

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Newsletter

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

Issue 54 - Winter 2024



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.



Letter from the Editor

By Karen Learoyd

The time has come for me to 'hang up my pen' as editor of the Neroche Newsletter.

Unfortunately, this will also be the last newsletter as we have been unable to find another volunteer to take on the role. The newsletter started in April 2011 as a 10-page pamphlet, an outcome of the Community Plan the previous year, and a desire to improve communication in the parish. Originally produced by Wally Torrington and then with Alan Perrior, it was printed by a local resident and has now developed into a professionally designed and printed newsletter of between 40 and 50 pages.

When we moved to Bickenhall in 2017, the newsletter proved a great source of information about what was happening, and all 3 of us were keen to get involved in the community. Editing the newsletter over the last few years has brought me many new friends, and opportunities. Volunteering at the RSPCA West Hatch came about as a result of their fascinating contributions. My husband John's enthusiasm for the Scarecrow festival was sparked by the amazing creations we saw in the very first newsletter we received when we moved in and gave him a determination to win.

My first edition was Spring 2019 after I took over from Jacq Wanstall, and Alan and Sarah Hyde. At that time, the NCAG agreed to outsource the design element as this was the most time consuming and required a level of skill I didn't have. We were extremely fortunate to find Rachel Wakeman from Cornwall, who has made the whole process of producing the finished version very smooth.

The toughest times for me were undoubtedly the Covid years – when I look back at the content, we were so fortunate to still share interesting items despite there being nothing to publicise or report on, and only tentative thoughts on when the pub, church and hall might open again !

We have also been extremely fortunate to benefit from the support of Taunton Racecourse who have sponsored the winter edition from the beginning, as well as all the reader donations we have received over

the years - your support for the newsletter has been much appreciated. I must also mention Roger Keat and the wonderful team of distributors who, over the last 13 years, have delivered the newsletter in fair winds and foul.

I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the newsletter over the last 6 years and would recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about where they live.

Thank you for reading...

The Hatch Beauchamp & Neroche Garden Club

is hosting a presentation by
Jared Heardman of Capland Orchard
at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 20 November
in The Gault room
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall.

Jared and his family have only recently come to Hatch Beauchamp, and he will be showcasing his local supply of organic seasonal veg boxes and sharing tips, ups and downs of organic market gardening.

Refreshments included

The team look forward to
welcoming members for free.
Guests - £5.00 payable on the night.

Your Farming Update

By Tom Pope

The past few months have been a very difficult time for farmers with such extreme wet weather. According to our own recording we've had over 20 inches of rain since the beginning of September, which is over 40% of our annual rainfall, which is mind boggling!

This has made so many things difficult for farmers, one of the hardest things has been the harvesting of maize in these wet conditions. In general farmers have worked really hard to keep the roads as safe as possible with signs, and also working hard to scrape and brush the road. In some circumstances this has still resulted in very difficult road conditions due to the extremely sticky nature of the soils close to Staple. I hope that people can appreciate that the maize is a very important feed stuff for livestock and these farmers are trying their best to keep the roads clean in very difficult conditions.

The weather has also made the planting of crops extremely difficult. In my work as an agronomist, barely 50% of the winter crops I advise on have been planted. Further to this, many of the crops which were planted haven't grown in the wet conditions, so it's a very tough time for farmers across the county where times were already very tight due to high costs and lower commodity markets.

Now to end on some positivity. We are forecast to remain in a high pressure zone for the next two weeks, with very little significant rain on the horizon for now, so let's hope it continues!

Christmas Trees For Sale



Staple Farm, Staple Fitzpaine, TA3 5BE

**Available from early December
Pre-cut trees will be available in the yard**

The Mission Hut

Mark Porter – Church Warden

You may have noticed some activity around the Mission Hut recently. I am leading a project for St Peter's Church to provide a space to foster our fine spirit of togetherness and community. We cleared out about 20 years of 'stuff' that had been 'stored' in there first, and cleaned it up, inside and out. There is still some important 'stuff' which will be stored in the Mission Hut, and we will build a cupboard for it just inside the door.

The remainder of the hut will be an open space for people from the community to enjoy. We will have the electricity reconnected soon and hope to build in a small serving area around the sink which will have hot water.

We have had a painting party to paint the walls and will be holding a couple more to paint second coats and do the finishing. However, by the spring it is hoped that the hut will be finished and in use.

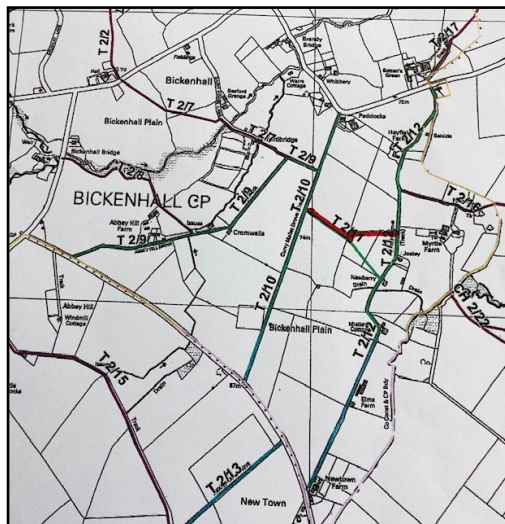
I've had some ideas about how it might be used – as a local resource for activities which are not already held at Neroche Hall or other venues. These might include a drop in table tennis club, bands using the space for practice, more of Paul's Scaletrix hill climbs, a repair shop, pop up café lite (self service) on Tuesday mornings (or other days)...

The hut will be used for a photographic exhibition 'A Year in the Life of our Community' by Jon Barratt as part of the Flower and Music Festival next June.



By Sue Hayman

When I originally joined Neroche Parish Council two years ago a bridleway which is a public right of way (PRoW) was on the agenda. Its route runs from Curry Mallet Drove to Forest Drove South, Bickenhall. It had been blocked for use by the public for many years and was not apparent on the ground at all. It had been discussed at various parish council meetings over the years without resolution.



Recently Somerset Council's Public Rights of Way department (PROW) unblocked the access from Curry Mallet Drove and installed a wooden bridleway gate, leading across that field to two more wooden gates delineating the boundary between the two fields the bridleway crosses. The delineated line on the Definitive Map changes at this point to follow the hedge line to the left on a permissive bridleway, rather than diagonally across the field, and leads you to another wooden gate joining Forest Drove South further north. This does mean that the original route at Forest Drove South is still blocked. This unblocked bridleway makes a very welcome and safe addition to horse riders, those with children or dogs and those without, joining the two droves without the need to travel along the road. As this path crosses in part an equestrian centre you must keep your dogs on a lead and clear up after them.

Many years before, both landowners applied to the PRoW department to have the route deleted believing that it had been entered on the Definitive Map in error. This issue came before the Secretary of State in 2011 who declared that the bridleway existed and should be unblocked.

Unfortunately, the PRow did not manage to deal with it at the time and so the issue drifted along - for over a decade. Once a right of way is entered on the Definitive Map it has legal rights to exist, is protected in

law and as such legal routes must be taken to alter, modify or delete it. It cannot be stopped up, altered or made impassable by anyone.

In 2022, a further application for deletion was requested and is as yet unresolved. As the law stands, a PRoW recorded on the Definitive Map must remain accessible until it has been proven that it should be removed from the map. If this second deletion request is successful, this public right of way will cease to exist.

We would like to thank all those who have championed this bridleway over the decades, our parishioners who first brought it to the attention of Neroche Parish Council, The Ramblers, our local councillor and ProW department, and especially the British Horse Society, without whom we would not have succeeded.



Bickenhall and District WI

Last month we enjoyed a fascinating talk about trees, we learned their composition, how to age a tree and even that they "talk" to each other through their roots!

This year's Shoe Box Appeal from the Somerset Federation W.I. called for donations for 16-24 year olds, who may need a little extra help. We were delighted to donate three very full boxes of items, all beautifully gift wrapped.

Next month our members plan a craft evening, trying their skill at three different crafts, guided by our very own experts!

These are just a few of the benefits of being a member of our Bickenhall and District W.I. So why not join us?

For further information about the WI and our programme for next year, please contact

Frances Alford at 01460 234245 or
fran.alford@hotmail.co.uk

ST PETER'S CHURCH DECEMBER 2024

Christmas is coming which is always a wonderful time at St Peter's.

Our Advent Service is at Thurlbear Church on December 1st at 4pm. This beautiful church is only occasionally opened and having our Advent Service there is always a lovely way to start the Christmas Season. We have our Service by Candlelight, David Bidgood plays the old harmonium, and St Peter's Singers will sing. Afterwards we walk up the road to Thurlbear School for mince pies and a cup of tea. Do come and join us although come dressed up warmly as Thurlbear church has no heating or electricity.

On December 8th, we will have Morning Worship at 10.00, led by Mark Porter.

On December 14th, Jackie Kolkowski is organising decorating the Christmas tree and decorating trees for all the windows at 10.30am. There will be a café and the Badger Street Band will play carols for people to sing along. Jackie has planned a decoration theme for the tree and all the children will join in to make decorations. This is a very popular event for local children, including visitors, and anyone young at heart. Each window will have a tree decorated by a different group, so there will also be groups of people doing their own trees with different themes. On the same day, Holly Stevens, who leads our Children and Families activities, is organising a nativity trail across the whole Benefice which will end at St Peter's.

On December 18th, we will have our Service of Carols and Readings at 7pm. St Peter's Singers will sing three Christmas songs, one of which will involve some audience participation. We will have traditional carols and readings and mince pies, mulled wine and cider afterwards.

On December 24th, we have Midnight Mass at 11pm. This will be preceded by the Badger Street Band playing carols and Christmas Songs at The Greyhound from 9.30pm with everyone joining in! Midnight Mass is a great way to start Christmas proper, especially as when we leave the church the baby Jesus has been born for us all.

Everyone is welcome to all our services, regardless of whether you regularly attend church or not.

St Peter's Church Flower Guild

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

Members of the Flower Guild have again produced wonderful displays that include flowers and produce from our gardens along with a wonderful supply of flowers and vegetables grown by Dianne Hood. Peta Trott made harvest bread that enhanced the glorious displays.



Future displays and opportunities to help decorate our church.

We will be erecting Karen Morgan's wonderful cascade of poppies again this year for Remembrance Sunday.

Christmas

On Saturday, December 14th between 10.30am and 12.30pm we look forward to inviting families to come along and make decorations for our Christmas tree. There will be music and of course lots of scrumptious cake.



This Christmas we are asking groups to help decorate the church by inviting them to provide a decorated tree for a window in the church. If there is anyone I have not been in contact with who would like to be involved, please get in touch with me. These trees will be decorated over the weekend of December 13th-14th. We hope you come along and see our church; I know it will look glorious.

Great excitement for next year when we will be holding our Music and Flower Festival. So, if you are interested in being part of our team do please contact me. Why not come along to 'Come decorate our tree' on 14th December and meet the team.

Lastly, I would like to thank Karen Learoyd for all her hard work and the support she has given to us while being editor of this newsletter.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY BINGO



FRIDAY 6th DECEMBER 2024

(6.30pm FOR EYES DOWN 7pm)

Neroche Parish Hall

RAFFLE BAR BYO

Booking essential Email pmphelps@enterprise.net





The Road to Bethlehem

Rutter - Magnificat

**Head - The Little Road
to Bethlehem**

Holst - Christmas Day

**Friday 6th Dec
St James' Church,
Taunton**

(next to the County Ground)

7:30pm

Tickets £16

(all under 18s FREE)

Taunton Visitor Centre

01823 340470 or

www.tauntonchoralsociety.org.uk



Registered Charity Number 900173

News from Neroche Hall

By Karen Learoyd, Chair

It's been an expensive few months at the Hall as we undertook repairs to both sides of the main roof after a leak back in May. Unfortunately, on the south side, rot was identified in one of the valleys which made the job larger than originally anticipated, although obviously needed to be undertaken. We are hopeful that this year's investment of just under £14k will buy us a good few years before a full replacement is needed and have indeed been fortunate that we had just enough 'in our piggy bank' to cover the costs. Our roofing contractors, Quantock Builders, have vast experience of maintaining and replacing roofs on listed buildings and churches, and we are grateful for the excellent job they have done, and the extra painting work they completed at no additional cost.

That has now left our coffers rather short of money for any other investment, so Sarah Hyde and Jane Hole have completed a grant application to the National Lottery on our behalf. We hope to hear back in the next few months as to whether we can continue our program of improvements, and of course must keep enough funds to cover the standard cost of utilities, insurance, licences, maintenance, and all the other sundries that legislation throws at us!

To that end, it is imperative that the Hall is regularly hired, and we are thankful for all those that continue to do so, for meetings, sports activities, lunches, music events and another upcoming wedding reception in January. We were unable to hold a craft fair this year although have Christmas family bingo in the diary for December 6th. Our latest Breakfast event was also well attended, and we will continue these at regular intervals next year.

With this being the last edition of the newsletter, we will find other ways to advertise our events – please look out for notifications on Facebook, our website, the noticeboards and the Email communication. For those of you that have enjoyed our bi-weekly pizza van, we are sad to tell you that Nom Nom Pizza are relocating to Ireland in the New Year, we wish them well in their new venture. We are hoping to source another regular mobile eatery to take their place.

For those of you who subscribe to the 100 Club, many thanks for your renewals – it all makes such a positive difference to our finances. And lastly, very many thanks for the additional donations we've received this year – we are very very grateful for your continued support.

As ever, if you would like to join our merry band – we would love to meet you.



Working Together for a Stronger Community

Call for new volunteers. As one generation of local volunteers begin to hand in their spurs – could you be part of the next generation? There are several groups looking for new helpers:

Litter pick up coordinator

Fingerpost restoration team

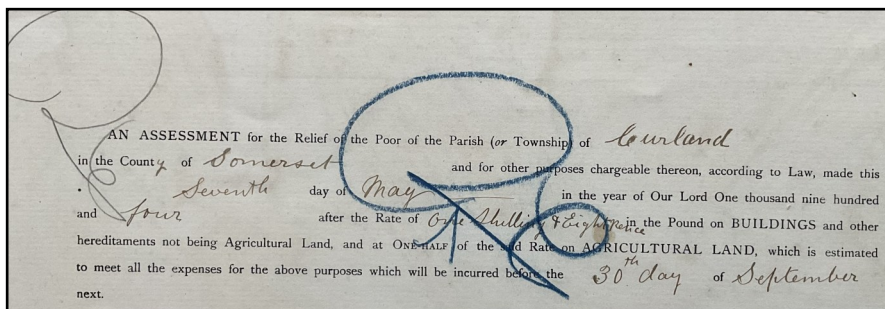
Hands on maintenance of Rights of Way

Do you have a special idea you would like to take forward to help our villages?

Contact Jane Hole jane.hole@outlook.com

By Jane Hole

local administration of poor relief. In most instances this went towards the upkeep of the Workhouse.



As Union Assessment Committee
The Valuation List
John M. Dicks
Henry Gandle
Overseers
of the Parishes of Gueland

Samples from Curland Rate Book May 1904

Name of Occupier	Name of Owner	Name of Property	Rateable Value	Rate at 1s & 8d in the £	Actually collected
Dicks, George	Mrs Eveleigh	Newlands	£6 5s	10s 5d	10s 5d
Challis, Alfred	Charles Govier	Floods	£2 16s	4s 8d	4s 8d
Yard, Thomas	Self	Middle Room Cottage	£1	1s 8d	1s 8d

*Pre decimal - 12 pence in a shilling, 20 shillings in a pound or 240 pence.

*£1 in 1900 is worth around £154 today

John W Dicks the Overseer, aged 58, a farmer and employer who lived at Newburys Farm in Bickenhall. Thomas Yard of Middleroom was 54 and a road contractor. Alfred Challis of Floods, aged 66, a labourer is resident at Floods in April and November 1904 although had moved on by April 1905.

PARISH OF <i>Curland</i>										RAT									
RATE																			
No.	NAME OF OCCUPIER	NAME OF OWNER	Description of Property Rated.	Name or Situation of Property.	Estimated Extent.	Area in Acres.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.	Rateable Value of Property.
76	Barnwell Henry	West Portman	House & Building	House & Building	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
77	"	"	Cottage	Cottage	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
78	"	"	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
79	West Portman	"	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
80	Yard George Boyton	"	Cottage & 1/2 Acre	Cottage & 1/2 Acre	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
81	Yard George Boyton	"	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
82	"	"	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
83	Mannan Eli	Self	Cottage & 1/2 Acre	Cottage & 1/2 Acre	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
84	Edie Binks Ruckin	West Portman	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
85	"	"	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
86	Portman Mrs B.D.	West Portman	Land	Land	79	5	3	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Taxation History Bites

- £ Beggar-Banger: parish officer responsible for controlling the length of stay of any 'stranger'. (In earlier times impoverished strangers were not welcome in case they required local poor relief)
- £ Hair Powder Duty: From 1795 – 1798 people who used hair powder were to pay duty and obtain a licence
- £ Childwite: fine for fathering a child out of wedlock. The fine was regarded by the lord of the manor as compensation for cheapening the value of the women to the manor (!)

News from Young Wood

Neroche Woodlanders as an organisation has been operating at Young Wood for fourteen years now. Like the trees around us we have grown and spread, acquired a few gnarly scars on our bark, sprouted leaves, dropped them again, sprouted them again – and again - and just carried on doing our best to grow towards the light.

We held our annual general meeting in October, in the roundhouse, in the middle of the forest. It was a chance to reflect on another year of working to help people connect with the natural world and enabling those people to give something back to the forest. It rained – a lot – although sheltered from the weather, staring into the flames of the campfire, as dusk descended and the owls began to hoot, it felt like a good place to be.

In simple terms of numbers, some 238 people – adults and children – spent time at Young Wood during the past year, during a total of 114 separate day sessions. For our core woodland wellbeing programme for adults with moderate mental health challenges, we ran 31 sessions on Tuesdays, providing a 'safe base' for participants to experience nature as part of their recovery process, and offering a sense of community and connection, both with other people and with the land.

Our parent and toddler group provided 20 sessions through the year on Fridays, supporting 24 parents and 24 children, across 19 different families. We ran day sessions during the school holidays for children on free school meals, through the Government-funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. For HAF we worked closely with four primary schools: Bishops Henderson, Minerva, North Town, and Priorswood. Each school selects the children in their school who most need this provision. We ran 13 HAF days, with 16 spaces per day, and these were consistently fully booked. We have a large staff and volunteer team for HAF, with over 300 volunteer hours being donated across the year for this part of our work.

Meanwhile our practical volunteering group, which works on Wednesdays to maintain the camp, look after the woodland, and help with conservation work on other local nature reserves, invested 255 volunteer days across the year.

Working outside, especially through the winter months, has its challenges, but everyone who does so comes away with some very worthwhile rewards. We hope Woodlanders will continue to do so for at least another fourteen years.

www.nerochewoodlanders.org



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 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 communication – 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 communication, just send your details to nerocheemail@gmail.com.

Welcome to Neroche



Photos © David J Dalley

Thanks to the Distribution Team

By Roger Keat

As this is the final newsletter it is the opportunity for me, as the coordinator, to publicly thank the distribution team who have delivered the newsletter to you throughout the years. Some you may know, others perhaps not.

The individuals were as follows:

Tim French, Clare Canape and Mark Perry covered Staple Fitzpaine

Mark Porter for Thurlbear and Netherclay

Ken Bidgood in Orchard Portman

Alan Perrior, one of the co-founders of the newsletter along with the late Wally Torrington, covered Bickenhall area

Mike Aspray in Winterwell and Badger Street

Myself in Curland

In the past years there has also been help from Chris Cottey and the late Chris Newis.

They have all been a great support to me as coordinator of the distribution and I am extremely grateful for their efforts and friendship.

Thank you so much all of you.



ST. PETER'S CHURCH
STAPLE FITZPAINE

- *Carnival* -
A Festival of
Music &
Flowers

20TH - 22ND JUNE 2025

A celebration of our church and community

Music for all - Beautiful floral displays
- Refreshments.

For more information contact Katherine Michaels
katherine.michaels@icloud.com

A Festival of Music and Flowers

St. Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine

June 20th-22nd 2025

Sponsorship Packages

Our last festival in 2018 was a huge success, thanks to generous local sponsorship and significant footfall.

Would you be willing to be a sponsor for next year's festival?

GOLD £150

- Advertising in the festival programme and via social media
- Your business name and logo adjacent to a floral display throughout the festival
- 2 tickets for each concert on Friday and Saturday evening + reserved seating (value £74)

SILVER £100

- Advertising in the festival programme
- 2 tickets to attend an evening concert of your choice + reserved seating (value up to £44)
- Your business name and logo adjacent to a floral display throughout the festival

BRONZE £50

- 2 tickets to attend the Friday evening concert + reserved seating (value £30)
- Your name in the festival programme

For more information please contact either Katherine, Jacqueline or Shreya

Email: katherine.michaels@icloud.com

News from the Parish Council

By Mark Palmer, Chair

As I sit and write this article we are coming to the end of another year and the weather is still throwing up surprises. With major flooding in Spain and above average temperatures in our area, we wait to see what sort of weather winter will bring.

Drains, Ditches and Gullies

Due to the changing weather patterns possibly due to global warming, the parish council is keen to mitigate the effects of increased rainfall by carrying out a program of reporting blocked drains and gullies to Somerset Council on major roads, clearing blocked ways on minor roads and asking landowners to clear ditches where needed. This will apply to both commercial and private landowners. Parish councillors have already noted some problem areas and are working with the landowner to keep the rainwater in the ditches and drains where it belongs.

Somerset Council are responsible for trimming up the first metre of hedges on roads and this has mostly been done. Anything over and above this is the responsibility of the landowner to keep clear up to 5m high plus 0.5m in from the highway, this is to prevent damage to large vehicles who would otherwise need to move toward the centre of the road to avoid damage to either themselves or following motorists.

Any private landowner who requires help complying with this should contact the parish council for guidance and possible contractors who can assist.

Blackdown Hills Parish Network (BHPN)

"Hunt the Heat" is back again this year. After a challenging start last year, when the scheme got underway, temperatures did not fall low enough to warrant home visits. The parish council in collaboration with BHPN would like to offer Neroche parishioners this free service to have their property surveyed for any source of heat loss.

This scheme would help homeowners locate areas of heat loss, by way of a thermal camera taking pictures of the outside of their homes and give advice on available ways of improving home insulation. Please look out for links to book an appointment on social media or the Neroche villages website. Surveys will be carried out during the day. They are usually conducted just after dawn when the air temperature is below 6°C and the properties heating system has been running.

Local Community Network (LCN)

Encouraging both parish councils and the general public to attend LCN meetings, in person or online, has been a challenge. Other groups have actively participated in this scheme with Taunton LCN bringing together youth services to reduce petty crime. Chard and Blackdowns LCN had two working groups, being Travel & Transport and Environment & Conservation. Since these two groups have overlapping concerns, that and the lack of support, it has been decided to combine the two working parties to make a more effective working group.

Travel & Transport WG have focused on gullies, ditches and potholes and are encouraging all parishes to input defects into an active spreadsheet so they can be tracked and remedied in a timely and cost effective way.

The Environment & Conservation WG are focusing on encouraging residents and visitors to take part in outdoor activities in our woods and forests and is working with Forestry England in schemes to achieve this, and the well-being of residents.

Airband

Yet again the contract to provide Full Fibre to The Property (FTTP) in our area appears to have stumbled, even though Airband have installed fibre cables between poles around our parishes little else has been achieved. It would appear that Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) are not a worthy contract issuer, even though they

are said to have helped over 320,000 poorly served premises to superfast broadband.

I have written to our new Member of Parliament (Gideon Amos) who has raised the matter in the House of Commons and is seeking (with other MPs in the affected area) a meeting with the Minister for Data Protection and Telecoms, the hon. Member for Rhondda and Ogmore (Chris Bryant). Mr Amos intends to invite chairs of the affected parish councils to this meeting. This is a little progress but as there is little financial gain by the internet service providers to incur the costs involved in FTTP installations in rural areas, I'm not holding my breath.

A358

With the change of government, we finally have confirmation that the dualling of the A358 has been cancelled. While this has brought a sigh of relief to many who live alongside or need to cross the A358 for work or other reasons, the good people of Henlade have had their hopes dashed of getting a by-pass to help reduce their pollution issues. Somerset Council is keen to investigate ways to raise the finance to provide Henlade with one.

Salt bins

The parish council has purchased four salt bins, one will replace the damaged bin outside Neroche Hall and the other three to be placed around the parishes following agreement with the Highways department of Somerset Council. It is hoped that these will be ready before the onset of the frosty weather. When in place, it is hoped that parishioners will take advantage of this facility to salt the roads where the bins have been placed, as required.

Parish council vacancies

We still have vacant positions on the parish council, and even though it is the parishes of Bickenhall and Orchard Portman, we can co-opt any eligible parishioner living in other parishes (within Neroche) to represent this parish. If you would like to join us on the

council, you are more than welcome to attend a meeting held on the second Tuesday of the month to observe the work we do. Training will be provided to new councillors.

Schedule of meeting times and dates are published on the village website with a paper copy on the parishes notice boards. <https://www.nerochevillages.org.uk/>

In closing I would like to thank readers and wish them a pleasant winter. If you have any issues which you think the parish council may be able to help with, please contact your parish councillor who can offer support or guidance on services available.

Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**



**5th December - £10 per head
No lunch in January.
Next lunch 6th February (£8)**

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a superb home-cooked lunch in wonderful company (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**

The Neroche Newsletter

Rebecca George CBE

I'm sorry that this is the last issue of the Neroche Newsletter. I know it's a big job putting it together, getting the advertising, content, printing and arranging distribution and I am immensely grateful to Karen Learoyd who picked up the job and has done it excellently. However, I will miss it, as I'm sure many of you will too.

I remember moving here in 2013, not knowing a soul, and finding a copy of the Neroche Newsletter, along with a Parish Magazine, on the counter in the kitchen. And there, in those two little documents, was all the information we needed to start our new life. We found things to do, places to go, people to meet, and all sorts of people to come and help us with myriad jobs.

The Neroche Newsletter has documented our lives in this friendly, vibrant community. All the activities at the hall and church and around the neighbourhood, all those events which brought the community together. What was happening with our local farmers, Thurlbear Woods, the Crown Estate, Young Wood, local politics, bowling in the hall carpark, barn dances, see what's happening at the Race Course, learn how to help animals from the RSPCA, Murder Mysteries, Christmas markets, scarecrow competitions, making wreaths, watching films and listening to music. And so much more.

We mark the passing of dear friends from our community, remembering their lives and contributions with love.

We are very lucky that we have each other, here in this perfect corner of Somerset. We look out for each other, our community and our countryside. We like to do things together and have fun.

I asked a few people what they got from the newsletter and here are a few comments:

Kath Michaels said: 'I particularly enjoyed the breadth and detail of the articles, notably the regular report from our local farmers. A pleasure to receive and read and sorry to see it go. Sincere appreciation to all making it the success it has undoubtedly been.'

Elisabeth Cohen said: 'When we were house-hunting the newsletter gave me a real sense of the community here, and was one of the factors that led to me trying to find a house round here.'

Alys Gunstone wrote: 'How very useful the newsletter has been for the local trad adverts, and good reading on local wildlife matters.'

Others said:

'Always enjoyed the varied content'

'Made me feel more in tune with what was happening locally'

'Loved the articles especially those from the RSPCA'

'Always a great way of promoting events and meetings'

'I liked being one of the delivery team - you got to see a different part of the parish!'

Thank you Karen and team, and those who went before you. We have very much appreciated your work.

Our Wildlife needs Your Help

Butterfly Conservation have declared this year a **butterfly emergency**. As you know, they have solid data going back to before the 1970's which clearly shows a decline in the numbers and species that have been seen each year, a decline of about 80%. This year, after several worrying years, the numbers counted have further dropped dramatically. There are a few factors, the government's continuing approval to the use of a pesticide, banned in Europe, which has had a big detrimental impact on all pollinators. Yet another mild wet winter exposes their over-wintering forms (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis or adult) to damaging fungus or moulds. Followed by a cold wet spring, which when they do emerge, their essential spring flowers are not there to sustain them. As I am sure you have noticed, all wildlife numbers are hugely down this year. There was a late summer recovery when the weather finally brightened that led into an early autumn boom. Although not all the common butterflies may be adaptable, the specialists are struggling to cope with these new conditions.



Marsh Fritillary



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

"Two of the specialists we want to attract back"

We know Butterfly Conservation has robust data because transect walkers have been going out each week, during the flying season, walking their fixed routes and counting what they see. This year was particularly hard. Our local walkers initially going out on cold damp days, with very soft ground conditions, and barely saw any butterfly to reward them. It is so important that they did carry on, as their next to nil returns built up that data of a butterfly emergency. Data that will quickly respond as any changes are made to environment. Just like you, they

too are struggling to get out every week, what with family commitments, work schedules, holidays and even ageing bodies. They so desperately need your support to keep going.

If you are able to walk over rough ground, have flexibility during the weeks across April through to September (next year 2025), then do please get in touch with Anna (at annabcwarden@gmail.com or tel: 01823 421423), let her have your mobile number to join one of two WhatsApp transect butterfly groups. Then watch the messages to see if a planned walk is on a day and time when you are free. Offer to help and enjoy a couple of hours' walk in splendid Blackdown landscape, relax in the fresh air, get to learn more about the special habitats and even begin to spot and identify butterflies, as you help by writing down their sightings. What could be a more satisfactory way to spend a couple of hours?

Of course, left to itself the reserve would quickly revert to bramble and bracken cover then develop into a scrubland of willow and birch. England has so very few unimproved areas of open grasslands left. Our Blackdown meadows in the reserve are particularly important for their special varied habitats and they need constant management to keep them open. Some of the work is done by contractors, although the steep slopes, wet ground and our anthills mean some areas can only be done by volunteers. During the summer months we aim to cut bracken at least twice a year, which is proving to be successful in reducing the bracken's vigour. This is followed by cutting bramble, along with willow/birch regrowth, during the winter months. With 13Ha to look after there is a lot to be done. Again, we really do need your help supporting us to keep this reserve in the best condition possible.



*Annually cut bracken surrounded by
chest high*



finishing the 1st annual bracken cut

That way all wildlife, not just butterflies, have the best chance possible to adapt to the effects of climate change. There is nothing more satisfying than a day's work out at the **Green Gym**. Come along for a day and give it a try, tools, tea/coffee and guidance all provided. See:

<https://fancyvolunteers.weebly.com/> for details



or Email: mountfancywarden@gmail.com

At the top end of the Mount Fancy Reserve compartment, (where it abuts the MF Farmland) there is a mound. Standing there you can look down along the reserve and out to the distant levels and hills beyond. During mid-summer, despite all our management, you are looking down across a sea of chest high bracken interspersed with pioneer willow and birch clumping into thickets. Standing there I got talking to a guy who recalled how what we were now looking at was once just all grass, grazed with 10 bullocks until the 1970's. As the land is poor, wet, and often very soft underfoot, it is not suitable for any arable crops. So how did they manage to keep it so open? What I do so want to discover is what were the old annual routines back then that were able to keep this land as open grass. Was it grazed all year round, or were the cattle taken off over winter? When or how often was the grass (meadow?) cut or just in the autumn? Was there bracken even then, but annually cut for bedding? So many questions. Do any of you have any recollections as to how this land would have been looked after in the old days? I am sure there are important clues to learn from these old practices. I would very much appreciate hearing what you know or can recollect. Email me at tonybcwarden@gmail.com or phone me if you prefer to talk, call Tony on 01823 421423.

RSPCA 200th Anniversary Celebrations



In 1824, a small group of people met in a London coffee shop, determined to change animals' lives. They created the society that became the RSPCA, sparking a movement that spread around the world.

Before that time, cruelty to animals was widely accepted. Few people kept pets, and animals were used for working, food, or



entertainment. Setting dogs on chained bulls or bears was considered a sport. Things had to change.

The first-ever law protecting animals was the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act of 1822. It's often called Martin's Act, after Richard Martin who helped get the law passed. He was one of 22 people who went on to meet at Old Slaughter's Coffee House, St Martin's Lane, London, on 16 June 1824. With him was the Reverend Arthur Broome, credited as our founder, and anti-slave trade campaigner William Wilberforce. By forming what became the RSPCA, they prompted a vital social shift in how people thought about animals.



2024 marks the 200-year anniversary of the RSPCA. So, we thought it would be fitting that we celebrate this milestone at West Hatch RSPCA by holding our own coffee morning for all of our staff and volunteers.

Everyone was invited to bring along cakes, and we ended up with the most amazing spread. It's not often that we just take a moment out of our very busy routines to appreciate what we manage to achieve each year, and to appreciate what a fabulous team we make. We ended the coffee morning with group photographs, which we will treasure for years to come.

Recycling results are in!

We recently published our latest [recycling tracker](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/recycling-tracker) and the results show that reuse is on the increase and landfill is at a record low.

This year we reused 2,300 tonnes, an increase of almost 400 tonnes. This includes smart tech collected via the Fixy project, furniture and bric-a-brac donated to furniture reuse groups and reusable textiles collected from the kerbside and via recycling sites.



Reusing items, for example, mobile phones, furniture or bicycles is more environmentally friendly than recycling. Recycling removes the need for items to be broken down, processed and made into something new.

The amount of waste going to landfill, 5,500 tonnes, is a record low for Somerset and nearly 96% of the 145,000 tonnes of recycling materials collected stayed in the UK (54% in Somerset), to be turned into new products and packaging.

Somerset's recycling rate of 56% puts it in the top 20% of waste authorities in England, with the national average at 44%.

Other key figures include:

- 130,484 tonnes of carbon has been saved through recycling the materials collected at the kerbside and at recycling sites, equivalent to taking 50,000 cars off the road for a year.
- 21,106 tonnes of food waste was collected – all of which stays in Somerset, going to an anaerobic digestion plant to be turned into biofertilizer to be used on agricultural land and biogas.
- 48,463 tonnes of garden waste was collected – all of which stays in Somerset, going to Walpole, Dimmer and Priorswood to be composted, ready for use on gardens and farms.
- Somerset's recycling rate is 56%, higher than England's average of 43%.

Thank you for recycling!

Do you refill?



Running low on washing up liquid, shampoo, conditioner, soap or many other everyday items, why not head to your local refill shop?

Refilling reduces waste like plastic packaging, supports local businesses and often the products you buy are better for the planet too. Somerset has many independently run refill shops. Check out our growing list of **places to shop for eco-refills**.

Just remember to save your jars, pots and bottles and take them along with you.

Local refill places:

Lesser Litter - 11 Paul Street, Taunton, TA1 3PF

My Carbon Coach - 18 Lower Middle Street, Taunton, TA1 1SF

Trading Post Farm Shop - Lopenhead, TA13 5JH



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





2024/2025 Fixtures

Fixture	First Race	Last Race
Thursday 14th November	12.30pm	3.25pm
Thursday 28th November	12.15pm	3.45pm
Thursday 12th December	12.35pm	3.50pm
Monday 30th December	12.45pm	4.00pm
Wednesday 8th January	12.55pm	3.35pm
Saturday 18th January	1.05pm	4.28pm
Tuesday 4th February	1.50pm	4.20pm
Tuesday 18th February	2.10pm	4.45pm
Thursday 27th February	2.05pm	5.00pm

Neroche Newsletter

By Rachel Wakeman, Designer

I would just like to say how wonderful it has been designing the Neroche Newsletter since Spring 2019. I always looked forward to the emails in my Inbox to see what had been happening and it never disappointed. Karen and I had a great system going and if somebody decides to take over as the Editor and keep the magazine going, please feel free to contact Karen and we can ensure this fabulous publication isn't lost forever. It felt as though I was part of a thriving community from down here in Roche in Cornwall and it will be a shame to see it come to an end.



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2 High Street, Chard, TA20 1QB

YogaNess Yoga

My name is Vanessa Bourne, I live in Bickenhall and I am a Hatha Yoga Teacher, specialising in Subtle Yoga, a slow, mindful yoga, designed to suit everyone. This type of Yoga is specifically designed to reduce the effects of stress on the body, using subtle, nuanced and deliberate movement to optimise the nervous system, combating overwhelm and creating ease in the mind and body.

Classes currently available:

At Neroche Village Hall – Tuesdays Mat Class
10.30am-11.30am

At West Hatch Village Hall:
Mondays 11-12pm – Chair Class
Tuesdays – 7-8pm – Mat Class

Please contact me for class dates if you are interested or have any questions on suitability for you - all abilities catered for - I have equipment to borrow if needed.

ness@yoganessyoga.co.uk

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SCHOOL DATES

Term 2:

**4 November to
20 December 2024**

Holiday 2:

**21 December 2024 to
5 January 2025**

Term 3:

**6 January to
14 February 2025**

**Holiday 3: 15 February
to 23 February 2025**

Events for your calendar

(Venue is Neroche Hall unless stated)

December

Thursday, 5th - Christmas Community Lunch
Friday, 6th - Christmas Family Bingo
Tuesday, 10th - Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday, 11th - WI Meeting
Saturday, 14th - Come Decorate Our Tree at St Peter's
Wednesday, 18th - Carol Service at St Peter's

January

Tuesday, 14th - Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday, 15th - Quiz at The Greyhound

February

Thursday, 6th - Community Lunch
Tuesday, 11th - Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday, 12th - WI Meeting
Wednesday, 19th - Quiz at The Greyhound

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 Communication:** 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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