

Working Together for a Better Community

# NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

Issue 31 - Spring 2019



*New Year's Eve Party - The Badger Street Band entertaining  
the party goers - read more inside*

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.



## Meet the New Team

*By Karen Learoyd*



*Carole Wensley-Dodd and Karen Learoyd*

Hello and welcome to the Spring edition of the Neroche Newsletter, the first that the new team have been responsible for. Firstly, we would like to say a huge thank you to the outgoing team of Jacq Wanstall, and Alan and Sarah Hyde. I'm sure you'll agree that they have done a sterling job over the last 2 years taking this community magazine from strength to strength. We are indebted to them for their help in the transition to the 'fledging' team! We are also very pleased that Mark Wanstall is continuing to manage the budget for the Newsletter, to ensure that we spend the money wisely.

I moved into Bickenhall in September 2017 from Berkshire, with my husband John, and my Mum, Carole Wensley-Dodd. We bought the house in Dairy House Lane after deciding we would all move together, and I'm pleased to say it has been a huge success. We found the community welcomed us with open arms, and we were encouraged to

get involved with lots of different activities, which we are all enjoying enormously. We have now met a large number of people between us, although are always happy to meet more, and hopefully having responsibility for such an important communication vehicle as the Neroche Newsletter, will make this even easier.

At the moment, we are a small editorial team of 2, so would welcome any additional help, especially from anyone who would be prepared to write articles for us, in particular covering local events. Carole, who enjoyed a successful career as an Events Manager before her retirement, is now actively involved with many aspects of the WI, especially where it involves baking! Previously, I had responsibility for running global I.T. departments, mainly in the banking industry, so have a good background in Project Management, and like to think I'm pretty organised. I am an active member of the Neroche Hall committee, and last October also took on the production of the Email alert. I hope you don't think we have taken over the parish....

As of this edition, we have outsourced the design element of the Newsletter to a lady who lives in Cornwall, Rachel Wakeman – it's fair to say this is one of the more complex areas of the production, and the Neroche Communications Action Group agreed this would simplify the skills required within the community, and hopefully ensure its longevity.

So, without further ado, we hope you enjoy the Spring edition, and please get in touch with any suggestions or comments about what you'd like to see included in future Newsletters.

Our email address is [nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com)

## **School Holidays**

**6th April to 22nd April with  
Half Term starting 25th May**

# Neroche Hall New Year's Eve Party

*By Alan Perrior*

***So where were you for New Year's Eve?***

***If you were just sitting at home watching the fireworks on TV – WHY?***

***The Neroche Hall New Year's Eve party was the place to be!***

*First, the public service announcement.*

*Do you know how much it costs to run the hall? No, neither do I – but I do know that it's an expensive business paying for maintenance, improvements, insurance, electricity, air conditioning, heating etc etc – the list goes on; and unfortunately, so do the costs.*

*Therefore, it's important that community events are well supported; it was gratifying to see so many locals, ex-locals and some "not-so-locals" contributing to village hall funds by attending the New Year's Eve party – and, despite numbers being slightly down on last year, what a great party it was too!*

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The organising committee (formed from the main Neroche Hall committee) worked hard to ensure that everyone had a fabulous evening and they provided a great night's food, drink and entertainment for the lucky people who were there to see in the New Year.



By the official start-time of 8.30pm most party-goers had already arrived and were laying claim to the tables that were setup in the hall and on the stage, and then it was time to get the drinks in and settle down for the evening.

As last year, it was good to see “outsiders” at the party. Neroche Hall’s New Year’s Eve reputation has obviously spread to some nearby villages and, by buying tickets, these outsiders are directly sponsoring our hall. It was also great to see old friends and ex-locals Pat & Colin Croad (and family), back in the parish for the party; we’re grateful for all the help and support they’ve provided over the years.

Unobtrusive background music played while raffle tickets were sold, drinks were bought from the bar (ably overseen by Richard Davies) and party-goers relaxed into the party spirit. Before long, the excellent catering team served a delicious chilli with rice – well, actually there were two chilli’s. A mild version and another, rather



*The Badger Street Band in full flow!*

stronger version, both of which were delicious. Marianne Bray’s team had even catered for those with special dietary requirements and a vegetarian option was also available. The main course was followed by a range of delicious desserts ensuring that the last meal of the year was definitely not for those on a diet!

After dinner Chris Baxter, for the second year, cajoled the crowd onto the dance floor for a session of country dancing accompanied by the Badger Street Band. All the dances were over-subscribed as participants encouraged (*dragged*) partners up for energetic attempts to follow Chris’ “*calling*” while keeping in time with the music – a task that proved to be more-or-less impossible for many. The fault for the



occasional ensuing chaos can in no way be blamed on the Badger Street Band who were actually very good; the band are Sheila Green, Nicky Baxter and Di Davies on recorders, Julie Pope on accordion, Mark Porter on mandolin, Tammi Boden-Ellis on tambourine and Rebecca George on fiddle. We're so lucky to have such talent in the parish!

Actually, the lack of dance ability or co-ordination really didn't matter, a fact confirmed by the peals of laughter and beaming faces on the dance floor throughout.

There was little time for recovery after the country dancing as DJ Dan from Taunton's Quadrophonic Sound hit the decks and kept most of the partygoers on the dance floor with a program of mostly 70s and 80s classics – DJ Dan certainly knows his audience and his music!

And then, almost by surprise, it was nearly midnight. Where did the evening go? A sure sign of a successful event. I'd come prepared with a bottle of champers (*well, Cava actually*) and managed to open it by dropping the bottle onto the table; the cork shot out and actually hit the apex of the ceiling – no mean feat in an old church! And I didn't spill a drop!

Midnight came and went with the traditional chimes of Big Ben and balloons cascading from a net strung across the ceiling. Then, we all joined in a chorus of Auld Lang Syne accompanied by waves of party-



goers advancing into the middle of the circle and then retreating in a traditional and ragged fashion – all hugely enjoyable. This was followed by an enormous conga around the hall, although some people dodged out of the line when it disappeared out through the doors into the cold evening air!

DJ Dan's disco picked up the pace again for those who still had any energy left. Thank goodness some even had enough energy to help the committee with the task of tidying the hall – well done them; it was much appreciated. At the end of the day (year!), when “seeing in” the New Year, would I prefer to watch the fireworks on TV and the often obscure and eclectic music of the hootenanny? Or would I rather be at a great party in the village hall? **No contest!**

### ***“Goodbye 2018” and “Hello 2019”.***

*Postscript: A few days later I bumped (I would like to emphasise that the “bumping” was metaphorical not physical) into one of the New Year's Eve party organising committee in The Greyhound. I said that I'd really enjoyed the party and was already looking forward to the next one - New Year 2019, only to be told that the party probably wouldn't happen!*

*The problem is that the New Year's Eve party takes a lot of hard work and organisation and the committee really do need some help to be able to cope with the workload.*

*I realise how lucky we are to have this superb facility and such hardworking Village Hall committee members but, if we want to continue enjoying events, not just the New Year's Eve party but everything else they do during the year, they could do with some help. Even if you can't commit to being a committee member, can you offer occasional help? Can you spare a little time to help the committee with some of the functions? If you can then contact the committee via the hall website ([www.nerochehall.org.uk](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)) – they'd be delighted to hear from you.*

*Well, that's the end of the “sermon”. Enjoy the rest of the Newsletter.*

# Carol Singing in the Parish of St Peter's

*By Alison Brown*



The Christmas story of the birth of Christ was celebrated in the traditional way by our annual Singing of Carols around the villages of Staple Fitzpaine, Curland & Bickenhall on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. This was well

supported and the singing ably led by Julie Pope on her accordion. St Peter's Singers formed the basis of the choir with some welcome additions from friends. This year transport was by carshare instead of the amusement of climbing in and out of the horsebox.

The singers were met by groups of spectators and participants at each venue and were liberally rewarded with food and drink. Our grateful thanks go to all the various hosts who sustained us so well. It is most rewarding to look round in the torchlight and see happy faces all singing away about the coming of the baby Jesus.

The trip started with a warm up at Ladyacre, Staple Fitzpaine, and finished with a visit to the Greyhound Inn, with several stops in between. The weather held out and was kind to us as well.

A collection of over £200 for Somerset Sight, was made during the evening. Somerset Sight is the local charity supporting blind and visually impaired adults and children, and is celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> year of existence in 2019.

Many thanks to all who donated so generously to this worthwhile cause.





# ‘COME DECORATE OUR CHRISTMAS TREE’ St Peter’s Church, Staple Fitzpaine

*by Jacqueline Kolkowski*

In Early December we organised a wonderful morning of fun music and laughter in the church where children, parents, grandparents and friends came and decorated our Christmas tree.

The church was a hive of activity while the children (as well as the grown-ups) made their decorations. They made angels, jewel encrusted stars, snowmen, penguins and reindeer, put together with lashings of glitter.

The children were fascinated by the sound of the bells made by the ladies of the Neroche Hand Bell Ringers, and we all joined in with the session of rousing Christmas Carols.

All morning the cafe was run by the Bickenhall WI, Pauline, Tricia and Peta, with wonderful homemade cakes and pastries, and those marshmallow Olaf’s made by Carole.



Thanks to Karen Morgan, Candy Janes and Debbie Hards for running the craft stations, to the Neroche Bell Ringers, and to all who came to help, and particularly those special decoration makers and their assistants!



# Stocks and Brickbats

*By Jane Hole*  
Neroche Local History Group



While researching '*Village Life in the Lee of the Blackdown Hills*', I came across many interesting snippets of information such as there had been a set of stocks in the churchyard at Staple Fitzpaine in the late 1700s. A short spell in the stocks, a punishment known since Saxon times was a penalty for blasphemy, drunkenness, breaking the Sabbath and so on. A 15thC parliamentary Act stated that stocks should be provided in each town and village. They were typically positioned in the busiest place available, as public humiliation was a critical aspect of such punishment. Stocks were wooden or metal devices with foot holes. The offender was seated and had their feet and ankles locked into the device so the legs were held out straight. Punishment by the stocks had lapsed by the 1830s.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Somerset Quarter Sessions<sup>1</sup> allow us to peer into petty misdemeanors and tittle tattle about those held in the stocks:

- Agnes Smalle, the wife of Nicholas Smalle of *Taunton St James*, who states that as she went by the *stocks* in *Taunton*, she heard a man in the *stocks* say that 'there was a towne and church and

that he did hope within 12 months to see noe Church nor minister'.

- Mary Lamberte of Kingsbury Episcopi, spinster, who states that when Mr Bearde was in the *stocks*, Ellis Pitman came to him and stated that he wouldn't be in the *stocks* long as the constable had searched the house and would find nothing.
- Anna Waters of Pilton, spinster, accused of stealing wool from her master. She is to be placed in the *stocks* at Shepton Mallet market.
- In Merriott, three husbandman<sup>2</sup> state that a vagrant fiddler woman came to the parish and was playing during the time of divine service, was taken and put in the *stocks* by the tithingman<sup>3</sup>, but was let out of the *stocks* without the tithingman's permission and that William Hooper was seen leading her away.
- Gabrell Gibbes of Mark and Banfill Hadlie of Cross punished by stoking for tipling<sup>4</sup>.
- Documents from 1760 of Francis Treble of St Elizabeth, Jamaica and Kingweston near Somerton mention the placement of "Mulatto Hugh" in the *stocks* for "talking a little too Freely".

<sup>1</sup>Quarter Sessions: meetings of the county justices held four times year. <sup>2</sup>Husbandman: a tenant farmer  
<sup>3</sup>Tithingman, usually a term for a constable or deputy constable. <sup>4</sup>Tipler: brewer of ale, a habitual drinker of intoxicating liquor.

## Do you Run a Local Business?

**You could help the running of your Neroche Newsletter  
by advertising with us.**

**For a small fee, we will place your business flyer or card in  
with each edition, which is then hand delivered to  
250 local houses and businesses.**

**If you are interested please drop us an email to chat about  
it: [nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com)**

# Taunton Deane Update

***John Williams, Borough Councillor,  
Neroche Ward and Leader of the Council***

## **A358 Dualling Progress**

The project team at Highways England (HE) are undertaking additional investigative work around the route options for the proposed dualling of the A358 through Taunton Deane. Highways England, in a recent newsletter, have advised that we can expect the “Preferred Route Announcement” will now be March 2019, not December 2018 as was previously advised. It has always been the intention that as soon as the preferred route has been announced, Highways England will proceed to formalise and inaugurate a ‘Community Liaison Forum’ so local representatives can talk directly to HE regarding the proposals.



Meanwhile, Highways England have reached the Preliminary Meeting stage for the equivalent proposal for dualling of the A358/A303 within the South Somerset District Council area (from Southfields Roundabout to Capland). This project has always been ahead of the stretch of the road running through Taunton Deane Borough Council’s jurisdiction. TDBC are taking a watching brief at this stage as it does not directly impact on us, but we need to be aware of future plans in case it impacts on our community.

## **J25 Upgrade and Nexus 25 Employment site progress**

Progress at last, Somerset County Council are in the process of placing an order for the works to upgrade J25, and the Contractor is due to commence on site March 2019 with an estimated two year build programme. The work to the junction includes enlargement and a new spur road connecting to Nexus 25 and hopefully an upgraded A358 connection!

There are major civil engineering works being carried out adjacent to J25 at present and these are preparation works to relocate WWA major services ahead of the permanent works.

Once works to J25 get under way this should trigger the commencement of works to Nexus 25 by the developer, we understand they are keen to start the major works of laying out the roads and services installation to building plots for potential occupiers. It is anticipated that ultimately the whole development will employ around 4,000 people. A welcome addition to the employment base of the area.

### **The New Taunton Police Station**

The Avon and Somerset Police (ASP) have now relocated their Taunton Police Station to the ground floor of Deane House, Belvedere Road, our Council offices. So, if you need the services of the Council or the Police they are dealt with at the same reception. This delivers a community hub which is a “One Stop Shop” for the Council and Police, minimising cost for both organisations, most importantly it secures the future of the Police Station in Taunton for the foreseeable future.

### **Deane House Refurbishment**

It is worth noting how working practices and the way services are delivered have changed considerably. An assessment of the working space required in Deane House meant that by changing the way we work, and using digital technology, we only required approximately a third of the space in the existing building that we occupied. The decision was made to refurbish the whole building and let surplus space to other organisations, so minimising the running costs to the benefit for our community. The business case produced confirmed it as a sound investment and when fully let, delivering a surplus which contributes towards the front line services so valued by our community.

### **Proposed Development of the Tangier Site, Taunton, with 182 New Homes**

This site has a long and chequered history. It was the site of the old Gas Works and, I am pleased to say that, a revised scheme has come forward to replace the extant permission since pre 2008 of near 300 flats. The commercial developer decided not to proceed with the larger scheme as it was not viable at the time, and now has planning consent for a smaller, more in keeping, scheme that was approved recently. This has been a very complex site to bring forward although with time the issues have been resolved, and it will be great to see yet another brown field site in a prime riverside position, being developed and delivering much needed homes for Taunton.





## **Introducing Mud Mountain**

***By Lorraine Scott***

Established in 2007 by my husband Stewart and myself, Mud Mountain has grown to become one of the leading importers of Italian terracotta pots. We offer a specialist range of hand-made Tuscan terracotta vases, olive jars and urns that are not available from most traditional garden centres and retailers.

We have 20 years of experience dealing with potteries worldwide and have used this experience to source a high-quality range of garden terracotta to bring to the British market. Having instantly appreciated, in particular, the quality of the Italian terracotta, and admired the skill of the artisan potters, we decided to concentrate on these potteries and our business now is almost exclusively dealing with the Italians.

It has long been a joy to homeowners to experiment with design and structure in the garden and indeed for many, the garden has become an extension of the living space. If you are looking for an unusual garden ornament or planter to complement your indoor or outdoor space, we have a quality range to choose from which will suit a variety of garden styles and will hopefully give you some ideas and inspiration.

From hand carved granite sculptures to reclaimed cast stone urns with plinths, life size stone statuary and hand-made terracotta garden furniture, these delightful items are sure to enhance your garden,

terraces and indoor garden rooms. Many of the items we have found on our travels are unique and we welcome you to \*visit us or take a look on our website to see what new treasure we have found! We are always pleased to welcome local customers to take a look at our stock....

Orchard Cottage, Bickenhall,  
Taunton TA3 6UF  
01823 480822 or 07801 436496  
[www.mudmountain.co.uk](http://www.mudmountain.co.uk)

\*please call in advance to ensure we are in to show you around!



## Neroche Knitting, Crochet and Stitching Group @ Neroche Hall, Bickenhall



Come and join us for a friendly group of people enjoying these traditional crafts

**Monday  
afternoons  
2pm to 4pm**

All levels of skills welcome from beginners to advanced. Starter help for crochet. Most levels of help for knitting. Cost £2 per session to include coffee/ tea and biscuits

**For details phone Nicky 01823 480675  
or Brenda 01823 480218**

# **A358 Mini Motorway to Change Lives**

***By County Councillor John Thorne***

How long is a piece of string? The answer could be, 'as long as the timeline for the A358 motorway lite which Highways England wants to build from Ilminster to Taunton'. Because, we are more than four years on from the announcement of the project and three years since Highways England held a series of public information events to tell us all about its plans.

This time last year, a great many of us were involved in a consultation to try to help Highways England choose the most appropriate of three potential routes. It was the second consultation held by the agency after the first one in early 2017 was criticised for having only one 'take it or leave it' option from which to choose. Highways England promised to take on board all our comments and come up with a preferred route before the end of the year (2018). The preferred route has to be subject to a public inquiry before any final approval can be given.

So, as of today we should be sitting in an inquiry hall listening to experts being quizzed on the pros and cons of the chosen route while a planning inspector decided on who was right. However, we are not, because shortly before Christmas we heard from Highways England that it was postponing its preferred route announcement until the spring. So, the piece of string grows longer.

The re-run of the consultation offered three options, none of which could be described as ideal, but at least there were real choices for communities to consider.

Whatever the final choice, community life alongside this stretch of road is going to change for ever. When that change actually happens is still uncertain, as I believe the delay with the announcement will have the knock-on effect of delaying a start on building the road.

Highways England had hoped to be bulldozing away by 2021 with the new road completed by 2023, although I suspect it now will not start until 2022 and not be finished until 2024. I also have a gut feeling that all is not quite as it seems, not that it has ever been quite as Highways England made it seem, of course.

The excuse for the delay until the spring is that ‘further engineering and economic evaluation was required’. Really? After all this time and at the very last moment, they say they have not done enough evaluation? I may well be accused of not understanding how complex a task is road building, and I would be guilty. But I do understand how simple a task it is to clearly tell people what you are doing and why, and to tell them in a timely manner.

Highways England further said it would set up early in the New Year a community forum to allow local representatives to be kept in the loop with any developments. This also has not yet happened, unless the curse of the publisher strikes and Highways England announce it just as this newsletter goes to print!

A cynic might wonder if a delay in creating a community forum was conveniently helping Highways England to dodge the bullet of public questioning. I could not possibly comment, of course. In fact, there is very little I can actually do at the moment as your county councillor, except to keep on top of any information which is coming out and to make sure local voices are heard at every stage.

Praise where praise is due, I have to say that our MP Rebecca Pow has been brilliant in this respect. I am aware of the huge amount of work she has put in behind the scenes on this one and that she has the ear of the Secretary of State Chris Grayling, assuming again that there is not a Government reshuffle while this newsletter is at the printers. Rebecca will have been pressing to get the preferred route announcement out there as soon as possible so we can all see what is going on.



Then, we can start booking our public inquiry seats. I just hope it won't be to watch Groundhog Day if any further delays should occur.

*Somerset County Councillor John Thorne at one of last year's consultation events on the A358 upgrade*

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

**Pancake Tossing & other Exciting Entertainments**

**Neroche Hall 7.15pm for 7.30pm**

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019**



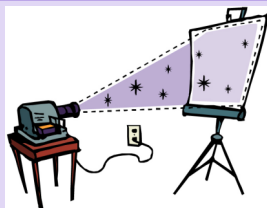
**Adults £10. Children (under 16) £5.**  
**2-course Supper, Raffle**



**Ring Alison Brown 01823 480441 for details**

**Tickets from PCC members. Please bring your own**  
**favourite tiple and glasses.**

**In aid of St Peter's Church Funds**



**FRIDAY FILM NIGHT – Neroche Hall**

**STAN & OLLIE**

**Friday 26th April @ 7.30pm**

Starring Steve Coogan and John C. Reilly as the legendary movie icons, Stan & Ollie is the heart-warming story of what would become the pair's triumphant farewell tour. With their golden era long behind them, the pair embark on a variety hall tour of Britain and Ireland. Despite the pressures of a hectic schedule, and with the support of their wives - the pair's love of performing, as well as for each other, endures as they secure their place in the hearts of their adoring public.

“These are brilliant impersonations, the kind that can only be achieved by exceptionally intelligent actors; the superb technique of both is matched by their obvious love for the originals.”

**Bar and snacks available - Tickets £6.00**

**Contact Karen Learoyd 01823 480886 or just turn up**



# Neroche Christmas Lunch

*By Tricia Dryden*

Each year we look forward to planning the Christmas lunch (planning starts in November), although, like any event, we hope that nothing will go awry.

We shouldn't worry, as each year, we serve over 70 people, with a succulent turkey lunch with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding (and any number of other delicious puddings from our "Pudding Table" which is becoming fabled!), cheese and biscuits, coffee and mints, together with a cracker and hat and the ever-present silly joke.

This year the entertainment was provided by Chris Luck with his guitar who led the guests in enthusiastic carol singing - Chris lives locally in West Hatch and was a welcome addition to our festivities.

The hall was beautifully decorated by members of the Church.



The team of ladies and gentlemen who make the lunch possible by contributing both time and culinary expertise are delighted when guests are so warm with their thanks for a lovely meal.

The photographs show just how much our guests enjoyed themselves.



## Monthly Thursday Lunch

The Christmas lunch follows our regular format for the Thursday lunches where we again offer a 2 course home cooked meal, plus cheese and biscuits, coffee and mints, to members of our community and beyond.

On arrival we offer either a sherry or soft drink. The food we serve is hot and delicious, and we are able to offer both vegetarian and gluten free options, all for the cost of £6 per person. We continue to be told our extensive range of hot and cold puddings are becoming "world famous" hereabouts!

Come along and join us on the first Thursday of each month. Bring a friend, make new friends, and enjoy both the company and the good food.

It would be helpful if you could make a booking over the phone so that we can judge numbers for catering purposes and also to ensure that we can provide you with your dietary requirements.

Bookings can be made through **Alison Brown on 01823 480441**. We look forward to seeing you.

### Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

Neroche Hall  
12.30pm for 1pm



**March 7, April 4, May 9, June 6**

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a superb home-cooked lunch in wonderful company for just £6 per head (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.

**Please phone or email by the Monday prior to the lunch to book for catering purposes. Contact Alison Brown 01823 480441 or [aabrown.battens@gmail.com](mailto:aabrown.battens@gmail.com)**

# **Future Provision of Local Services**

***By Jon Bell***

**Chairman, Neroche Parish Council**



We all depend on a number of services to enable us to live and work in Neroche, as do those who live everywhere in the UK. Some are provided by central government, others are provided by local councils. In Somerset, there are three layers of local government, Somerset County Council (SCC), Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and Neroche Parish Council (NPC). Each contributes to a greater or lesser extent to providing the services on which we all depend.

Money to do this is raised by a charge levied on property owners, the level of the charge depending on the value of the property. This charge is known as a precept. County, District and Parish councils all set their own precept which along with charges for provision of police, fire and rescue services make up the Council Tax bill property owners are faced with each year.

The greater part of the Council Tax bill, around 70%, represents the SCC precept. This covers things like schools, adult and children's social services and environmental services including road maintenance. TDBC charges make up almost 10% of the total bill, waste disposal, housing and planning services are among those covered by this.

The NPC precept makes up about 1% of the total Council Tax bill at present. The Parish council historically has had little role in providing local services. We maintain local notice boards, the bus shelter at the Staple Fitzpaine crossroads and Curland village green. We also make contributions to the Neroche Villages newsletter and the Neroche web site. The rest of our precept covers the expenses of running the council, subscriptions to bodies like the Somerset Association of Local Councils and the salary of the parish clerk. Councillors are not paid. The annual cost of all this is in the region of £4.5K, our precept last

year was £4580, which is equivalent to around £17.50 for a band D property. This is low in comparison to most other parishes in Somerset.

Although the arrangements described have been the same for many years there have recently been ominous signs that this position may change in the next few years. Most of you will be aware of SCC's recent financial difficulties and as they cover around 70% of the cost of local services this may have a major impact on what is provided. There is a significant risk that in future SCC may only provide the minimum level of services which the law requires, other services will cease. If this happens there is likely to be pressure for Parish Councils to pick up responsibility for services essential to our residents.

Things we see as at risk but which need to be done include activities related to road safety, such as clearing ditches to prevent flooding, ensuring hedges are cut and road signs visible and maintaining the road signs themselves.

These issues have been discussed by the Parish Council in recent meetings and a decision made to prepare for such eventualities. They have not happened yet but if they do, we need to be ready. Because of the way the Council Tax system works we cannot raise the money at short notice. We have decided to increase our precept this year by an amount equivalent to £7 for a band D property. This looks a huge increase in percentage terms because our budget to date has been so small, but it is modest in real terms. The new increased level of precept would raise Neroche to a mid-table position when comparing our precept to other Parish Councils.

We are not alone in adopting this strategy. A recent issue of the County Gazette (10<sup>th</sup> January) includes an article describing a similar decision by Wellington Town Council. I would not be surprised if others take similar action.

I realise, as do other councillors, that this will not be welcome news but we believe it is necessary to safeguard the future provision of services we all depend on. It will make an interesting topic for our annual parish meeting in April.

# Taunton Racecourse News

*By Karen Learoyd*



Another exciting season is underway at Taunton Racecourse and there is a packed list of fixtures and events waiting for members and occasional visitors alike. Why not come and experience everything the Racecourse has to offer.

## Upcoming race meetings:

Thursday February 28 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Meeting
Monday March 11 <sup>th</sup>	William HILL FREE Raceday (limited free tickets available)
Tuesday March 19 <sup>th</sup>	RNLI Charity Raceday
Thursday April 4 <sup>th</sup>	Ladies Day
Wednesday April 24 <sup>th</sup>	C&S Electrical Evening Meeting

We are also hosting a number of other events in the next few months including the Cheltenham Festival Preview Evening on Friday March 8<sup>th</sup> – tickets available on the door from 6pm. You can also enjoy the two most prestigious jump races of the season with us at the Racecourse – The Gold Cup and Grand National Lunches, where the package includes a welcome drink, 2 course lunch, afternoon tea, in-house bookmaker, racing host and so much more. All for the price of £30pp per event or come to both for the combined price of £55pp.

Or can we interest you in an evening with TV Racing Pundit Derek Thompson, and Grand National winning jockey Bob Champion MBE, plus a host of other guests? The night includes a 2 course meal, VIP reception, photo opportunities, book signings and on stage stories with guests.

Full details of all meetings and events can be found at

[www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk](http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)



## Membership

If you have ever enjoyed a visit to the racecourse, have you considered becoming a member?



Members and their guests, together with owners and trainers, have exclusive use of the Members Restaurants in the Paddock Stand, and the Members Car Park. Wearing their badges, members enjoy free entry to Taunton Racecourse and are welcome at the numerous days of free racing at 47 reciprocal racecourses across the country. Included in membership is free entry to Hickstead for their Derby meeting and Royal International Horse Show, as well as 2 for 1 Saver Tickets for the Royal Bath and West Show.

Full Year Membership is still only £175 for the year and further details can be found at <http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk>

## Reciprocal Racecourse Meetings and Dates until June 2019 *(Free Entry when Wearing Taunton Membership Badge)*

**March** – Huntingdon Sunday 3rd, Southwell Monday 4th, Carlisle Sunday 24th, Hexham Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>, Newcastle Thursday 28th.

**April** – Warwick Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup>, Wincanton Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>, Ffos Las Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>, Chepstow Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>, Puchestown Tuesday 30th.

**May** – Ascot Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup>, Bath Monday 6<sup>th</sup>, Southwell Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>, Great Yarmouth Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>, Goodwood Friday 24<sup>th</sup>.

**June** – Newton Abbot Friday 14<sup>th</sup>, Windsor Monday 24<sup>th</sup>, Brighton Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>, Newmarket Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>.

## As a venue

Ever thought about using Taunton Racecourse for conferences, meetings, parties or even a wedding reception? It boasts excellent facilities for hosting any event and can arrange packages for race days and non-race days.

Call 01823 337172 or email [troy@tauntonracecourse.co.uk](mailto:troy@tauntonracecourse.co.uk) for any further enquiries.

# WATER POLLUTION IN SOMERSET

A Somerset farmer has recently been ordered to pay nearly £4000 in fines and costs for polluting a stream with contaminated water. The incident, near Stoke St Gregory, was picked up during a routine Environment Agency visit. Water from a roofing drain had become contaminated by silage discharge. It emptied into a watercourse within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, impacting several kilometres of watercourse.



All farmers, landowners and businesses should have measures in place to prevent pollution. However, ensuring that these measures work and continue to work is vital. Regular monitoring and testing can pick up any changes before the local environment is impacted. It can also avoid costly cleanup processes, and help avoid accusations of negligence.

Incidents over the last few years in Somerset have included costs of £4000 for a Merriot poultry farm, £9000 for a Radstock dairy farm, £18,000 for a Yeovil box company and £30,000 for a Cannington anaerobic digestion plant. Fines are unlimited and there is the risk of up to 5 years in prison. If your business creates contaminants, or you have a consent to discharge from the EA, get your equipment and processes checked and tested on a regular basis.



**Contact Somerset Scientific Services, part of SCC, for advice on 01823 355906 or [SSmailbox@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:SSmailbox@somerset.gov.uk)**



Transport and the potential difficulties of getting out and about come to mind when I think of January. Whether it is coming across a flooded lane on the way to work or sliding across icy roads as a driver or a pedestrian, the winter months can present some challenges.

Preparation is important when heavy snow and/or floods can cut off villages and small towns. Suggestions for coping include stocking UHT/Long-life milk and some frozen bread and vegetables. Put a torch in a place where you can find it quickly. Check your oil and have your boiler serviced, cover your outdoor tap and combi boiler condensate pipes (the bit outside that can freeze). Check on elderly neighbours who may find it harder to get out in the snow and ice and can be trapped at home. If you live alone or are frail, it is important to get out in your local area all year. Use your shops, local pubs and social groups so that people will know about you and think of you at these times. Don't forget to prepare for storms by securing anything outside including taking care of your trees – willow branches are prone to snapping and need branches with cracks or rot removed. Contact Western Power Distribution or telecoms providers if a tree is hanging over or brushing on lines. Listen to local radio and check if buses are running and whether it is advisable to drive.

The roads have all been dressed this year, which improves skidding resistance and helps prevent those nasty potholes but in turn, the gritting routes have been reduced. Check with your village as some parishes have their own grit stores to distribute and may appreciate help with this. If you do need to drive in snow or ice make sure you are prepared – check your tyres and have a warm coat, boots, torch and a bottle of water with you. When driving on an icy road, the first thing to remember is to slow down. You are more likely to see an ice patch and will be able to correct for it. It is frightening when your car gets a mind of its own and the presence of flood filled, deep ditches at the side of our roads doesn't help. Advice copied from DVSA follows:

Don't accelerate suddenly or harshly. Don't brake harshly. Don't brake while cornering. Watch out for slippery road surfaces and keep your speed down if you think the road is slippery. Use engine braking as

well as the brakes to slow the vehicle down. If you do encounter a skid, steer gently into it, for example if the rear of the car is sliding to the right, steer to the right. Do not take your hands off the steering wheel or brake hard. Further information can be found online at:

[www.safedrivingforlife.info/drivers-and-riders/.../controlling-your-vehicle](http://www.safedrivingforlife.info/drivers-and-riders/.../controlling-your-vehicle)

Many people take the risk and drive through the floods. This is a real risk as the car can float or travel on strong currents. Water can find its way into the air intake on some vehicles, causing serious engine damage even in shallow floods. If you have checked that it is shallow enough to drive through, the water is probably deepest near the kerb and shallowest at the crown. Drive in first gear as slowly as possible but keep the engine speed high and steady by slipping the clutch. If the engine speed is too low, you might stall. If you go too fast, you could create a bow wave. Water will flood the engine and it could cut out. Test your brakes as soon as you can afterwards. More advice can be found at: [www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/winter-driving/](http://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/winter-driving/)

If you were part of the floods in 2014, you will receive a questionnaire from us (Community Council for Somerset). Public Health England (PHE) is to conduct the first ever long term study into the impact of flooding on health and wellbeing. Please look on our website or phone a Village Agent if you would like to receive one and haven't already.

[www.somersetccc.org.uk/national-study-flooding-health/](http://www.somersetccc.org.uk/national-study-flooding-health/)

After all those cautionary words, don't forget to enjoy those beautiful sunrises and the chance of a snowday!!



**Surviving Winter** grants are available for older people living in Somerset, who are unable to adequately heat their homes. If you are struggling to afford to heat your home this winter contact your Village Agent for more information.

**Village Agents** work to provide those in Somerset's rural communities with easier access to information and services. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs. We can offer advice on support, local groups and activities available in your community.

## Your Village Agent:

**Linda Burton - Village Agent  
Taunton East - Tel: 07931 018019**

Please leave a message on my voicemail if I am unavailable and I will call you back as soon as I can. If you prefer to email me, my address is

[linda@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:linda@somersetccc.org.uk). You can also come and see me at the Talking Café at St Mary Magdalene Church Taunton every Monday between 10.00am and 12.30pm. Tea and coffee are available (and cake too!).



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## Christmas Trees at Staple Farm

*By Mark Pope*

We have had a great season of Christmas trees at Staple Farm. Trees left the farm via all means of transport including cars, vans, tractor and trailers, to even being taken home on foot. The open day was a great success and thanks must go to all who helped make the day go so well.

We have just ordered trees for planting at the end of February. Pruning of some 3000 trees has started and will continue until mid-February. We will also be removing an area of our larger trees and making that ready for replanting next year.





## Thurlbear School Remembers

*By Jo Moore*

Thurlbear School were delighted and proud to be invited to be part of a history project to commemorate the life of John Collins VC, 100 years after the end of WW1.

John attended West Hatch Village School, which is now the West Hatch Village Hall, and is the only Somerset man to have achieved the VC for his bravery shown during WW1. He would certainly have attended his local Church, and so the project culminated with a Memorial Service at West Hatch Church on Sunday 25th November.

Over 80 members of the community, including some of John Collins' family, the Mayor and her Consort, together with the pupils from Thurlbear school attended the Service.

Pupils' work was on display throughout the Church and the choir performed a special Remembrance song.



# Briefing from Westminster

*Rebecca Pow, MP*

As we look forward to Spring, I thought I'd share a few of the highlights of my recent activity. You won't be surprised that Brexit has been pretty dominant and, at the time of writing, the debate is moving so fast that I won't comment here as matters will undoubtedly have changed by the time you read this.

## **Musgrove Park Hospital**

I've been involved in much other business too; planning for the new Surgical Centre is progressing, thanks to the £79m grant. I also welcome the additional £11m for transforming other Somerset health services that the Department of Health has recently agreed.

Having been instrumental in securing Garden Town status for Taunton I am pleased that the planning guidance/code I pressed for is underway and that so many people have attended events to feed in ideas. A first big step was the launch of the Somerset wood, commemorating those who gave their lives in WW1 from Somerset. It's a precious green space at Monkton Heathfield and I took pride in planting one of the 14,000 trees recently.

*Picture: Rebecca at Somerset Wood  
"14,000 trees will be planted in the  
Somerset Wood"*

## **Infrastructure Mileage**

I was pleased that Highways England heeded my calls, and those of others, and ran a second consultation on the proposed route for A358 upgrade. The outcome is still awaited and I'm pushing Highways England to get on with this. My stakeholder meetings to oversee progress on Taunton Rail station upgrade are also bearing fruit, with work beginning shortly, and local views from my survey relating to the multi-storey car park are being incorporated into the car park's design which also links into Arts Taunton's ambitions.





*Picture: Rebecca and others in front on display "Stakeholders gather to announce that work will start on the Taunton Rail Station upgrade"*

## **Giving the Monument some Welly**

I am pleased to report excellent progress on my joint endeavour with the National Trust to restore the iconic Wellington Monument.

Kick started by the £1m I secured from the Libor fund, following a concerted approach involving the whole community in Wellington, support from Taunton Deane Council, Wellington Town Council and indeed the current Duke of Wellington himself. The National Trust have made this project one of their top three national priorities and have appointed a local project leader, the effervescent Emma Jones. This demonstrates remarkable commitment by the NT and we are well on the way to the £4m total and the multiple local spin offs this project will bring. The Trust is organising its first ever fundraising walk, The Monument Trek, on 11 May 2019 - for more information go to: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wellington-monument/whats-on>

## **Boosting Business**

In a bid to help boost our many small local retailers I ran my first ever Best of the Highstreets Awards and was delighted with the on-line voting response that resulted in some superb winners: the Emporium, Sporting Duchess, The Mount Hair Salon, Paws & Claws and Tim Potter the butchers in Wellington, and Miles Tea shop and café and the Bank restaurant in Taunton. What they all have in common is offering a personal service which people value.

*Picture: Rebecca at Mr Miles "Presenting the Best of the High Street Awards to Colin Barrell, owner of Mr Miles Tea Shop"*



Getting Somerset into one of the new pilot business rate retention areas is welcome and I am pleased that Government listened to the case I made together with 3 fellow Somerset MPs. This will mean money raised here can be spent here, and will be a boost to Somerset County Council in delivering services. Talking of services, I am delighted to have helped secure an extension for Post Office services in Taunton which will remain open in County Stores until at least 31st March 2019 before moving to a new permanent location in the town. This is all taking place amidst the backdrop of the new Somerset West and Taunton District Council being formed with the aim of cost sharing and saving, whilst maintaining the delivery of the services we all demand and need.

## **GREEN STUFF**

I continue to work on the environmental agenda in Westminster, driven by my desire to leave the planet in a better state. This seems to be striking a chord if the thousands of views of my recent intervention on the Prime Minister are anything to go by, where I pointed out that basically sustainability and the future of the planet was bigger than Brexit are a few of my environmental top moments.

- Working with the Woodland Trust to secure extra protection for ancient woodland and veteran trees (there's only 2% of this precious habitat remaining, it's our equivalent of the rain forest) this is now included in the National Planning Policy framework.
- Getting soil health on the agenda with references in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill and the upcoming Environment Bill.
- Launching a campaign with the WI to highlight the dangers of micro fibres in clothing and their damaging effects on the marine environment.

## **Charity Chums**

I have to finish with a BIG thank you to all those working for church groups and charities across the constituency making a real difference to people's lives. I have been humbled to meet so many of you including the Taunton Welcome Refugees team making our Syrian Refugee families so welcome (I was pleased to mention you in the Chamber), Reminiscence Learning (I got a soaking singing in the rain with them), the Samaritans and the CAB too, amongst many others.

Thank you to those doing sterling work in the Job Centre Plus, successfully rolling out Universal Credit and helping many people into work.

I will continue to meet as many people in Taunton Deane as possible and do my utmost to maintain and improve the services that local people need and want.

As always do get in touch with me and my hard-working team if there is anything I can help you with via my Taunton office, or Facebook: [fb.com/rebeccapow](https://www.facebook.com/rebeccapow) or Twitter: @pow\_rebecca

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## **Please Support your Neroche Newsletter**

*By Karen Learoyd*

Dear Readers

It is that time of year again, when we try to raise some much-needed funds for the running of the Neroche Newsletter. As of this edition, we are outsourcing the design element of the Newsletter to simplify the production process. Unfortunately, this will increase the overall cost, although we anticipate will make it much easier for other people to get involved in the future.

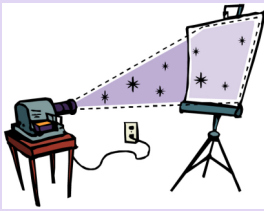
If you enjoy receiving this free, informative magazine, packed with all your local news and events then please help secure the ongoing production of this Newsletter by sending in a donation.

There is a donation form accompanying this edition. Here are the details again:

Please make cheques payable to: 'Neroche Communication Action Group' and send to: Karen Learoyd, Seaforde Grange, Bickenhall, Taunton TA3 6TY.

Many thanks for your support  
From your Newsletter Team





**FRIDAY FILM NIGHT – Neroche Hall**

## **THE CHILDREN ACT**

**Friday 1st March @ 7.30pm**

As her marriage to Jack (Stanley Tucci) flounders, eminent High Court judge Fiona Maye (Emma Thompson) has a life-changing decision to make at work - should she force a teenage boy to have the blood transfusion that will save his life? Her unorthodox visit to his hospital bedside has a profound impact on them both, stirring strong new emotions in the boy and long-buried feelings in her.

The critics said - 'Thompson gives a performance that deserves a standing ovation' and 'This is probably the best adaptation of one of Ian McEwan's novels'.

Bring your hankies!



## **THE LITTLE STRANGER**

**Friday 29th March @ 7.30pm**

The Little Stranger, based on the novel by Sarah Waters, tells the story of Dr Faraday (Domhnall Gleeson), the son of a housemaid, who has built a life of quiet respectability as a country doctor. During the long hot summer of 1948, he is called to a patient at Hundreds Hall, where his mother once worked. The Hall has been home to the Ayres family for more than two centuries. Now in decline and its inhabitants - mother, son and daughter (Charlotte Rampling, Will Poulter, Ruth Wilson) - are haunted by something more ominous than a dying way of life. When he takes on his new patient, Faraday has no idea how closely, and how disturbingly, the family's story is about to become entwined with his own.



**Bar and snacks available - Tickets £6.00**

**Contact Karen Learoyd 01823 480886 or just turn up**

# News from The Greyhound

*By Karen Learoyd*

Now that Jan-Willem and Veronique have been at the pub for 6 months, we thought it time to catch up with them, Jan-Willem was out, so I caught up with Veronique to find out how they are settling in, and more about their plans for our local pub.

*V – tell us a little more about your family and how you came to be in Neroche.*

‘Jan-Willem and I have 4 boys, Mitchell (19) who lives in the Netherlands and is training as a chef, Symon (17), at Huish College doing his ‘A’ levels, Kyle (14), at Bishop Foxes and James (7), at Thurlbear, he is the one you will have seen in his Super Mario onesie!

We have always enjoyed hospitality, loved entertaining and I worked at a French bistro in the Netherlands before we moved. Jan-Willem



started in I.T. and did this for 25 years before we decided to fulfil our dream. We started by looking all over Europe, North and South America, and South Africa, before we realised that we wanted to run a British village pub – we loved the idea of something that appealed to everybody, and made a community come together.

Our first visit was in February 2018 when we fell in love with The Greyhound. While it wasn't very lively during our visits, we could see the enormous potential it offered. So, while making a few more visits over the next few months, Jan-Willem took his publican's licence and all fell into place. We started here in August 2018.'

*We know you have plans for a major refurbishment – what's the latest?*

'Originally work was due to start in January, although this has now been delayed until after the summer, as there have been a few issues. We are trying to get the kitchen done sooner, as this is an essential improvement, and it will be major structural work, but we don't have any firm dates as yet.

In truth, we are glad that we have more time to work on the refurbishments. The first few months here were challenging. We were on a very steep learning curve and we inherited a number of issues which needed addressing. We need to do more research and give ourselves time to create the right character for the pub. We want it to reflect the location, Neroche, Taunton, and to be different to a standard chain pub. The Brewery are responsible for the structural changes and we have input with regards to how it is decorated to a degree. The plan is to make the bar area bigger and opening up some of the spaces, while still retaining a separate restaurant area. Of course, you will be able to eat in the bar too, but in a more casual environment, and we want to make it more comfortable to just come in for a drink. The skittle alley will be making way for 3 more rooms, and we are pleased to say that the accommodation side is proving very popular.

So, the next 6 months will be spent planning and researching, especially how to minimise any impact to our customers.'

*Can you introduce your team to us?*

'The kitchen is ably run by Herman, who many of you will know from his

previous incarnation as Chef here and as restaurateur at Flavours in Wellington. We are extremely happy with the changes he has made to the quality of the food, and have received great feedback from customers with lots of people coming back regularly. He also has 2 great assistants in Darek and Maceij.

Front of house are Greta, Radek, Tracy and Symon (when he has time away from college), as well as Jan-Willem and myself. Opening all day can be challenging, although we feel this is what the community wants, and that we are filling a gap, as very few other local pubs have extended opening hours or are open every day.'

*How was the Christmas period?*

'We were pleasantly surprised by how busy Christmas and New Year were – the Badger Street Band played on Christmas Eve, which was lovely, and the bar was full on Christmas Day as well. On Boxing Day, we had a full house for lunch. New Year's Eve was also busy, and a few people came along after the party at Neroche Hall, our last customer left around 4am.'

*What else is happening at the pub?*

'Most people know about the Quiz Night which we hold on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month which is very popular, and we have started a Jam Session on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month. Trevor James, and a couple of friends, play an acoustic set which you can join in with (bring your own instruments) or just come along and enjoy the music.'

We are also happy to be involved with other community events, like the Macmillan Coffee morning and Bingo Night, so please get in touch. We will be updating our website in the next few months, although the contact details are correct and your message will reach us. We also have a dedicated Facebook page, and we're setting up an Instagram account.'

*Any other messages for the community?*

'Yes! We have created a Lost Property tree, just as you come into the pub. We can't believe the number of items we have accumulated so far, including scarves, cardigans and even a High Vis jacket. So, if

you're missing anything, please check it out!

Seriously though, we would like to say a huge thank you to the community for making us so welcome. We are really grateful for all your support and for spreading the good word about the changes. We hope to join in with things going on elsewhere as things become more stable for us over the next few months.'

# Neroche Hall Quiz Night

Buy beer / wine on the night or BYO

**Max 6 in a team**  
**£3.00 per person**  
**(food extra)**

**Friday, 15th**  
**March 2019**

**Doors open 7.00pm for**  
**prompt start at 7.15pm**



Tickets from  
[r.davies507@btinternet.com](mailto:r.davies507@btinternet.com)  
Advance booking essential  
[www.nerochehall.org.uk](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)



# News from Neroche Hall

*By Richard Davies, Chairman*

The arrival of 2019 will, I am sure, bring further challenges for the Neroche Hall Committee to wrestle with, as we look forward to not only maintaining the building, but raising funds to continue with the aim of improving facilities.

You will all have been well aware of the prolonged hot weather last year and the fact that many gardens in addition to the land, suffered with large cracks to our predominantly clay soil. Such conditions can of course lead to unwanted movements on the soil resulting in damage to structures. Unfortunately, the hall has not escaped unscathed as a large crack appeared in one of the committee room walls. We hope that this will not worsen and are carefully monitoring the situation by taking measurements over the coming months, hence the brass screws you may notice either side of the crack. Hopefully, once we can establish that it is stable, we can carry out the necessary repairs, but rest assured the building is otherwise safe.

Badminton continues to be very popular at the hall and there are several groups which play regularly each week, along with a new group which has just begun. We have been aware for some time that the hall lighting is not ideal for the sport and are looking into the possibility of installing better lighting. As always, much will depend upon the cost and if the hall finances can support the proposed scheme, or whether we may need to explore the possibility of a grant. Needless to say, these things take time to come to fruition.

The New Year's Eve Party was a great success again with a lively bunch of party-goers, some of whom were rarely off the dance floor. Sadly, some were unable to come having picked up one of the many bugs that were circulating over the Christmas period. My thanks go out to all those who contributed to the evening, both organisationally, and by attending. At the moment I am unsure if there will be a party this year as you can sometimes have too much of a good thing, although



the committee would be very pleased to hear the views of the community on the subject, especially if anyone would like to help or be involved in the staging of the event.

The next fish and chip quiz will be held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and details of how to book a table for a team of six can be found on the hall website. Once again Mike and Andrew will be our quizmasters. Provisionally we intend for our Autumn quiz to be held on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019, although this will be confirmed later in the year. October may see us also hosting one of our popular craft fayres, although the date has yet to be finalised. Lastly, we are exploring the possibility of an event around midsummer, although this is currently in the embryonic stage. I hasten to say that it is not a music festival as we are not looking to challenge Glastonbury's dominance!!

## Is your Business using the Neroche Villages Website?

One of the main reasons for developing the Neroche Villages website was to promote our local business. It does this in two ways, both designed to help them become better known and more easily found by those needing their services.

All businesses operating within Neroche Parish are entitled to a **free entry on the Business pages of the website**. They are listed in one or more of seven categories: Accommodation, Arts and Crafts, Building and Gardening, Equine, Farm and Agriculture, Food and Drink, Leisure, and Services. No business is too large or small to appear and there are many involving one person. Each free entry lists the name of the business, type of activity, contact details, address and telephone number/s. Many pay £10 per annum to have an email address and/or website added to the entry.

The **Advertisers page** allows a business to provide more details of its activities for an annual charge of £30. We can help you create your advertisement.

Please have a look at the website at [www.nerochevillages.org.uk](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk). Use the Contact page to get back with your details or to correct any entry. We are keen to have all businesses listed on the website, and with more than a basic Business page entry. All additional fees are used to fund the activities of the Neroche Communication Action Group.

# News from Neroche Parish Council

*By Gillian Midworth, Clerk*

## Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April at Neroche Hall starting at 7.30pm.

This meeting is a chance for all parishioners to come together and discuss what is important as a community. This year the Parish Council would like to hear what you consider the priorities should be for the Parish and how the Parish Council can support these.

Village organisations are invited to attend and for anyone recently moved to the Parish, it is an ideal opportunity to meet other parishioners and learn about all the activities that take place in the area. Keep an eye out for upcoming email alerts which will give further details.

## Parish Council Vacancy

There is presently a vacancy on the Parish Council for a Councillor to represent the ward of Orchard Portman with Thurlbear. Usually, the Council would be looking to fill this vacancy as quickly as possible although, as the current term for Councillors ends in May this year, the vacancy will run until that time.

The beginning of a new Council term provides the ideal opportunity for anyone interested in community affairs to stand as a Parish Councillor. As a local councillor, you can become a voice for your community and make a real difference. Local councillors represent the interests of the communities they serve and have three main responsibilities:

- Decision-making
- Monitoring
- Getting involved locally

If you wish to become involved, please contact me on:

[nerochepc.org.uk@gmail.com](mailto:nerochepc.org.uk@gmail.com) for further details and nomination papers.

The Parish Council would particularly like to hear from residents from Orchard Portman or Thurlbear.



## **A358 Improvements**

As many of you are no doubt aware, the announcement of the Preferred Route option, due in the autumn, has been delayed. Apparently, the assessment work carried out following the additional consultation, has identified the need for further technical work which needs to be carried out prior to making a Preferred Route announcement.

Highways England hope to make this announcement in the Spring, following which, the Parish Council will make a formal response having widely consulted with the community.

In the meantime, Highways England is forming a new community liaison forum for the A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme. The forum will be made up of representatives from local authorities, parish councils, local businesses and a variety of community groups with the view to share timely and relevant project information outside the periods of formal consultation. It will also help capture and consider the views from the wider local community prior to the forthcoming statutory public consultation.

The Parish Council will endeavour to be part of this forum as this will enable the views and concerns of the parish to be shared directly with the decision makers.

## **Pop-Up Café**

**St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine  
Every Friday, 10.30am to 12.30pm**

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](mailto:tricia@witchlodge.co.uk)**

# **Report from the Neroche Parish Council Fingerpost Group**

***By John Parsons, Neroche Parish Councillor***

During 2018 we were approached by Jane Hole and the History group who were concerned that the fingerposts in the parishes were in dire need of restoration. These posts have been an integral part of our landscape since the 1930s and are therefore of historical significance.

A Fingerpost group was formed by members of the Parish Council and the History group to consider how we might move forward. We undertook 2 surveys of parishioners to establish the level of support within the community. The Parish Council held an Extraordinary Parish Meeting to establish whether the idea of a precept raise to help finance the project was supported. The response we received to all our approaches was overwhelmingly positive.

The Fingerpost group surveyed the posts, then contacted contractors and foundries in order to establish the cost of the restoration project. With initial budgets coming in at £16,600 we set about looking at other options. We were very fortunate when we acquired a new member of the group who has worked in the casting industry and who offered to manufacture all the patterns for the new castings we required. This, along with raising a trusty band of volunteers to undertake the majority of the work has now reduced the costs to an estimated £7,600.

Jane Hole has been applying for funding and shaking her collecting bucket locally which has raised a magnificent £2,200 so far. At the Parish Council meeting in January we voted to increase this year's precept by an average of £7 per year per band D household. This will raise £1,560 to be allocated to the project along with £940 from Parish Council reserves. This money will be used to match any funds raised by the Fingerpost group. Consequently, we now have £4,400 which enables us to push ahead - what a great start to the New Year!

We have organised the restoration into a two-year schedule, allowing us time to complete our fundraising.





*Before and after restoration*

In Phase One we will be undertaking work on the posts at:

Curland, Broadway junction

Greyhound junction

Castle Plain, Staple Hill

Thurlbear straight

New Road cross roads

In order to complete Phase 2 of this restoration project:

**WE NEED YOUR HELP** so please **DONATE**

by sending a cheque made out to Neroche Parish Council, or cash to Neroche Parish Council, c/o Rossland, Hatch Green, Hatch Beauchamp, Taunton TA3 6TN

Or email: [dhood421@btinternet](mailto:dhood421@btinternet) to receive details for bank transfers

**Update:**

We have completed the renovation of 1 post at Crossways, Curland, so have a look when you're passing.

# You're Invited!

## **Neroche Annual Parish Meeting**

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

**Thursday 25 April 2019 - Neroche Hall  
Opens 7pm - Formal Presentations start 7.30pm**

**Jon Bell, Parish Council Chairman, will present the Annual Report**

**The evening will also include a number of presentations of local interest. Watch out for details nearer the time in the Neroche Email alert**

**Stroll around the stands representing numerous local clubs, organisations and groups, speak with club representatives, event organisers, Action Group members and meet your Parish, Taunton Deane and Somerset County Councillors**

**This is the most important local event of the year. Your support is essential; please be there.**

**A variety of FREE cakes, pastries, beverages and refreshments will be served all evening.**

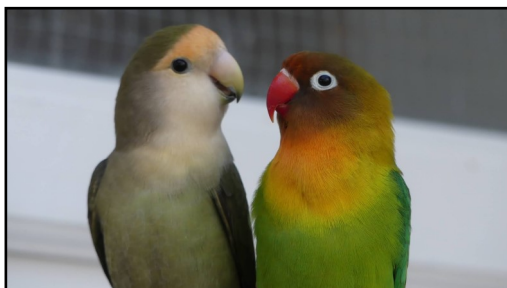
# News from RSPCA West Hatch

*By Bel Deering – Centre Manager*

2018 was a very busy year for West Hatch. The wildlife centre admitted over 4000 sick and injured wild animals and the animal centre cared for around 700 animals including cats, dogs, pigs, ferrets and rabbits. 2019 has started much as 2018 left off and we are really busy with grey seal pups in the wildlife centre and a real range of domestic and farm animals too. In this news update, I would like to focus on some animals that particularly need your help - our longer stay animals that are still looking for new homes. Please share this information with your family, friends, and colleagues and perhaps we can start 2019 in style for these fantastic beasts.

## **Could you love a pair of lovebirds?**

Simon and Garfunkel are a pair of stray lovebirds who were matched up here at West Hatch. They got on very well from the start and love to groom each other. They are now looking for an aviary home together, either as a pair or with other compatible birds. The aviary flight should be metal framed and at least 12ft x 5ft, and should contain perches and enrichment. There needs to be a secure sheltered area where the birds can roost comfortably, protected from extremes of temperature and weather.



## **Perfect pigs!**

Elvis Pigsley, Albert Einswine and William Shakespig are three gorgeous and friendly one year old male pot bellied pigs. The trio came into our care as they were part of a large group being kept in very poor conditions. They are very sweet boys and can either be rehomed as a group or individually to live with existing pigs.

A pair of pigs will ideally need a securely fenced 1 acre paddock to provide them with the space to roam and forage. An area of hard standing should be provided, as well as a wallow for them to mud bathe. They must have access to at least one insulated ark or other solid shelter with bedding such as straw. Larger groups will need more space and access to a number of shelters and watering points.



*Elvis Pigsley*



*William Shakespig*



*Albert Einswine*

Another way in which you can help animals in 2019 is to take part in one of our fundraising activities. This year we have a number of events planned, including a sponsored cat cuddle, sponsored dog walk and our annual dinner and dance.

For more information and to keep up to date just follow us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/RSPCAWestHatchAnimalCentre/>



Finally, we have a few talks scheduled for the year that you are welcome to attend. These are all free to attend but donations are welcome. Please book a place in advance so we know how many seats to put out!

- 6 March: The Dorset Seal Project – Julie Hatcher of Dorset Wildlife Trust
- 30 April: The Urban Gull Project – Anouk Spelt of The University of Bristol
- 12 Sept: Somerset Butterflies – Keith Gould of Butterfly Conservation
- 4 Oct: Bat Echolocation Research – Athia Haron of The University of Bristol

If you would like to find out more or book a free place please email me on: [Bel.deering@rspca.org.uk](mailto:Bel.deering@rspca.org.uk)

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## **News from Bickenhall and District WI**

*by Jacqueline Kolkowski*

### **MEETINGS**

The November meeting welcomed artist Emma Duke, who spoke passionately and informatively on “The Lost Coast of Somerset”, showing many pieces of driftwood, alabaster and sea glass she had collected from the beaches and uses in her art. Members were able to purchase some of her crafts and we were invited to visit her studio in Crowcombe.

December’s meeting had a very Christmas feel when Brian Wright gave an illustrated talk about Christmas traditional customs especially about Father Christmas and his transformation to the Father Christmas we know now.

Our New Year meeting was held at the Farmers Arms and included our annual prize giving. The 2018 prize winners were: (drum roll please)



1st: Peta Trott; 2nd: Frances Alford; 3rd: Di Grabham. The Bickenhall Cup was awarded to Peta Trott and Carole Wensley-Dodd. We all enjoyed the evening with excellent food, quizzes and laughter.



Sadly, I have to report that two of our previous members have passed away: Margo Briggs who lived at Bickenhall and Jennie Trood who lived in Curland.

## EVENTS

**The POP-UP CAFÉ**, which takes place every Friday in St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine. This will now run from 10.30am till 12.30pm. **PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE.** It has been a great success and many locals,

*Peta being presented with her prize* walkers, cyclists and tourists have sampled our wonderful homemade cakes and savouries. They have enjoyed the chats and friendship found at these busy Friday mornings. Do come along, we would love to see you (**we now have the heating on**).

We have run a few craft mornings, including helping at the St Peter's Church 'Come Decorate our Christmas Tree' morning. Lookout for more events that St Peter's and/or the WI will be running in the Church.

In October, several Members attended the **COUNTY ANNUAL MEETING** at Westlands Entertainment Venue Yeovil. Jennie Bond was the guest speaker and shared her experiences as the BBC's Royal Correspondent during 14 of the most turbulent years the monarchy has endured.

A speaker from the Not Forgotten Association (a military charity) gave an excellent presentation in promoting the charity and sharing his personal experiences.

Musical entertainment was provided by the FREE RANGE Acapella group.

There was a competition where entrants were invited to submit an item showing "Fashion through 100 Years". Entries included tapestry pictures and a particularly fetching miniature hat. Carole Wensley-Dodd produced our competition cake with designs of hats and shoes through the ages made out of sugar paste. After the meeting, Carole took the cake down to Calway House Care Home, Taunton, where she and the cake were made to feel very welcome. One gentleman declined his lunch and said he just wanted cake!



Wyn (Mary Berry) Balance kindly hosted a Christmas pudding stir up. It sounded as if everyone had fun, but did all the brandy go in the pudding?

### **CHRISTMAS BINGO IN THE GREYHOUND**

This was eyes down for an excellent evening run by Pauline Phelps. We were fortunate to have lots of teams with lots of prizes. Thanks to the Greyhound and John Dryden our erstwhile bingo caller.

In December, members attended the excellent **COUNTY CAROL FESTIVAL** at Wells Cathedral, and the smaller Carol Service at Horton organised by the HORTON & DISTRICT WI.

### **SPORTING EVENTS**

#### **Walking Netball, helping the WI get a Wiggle on!**

We have started again after our Christmas break, and hope to start playing friendly matches (now that will be a test!!!!!!)

## **TWIDDLE MUFFS (Sensory Bands)**

We are still making twiddle muffs with many thanks to Pauline's Mum Jean for knitting so many, our last twiddle muffs went to Calway House Care Home, Taunton.

*Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month. We have a full programme of speakers and events and would be delighted to welcome new members to our meetings.*

***Please contact Tricia Dryden at [tricia@witchlodge.co.uk](mailto:tricia@witchlodge.co.uk)***

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## **Neroche Woodlanders at Young Wood**

***By Gavin Saunders***

We're still in the clutches of deepest winter, although there are already signs of life returning in the woods. Some hazel catkins on sunny rides are beginning to burst, and the rosettes of primroses are showing bright green on the woodland floor. This is a tough time to be a bird, and the long-tailed tits and other woodland birds are patrolling low thickets and bramble mounds in search of the remaining seeds and fruits to be found. The birds really benefit from the extra boost on offer from bird table peanuts and seeds at this time of the year, so keep putting the feed out – if you can guard it from the squirrels!

Winter is the time when we do most of our woodland management work at Young Wood, cutting trees and shrubs to help diversify the structure of the woodland, which in turn creates richer habitats for wildlife, and more opportunities for a new generation of trees and regrowth to spring up. In the process, this work yields a product which we can process to feed our camp fires, make charcoal, and make wooden craft items. All stages of the woodland management process also provide opportunities for participation, either from volunteers or from our regular therapeutic groups.

This year marks the centenary of the Forestry Commission's founding in 1919. The Neroche Forest only passed to the Commission in 1947,

leased to it by the Crown Estate following the demise of the Portman Estate, although that still means there are over 70 years of living memory of how this public forest has been looked after. A number of former, as well as more recent, Forestry Commission employees still live in the area. We would love to hear from anyone who remembers how Young Wood, the rest of the Wych Lodge forest, and the wider Neroche Forest have developed over the years. Understanding the history of our place can help us do our best by it, today.

As ever, anyone is welcome to join us on volunteer days at Young Wood, on the fourth Wednesday of every month (and during the winter period, on some Tuesdays and Thursdays too), and we have volunteering opportunities on our Tuesday Wild Learning days too, which begin again in late February. We also run volunteer days on local nature reserves on the second and third Wednesdays of the month. As well as that, we're on the lookout for potential new recruits to our board of directors, to help us with finance, marketing and IT. You can support Woodlanders' work by becoming a shareholder member – see [www.youngwood.org.uk](http://www.youngwood.org.uk) for details.

## *Gavin, Jenny and the team at Neroche Woodlanders*



*"Volunteers celebrate the completion of our 'cabin' in the woods at Young Wood."*



## Forestry Commission Update

**Rob Greenhalgh,  
Community Ranger,  
and Jon Burgess, Forester**

2019 brings the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Forestry Commission. Throughout the year the organisation will be celebrating this landmark with a series of events aimed at well-being, health and fitness and woodland creation! It's a chance for our organisation to reflect on the last century, learn from our predecessors and move forward into the next century as a worthy steward of the public forest estate. Commemorative avenues will be planted within all of our 6 regional districts throughout England, each with 100 trees. The south-west will be planting their avenue at Eggesford, in North Devon, where the first ever tree for the Forestry Commission was planted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1919. Every local team is also encouraged to plant a single commemorative tree somewhere within their 'beat'. We have selected Castle Neroche as the venue, however, full details have yet to be confirmed but we will update you in the next bulletin.

Work continues at Castle Neroche for the time being. We're still in the throes of removing the diseased larch and as we've experienced a reasonably dry start to winter, we are

keen to get the work complete to minimise any long-term impact. We will ensure the footpaths and bridleways are re-established in any areas that damage has occurred, but we would also ask you to feed in any concerns or issues should we miss anything. We will also be keeping a close eye on the northern edge of the monument itself to see how the grass and wild flower seed will establish throughout the spring.

Further west, at Mount Fancy, we have been undertaking some pathway restoration work. Sections of the footpath running through Mount Fancy, and below Staple Hill, have long been waterlogged and affected by the spring line. Recent work to restore the culverts and drains will hopefully allow a reasonable dry walk in the summer months!

We will also be working in partnership with the Blackdown Hills AONB, British Ornithological Trust (BTO) and Somerset Reptile and Amphibian Group (RAGS) in the coming year to survey for nightjar and adders along the northern ridge of the Blackdowns. It will be an exciting opportunity for you to be involved, volunteer and support our work. Please look out for details in the coming months on our social media page (Forestry Commission Ranger, East Devon & Blackdowns) or the AONB website.

There has also been some recent hunting activity seen at Culm Davy, on the north-west edge of the Blackdown Hills. We would like to take this opportunity to state that hunting is not permitted on our land. Should any members of the public witness this please report it directly to the police by calling 101.

*Thank you and Happy New Year from all the team  
at Smokey Bottom Lodge*



# Events for your calendar

(Venue is Neroche Hall unless stated)

## March 2019

- 1 Friday Film Night - The Children Act
- 5 Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- 6 Greyhound Pub Quiz
- 7 Thursday Lunch Club
- 14 Parish Council Meeting
- 14 Greyhound Jam Session
- 15 Fish 'n' Chips Quiz Night
- 29 Friday Film Night - The Little Stranger

## April 2019

- 3 Greyhound Quiz Night
- 4 Thursday Lunch Club
- 11 Greyhound Jam Session
- 25 Neroche Annual Parish Meeting
- 26 Friday Film Night - Stan & Ollie

## May 2019

- 1 Greyhound Quiz Night
- 9 Thursday Lunch Club
- 9 Parish Council Meeting
- 9 Greyhound Jam Session
- 31 Friday Film Night - film to be confirmed

For latest updates visit [www.nerochevillages.org.uk/events-calendar](http://www.nerochevillages.org.uk/events-calendar)

## Household Recycling & Refuse Collections

22nd April to 23rd April, 6th May to 7th May, 27th May to 28th May



Somerset  
Waste  
Partnership

To check collection dates go to:

<http://www2.tauntondeane.gov.uk/asp/webpages/waste/pdf/RefuseWednesdayB.pdf>

# Local Communication and Information

## **Websites:**

### **Neroche Villages** [www.nerochevillages.org.uk](http://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](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)

A new-look website which 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](http://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 there is a new address to contact the email alert: [nerocheemail@gmail.com](mailto: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 Kate Reynolds on 01823 444023.

### ***Many thanks for taking the time to read this Newsletter.***

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

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