the survey. It will be online via your email address or by using the QR code. Have your say about how you want to see the parish shaping up over the next decade. Your views will influence what the Parish Council does and will feed into how the new Somerset Unitary Authority understands what is important in the rural villages. Use your voice for positive change.

Already some great ideas are coming forward – corridors for nature and wildlife, an audit of the veteran and ancient oaks, maybe even a green energy scheme for the community and action on reducing road speed.

If the subject of climate change and the challenge facing nature and the environment seem almost too big an issue to tackle, come along to The Annual Parish Meeting on 9th March (see page 4) and listen

to our speaker. James Grischeff from Natural England is an expert on nature recovery and will have ideas and information for us all. Think global – act local!

The more of you who reply to the online survey the stronger our voices will be. To enable the survey to be distributed, collected and analysed, we need your email address please. So, we'd be grateful if you could email it to futurenerocheplan@gmail.com (be assured your address will be used solely for the purposes of the Community Review).

If you would prefer to fill in a paper questionnaire, please contact Dave Knight 07812 158967 or Jane Hole 01460 234410.

Look out for the online survey from 3rd to 24th March 2023. It will be sent from our futurenerocheplan@gmail.com address.

The survey findings are collated for us by The Community Council for Somerset who have long experience in community consultation. Respondents will be entered into a prize draw - good luck!

Delivering the Newsletter

Would you be able to help with the distribution of the Neroche Newsletter?

We are looking for someone who could deliver the newsletter each quarter to 20 homes around the Badger Street and Winterwell area.

If you can help with this, please contact Roger Keat on 01460 234380

Neroche Annual Parish Meeting

Thurs, 9 March - 7.15pm
Neroche Hall

Neroche Parish Council invites you to the
2023 Annual Parish Meeting:

- *'What we can do for Nature & what it can do for us'* - guest speaker: James Grischeff, Natural England
- Parish updates inc Airband, A358 & speed reduction measures
- Neroche Community Review

Followed by Open Session Q&A on anything you'd like to raise in the parish.

Glass of wine & nibbles. Displays of local projects

ALL PARISHIONERS WELCOME



Update from the Parish Council

By Mark Palmer, Chair

At the time of writing this article (early February), Spring appears to be in the air although the weatherman forecasts a cold snap approaching, so thoughts of putting the winter woollies to the back of the cupboard have to be put on hold for the time being. The year ahead is set to be a busy one for the Parish Council and with this in mind it was decided to move to a Council meeting once a month to enable us to carry out our legal responsibilities, one of them being to consider any planning applications that have been submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council within the required timeframe. This is the link to the web site for the weekly list of all planning applications in the Taunton area:



<https://www3.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/asp/webpages/plan/plweeklylist.asp>

Whilst on the subject of Somerset West and Taunton Council, we will soon see the fruits of the steering group for the formation of the Unitary Council combining the existing County Council and the four district councils due to launch on 1st April 2023. Following the publication of the SCC announcement on their proposals for the Local Committee Networks (LCN), our parishes have been placed in Group 18, Chard & Blackdowns. Each LCN will comprise the elected unitary councillor(s) for the local division(s), as well as city, town or parish councillors, representatives from the NHS, police and fire services, and members of local churches, business and trade groups and voluntary organisations. LCNs will meet at least six times a year and will be able to share ideas on how to deliver services, collaborate to agree local priorities for funding, draw up plans for how services may be delivered in the future, and escalate requests to the council's executive.

The parish council trust you will offer your support in making this project a success and if you have any suggestions on how we may improve the services which the parish or unity council offers, please contact the Parish Clerk, Emily York.

The A358 'improvement' has been delayed as National Highways have delayed submission of their plan to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO), that was intended to be submitted before Christmas and is currently undergoing a high-level review. Other parish councils in the area have raised concerns of safety, not of the A358 itself, but of the possible increase in traffic on local roads and the impact that will have on other road users, for example walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Local roads may see an increase in vehicular traffic which will increase the requirements for maintenance and repairs, putting a greater strain on the finances of the new Unitary Council.

A report has been written by the Road Investment Scrutiny Panel of the University of the West of England that calls into question the scale and purpose of future spending on road investment, maintenance and operation of the national road network. The Panel has identified a set of seven questions relating to the concerns the panel raised through their discussions. These questions relate to issues of national importance but apply to decisions from the largest mega projects right through to the provision of routine maintenance on local roads.

Finally, the steering group of the Neroche Parish Council Community Review have been working very hard pulling together the details of the survey to go online at the beginning of March. I am sure you found time to reply to the request from them for your three suggestions you would like to see made about our parishes. This will be a main topic during the Annual Parish Meeting to be held at Neroche Hall on 9th March 2023, to which you are all most welcome. Please read the flyer/poster (Page 2/3) with this magazine with details on how to take part in this survey.

**ST PETER'S CHURCH,
STAPLE FITZPAINE**
Shrove Tuesday Annual Pancake Party



*Featuring St Peter's
Pancake Tossing Competition!
Prizes for best "Tosser"! Adult and Junior*

Neroche Hall
6.45pm for 7.00pm
Tuesday 21st February 2023

Adults £10 Children (under 16) £5
2-course Supper, Raffle, BAR

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

In aid of St Peter's Church Funds

Our dear friend Julie Pope

As many of you are aware we said goodbye to our very dear friend Julie Pope in October last year after she passed away from Motor Neurone Disease. Julie was a much-loved member of our community as was evidenced by some 400 or so mourners attending her funeral.



I was one of the lucky ones to count Julie as a close friend for well over 20 years. She was brave, determined, kind, thoughtful, fun, forgiving, generous and always sought to get the best out of people. I think many who knew her will recognize these qualities in Julie. They are now evidenced in what close friends Kath Michaels and Rebecca George each say about their friendship with Julie.

Kath writes:-

“To echo the well-known lyrics of Tina Turner, Julie was “Simply the Best” friend.

We met shortly after Mike, Alex (aged 15 months) and I moved to Staple in 1998. To begin with it was a series of our paths crossing - church, WI - and even then, I was immediately struck by Julie’s warmth, kindness and willingness to stop and have a chat; she was always interesting and interested.

There is a pivotal time in my memory when the friendship went up another level. Mike and I received an invitation for a party at the farm with the instruction of 70s fancy dress. The barns were thumping out music, there were many dubiously dressed people and also there was an air of eager anticipation awaiting the rumoured tribute act. Poetic licence permitting, through the mist emerged Mark, Mike, Mick, and

Stan (my sincere apologies if I've missed anyone out) dressed in their long wigs, playing air guitar, or, in Mike's case his drumkit, very enthusiastically!! Slade took to the stage, everyone went wild, and Julie and I exchanged a wry smile and laughed a lot immediately realising that "our boys" were children and would encourage each other not to grow up!!

As the boys, Mike and Mark, pursued their common loves of music, rugby, sailing, often going away for days at a time, Julie and I along with other friends, Nicky, Mary, Lisa, Rachael to name but a few, would always make sure we would have a good time too, from the simple pleasures of walking around our beautiful countryside to supper parties and film nights.

In more recent years skiing and cycling were added to the list of outdoor pursuits, both demonstrating Julie's tenacity and determination not to be defeated. Village ski trips followed and with them a whole bunch of very happy memories, what goes on tour stays on tour!

Julie was extremely dedicated to our community in many ways, from membership of the governing body at Thurlbear School, St. Peter's PCC, WI to name but a few. In my opinion her greatest community legacy is the St Peter's choir which she took over from Jenny Trood in about 2006. To start with she concentrated on Christmas and then we started to meet weekly, small in numbers although slowly and steadily the membership grew. It was an exciting day when men joined the choir and we had all 4 parts covered, soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Opportunities then followed to tackle more complicated pieces of music, followed by concerts. Above all, the choir embodied friendship, Julie embodied friendship. I am so grateful to Julie for all the happy times we shared and for the many memories I have, thank you Mrs. P!"

Rebecca now writes:-

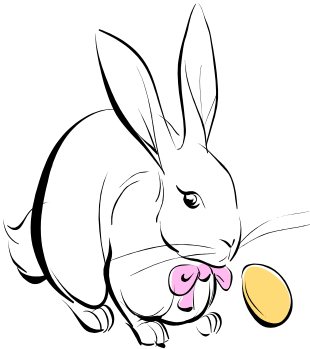
"Julie was two weeks older than me, and we clicked from the time we moved here nearly 10 years ago. She was a relatively new Choir Director for St Peter's Singers then and gradually took on more and more leadership of music in the community in her understated and immensely talented way – directing the choir, playing for services, carols around the community at Christmas, and playing with Badger Street Band.

She was quietly proud of the work she did at Debenhams over 30 years and talked about her work implementing new financial systems, and as a manager. She was the project manager for a complicated holiday we arranged for 10 of us, 8 Americans, around Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. She thought of every detail, booked hotels, meals, tours and transport, for a week of activities and it was perfect.

We spent a lot of time together through her illness which she bore with great courage and was an inspiration to me. In our too short time together we cycled and skied, sang and made music, walked with our dogs, had meals together, and talked and talked about important and inconsequential things. She was generous and loving and gave more than she took, and I loved her.”

Thank you, Julie, for being such a wonderful friend. I love you.

Nicky Baxter



EASTER FAMILY BINGO

FRIDAY 31st MARCH 2023

(6.30pm EYES DOWN 7pm)

Neroche Parish Hall

RAFFLE and BAR Bring your own nibbles

Email tricia@witchlodge.co.uk

Thurlbear School Update

The Autumn Term always seems to be the longest term in school (this could be just the shortening days and longer nights) and it is always a productive term for teaching and learning, as well as preparing for nativities, carol services and other celebrations. For the first time in a number of years our Christmas celebrations culminated in a carol service at Stoke St Mary Church. It was so lovely to be able to join with parents and the community, and come together to enjoy a selection of hymns, prayers and readings.

We were also lucky enough to receive a spectacular flying visit from a very special visitor, courtesy of the Royal Navy Commando Helicopter force 'Santa Drop'. An absolutely massive thank you to 845 Naval Air Squadron and the Mobile air Operations Team who co-ordinated the event, as well as spending time afterwards talking to and inspiring our young people.



The term ended with a magnificent sunset and we give thanks to everyone who helps and supports us to keep our children safe, happy and learning. 2022 hasn't been without its challenges, although we have all worked together and long may that continue.





Neroche Hall Fish 'n' Chip Quiz

Friday, 24th March

Doors open 7pm for prompt start 7.30pm

Maximum of 6 per team - £4 per person entry
(Food extra)

BYO beer / wine and a glass!

Advance booking essential from 1st March on
01823 480286

Email: r.davies507@btinternet.com



St Peter's Church Flower Guild

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

For the Remembrance Service in November, Karen Morgan produced a stunning display of poppies falling from the pulpit. The poppies were made from the ends of plastic bottles, painted then attached to the wire that formed the cascade. The display along with her pedestal ensured a fitting tribute to all those who are remembered. Thanks must also go to Andrew for his help in the production of the poppies. The installation has been stored and we hope to reuse it somewhere in the church next November.



Christmas is always a joyful event in the church as we invite the local children to help the Flower Guild in decorating the church for Christmas. The children decorated willow rings for the Christmas tree and for pew ends, which along with the flower guild displays and all the greenery made the church look fantastic. Thanks to Peta and Karen for helping with the crafts, especially Peta for making all the willow rings. Thanks also to Carole for making those scrummy Christmas cupcakes, along with Tricia for running the café, Rosemary and Tina for the memory tree, and Diana for all the greenery and her support. Also, thanks to members

of the Choir and The Badger Street Band who came along to entertain us, we sung all my favourites.

We hope to run an Easter crafts event in April to decorate the Church. See the email alerts for more information nearer the time.

As in past years we will be using lilies in our flower displays at Easter. If you would like to donate towards a lily in memory of a loved one or friend, please contact myself or Alison Brown. This year we will be recognising those remembered with their names on a board.

If you are interested in joining the Flower Guild do please contact me Jacqueline.Kolkowski@btinternet.com



News from Neroche Hall

By Karen Learoyd

It's been another interesting few months at the Hall. The renovations of the toilets were completed back in November, and they have been the subject of many positive comments from our hall users – we are pleased to have been able to improve the facilities in such a way – we hope there will be more changes in the pipeline.

After numerous delays in the delivery of the car park height barrier, it finally arrived late in January, and is now in place – many thanks to Mark Wanstall and John Learoyd for digging the very large holes required! This provides us with an increased level of security for the building and grounds and will still allow cars and small vans to park as usual. Should you wish to park horse boxes or larger vehicles, this will require advance booking, and may be subject to a charge.

The big shock came in early January when we received the renewal quote for our electricity contract. As with homeowners, we were expecting an increase, although nothing quite prepared us for the hike in costs that the letter announced. Our charges have increased by between 300 and 350% depending on which tariff is being used – as you would expect the weekday unit rate is by far the most expensive. Our annual forecast is now around £7k which would equate to over 60% of our income based on 2022 figures. Unfortunately, this led to us taking the uncomfortable decision to raise our hire charges by 50%, and even with this change, we will still be faced with a significant shortfall to offset the increases.

In addition to this, we have been having problems with our heating particularly during the very cold spells before Christmas, and just recently. It had quite an impact on our recent jazz night, leaving the hall extremely chilly. One of the heaters has reached the end of its life, and the others are not operating as efficiently as they should. We are waiting for quotes to replace the heater and will also be looking at possible alternative heating systems, clearly this won't be quick or cheap! Our caretaker has been setting timers to improve the heating for our regular hirers, although this obviously comes at a cost as well. In the meantime, we would appreciate your help in managing electricity usage when hiring the hall – please make sure all lights and heaters are switched off when you leave.

All in all, times are challenging, although we are working together to come up with new ideas for fundraising. Our popular Fish 'n' Chip quiz returns on Friday, March 24th with Easter Family Bingo the following Friday, March 31st. We are also considering a 'Friends' scheme which could provide a regular donation in return for some benefits (yet to be decided!) We would also be extremely grateful should anyone feel able to donate to the Hall's funds – please email me if you would like to do so (karen.wensley@gmail.com)

As always, we value the ongoing support and commitment of the community – we really appreciate the understanding shown when the costs increase, or the heating isn't working as it should! Thank you...



	First Race	Last Race
Tuesday 21st February	2.00pm	4.30pm
Thursday 2nd March	1.40pm	4.35pm
Monday 13th March	1.40pm	5.00pm
Monday 20th March	1.40pm	4.45pm
Thursday 30th March	1.30pm	5.00pm
Thursday 13th April	1.30pm	4.55pm
Thursday 27th April	5.15pm	8.10pm



Coronation Concert

Mozart - Coronation Mass
Handel - Coronation Anthems
Stanford - Te Deum

Sat 1st April - 7:30pm
St James Church, Taunton
(next to the County Ground)



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

Registered Charity Number 900173

February Farming Update

By Tom Pope

With 32,000 free range chickens, arable crops, a dog walking pen, and a storage business, there is rarely a dull moment at Staple Farm! These past few months have been especially busy as our hens have been changed for a new flock. In November we emotionally waved goodbye to our first flock of hens as they reached the end of their productive life and headed off for slaughter. They will be used mainly in soups and stocks. We try to sell as many of our outgoing hens as we can on to local people to try and prolong as many of their lives as possible. We were planning on selling 2,000 to the hen welfare trust this year for them to rehome, unfortunately the ongoing avian influenza crisis put paid to this idea this year which was a real shame.

As soon as the hens had gone, we jumped into action in cleaning the shed down for the next flock of hens to make sure no bugs transferred over to them from this flock. This took us two weeks with our second flock of hens arriving at the beginning of December.

Over the Christmas period the chickens graced us with a 'honeymoon period' before they started laying. This meant a lot less work for us as we only had to check on them, rather than pack and pick up eggs every day. Since the beginning of January, they have started to lay with more coming into lay each day. As I write this now, we're starting to reach daily production of around 30,000 eggs a day! These eggs are mainly packed by our automatic packer which only requires one person to pull out any dirty or broken eggs and it does the rest. Unfortunately, not all of the hens have found the nest boxes so at present we are currently collecting around about 1000 eggs per day by hand, which is very hard work. Luckily as time goes on more and more birds normally find the nest boxes and make our lives a lot easier!



**Services and Activities for St Peter's Church
with Services for Seven Sowers Benefice Lent/Easter 2023**

March 1st – April 5th Wednesdays in March/April
Lent course at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall 11.30am

March 5th – 2nd Sunday of Lent
Benefice Communion 10am at Hatch Beauchamp

March 12th – 3rd Sunday of Lent
Benefice Communion 10am at Stoke St Mary

March 19th – 4th Sunday of Lent
BCP Communion 8.30am at St Peter's, Staple Fitzpaine
Benefice Communion 10am at Beercrocombe

March 26th – 5th Sunday of Lent
Benefice Communion 10am at St Peter's, Staple Fitzpaine followed
by Annual Meeting of Parochial Church Council at 11.15am

April 2nd – Palm Sunday
Benefice Communion 10am at Orchard Portman

April 7th – Good Friday
Reflective Service 10am at St Peter's, Staple Fitzpaine

April 8th – Easter Saturday
Vigil Service of the Light 7.45pm at St Peter's, Staple Fitzpaine

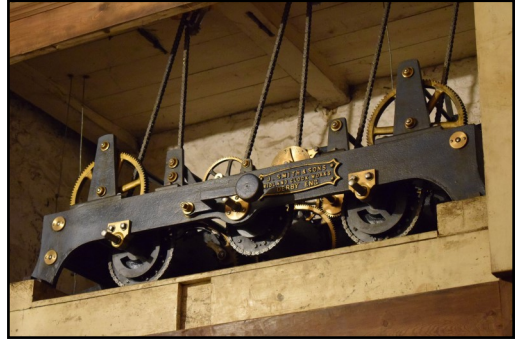
April 9th – Easter Day
Benefice Communions 10am at Curry Mallet and 11am at West Hatch



News from St Peter's Church

Spring is on its way although this morning, as I write, the temperature was -4 degrees C overnight, so I prayed that the plants already showing signs of spring growth were unaffected. In the churchyard there were a few brave daffodils out for the last few days of January. This time of year induces one to look back on the year past and to consider what has been achieved from 2022-2023.

St Peter's Church has been fortunate to have amongst our congregation some very energetic and enthusiastic parishioners. Consequently, quite a bit has been achieved this year through their motivation. The church clock, having been cleaned and repaired last year, has, through the generosity of an anonymous



donor, now been automated with a new electricity supply, enabling our stalwart tower/clock captain to relax a little. Paul Hart has wound the clock every week for at least 30 years, and we thank him most sincerely for his sustained care and attention to both the clock and the bells. Thanks are due to Mark Porter for getting the work on the clock underway.



We also now have a new composting toilet in the churchyard. The plastic "Tardis" has gone at last and a smart building, much nearer the church, houses the new "throne". The PCC are enormously grateful to Rebecca George who has driven the application through the labyrinth of diocesan rules to bring this to fruition. Users will note there are a few instructions as to the use

of the toilet as it is a specialised system, which will in the future produce compost usable in the garden.

Earlier in the year the west wall of the churchyard was rebuilt with stone kindly given by Chris Dunn. This was due to the wonderful efforts of a group of volunteers directed by Anthony Stone of AES Builders and led by the late Chris Newis.

Looking forward, church activities for springtime include the Lent course on Wednesday mornings at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall running from 1st March to 5th April. Start time 11.15am and is followed by a suitably simple lunch in the village hall catered for by each church of the Benefice in turn. St Peter's turn for this is on March 22nd - any help gratefully received!



The annual meeting of the Parochial Church Council will take place after the 10am service on 26th March. All worshippers and supporters of the church may attend, although only those on the Electoral roll may vote. The past year to 31 December 2022 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.

We recently received the sad news that Rev Mary Godin will be moving from the Seven Sowers Benefice to live near her daughter in Warwickshire. Mary has been an important member of the Ministry Team for the benefice for many years. Her late husband Roger was treasurer for St Peter's for some time, and Mary has instigated or been involved with much of the Christian outreach in our benefice: coffee mornings; home groups; visiting care homes; cooking lunches and many more. Despite her advancing years her cheerful enthusiasm never seems to wane, and her Christian faith always shines out on us. Her ministry will be missed by many. We of St Peter's thank her for everything and wish her a happy time in her new abode.

Members of the church community are aware that Rev Joanna, our Rector, and the rest of the Ministry team will be working even harder in the future to look after our 7 churches of the Benefice. A few months ago, Rev Stephen Jones, who was part-time in the benefice, retired as

well. However, Julie Kimber, who will be known to some of you, is training towards priesthood within the benefice and we are fortunate to have her with us. Members of our congregations and church supporters will increasingly be encouraged to take a greater role in our churches, often developing their own faith further at the same time. We are so fortunate at St Peter's that we are blessed to have many helpers who willingly give up their time to get involved or to lead church activities of one kind or another. There is always a need for volunteers and being involved brings its own rewards. You are probably aware that the service pattern has changed since August 2022. The regular Sunday morning Communion service now moves around the Benefice on a 7-week cycle. To partake of a weekly Sunday Communion, it has become necessary to travel to one of the other lovely churches in the benefice. This can be an uplifting experience, worshipping with a new community and if we all did it, enjoying singing and praying in a full church! If you need directions to one of the other churches or a lift, please contact one of the church wardens.

Services at St Peter's and Easter dates are shown elsewhere in the newsletter. We hope you will find a service to suit. Our main service for Easter will be on Easter Saturday evening and will be very different, an Easter Vigil service called The Service of the Light, taking place after dark prior to the dawning of Easter Day, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Easter dawn service held at the Scout field in West Hatch is an amazing way of joining together in the well-known hymn "Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia!"

Youth Group

Under the "church umbrella" it is hoped to develop a youth activity time within our area. It will be for one evening a month initially and will be, if possible, of an outdoor nature. We would like to know if there is an interest in this. If you have children who would be interested please get in touch with Mark Porter 01823 481132 email: markp@hoki.com or Alison Brown 01823 480441 email: aabrown.battens@gmail.com. We need to know numbers and ages of children who may be keen, in order to develop suitable activities. We would also like to hear from any parents or other adults who are prepared to assist. A venue for this has provisionally been offered.

Hope to see you at the Pancake Supper Party on February 21st at Neroche Hall. Places still available.

Alison Brown, pp the Churchwardens



KFEC

Knitting / Faith & Friendship / Crochet

Meeting Monthly
starting Tuesday
21st February 2 - 4
pm at The Rectory,
Ash Road Stoke St
Mary. TA3 5BX.

ALL LEVELS OF
SKILLS
WELCOME AND
BEGINNERS
WILL BE
SUPPORTED



Contact Rev'd Joanna 01823 974716 or Nicky
07843 790073



30 mph for Staple Fitzpaine

Since last year, the Parish Council has been working with Highways and the Police to get a speed reduction from 40 mph to 30 mph within Staple Fitzpaine. This will be beneficial for safety and reduction in noise. We are now at the consultation stage and need to know if most residents and businesses within the village are in support, or if there are any objections. Please contact either Dave Knight or me, Fiona Gledhill, or email nerochepc.org.uk@gmail.com should you have any objections before 28 February.

Pop-Up Café

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

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

Meet old friends and make new ones

For more information contact

**Tricia Dryden
tricia@witchlodge.co.uk**





WI Open Meeting
Wednesday 10th May 2023
Talk on Jackie Moggridge
Pioneering Pilot
Flew 83 different types of planes
In the ATA
The first female airline captain
To fly scheduled flights...

HARES, HAZEL AND HIBERNATION

Wildlife notes from Neroche Woodlanders at Young Wood

Have you seen a hare recently? We would be interested to hear about hare sightings around Staple Fitzpaine and Thurlbear. We have encountered a very impressive hare several times deep inside the woods at Young Wood recently – not really the place one expects to find hares. So, who else is seeing hares in this area – out in the fields? Do let us know (contact details below).



We're into coppicing season at Young Wood, cutting hazel bushes to ground level to generate bean poles, pea sticks, material for 'dead hedging', and firewood. We're selling hazel 'canes' (as a locally produced alternative to bamboo) at Combe Dingle Nursery up at Eagle Cross, so please support us by buying some if you can!

The coppicing promotes fresh dense growth which provides cover for dormice and other wildlife. Dormouse monitoring boxes, which are scattered through several areas of the woods, have been inspected by volunteers through the past year and have yielded records of dormice repeatedly using the boxes for shelter or nesting, showing we have a healthy population of these delightful furry friends.

During the winter, dormice hibernate – they go into a deep sleep, drop their body temperature and slow their metabolism down to eke out their food reserves. While they spend the warmer months up in the canopy – and hence benefit from dense coppice growth – in the early winter they come down to the ground and build a tight nest of

dry grass to hibernate in. They make the nest close to the ground because they need to stay cold – if they warm up too much during the winter they will wake up, which means their bodies start using more energy, and that's the time when many will perish. So, our increasingly unpredictable mild periods in the winter are, paradoxically, more dangerous to dormice than prolonged cold.

Other mice, squirrels and small mammals don't hibernate, simply because they can make use of more types of food. Dormice lack a caecum, a section of intestine which herbivores use to store the bacteria used to digest cellulose, so unlike many species, dormice are unable to digest grass and leaves for nutrients and so rely on fruit, nuts and seeds while they are available.

It's pretty amazing that tiny mammals can survive the intense periods of cold we have had this winter. What about even smaller creatures like insects? Many insects also hibernate – a process known as diapause - finding shelter in homes, holes in trees, in leaf litter, under logs and under rocks. Others, like honey-bees and ladybirds, survive by huddling together to share body heat through the winter. Some produce anti-freeze chemicals that enable them to remain functional even below freezing. A few species remain active throughout the winter – even tiny ones like whitefly, while for many others, the best life strategy is to lay eggs in the late summer, so that the eggs can survive the winter despite the adults succumbing and allowing a new generation to emerge in the spring.

A really good strategy for us humans to survive the winter is to come out volunteering with us – coppicing, scrub clearing, or other winter jobs are a great way to keep warm! If you'd like to join us, do get in touch at info@nerochewoodlanders.org, or visit www.nerochewoodlanders.org.

Gavin, Jenny, Sarah and the team at Neroche Woodlanders

We had a very informative presentation from Emma Green of the Ferne Animal Sanctuary. She told us of the history of Ferne when Nina, Duchess of Hamilton & Brandon in 1939 provided refuge for the pet animals of men and women who went off to war. At the end of the war, she continued to take in and rehome unwanted animals.



Sadly, a number of these animals that needed rehoming belonged to service men and women that had not returned from war. The work at Ferne continues caring for and rehoming animals in larger premises and with state-of-the-art care units.

The staff and volunteers are a committed group of people and there is lots to see and do at the sanctuary. For more information go to www.ferneanimalsanctuary.org.

At December's meeting our speaker was our own Carole Wensley-Dodd, speaking about and demonstrating the art of sugar craft with the help of two novice students Candy and Pauline. Carole has produced some amazing pieces of sugar craft - you may have seen some of her wonderful creations at the pop-up cafe events.

Carole was involved in producing some exquisite sugar flowers that were used to decorate an arch at the cake international exhibition in Birmingham. We soon realised there is a lot more to the art of sugar craft.



The first event of 2023 was our annual Birthday Party held at the Greyhound where trophies were presented. After all the points were

counted, the monthly competition trophy was won by Candy, with Pauline and Frances joint second.

The Bickenhall Cup was presented to Frances, a well-deserved recipient.

As at all good parties you must have games and we excelled with a good old pass the parcel! And of course, a quiz, questions from 2022. Funny how soon we forget things!

A most enjoyable evening, thanks to all who were involved in its organisation.

2023 Programme

The 2023 programme has now been finalised thanks to Carole and Gill. If you would like a programme of our events for the year, please contact Tricia Dryden or a member of the WI.

On May 10th we are holding an open meeting at Neroche Hall, and all are welcome for a small fee to include refreshments. Candy Adkins will be talking about her mother Jackie Moggridge pioneering pilot. It is a fascinating talk with lots of slides and some wonderful flying memorabilia across Jackie's life in aviation.

More information on Jackie can be found on this very informative web site www.jackiemoggridgespitfiregirl.com

*Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm, at Neroche Hall
if you would like to join our meetings, please contact Tricia Dryden
tricia@witchlodge.co.uk
Also contact Tricia if you would like a programme of our events
for the year.*

*Perhaps you would like to come along as a guest
We hope to see you at one of our meetings.*



Somerset Bus Partnership Welcomes Flat Rate Fare Proposals

Somerset Bus Partnership welcomes the Government's plan to provide up to £60 million, to enable bus operators to cap single adult bus fares at £2. The £2 flat fare comes in from the beginning of January and will continue through to the end of March 2023. Most bus operators are expected to adopt the scheme.



This means millions of people across England will save money, at a time when many households are suffering massive pressures from the rising cost of living. The move will help people travel for work, education, shopping and medical treatments and provide a much-needed saving in daily expenditure.

The current average single fare for a 3 mile journey is estimated at over £2.80, meaning that the new fare will save passengers almost 30% of the price every time they travel.

In addition, Somerset County Council currently plans to introduce a £1 single/ £2 return bus fare in Taunton, as part of its Bus Service Improvement Plan. Somerset Bus Partnership welcomes this initiative although emphasises the need to procure further funding to enable this flat rate fare to be extended across all of Somerset.

Somerset Bus Partnership Co-Chair, Peter Travis, said, “Bus usage declined in Somerset in the last decade and even more so during the pandemic. We need initiatives like these to restore and improve passenger levels. Encouraging people to choose buses over cars helps to reduce carbon emissions. It is estimated that the Government's £60 million will reduce car journeys by at least 2 million and cut pollution and congestion for all of us.”

Somerset Bus Partnership will continue to work closely with Somerset County Council to encourage bus use and ensure implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan across the county.

Contact us at: somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com
<http://www.somersetbuspartnership.co.uk/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Somerset-Bus-Partnership-105704811629827>

Peter Travis, Co-Chair Somerset Bus Partnership

News from Your MP

By Rebecca Pow

Hello again

It's been a busy although a constructive start to the year in the constituency, as well as up in Westminster.

KEY LOCAL HEALTH ISSUES



Early on I had an urgent meeting with Health Secretary Steve Barclay MP, to report in on various local plans for health with a view to keeping them on track. Whilst great progress has been made in upgrading the theatres at Musgrove Park Hospital, progressing plans for the whole site upgrade remains a priority. I stressed the importance of securing the next tranche of funding to enable the design and business case phase for the works. Clearly, the challenges of the global economy, to get through the significant costs of dealing with the pandemic and the government support provided – could impact on projects like the hospital upgrade and I'll be keeping it on the agenda. I also sought the support of the Secretary of State, for the formal recognition of the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, which brings primary, community and mental health under one hat in a welcome new approach. And, in addition, in welcoming the £2m discharge package allocated to Somerset to unblock hospital beds I made it clear that we must have a clear line of sight in terms of how the vital funds are being spent with timelines and targets to indicate numbers of bed spaces unblocked in our hospitals and where clients are being placed in the community.

MAKING ACCESS TO NHS DENTISTS A TOP PRIORITY

Sticking to a health theme I continue to make the case for more dental provision locally. Following a meeting with the British Dental Association (BDA) at the end of 2022 to highlight the lack of access to NHS dentists in Taunton Deane; and to try and find some way forward, I met with the Dental Minister Neil O'Brien MP in Westminster recently. The lack of access to NHS dentists in this area has reached crisis point. I have countless examples of those facing serious problems including many children who have never seen a dentist. I explained the situation in no uncertain terms to the Dental Minister and I also suggested that some of the initiatives being run in other parts of the country to encourage dentists to work in areas facing recruitment challenges be explored. Minister O'Brien gave assurances that some positive progress on access to dental services will be announced shortly; with a further comprehensive package to follow in the future.

KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE FOR WELLINGTON RAIL STATION

Enhancing existing as well as delivering new infrastructure across the constituency continues to be a priority of mine. On this note, following the latest meeting of the Devon and Somerset Metro Group which I chair, I recently met both the Secretary of State for Transport Mark Harper MP and the Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP, to update them on progress with the proposed Wellington Rail station, stressing the sound business case for the station. The Rail Minister has accepted my invitation for a visit to Wellington to see the proposed plans and site location first hand.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON GOVERNMENT ACTION TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY



The Blue Pantry in Wellington, an eco-friendly grocery shop that promotes a waste-free approach and provides a great re-fill service for many eco products was the ideal place for the regional launch of Government's Environmental Improvement plan. The plan sets out the environmental targets that will drive the action required to restore nature, reduce air pollution, clean up our water and reduce waste, setting us on a sustainable footing for the future. Our new schemes for farmers, new recycling action, and a significant package of water measures will deliver this.

Much misinformation has been spread regarding sewage in water and yet this Government is doing more than any government to clean up our waters and no one voted for sewage to go into rivers, despite spurious claims, quite the contrary.

Firstly, the original Victorian storm sewage overflows, designed for emergency use during extremes of rain to prevent sewage backing up in our toilets have been used far too frequently by water companies despite permits to limit their use. I have been clear that raw sewage entering our waterways causing pollution is unacceptable. It is because of monitoring put in place by this government and an intensive Environment Agency and OFWAT investigation this has come to light and action is being taken. Whilst there is no quick fix, Government has put in place a fully costed and deliverable plan to tackle this. We are the first government to introduce comprehensive storm overflow monitoring with the data being published and by the end of this year all overflows will be covered.

Through the Governments' Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan launched last August 2022 water companies are required to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. It includes an initial focus on improving all storm overflows discharging into or near designated bathing waters; and 75% of those near high-priority nature sites by 2035 with all other overflows only to be used for their original purpose by 2050. In tandem we have seen record levels of fines for water companies, further enforcement underway and a commitment to raise fines. The regulator OFWAT, has also been directed by Government to ensure water companies prioritise environmental outcomes, and demonstrate their salary and dividend pay-outs are linked to environmental progress. Agriculture too is playing its part with a raft of

incentives to drive reductions in nitrate, phosphate and sediment run off into our rivers and grants for slurry storage.

Also, bathing waters are a good news story with 92.8% classified as 'good' or 'excellent' marking a steady improvement from 2015. All this action is game changing in cleaning up our precious water.

For further details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/toughest-targets-ever-introduced-will-crack-down-on-sewage-spills>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

As ever please get in touch if I can be of any help.

**THURSDAY LUNCH CLUB PRICE IS RISING FROM
BEGINNING OF APRIL TO £8**

Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**

2nd March, 6th April, 4th May

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**



A Plea!

Neroche Thursday Lunches have been running since 2011, and our fame has spread across the Benefice & wider. The stalwart volunteers who have cooked for the lunches since then have got older, some have retired and sadly one or two have passed away. They were drawn from the Neroche area under the banner of "Friends of St Peter's Church".

We now make a plea for some new cooks from the wider area to join us.

We are particularly short of people prepared to cook a main course for 12 -15 people. We provide home-cooked food to our guests, recipe supplied by the lunch co-ordinator, once a month. Volunteers are not expected to cook every month, usually twice in three months, and the work is spread between a number of cooks each month. Help at the lunches with serving etc is expected when possible and appreciated by the team. Lunches normally take place on the first Thursday of the month and cooks are reimbursed for ingredients used. There is a great team to work with and the lunches are much appreciated by our guests. The reward is the jolly atmosphere and the satisfied customers!

Please contact Jane Hole 01460 234410 email

jane.hole@outlook.com

or Alison Brown 01823 480441 email aabrown.battens@gmail.com



SCHOOL TERM DATES

Term 4: 20th February-31st March

Holiday: 1st April-16th April

Term 5: 17th April-26th May

**There will be an extra Bank Holiday on 8th May
for the King's Coronation**

The Domestic Centre at RSPCA West Hatch - 2022 Activity

By Karen Read, Animal Care Assistant

During 2022, the Domestic Centre at West Hatch took 399 animals, of which 83 were dogs and 162 were cats. The remaining 154 animals ranged from rabbits through to stick insects and pot-bellied pigs, so quite a variety! We prioritise taking in animals via our team of Inspectors, therefore the animals that are brought to the centre have often had concerns for their welfare and can often be in poor medical condition. Some of the animals are signed over for rehoming straight away, although others are undergoing case prosecutions so can be with us for some time. Due to their poor backgrounds some of the animals we take in may have been under socialised and mistreated, which means that often animals stay with us for a while before we can look for new homes because we need to help them behaviourally cope with new homes.

Our vet team was very busy during 2022 as many of the animals needed attention. They completed 305 vaccinations, 202 animals were neutered, 160 other operations took place and 136 animals had microchips implanted. All of these tasks need to take place so that an animal is in the best possible position for it to be rehomed.

Adopting

We are very grateful to each and every person that takes on a rescue animal and welcomes them in their home. Adopting a rescue animal isn't always easy although we are grateful to those that give an animal a second chance at life. It can take patience while new animals settle, and we often ask adopters to continue with training that has been started in the centre.

One of the most rewarding parts of the job is hearing back from adopters once our animals are settled into their new homes. It makes all the hard work feel worthwhile. Last year we received an update from a lovely



adopter who rehomed ferrets from us, not once, but twice! Zivi and Tarka were adopted as a pair from West Hatch in May and a few months later their adopter came back to consider another male called Remy. An introduction here went well, although it was not so harmonious at home. It took a bit of persistence, and their adopter persevered through ups and downs and eventually mixed all the ferrets successfully. While Remy is still a bit of a naughty character, they are clearly settling fantastically well together!

We also had another update from a lovely lady who had adopted two kittens, Pippin and Puddles, that were hand reared, having been brought to the centre after being found in a log pile in the countryside miles from anywhere when they were only two weeks old.



"I could write pages and pages of what they have done and send you hundreds of photos of them. We now have 2 wonderfully loving cats who are an integral part of our household. They love to be near us or cuddled up to our dog. They remain the friendliest cats who are loved by all. Thank you for trusting us with their care and their forever home."

No matter how long ago an animal left the centre they are always remembered by someone, and we love to hear updates!

Volunteering At RSPCA, West Hatch

**by Bruce Harber, Gardening
and Maintenance volunteer**

“What an amazing volunteering programme. The wonderful RSPCA staff create a friendly atmosphere that is extremely welcoming.

Due to my full-time work commitments, I have been very fortunate to be able to communicate via email with the volunteer coordinators to arrange my visits and tasks.

My activities have ranged from clearing the weeds and autumnal leaves from outside the perimeter wall. The added bonus has been to say hello to the horse riders passing by in the lane, the cyclists, walkers, as well as the RSPCA dog walkers. Not forgetting the robins that make an appearance as they realise an easy dinner is available, from the disturbed vegetation.

Within the site, I have been involved with clearing weeds from the paving stones around the public entrances, clearing overgrown vegetation along the dog walker pathways and the site fences in preparation of re-staining for preservation (and you can get to paint them as well in the warm and sunny weather!). There are areas surrounding the domestic animal enclosures that allow you to talk to the cats and the rabbits as you happily work away. Also, the bonus of clearing weeds around the seal pools means that you get to see the seals who are on their rehabilitation journey. What an experience!

To all of those considering volunteering at West Hatch - I would say definitely get involved as it is worth the effort. Good luck”.





VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

YOUR LOCAL RSPCA CENTRE AT WEST HATCH NEEDS YOUR HELP!

WANTED: Gardening and Maintenance Volunteers

- Are you **good at DIY** or a skilled **tradesperson**?
- Are you a **keen gardener**, or interested in giving it a go?
- Could you help us keep our **animal and wildlife centre** grounds neat and tidy?



We're looking for volunteers to help us with maintenance tasks like painting, carpentry (e.g., fencing repairs, making duckling runs), routine equipment checks, and also gardeners to help us with weeding, pruning and keeping our grass areas, pathways and borders looking presentable around our site.

If you want to keep active, make new friends, or use your skills to help animals (and humans!), this role might be perfect for you. To find out more, please call us on **0300 123 8152**, email tina.huntington@rspca.org.uk or visit rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/volunteer



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

In Memory of Mike Callow

Michael was born in October 1939, the oldest son of Frances and Wilfred Callow, who were farmers at Netherclay Farm, Thurlbear. He was followed two years later by a twin brother and sister, John and Mary.

Mike went to Thurlbear school where many years later, all six of his grandchildren attended under the headship of Brian

Crudge. After Thurlbear, Mike was a weekly boarder at a school just outside Bridgwater. He would spend the week longing to be back on the farm where he could help his parents. As a young man he won many a ploughing competition and cups for Landrover trials. Always a hard worker, he helped on the farm and then went into agricultural engineering until he “retired”.

Along the way he met Anita at the Young Farmers group, they married and had three daughters, Clare, Georgina and Victoria. Weekends and holidays were often spent at steam rallies exhibiting stationary engines, an old Scamell lorry, vintage tractors and cars.

He started the Taunton Historic vehicle club and would proudly drive the Carnival Princess through Taunton in one of his vintage cars at the carnival every October.

He was asked to open the new bridge at Silk Mills and was the first car to drive over it in 2005, when it was completed. A task he again undertook with pride. He would also bring his cars to the Staple Fitzpaine fete and the yearly gathering of vintage vehicles in Stoke St Mary.

On his “retirement” he started a new venture “Age of Elegance “. Mike and Anita used their cars as wedding cars and made many a local bride’s day extra special by transporting them to their wedding in a vintage car.



For nearly fifty years he lived at Hill Farm, Thurlbear, working hard and raising his three daughters and then along came his grandchildren who all benefitted from strong roots to the parish.

After Anita died unexpectedly in 2021, and facing his own health problems he decided to move next door to Clare in Staple Fitzpaine, where he enjoyed watching the farming life going on around him and counting the number of lorries going up to Daniel's every day. He thoroughly enjoyed the pop-up cafe every Friday where he met up with old friends and made new ones.

A true country gentleman and real "local "who will be very sadly missed.

Community Christmas Lunch

Around 60 guests attended the Christmas Lunch on December 8th at Neroche Hall, which is organised by members and friends of St Peter's Church.

The hall was beautifully decorated, and the tables were set out with Christmas crackers, wine and lovely chocolates. After an introductory glass of sherry, the guests took their seats, looking forward to the feast which was to follow. A full traditional Christmas lunch of turkey, stuffing, roast potatoes and all the trimmings were efficiently served to the guests, many of whom had already pulled their crackers and were wearing their hats!

The highlight of any lunch, the puddings, were then taken around on the trolleys, with many guests enjoying at least two, if not three, portions of the desserts, which were absolutely scrumptious. Followed by teas and coffees, and a few carols, a wonderful lunch was had by all.

A huge thank you to all the organisers, cooks and helpers for their invaluable contribution to this community event.



YogaNess Yoga

My name is Vanessa Bourne.
I live in Bickenhall and I am a
Hatha Yoga Teacher, specialising in
slow, mindful yoga, designed to suit
everyone, to reduce stress and
create ease in mind and body.

I currently have 2 classes running at
West Hatch Village Hall
Mondays 11-12pm – Chair Class
Tuesdays 7-8pm – Mat Class

I am looking to start a class at
Neroche Village Hall
Please contact me if you are interested

ness@yoganessyoga.co.uk
www.yoganessyoga.co.uk

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<https://www.thegreyhoundinнтаunton.co.uk>



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*subject to eligibility

Events for your calendar

(Venue is Neroche Hall unless stated)

February

Tuesday, 21st - Pancake Party

March

Wednesday, 8th - WI Meeting

Thursday, 9th - Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday, 15th - The Greyhound Quiz

Friday, 24th - Spring Fish "n" Chip Quiz

Friday, 31st - Easter Family Bingo

April

Wednesday, 12th - WI Meeting

Thursday, 13th - Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, 19th - The Greyhound Quiz

May

Wednesday, 10th - WI Meeting

Thursday, 12th - Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, 17th - The Greyhound Quiz

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

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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