

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

Issue 33 - Autumn 2019

'Fantastic entries for this year's Nursery Theme for the Scarecrow
Festival - read the full story'



The Owl and the Pussycat



*Bel Deering from the RSPCA
receiving their winner's prize*

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.



ONCE UPON A SCARECROW FESTIVAL 2019

Now children - Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin. Once upon a time in a beautiful land called Neroche, the villagers decided to stop pesky crows eating their crops by making ScareCROWS.

In 2019 two crows were happily visiting this idyllic part of Somerset. "Goodness" said VelCROW looking down. "It's July again and that means one thing – Scarecrows! I'm out of here." CROWdie looked none too pleased at being abandoned on her holidays and decided to take a closer look at what was going on beneath her.



She flew down over the quaint area known as Bickenhall where **Old Mother Hubbard** was fretting over her bare cupboard and not one, not two but three **Humptys** Really Really Scared her. She thought



Humpty Trumpty would be quite frightening; she was a little worried about **Humpty Dumpty** falling off the wall and hoped that his friend **Humpty** would remain upright too. She didn't like the look of **Jonathan Joe, with his mouth like an O**, so she flew on to spy on Curland. "I see you CROWdie" said **Mary** who was trying not to be contrary and be scary instead, "I don't think I could scare you, but I'll try. You do ruin my silver bells and my pretty flowers. I think **Incey Wincey Spider** is much scarier than I am. That web, those multicoloured spiderettes?



Really scary . . .” Just then **Jack** popped up suddenly out of his box and said, “No! I am the scariest as I frighten the crows with my very fast moves”. At which moment CROWdie flew further away to Whitty where **Three Little Pigs** were having a housing crisis. The Big Bad Wolf had finally destroyed one of their dwellings and was frightening everyone. At the same time up the hill **Peter Pan and Wendy** were trying to find their way to Neverland via Castle Neroche.

Down in the badlands that some call Staple Fitzpaine things were Very Scary. Rumour had it that a stray Wolf had overdone his breakfast and was resting near the church. “I am without doubt the one most crows are afraid of” he boasted. “Be afraid, be very afraid” and with that he settled down to frighten poor **Red Riding Hood** who thought she was visiting her grandmother. “Well” said the **Owl to the Pussycat**, “we are just going to chill out here beside the pub and wait for a fair wind, or for Jan and Véronique to bring us a cooling drink. We are very scary and scared of crows and wolves and we only have our pea green boat to save us”. “I am just taking it really easy today” said **Spiderman**, “the crows will have a field day”. “I agree” said **The Lazy Gardener**. Meanwhile the **Very Hungry Caterpillar** was munching his way through the garden plants next to the Greyhound and hoping to chase off a few crows and **Diddle Diddle** was hoping to scare the crows with loud music.



Further up the hill **Rabbits** were running. Alongside the forest **Little Miss Muffett** was managing to keep the spider at bay, and down in Staple Fitzpaine **Miss Muffett** was trying hard not to be intimidated by the big black arachnid about to gobble her up, and another **Hungry Insect** was causing as much damage as the crows.

CROWdie was enjoying her trip back to the nursery. “They are all excellent,” she mused, “and some of them are Really Really Scary. I had better find VelCROW and tell him what I have seen and which I thought the best” although when they met, he said: “I think we should let the people decide. Let’s have a People’s Vote”. So the people voted and the result was:

**THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT WENT TO SEA - IN A BEAUTIFUL
PEA GREEN BOAT
THEY TOOK SOME HONEY AND PLENTY OF MONEY - WRAPPED
UP IN A FIVE POUND NOTE**

Congratulations to the RSPCA for making the winning entry. The runners up were Mary Mary Quite Contrary and Little Miss Muffett (Curland).



**THE END
CROWS’ FEET
PRODUCTIONS**

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Festival, making scarecrows, travelling around to see them and voting, those who laid on teas, and everyone who attended and helped at the BBQ and prize giving.

Special thanks to Alison Brown for all her hard work in organising the Festival this year.

Summer Barn Dance

By Carole Wensley-Dodd

Hmmm, what to do this Saturday evening (July 20th)? Why, join the Barn Dancers at Neroche Hall of course!

Eager would be dancers were queuing at the doors before the official opening time – that's always a good sign for any event organiser and guests were not disappointed.

The Badger Street Band played at full throttle from the outset which certainly fired up the dancers. The moment the first note was played, the experts were on the dance floor showing us all how it's done.



After a couple of exploratory dances, we were invited to enjoy the supper provided – an absolutely delicious haunch of roast pork, together with stuffing and apple sauce, rolls and Waldorf and green salads. Dessert was not forgotten either – pavlova, chocolate brownie dessert and fresh fruit salad. Yummy! No one went away hungry and “seconds” were even available.

Having recharged their batteries, the Band got back to the serious business of providing the ideal background music for the hugely professional Caller – Gill Lambirth. So, after a glass of something refreshing it was back to the dance floor – a very crowded dance floor it must be said! Newbies and regulars alike took their instructions from Gill, who made it all look pretty easy.

While the fun was going on, the trusty band of volunteers did what they do best – manning the bar, carving and serving the food, clearing dishes and of course WASHING UP. What would we do without them; they deserve our huge thanks for all their efforts.

Many thanks to the Badger Street Band too, another wonderful group of volunteers who give their time freely and joyously. They were joined on the night by Nick, playing guitar and setting up the sound system, as

well as Ian Bryden, friend, supporter, mentor and coach who plays accordion and helps the band learn the dance music which proved such a hit. Along with his own band, Jigs for Gigs, he is a regular on the music scene and highly in demand.

Finally, many thanks to everyone who came along to the Barn Dance. More than 60 joined the evening, and along with the Band and volunteers we had a very full Neroche Hall.



Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**



September 5th, October 3rd, November 7th

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**

50 Gems of Somerset

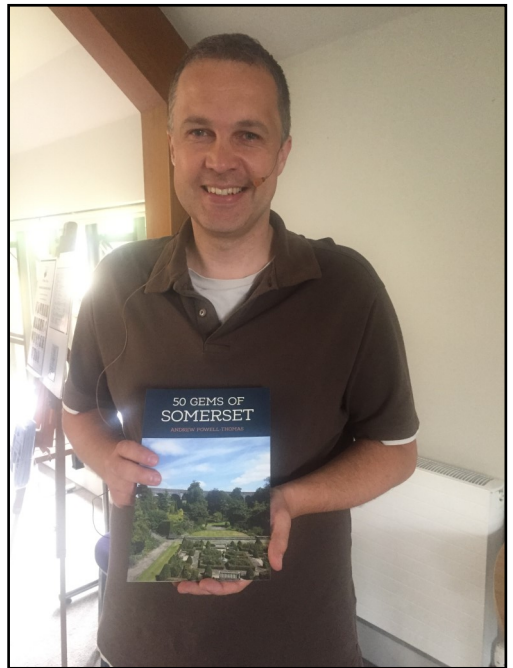
By Karen Learoyd

A few months ago, before summer finally arrived, the annual Ilminster Literary Festival took place across May and June. A number of famous faces including Lynne Truss, Alan Johnson and Kate Adie, as well as a score of other well-known writers, poets and experts, descended on various locations around Ilminster to entertain the local community.

We were privileged to attend a talk by Andrew Powell-Thomas on the '50 Gems of Somerset'. As relative newcomers to the county, we felt this would be a great opportunity to find out more about what is on our doorstep. Andrew is a Cornishman by birth although moved to Somerset 7 years ago as a primary school teacher. He lives nearby with his wife and 2 sons and has spent the last couple of years indulging his love of Somerset and its history by researching and writing about some of his favourite places.

The book spans a variety of 'Gems' across a diverse set of criteria - historic buildings, open spaces, museums, beaches, unique villages, entertainment (think Glastonbury Festival), and a number of them are close to the Neroche parish. I'm sure many of you will have already visited Barrington Court, the Museum of Somerset, and the Wellington Monument. It was also fascinating to see the inclusion of Churchstanton, because of its history as an RAF base during the Second World War, and Donyatt, where the old single-platform railway station forms part of the National Cycle Network, giving access to fresh air and fields of wildlife.

Taunton itself is included as the county town, but also to highlight the diversity of activities on offer, including cricket at the County Ground, entertainment at the Brewhouse Theatre, the annual carnival, and the wonderful Vivary Park, which also hosts musical events during the



summer (most recently Madness, Bananarama and Sir Tom Jones!). An unknown nugget for us was that Musgrove Park Hospital started as a US Army General Hospital during the Second World War, taking in soldiers who were invalided back from the D-Day landings. After the war, it became a part of the fledgling NHS service.

All in all, a memorable couple of hours. We learnt a lot, and the book is well worth a read, if only to inspire you to explore Somerset further.



School Holidays

Next Term starts 2nd September

Half Term from 26 October to

3rd November

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

Introduction from your new District Councillor

Ross Henley

I wanted to first of all thank everyone who voted for me in the recent Council elections, and to say how proud I am to become the very first District Councillor for the ward of Hatch and Blackdown on the brand new Council of Somerset West and Taunton.



The ward of Hatch and Blackdown contains the following parishes: Hatch Beauchamp, West Hatch, Churchstanton, Otterford and of course the Neroche parishes of Curland, Bickenhall, Staple Fitzpaine, and Orchard Portman and Thurlbear. A big area, although I really do feel I represent a beautiful area.

Since the elections, I have been enjoying getting out and meeting local residents. One of the first things I did was to attend the monthly village lunch at Neroche Hall in Bickenhall. I was lucky enough to be asked to say a few words after the lunch to introduce myself as the new local Councillor. I enjoyed the June lunch so much I also attended the July lunch! It's such a great event for local residents to get together and enjoy great company, and some lovely home cooked food. I intend to regularly attend this event. At the June event, I was very lucky to be sat on the same table as a real D Day veteran who lives in Staple Fitzpaine. It was a real honour to discuss his experiences and to see his medals, especially as it was the same week as the D Day 75th anniversary. At the July lunch, I enjoyed talking to Tim French's sister, who was visiting from Australia.

I have also attended a Coffee Morning organised by the local WI which takes place every Friday morning at St. Peter's Church in Staple Fitzpaine. These types of events are so important in deeply rural areas like the Neroche villages as they bring the local community together.

One of the big local issues is the potential dualling of the A358. A number of residents have raised concerns about the proposed reduction in entry and exit points onto the A358, and the impact of the extra traffic which will be forced onto the remaining local routes, before accessing the main road. The plans will go out for consultation and comment later this year.



One problem which hasn't gone away is fly-tipping. Just a couple of weeks after the election, I was contacted by a friend of mine, Alice Bridges-Westcott who is a Councillor in Richmond upon Thames, although was visiting her family who live nearby. She had noticed a huge amount of fly-tipping in Curland by the roadside. I was on my way to West Hatch Parish Council meeting so was able to see it for myself, photograph it and report it. Fly-tipping makes me so angry. Why do some people think they can use our rural areas as a rubbish dump? Please let me know if you come across any fly-tipping issues.

Still in Curland I attended a meet of residents about local planning enforcement issues. They brought to my attention a particular problem which I am following up with the Council.

I also really enjoyed driving round the local area looking at the various entries in the village scarecrow competition. All the entries are so incredible! I also popped into The Greyhound pub afterwards for a swift half of real ale and talked to them about their upcoming refurbishment plans.

Finally, I wanted to thank everyone for the friendly welcome I have received while out and about in the Neroche villages.

A Taste of the Country

By Alan Hyde

Mark and Julie Pope did the community proud once again as they organised an expert guided tour of Staple Farm in Staple Fitzpaine, followed or preceded by a delicious slap-up breakfast in the conservatory, depending on which of the two hosted groups you were in.

It's been a tough and uncertain time for tenant farmers recently as the Crown Estate has been selling off land and property.

Mark now farms 168 acres compared to 700 previously, although his enthusiasm for farming and strong connections with the community remain undimmed. His tour provided a fascinating insight into the life of a modern-day farmer and the subtleties of the landscape unravelled before our eyes as he spoke about the fragility of farming, from the impact of global commodity markets to uncertain weather patterns and how to strike the right balance between nature conservation and successful commercial enterprise. Mark strongly believes the two are not mutually exclusive.

His strategy is to diversify. His Christmas tree plantations help him to sell about 500 trees a year, with many more trees in various stages of growth. The Norway Spruce trees are pruned to shape them and steps are taken to counter the effects of hungry deer and rabbits. There are even plans to create a secure, fenced dog walking area for community use where pet pooches can be let off the leash to run around safely.

To the sound of a warbling chiffchaff and the sight of swifts darting overhead, Mark showed us round his treasure trove of rural delights. This included fields of oil seed rape (usually harvested in August or September), spring barley, beans, grass, wheat and miscanthus, commonly known as elephant grass, which resembles bamboo and is used to produce biomass energy. Mark also told us that the wheat is often cut early to produce energy for an anaerobic digester.

Notwithstanding the vagaries of the weather, each of the crops has to be protected from nasty bugs and toxic plants. For example, oil seed



rape is prone to attract slugs and flea beetle, and the toxins in the roots of black grass can quickly decimate a wheat field.

In a boggy area, past a pheasant pen used for social shooting, Mark introduced us to green haying which helps to grow a variety of flowers and he led us into a small copse, carpeted with wonderfully vibrant orchids.

Each of the fields, some of which have magnificent views as far as the eye can see, has a buffer zone. These zones, which can take years to establish, provide corridors for wildlife and rich biodiversity, including fine grasses, wildflowers and pollen nectar strips for bees.



Other frequent wildlife visitors to the farm include bats, screech or barn owls, and grey partridge, which I last saw near the compost site which Mark kindly allows the community to use for garden waste.

All in all, it was a wonderful way to start the day. Thank you, Mark and Julie, for your hospitality and for sharing your love and knowledge of the countryside.



Staple Farm News

By Mark Pope



Here at Staple Farm, we are now well into summer and so far this year, the weather has been kind to us with sunshine and some rain to help things along.

We have now harvested our wheat. This was cut early this year, sold as Wholecrop and has gone to an anaerobic digester to be turned into gas. We have also just harvested our oilseed rape crop, and this is in the process of being moved to a central store near Cannington.

Our last crop to harvest will be spring barley by about the middle of August if the weather behaves. We are trying a new variety this year that has the potential to be used to make Malt. If you like beer you may well be drinking some in the near future!

This is also the time of year when you may well see us digging holes with a spade to look at the soil and see what condition it is in, identifying if it has become compacted as this causes problems with rooting. We are also looking to see earthworm activity and general soil health. This is our most important asset, so we need to look after it.

No sooner have we finished the harvest and we will be making plans as to what to plant back again, starting with Oil seed rape in mid-August, then Winter Wheat towards the end of September.

We are also in the process of constructing a secure dog walking area behind the farm as a new venture at Staple Farm, where people can bring their dogs and exercise them in a safe and secure area. Lots to do in fence construction and web site building.

In late September we will aim to clear between the rows in the Christmas tree areas.

The land sales in the area are continuing with a few parcels of land not yet sold from the Crown.



PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY!

THE FAREY FAMILY IN CONCERT

Supported by St Peter's Singers

**AT ST PETER'S CHURCH, STAPLE FITZPAINE
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH 2019**

**Doors open 6.45pm. Concert starts 7.30pm
Bar & Nibbles. Raffle.**

Tickets: £10, students £6, children under 11 free
from Sheila Green Tel: 01823 480758
or email: stpeterschurchconcerts@gmail.com

In aid of St Peter's Church Loo fund!



Climate Warriors in Thurlbear

By Jo Moore

This has been the year of reports, rebellions and reviews, all relating to global warming and climate change.

'We are writing to you to put forward a planet-saving idea that we feel is severely necessary. It will not be quick, although we believe if we work together and persevere, it will be possible.

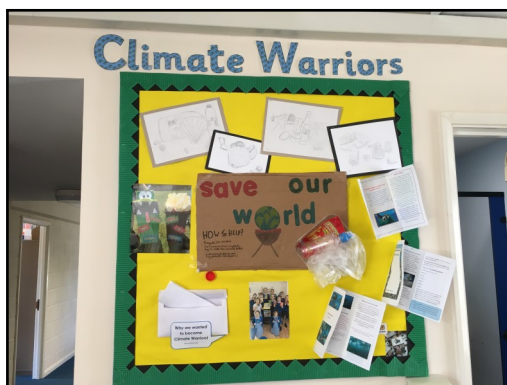
'I am sure it has become apparent to you that climate change is a fast growing problem and we need to make a difference. No matter how small and insignificant it might seem, we would like to change our attitude towards global warming around our school and would like you to consider the following:

- The amount of paper we print and throw away – even in recycling;
- The copious amounts of food waste we produce;
- The single use plastics we are throwing away such as pens, plastic bottles (including the ones in the staff room fridge!)

The above is the opening paragraph of a letter received from two of our Year 6 pupils, challenging us as to what part we can play and what we are doing, as a school, to help the environment whilst becoming more eco-friendly. Well we are delighted to say that we embraced the challenge and began to make some changes!

All of our shredded paper now goes to the RSPCA centre at West Hatch for animal bedding. We have been talking to our school meal provider and we will no longer be having our school lunches delivered in plastic, single use trays. We have signed up to the TerraCycle recycling programme and have started to collect crisp and snack packaging, as well as batteries, and have installed chilled water dispensers so that reusable water bottles can be filled up.

We also now have our own 'Climate Warriors' who we are incredibly proud of, and who are empowering us all to respond to climate change and fight the cause.



Heavy Horses and Hay Making

By Alan Hyde

'Heavy horses and haymaking' was the theme of a fascinating weekend of rural events on 20 and 21 July, organised by the Western Counties Heavy Horse Society in fields between West Hatch and Thurlbear.



It was an increasingly rare glimpse into a vanishing era when heavy horses, many of which are now endangered, played a crucial role in tilling the soil and bringing in the hay.

Spectators were treated to demonstrations of a farrier shoeing a horse, the spectacle of a smart show shire horse in full gallop, horse-drawn muck-spreading, gathering and loading hay into a haywain, and four mighty horses pulling a two-chain harrow. Visitors could also jump on board a horse-drawn open cart for trips round the fields.

Featured horses included Shire, Percheron and Suffolk Punch. Expert commentary, a craft stall and refreshment vans all helped to make it a memorable day out.



Neroche Hall Autumn Update

By Richard Davies, Chairman

Since the last Newsletter, we have held our Annual General Meeting and I and all the committee members were re-elected and have agreed to continue to serve in their existing roles, which will ensure continuity for a further twelve months. I am also delighted to report that we have been joined by an additional person who has been co-opted to our committee: Kingsley Beck from Bickenhall, who retired a year or so ago, and brings a wealth of local experience to the hall having lived nearby for some forty years.



Our Summer Barn Dance in July was Kingsley's initiation event as he and I manned the bar for the evening. The evening was a big success and despite a slow start to ticket sales, it gathered momentum as the day approached allowing us to reach optimum numbers. It is always very difficult to know what the take up is going to be for any event and there is always a tense time before interest improves. There is a separate article on the event and so I will say no more other than to comment on the Badger Street Band's contribution, without which we would not have been able to go ahead. Many of you will be familiar with them by now, although it is worth mentioning for those who aren't that they are a group of local people from all walks of life who came together to play music for their own pleasure and have blossomed ever since. Well done to all of them who gave their time voluntarily for the evening and spent many hours of practice in the lead up.

Forthcoming events for the next few months will include an additional quiz night in August, and it remains to be seen how popular this will be. It is a departure from our usual format of having fish and chips, as, sadly, Layzricks our usual supplier was not available on the day in question. The quiz format will be as normal, and for those that do like fish and chips, we will be holding our Autumn quiz on 11th October.

There will be a Film Night in September (Fisherman's Friends on 20th September). However, the future of our monthly film night still remains

in the balance with many factors coming into play. Dwindling audiences continue to be a very concerning feature, not to mention the poor film choices that Moviola have on offer for this season. Sadly, the hall cannot continue to subsidise films at the rate we have done recently given the high costs charged by Moviola.

There will also be a pre-Christmas Craft Fair this year on 26 October, and if previous ones are anything to go by it should have a good variety of stalls with interesting items for sale in the run up to the festive season. Again, this will be advertised for those that would like to attend, and for anyone who would like to take part by purchasing a table, details are available elsewhere in the Newsletter.

At present the Committee have decided not to hold a New Year's Eve Party for 2019, although to make it a bi-annual event thus returning in 2020. Finally, one for next year to look forward to is another Murder Mystery evening which is in the planning stage for February.

Fund Raising Success

Rosemary Grabham and Tina Warren were delighted to donate £807.50 to The Beacon Centre at Musgrove Park Hospital, after their fund-raising afternoon tea held in Rosemary's beautiful garden on Easter Saturday earlier this year.

It was a lovely sunny afternoon spent enjoying delicious home-made scones and cakes, among friends and neighbours. A huge thank you to you all for your generous donations, baking and help on the day.



Neroche Woodlanders at Young Wood

Through the hot weather over the summer it's been mercifully cooler under the shade of the trees at Young Wood, which has been a welcome retreat during our many woodland sessions, whether for toddlers and their parents, family groups from Taunton, volunteer work parties or green woodworkers.

The woods have been buzzing with life, and as ever, the stories of its residents can be as dramatic as any human soap opera. On the woodland rides the Silver-washed Fritillaries have been on the wing for a while – one of our biggest butterflies, with wings like miniature Persian carpets. Despite the apparently idyllic life of the adult butterfly, these creatures don't make life easy for their offspring.



Silver-washed fritillary

When the adult female finds the caterpillar's food plant – dog violets – on the woodland floor, they then fly to a nearby tall tree and lay a single egg on the north side of the trunk. When the larva has eaten its way out of its egg during August, it immediately hibernates next to the egg case, without even getting another meal, right through to the following April. As the spring returns it wakes up, and to get some breakfast it has to journey down the tree trunk (many miles when you're only about 5mm long) and search out fresh violet leaves to munch.

Another contender for Most Dramatic Insect at Young Wood is the Giant Ichneumon, or Sabre Wasp. These bizarre insects can be more than 5cm long, with elongated bodies and an extraordinarily exaggerated ovipositor, which looks like a fearsome stinger but is actually quite harmless – to us, at least. We quite often spot the females, hawking around log piles, where they alight and probe the log surfaces with their antennae, listening for the sound of grubs inside the wood, which provide food for their larvae. When they find one, they use their ovipositor to literally drill into the wood. The outer shell of the ovipositor has been found to contain trace amounts of zinc or manganese, making it hard enough to drill with!

Meanwhile up in the canopy, while Ash Dieback is affecting more and more trees across the country, we've been relieved to see fewer new infections in Young Wood this year than we perhaps expected. We can only hope that some of the still-healthy trees will prove to harbour some resistance to the disease in the longer term.

We have a new website, www.nerochewoodlanders.org, and a new logo. The logo is inspired by the pattern of beams in the roof of our reciprocal-frame roundhouse – each one resting on the one below, and all supporting the whole.

In the autumn we will be resuming our parent and toddler group, Young Saplings. Meanwhile for the grown-ups we're currently running our Greenwood Club – so why not give it a try? It's fortnightly, for two hours on Tuesday evenings – current dates August 13th, 27th, September 10th, 24th. It's a relaxed group, with people making spoons, benches, pots, walking sticks, and just having a chat in the peace of a woodland glade. We provide all the tools and materials. Just drop us a line if you would like to come along – gavin@nerochewoodlanders.org.

Meanwhile as ever, anyone is welcome to join us on volunteer days at Young Wood, on the fourth Wednesday of every month. We also run volunteer days on local nature reserves on the second and third Wednesdays of the month.

Gavin, Jenny and the team at Neroche Woodlanders

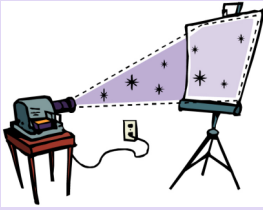
Do you Run a Local Business?

**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**

FRIDAY FILM NIGHT – Neroche Hall



FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS

Friday 20th
September @
7.30pm

Ten fishermen from Cornwall achieve a Top 10 hit after they are signed by Universal Records for their ability to sing a sea shanty or two.

Loosely based on a true story, this is a gentle sweet natured comedy – the type that Britain does best, enhanced by the stunning Cornish countryside and starring James Purefoy, Daniel Mays and Tuppence Middleton. An enjoyable night guaranteed.



Bar and snacks available - Tickets £6.00
Contact Karen Learoyd 01823 480886
or just turn up

Curland School Part 2: Catherine's Story

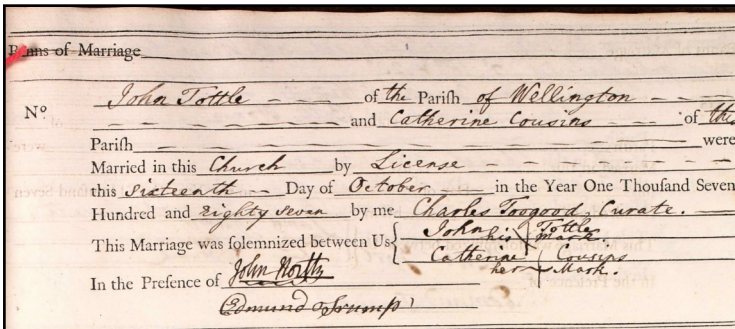
By Jane Hole Neroche Local History Group

When Catherine Savidge died in 1830 she left a bequest to build a school for 'poor girls' in Curland. The school and school house were duly built in 1831/2. Extensive bills and receipts for the buildings, written in classic copperplate, can be seen at the SW Heritage Trust in Taunton. Details include the cost of a brick 'privy' coming in at a price of £1.4s.7p including lime and labour, while sinking the well cost £2.7s.

Who was this enigmatic woman we only know as the benefactor of 'The School of the Widow of George Sheppard Esq'? Catherine was born in 1763 to the Cousins family (sometime spelled as Cozens) in Staple Fitzpaine. The family have a longstanding connection with our villages and can be spotted through the decades in the Victorian censuses. For example, one of them, Daniel Cozens was an enumerator in the 1851 census.

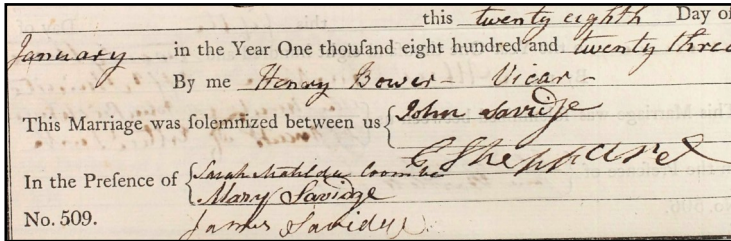
Catherine was married in Staple Fitzpaine church to John Tottle of Wellington in October 1787. Those witnessing the ceremony are also familiar names that come down the centuries. One, John North is likely to be a descendent of Edmund North who in 1674 took on a lease at Britty (page 208 Along the Wild Edge, 2011). The other is Edmund Trump whose predecessors are first mentioned in the Hearth Tax returns in 1664 (pages 38-40 in Village Life in the Lee of the Blackdowns, 2018). The interweaving of village lives is one of the fascinations to us amateur historians.

Both John and Catherine do not sign their names on the wedding licence but mark it with an X which presumably means they were illiterate at that time.



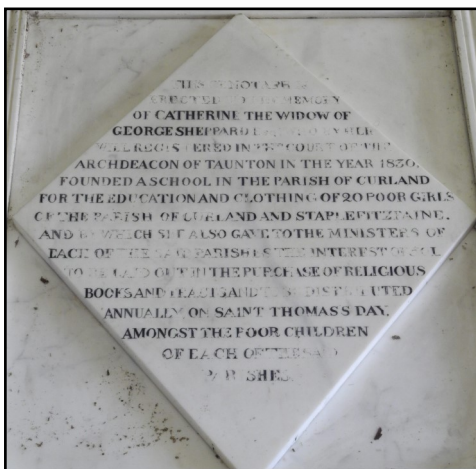
Catherine's marriage to John Tottle with John North and Edmund Trump witnessing her mark 'X' on the licence

At some stage Catherine is widowed and marries again in April 1804, this time in the parish of St James in Bath, Somerset. Her husband George Sheppard signs the licence, while Catherine can still only 'make her mark' an X. Widowed again and now a parishioner of St Mary Magdalene in Taunton, she marries for the last time in 1823 to John Savidge from Creech St Michael. At last aged 60 she is able to write her name although her signature shows a rather unsure hand.



Catherine's last marriage to John Savidge with her signature on the licence

Unlike many of her contemporaries who rarely moved from their villages, Catherine had a wider experience of life having left Staple Fitzpaine for Bath and Taunton. She became quite a wealthy woman. At the time of her final marriage she was living in Taunton at No 2 The Crescent, a fine newly built Georgian terrace house. Poignantly, Catherine used some of her wealth to found a school for the poor girls of Staple Fitzpaine and Curland to be taught "reading and writing" amongst other accomplishments. May we reasonably guess she wanted other girls to have a better educated start to their lives than she did?



Memorial tablet to Catherine in St Peter's Church Staple Fitzpaine

News from RSPCA West Hatch

By Bel Deering – Centre Manager

Summer is always a busy time in both the animal centre and the wildlife centre. These are a few stories from recent months to give you a flavour of our work.

Dangerous Litter

A female Daubenton's bat was brought into us by a very kind member of the public who arrived in a taxi to ensure the bat was seen by a vet as quickly as possible. She had found the bat hanging from discarded fishing line that had wrapped around her wing, leaving her suspended over a river. On inspection, our vet found a small puncture wound to her tail membrane that luckily, was likely to heal on its own. As she was a lactating female and most likely had a young pup waiting for her back at the roost, the decision was made to release her as soon as possible. After being hydrated, rested and then test flown, the bat was returned to the area she was found to reunite with her baby. A big thank you to the member of public who did everything possible to ensure the bat was seen to as quickly as possible.



Daubenton's bat

Earlier in the summer we admitted a Herring Gull from Plymouth that had swallowed a large fishing hook. Our vet operated as soon as the bird was stable and successfully removed the



Gull X-Ray



Gull Operation

hook. The bird was then put on a high dose of antibiotics, given pain relief and kept in the intensive care unit.

After a short stay in our gull paddock he made it successfully through to release.

Baby season!

The heavy rain we had at the start of the summer was a real challenge for wildlife, in particular nesting birds. As a result of this weather we saw a lot of admissions of abandoned nestlings coming into the centre. One such youngster was this buzzard, whose nest had collapsed in the torrential rain.

Alongside all the baby birds in our care we are also looking after nine roe deer kids, admitted for a variety of different reasons. One was caught up in a grass fire with her sibling and ended up severely burned, and four others from different areas were found calling next to their dead mothers. Some of the kids, however, were picked up unnecessarily and were then fed an incorrect diet that caused health



Buzzard Nestling

problems, meaning they could no longer be returned. We urge people to call for advice before picking up any kid or fawn, unless it is in immediate danger. It is normal for young deer to lie alone in long grass awaiting their mothers to return from feeding. Often they will lie still, refuse to move or refuse to stand when being handled by people, but this is not a reason for them to be taken into care and is a natural response to a threat. Nearly always the mother will be nearby. Our

fawns will spend at least 4 months with us before being released back into the wild and require a huge amount of care. Thank you to everyone who donated willow and rose plants for our paddocks, as they are getting through a lot of browse!

Spring Cat Cuddle



Cat Cuddle

In May we held our second Sponsored Cat Cuddle, where members of the public raise a minimum of £50 in sponsorship to be locked in a cat pen for 90 minutes. The event is always of double benefit, as we not only raise lots of money, and the cats adore the extra attention they get on the day.

This year our lovely cuddlers' raised £330, and we raised a further £124.70 in cake sales. If you fancy being a "Cat Cuddler" yourself we are holding another event on Saturday 5th October. Please email emma.may@rspca.org.uk for more information.

Thanks to the editor!



Bench Before

Last newsletter we sent out a plea for donations of garden benches for our dog socialisation areas. The wonderful Carole Wensley-Dodd offered us an old bench she no longer needed, and we gratefully accepted. Since then it has been transformed by one of our volunteers, and will be a fantastic feature in the refurbishment of our kennel block gardens. Thanks so much Carole!



Bench After Revamp

Volunteer gardeners required

We are looking for anyone with a few hours to spare to help us look after the centre grounds. Jobs would include weeding, mowing, and hedge trimming. Please get in touch if you would like to help – no experience required.

Can you help?

We are looking for a number of items to help with caring for animals in both the wildlife and the domestic animal centre. Please get in touch if you can offer us any of the following:

- Puppy food in jelly (meat flavours)
- Cat food in gravy (meat flavours)
- Original fairy liquid for washing contaminated animals

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 and our annual dinner and dance. For more information and to keep up to date just follow us on Face book at: <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 although donations are welcome. Please book a place in advance so we know how many seats to put out!

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

NEROCHE CRAFT FAIR



**Many pretty and unusual gifts and crafts including
pottery, natural skincare, jewellery,
wooden items, books etc**

**NEROCHE HALL, BICKENHALL,
TAUNTON TA3 6TY**

**SATURDAY 26TH OCTOBER 2019
11.30am to 4.00pm**

Buy your Christmas presents here

Refreshments on sale: Ploughman's lunches.
Coffee, tea & cakes & more

Doors open to the Public 11.30am.
Doors open for stall-holders for setting up from 8.30am

**For further details: Karen Learoyd
Tel: 01823 480886
or email karen.wensley@gmail.com**

News From Neroche Parish Council

By Gillian Midworth



Hello

Neroche Parish Council is pleased to welcome two new members. At recent meetings the Council co-opted Daniel Macey to represent Orchard Portman (with Thurlbear) and Kingsley Beck to represent Bickenhall.

The Council is still looking for members to represent Staple Fitzpaine and to fill the other vacancy at Orchard Portman. Being a Councillor is not an onerous task; it merely requires enthusiasm and an interest in local affairs. The Council meets six times a year so the time commitment is manageable and dependent upon personal commitments.

I would encourage anyone who is interested to attend a Parish Council meeting so that you can gain an insight in what being a Councillor entails, or contact an existing Councillor to discuss the role.

The next Council meeting is on Thursday 12th September at 7.30pm at Neroche Hall.

Annual Parish Meeting

If you attended the Annual Parish Meeting, you will remember that the Parish Council asked parishioners to indicate the priorities that the Council should focus on.

The topics ranged from affordable housing to climate change, and the use of plastics. The most common suggestions were the restoration of fingerposts and highways issues, including the maintenance of ditches, hedges and verges and the problem caused by mud and debris left on roads.

As a result of this feedback, the Council has decided to use the increased precept to support the fingerpost restoration project and match fund the amount raised by other fundraising efforts to a limit of

£2500 for the forthcoming financial year. Tremendous progress is being made by the restoration team and you can already see the improvements that have been made.

In addition, the Council has recently arranged for the seasonal growth at the Parish junctions to be cut. Although verge cutting is carried out by Somerset County Council, the Parish has no control over the timings of the work, which tends to be towards the end of the summer season. Bearing in mind that cow parsley and other verge wildflowers tend to be at their peak in late Spring or early Summer, the Council decided that it would be good use of precept funds to arrange for an additional cut and asked a local contractor to carry out this work on its behalf. I am sure that motorists appreciated the increased visibility that this provided.

The problems regarding Broadband and the contract with Gigaclear were mentioned at the Annual Parish Meeting and the Parish Council is currently exploring options with alternative providers to see whether the community is able to progress this issue instead of relying on the Connecting Devon and Somerset scheme. Watch this space or look out for notices on the email alert system for further developments.

A few words about footpaths

As the Crown Estate sells its remaining land in the Parish, there have been concerns raised regarding the future maintenance of footpaths in the Parish.

To confirm, the landowner or occupier of the land has a responsibility to keep the route visible and not obstruct or endanger users.

Somerset County Council is responsible for looking after the Rights of Way network and anyone can report an issue by using the Explore Somerset mapping service.

Please locate the issue on the map as accurately as possible as this makes it easier for the wardens and rangers to locate and investigate. Issues will be assessed and where necessary, action taken to try and resolve them. If you supply your email address on the form you will receive updates when the issue has been assigned and resolved or closed.

Of course, users of Rights of Way also have responsibilities, the most important being leaving gates and property as you find them, following the correct path and keeping dogs under effective control.

In the summer months, please also be aware of the danger from ticks and wear appropriate clothing to avoid being bitten. There were a couple of instances of Lyme disease in the Parish last year so please take every precaution to avoid this unpleasant condition.

... and Goodbye

Regretfully, this is my last article for the newsletter as I am standing down as Clerk to the Council.

I have enjoyed the 6 years that I have spent in the role which has given me the opportunity to become involved in the community and meet many of you at local events and meetings.

I know that my successor will be able to rely on the support of the parishioners as I have.

Neroche Knitting, Crochet and Stitching Group



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**

Neroche MP's Briefing

By Rebecca Pow

Welcome to my Autumn update. First of all, I would like to send a heartfelt thank you to the enormous number of well-wishers from across the constituency and further afield who have sent condolences to my family and I on the death of my husband Charles Clark.



He was known by many and he was truly a man of Somerset, rooted in the county as a seventh-generation agricultural auctioneer. He was a trustee and governor of a range of organisations and of course, more latterly, was Chair of Somerset County Cricket Club. Community, duty and family were at the heart of all he did, and he was a great role model for the life of an MP.

I want particularly to thank the extensive care team that has helped throughout this almost five year journey. I have learnt a great deal from this experience and will try to use this constructively so that people's care pathway might be improved. I can already see that a centre, such as the proposed Maggie's Centre might fill a currently unfilled gap.

As ever I continue to work representing you as your MP as I did throughout my husband's illness so please do get in touch if I can help with anything.

Tourism Sector Deal

I was pleased to visit The Newt Hotel in Somerset at the end of June to launch the government's Tourism Sector Deal in my role as Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism. I had a tour of the fabulous gardens and saw the hotel and cyder house which are currently under development and expected to open this summer.



Tourism is one of our country's greatest economic powerhouses. Worth nearly £70 billion a year and employing 1.6 million people, our sector is of huge importance to the nation. The Sector Deal will prepare us for the 9 million additional international visitors we expect to come to the UK by 2025 by committing to building 130,000 new hotel rooms. It will also deliver 30,000 new apprenticeships in the sector per year, providing crucial training for our hospitality workforce to ensure they are providing a world-class service.

Taunton Train Station

The number of passengers passing through Taunton rail station is set to double over the next decade and I am delighted that my efforts to ensure the station is upgraded to cope is coming to fruition. Work has started thanks to a £4.6 million



government grant and GWR and Network Rail's commitment to the project. Local surveys I conducted fed into this project, and we can look forward to improved station access, a better ticket office, a multi storey car park and much more, but above all we can look forward to welcoming more people to our fantastic town.

The Great Western Hotel

The renovation of The Great Western Hotel has been a major success. I have a great fondness for the site and was delighted to have the opportunity to relocate my office to the site earlier this year. The hotel is owned by the YMCA and offers young people the opportunity to develop a range of skills in hospitality, cookery, and facilities management amongst other things. The hotel has created numerous new jobs and been a major boost for the local community.

Somerset Wildlife Trust and The Environment Forum

I greatly enjoyed speaking on a panel at the Somerset Festival of Nature early in June. We discussed a wide range of environmental issues and I stressed the importance of increasing biodiversity across the UK and the immense benefits that the upcoming Agriculture Bill will

bring to protecting clean water and increasing the quality of our soil. I also had an opportunity to discuss green issues with many of my constituents at an Environmental surgery in Wellington last month organised by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. It's great to be able to hear your views and to stress the importance of continuing to work to ensure we leave the planet in a better state than we found it.

Arts Taunton

Great news to see that Arts Taunton have launched the name of their new festival Taunton Youth Culture & Arts (TYCA). The first festival will take place this autumn and is a fantastic opportunity to promote young talent from all backgrounds from across the County.

Future High Streets Fund

Great news that Taunton's bid for the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) has been selected by Jake Berry, the former Local Government Minister, to move into the second phase. I worked hard with the previous council on this bid.



This now unlocks £150,000 for the new Somerset West and Taunton Council to progress a compelling business case for improving Taunton High Street. In addition, the new High Streets Task Force will offer advice on developing data-driven and innovative strategies for the town and provide access to other specialist advice.

The bid benefited from the personal insight that Jake Berry gained when he came to Taunton, at my invitation, for a business focused event centred around the Great British High Street initiative. The comprehensive case made at that event set out a clear picture of what the problems were and a way forward building on the garden town status. The Minister was particularly impressed with the engagement shown by retailers for my Best of the Highstreets Award, and the growing focus on arts and culture with the consequent value this has for the local economy.

Thank you to all who worked hard on the bid including the local business team and those at the former Taunton Deane Borough Council and I look forward to working with the new Council on developing the next phase. One priority of mine is to progress the potential for an electric vehicle charging hub in the town.

'PINK ROUTE' PREFERRED FOR A358 UPGRADE

By Alan Hyde

Following two rounds of consultation and further feasibility work, the Highways Agency announced in June that a modified version of the 'Pink Route' was its preferred choice for the A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme.

For information please visit: <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/taunton-to-southfields-dualling-scheme>

The next steps are to refine the scheme design ahead of further consultation prior to submitting an application (Development Consent Order) to the Planning Inspectorate. Once, and if, the DCO is accepted by the Inspectorate it will be subject to a public examination before the Inspectorate makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport for a decision. Timescales are unclear at present.

If you'd like to know more about the DCO process and the role of the Planning Inspectorate visit:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

In the meantime, a Community Liaison Forum has been established, comprising council and other representatives, which met for the first time in February. Neroche Parish Council attended this inaugural meeting and will, no doubt, continue to keep the community informed.

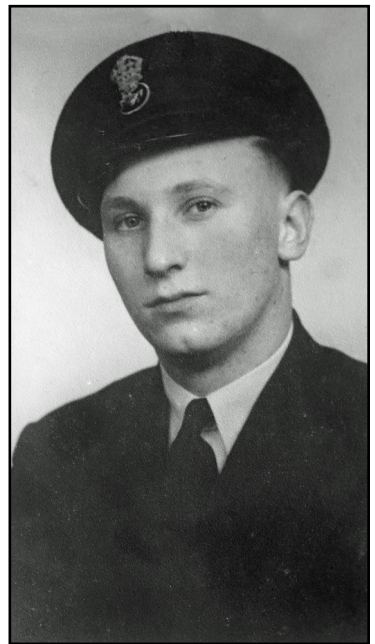
Two other planned projects to upgrade the A303 road corridor between the South East and the South West are at a more advanced stage.

Mick Donovan - Our D-Day Veteran

By Tim French

While we recently commemorated the D-Day landings in Normandy 75 years ago, few of us knew that we have, living in Neroche Parish, one who was there on the day; someone who served his country throughout the war, both in civilian life and in the Royal Navy.

Mick and Doris Donovan moved from London to Staple Fitzpaine to be near his daughter Judy and her partner. Mick quickly became a well-known, well-liked member of the community. Few knew of his wartime actions until the Thursday Lunch Club at Neroche Hall held on the 6th June. His son Chris spoke about Mick's service record. He produced Mick's UK service medals and his Légion d'honneur. Mick became eligible for the latter when the French president awarded it to British veterans on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of France, by those involved in the fighting. The lunch club spontaneously arose, clapped, and



Petty Officer Donovan



Mick at Neroche Lunch Club

honoured Mick for what he had done.

Mick was an apprentice coppersmith aged 19 when he joined the Royal Navy in 1943 as an Engine Room Artificer. As a Petty Officer he had duties in the engine room and carried out running repairs to the ship. His first ship was HMS Ambitious, a converted turbine ferry, which escorted ships travelling along the east coast of the UK, and once took a commando team of 30 to and from Norway.

Ambitious was anchored off Sword Beach on D-Day with engines running, ready to act as required, while troops stormed the beaches. Then, and in the months that followed as the invasion moved northwards, the ship was in danger from the enemy mines and from limpet charges laid by mini-submarines which destroyed nearby vessels. Mick celebrated VE Day in Holland although, after 2 weeks leave, shipped out from Greenock to the Far East. The war had ended when he arrived although he saw service helping clear islands where enemy troops had not surrendered after VJ Day. He was demobilised in 1946.

Like many of his generation Mick does not regard himself as brave or heroic just someone who did what he was asked to do; one of the lucky ones who returned home safely when others died or were injured. He minimises his contribution and is uncomfortable when “fuss” is made. For instance, when talking of being a fire watcher in the blitz, he once said, “It was better to be doing something about the bombing rather than be in a shelter waiting for a bomb to land on it”.

At the Thursday Lunch Club a woman near Mick touched his hand and said all that needs to be said to this most modest of men, “Thank you Mick for what you did”.



1939-1945 Star, Burma Star, France and Germany Star, Victory Medal, Légion d'honneur

Events at Taunton Racecourse

By *Karen Learoyd*



Racing will start again at Taunton at the end of October, but in the meantime, there are still a host of other events happening including concerts, the County show, parties, exhibitions, conferences and weddings. Christmas parties are always especially popular at the racecourse, and more details are included below.

Somerset County Show



COUNTY SHOW

The Somerset County Show comes to Taunton Racecourse on September 21st and 22nd. There will be loads of things happening including:

- Full programme of equestrian events including the Shetland Pony Grand National
- Clay shooting and Gun Dog competitions
- Classic and Vintage Vehicles
- Cookery Demos
- Live Music
- Artisan Stalls
- Food and Drink Festival
- Children's Funfair

A great day out for all the family from 9am til 5pm each day, with plenty of Free Car Parking. Dogs are welcome, and there will be events all with entry available on the day.

Tickets are priced at £10 per adult, £5 per child or a Family ticket at £25 (2 adults, and 2 children). Further details and tickets are available from www.tauntonracecourse.org.uk

Charlie's Chocolate Christmas Party Nights



On December 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21, The Racecourse will be hosting Wonka's Wonderland! Feast on candy canes and enjoy a drink at our Wonka bar.

Take your seat and join us for a scumdidlyumptious 3 course dinner for £32.95pp.

The price includes a drink on arrival, three course dinner, a bottle of wine for every 5 guests, a disco until the early hours and two free golden tickets to the race meeting of your choice for the organiser.

For more information on Christmas parties or to book please call 01823 337172 option 2 and talk to Troy or Ryan.

A £15 per person non-refundable deposit required on booking and final payment due one week before the event.

Taunton Race Meetings

Race meetings start again at the end of October – online booking in advance will save you up to 40% of the ticket price!

Race meetings at Taunton are October 30, November 14 and 28, December 12 and 30.

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.

Half Year Membership, for the remainder of 2019 is available for just £85.



ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA?

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

Neroche Newsletter is delivered free to every household each quarter – full of upcoming events, articles on recent events, and updates from local Groups and leaders.

Contact us at nerochenewsletter@gmail.com

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

www.nerochevillages.org.uk

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

nerocheemail@gmail.com.

Welcome to Neroche



News from your Village Agent

By Linda Burton

A colleague was very honoured to attend the Yeovil Chamber of Commerce meeting with Sue Mountstevens, the Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, and Sharon Baker the Chief Inspector for Yeovil. Sue explained how the charge on our council tax bills has risen and this has directly paid for an extra 100 police officers. She is adamant that the police are to be part of our community and doesn't want them to be sitting in offices when they could be visible.

To this extent, our council tax money has been spent on providing upgraded equipment such as phones and laptops so that your officer can sit in a public space such as a coffee shop to complete their admin, rather than driving back to the station. This means they are not wasting time and petrol travelling and are visible in the community. She encourages us all to go and chat and get to know our local police constables and PCSO's - they are there to support us and be a part of the local community.

Sue has also employed mental health nurses with access to medical records to support phone calls to the 101 non-emergency number so people in distress can be supported by a network of family, medication and mental health support services. In turn this should reduce the numbers of mentally ill people being put into cells and through the criminal justice system when they need medical support.

The Avon and Somerset Constabulary 4 priorities are:

- 1) To protect the most vulnerable from harm.
- 2) Strengthen and improve local policing teams.

- 3) To ensure Avon and Somerset Constabulary have the right people, equipment and culture.
- 4) To work together effectively with other police forces and partner agencies to provide better services to local people.

Our Village, Carers Community Agents all have great relationships with and work closely with our local police teams.

Interestingly, she also spoke about the need for volunteers. She reinforced the fact that the police are the citizens and the citizens are the police. We need to work as a team to reduce crime. Sharon Baker, our Chief Inspector for Yeovil would love to see growth in volunteers in:

- an increase in Specials Police (15 hours a month) who will be trained alongside other police officers.
- More people shadowing a Police Officer. She stated that you are able to join the police for a shift and experience first-hand what the police do. Just fill out the online form.
- You could join as a speed watch volunteer or
- Join the independent resident's panel to monitor people's experience of the police; discussing the use of tasers and stop and search techniques or visit custody units to take views from detainees on their experience.

One thing she stated very clearly is that Yeovil, and Somerset in general, are low crime areas and that they are working hard to keep it that way with investment into preventative long-term solutions to crime.

It was a fascinating meeting and I hope we can help facilitate what I have learnt into the community.

Other News:

Did you know our latest newsletter is out now for the Somerset Carers? Download it here: https://issuu.com/communitycouncilforsomerset/docs/newsletter_issue_2_final

Linda Burton – Community Agent Taunton Deane - 07931 018019

Forestry England Update

By Rob Greenhalgh



Well it's almost autumn and that means the spectacular colour will soon be upon us! Strange to think we were only just welcoming the spring flowers a few short months ago. Here's a roundup of the summer's activity:

We were waiting a very long time for the sun to come out this year to allow us to start accessing the forest with the heavy machinery we use to pull the timber out of the woods. After a long wait we have now managed to complete the small scale works we started at Thurlbear last year, and have started the thinning programme at Wych Lodge. This huge woodland will be worked over the next 5 years doing 'little and often' so that any disturbance we make to wildlife will be small and localised. This will allow the whole population to flourish with the majority of the woodland undisturbed in any single year. Once complete, the forest will be more open with warmth and light reaching the forest floor and stimulating growth which will be beneficial to everything from dormice to butterflies and bats.

The wildlife in the woodlands around the Blackdown Hills is so rich that we were proud to recently host a training course on 'how to manage woodlands with protected species' to share the expertise with forest managers from the rest of the south west – this was the only site where so many different rare creatures could be found in such a close proximity to each other! This year's work alongside partners from various organisations such as the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Blackdown Hills AONB, Somerset Ornithological Society, Butterfly Conservation and Reptile and Amphibian Group for Somerset (RAGS) has enabled us to build a much more detailed picture of what thrives in our woodland. Successful surveys for nightjar, adder and a variety of butterfly species has really helped broaden our knowledge about our sites and will help inform our on-going management of them.

We have also installed some new signage and way marker posts around Castle Neroche to help distinguish access routes for all of our users. Historically the site has been accessible to all, and we love this

fact. Neroche really often feels so vibrant and lively with a huge array of visitors using the landscape for a variety of activities. We hope the new signage will contribute to people's enjoyment without restricting the sense of adventure! There may also be some further work taking place as we support Historic England in reopening and removing tree cover from the northern edges of the monument. Therefore, a number of trees will be felled to extend the meadow area and lessen the damage to any archaeological remains.

And finally, I'd like to say a big thank you to the team from Neroche Woodlanders – the volunteers have been instrumental in supporting our work both at Staple Hill and Castle Neroche, as well as the more hidden away venues such as Britty Common. They recently tackled the blight of Himalayan balsam that affects the hillfort at Castle Neroche; the team really helped to beat this back and hopefully allow our native species to thrive. Thanks all.

A final note to say we will be planting our commemorative tree at Castle Neroche to celebrate the 100th year anniversary of the Forestry Commission. We will be holding a wild tree planting service on Wednesday 20th November in the car park and installing a stone and plaque to mark the occasion.

Rob Greenhalgh (Community Ranger) and Jon Burgess (Forester)

News from Bickenhall and District WI

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

MEETINGS

The May meeting included the Annual Meeting where Tricia Dryden was re-elected as President for another year. Marianne Bray presented the resolutions regarding local buses, and not to fear the smear test. After a lively discussion we voted for both the resolutions that will go forward to be voted on at the National WI Meeting.

Jutta Blumenthal gave a very interesting talk in June on the use

of herbs and spices in cooking and healing. In July, Alison Brown gave a talk about her and Anthony's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, she spoke eloquently about the logistics of getting the pilgrims to Lourdes with the support of many other volunteers, including the doctors and nurses. She went on to tell us about where the pilgrims stay and the events they attend, including the famous candlelight processions, all cared for and supported by the dedicated volunteers including Alison and Anthony.

EVENTS

In June despite the very heavy rain we ran a very successful plant sale alongside the Pop-up Café. Many thanks to all who provided such wonderful plants for the sale. The WI run the Cafe every Friday in St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine from 10.30am till 12.30pm. It is a great success, and many have sampled our wonderful home-made cakes and savouries, and enjoyed the chats and friendship found at these busy Friday mornings. Do come along, we would love to see you. Look out for more events being run by the church and the WI during the Friday cafe.

Members attended an outdoor production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** by the Taunton Thespians at Dillington House in July and managed to keep dry with only a few raindrops descending during the performance.

SOMERSET COUNTY WI FEDERATION EVENTS

Flower and produce show

This was held at Cheddon Fitzpaine Village Hall, some of our members entered the different classes and as an Institute we entered the group class which required the creation of a tea tray for the Queen to include a floral decoration and food. Carole Wensley-Dodd came second with her decorated cup cakes (we may be biased but we think she should have won!) and Di Grabham also came a creditable second with her floral table decoration.



Carole Wensley-Dodd's cakes



Di Graham's table decoration

County Quiz

We took two teams to the county quiz at The Shrubbery, Ilminster – it was an enjoyable evening, but alas we didn't win so did not progress to the finals, although we did well.

SPORTING EVENTS

We are still getting a wiggle on with our walking netball. Frances Alford, a regular WI croquet player entered the County Golf Croquet pairs tournament with Margaret Bigg (an ex County Chairperson). Against strong opposition they came an excellent third.

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



ANNUAL VILLAGE CRICKET MATCH

**Stoke St Mary Cricket Ground
Sunday 1st September 2019
from 2pm**

**The annual competition between Staple
Fitzpaine, Thurlbear, Orchard Portman and
Stoke St Mary for the Walker Cup**

**A great afternoon's entertainment with some
very competitive cricket!**



Reaching out to 'Hard to Reach' communities

By John Thorne

There may be no such thing as a free lunch, although I can tell you there is such a thing as a free community hub van and it could be coming to your community soon, if you would like it to do so.

Otherwise known as the Somerset Libraries outreach vehicle, this is quite an exciting initiative which I hope will be just the start of a wave of investment in bringing the County Council to your doorstep. Originally designed as a children's services vehicle for Oxfordshire Libraries, the van has been re-branded with a striking new design which reflects the dynamic and vibrant Somerset Libraries service offer. It has been kitted out with cutting edge technologies to provide an exciting new way to further extend the reach of the library service.

Somerset Libraries already has an established outreach programme which has been highlighted through the recent service redesign process where more communities are now being served by mobile and outreach libraries. By the autumn, we will also have outreach officers in post to further develop this offer. The existing mobile library service continues and is not impacted by this new addition which showcases the diverse range of Somerset Libraries services. The new vehicle is aimed at the harder to reach communities throughout the county and

will offer targeted activities for those who use it. It is available to hire to attend and support a variety of activities at schools, community events, business support activities, family fun days, and much more. You can even try one of the BBC's virtual reality experiences or see the latest 3D printing technology in action.

When I was given an opportunity to look around it outside the Shire Hall, in Taunton, there were some primary school pupils giving guided tours and demonstrating the on-board digital equipment. Just as well, as being a stereotypical 'mature' man, I was a little out of my depth when it came to matters such as augmented reality, Nintendo Switch gaming, or computer coding. I saw the 3D printer in action and the hand scanner which I believe was used to scan some of the children's heads – although I'm not aware that any replicas were printed! I also took a Rubik's Cube challenge and was beaten hands down by a robot which took only about 60 seconds to solve it. There was even a toy called a Codeapillar which is used to teach coding to children before they even learn to read. As the name suggests, it is like a giant caterpillar, with easy-to-connect segments each of which is programmed to command the toy to move in a certain direction, forward, left, right, and so on. This helps children to develop coding, sequencing, and critical thinking skills without even having to be able to read.

However, when the Codeapillar was demonstrated to me, I did have a little chuckle as it failed to work. The reason: It had already been used so much that it had run out of charge, which just goes to show that even new technology has its limitations! I was quite surprised when I asked how many library books were stocked on the vehicle and the answer came back: None. The explanation was that depending on the type of event the van was attending and the kind of audience, the staff will load books targeted for that occasion, so it changes every time.

So, watch out for the vehicle on roads across Somerset over the coming months, particularly in the more remote areas, as we begin supporting a variety of community activities.

If anybody has an event they would like the outreach vehicle to support, or a particular group such as the cubs or girl guides or a school class, for instance, then please get in touch and I would be delighted to make the connection.



Neroche Hall Fish n Chip Quiz Friday 11th October

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

BYO beer / wine and a glass!

Doors open 7pm for prompt start 7.15pm

Advance booking essential on 01823 480286
Email r.davies507@btinternet.com



Events for your calendar

(Venue is Neroche Hall unless stated)

September 2019

- 1 Annual Cricket Match—Stoke St Mary
- 4 Quiz Night (The Greyhound)
- 5 Thursday Lunch Club
- 20 Friday Film Night - Fisherman's Friends
- 21-22 Somerset County Show (Taunton Racecourse)

October 2019

- 2 Quiz Night (The Greyhound)
- 3 Thursday Lunch Club
- 9 Women's Institute
- 11 Autumn Fish n' Chip Quiz Night
- 26 Neroche Craft Fair

November 2019

- 6 Quiz Night (The Greyhound)
- 7 Thursday Lunch Club
- 13 Women's Institute
- 23 Take Art presents Kathryn Roberts and Sean Lakeman

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

Household Recycling & Refuse Collections

Week commencing Monday 26th August, all kerbside collection will be pushed back by one day



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

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

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

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: nerochemail@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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