

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

Issue 41 - Autumn 2021



*Flying machines, secret agents and loads of dogs!
The 2021 Scarecrow Festival had it all.....*

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.

Scarecrow Festival 2021

By Karen Learoyd

Once again, the Neroche Scarecrow Festival didn't disappoint! What an amazing collection were out on display from the first Saturday of the competition. The weather had been exceptional the week before while the scarecrows were 'under construction', and I'm sure most participants were glad that their creations weren't going to be subject to heavy rain!

This year's theme of 'Characters from Stage and Screen' brought a wide variety of ideas to the fore, some fiendishly clever constructions, others with an incredible level of detail in them, all had been put together with care, imagination, and flair. Musicals were well represented with The Greatest Showman, Titanic, Mary Poppins, the Phantom of the Opera, Eliza Doolittle, and the Tin Man from the Wizard of Oz, all on display. We had the devilishly smooth James Bond and Jack Sparrow, as well as the seductive Cleopatra. Children's films took centre stage with the creation of Cruella and the 101 dalmatians (yes all of them!), Paddington, Gromit, Beauty and the Beast, Scooby Doo, the Little Mermaid and Stick Man. Action films and thrillers were covered by Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines and The Birds Unhitched! A good number of the scarecrows were entirely crafted by children in the community, and their efforts were amazing.



That Sinking Feeling



The Birds Unhitched



My Heart Will Go On



Tin Man



Jack Sparrow



Stick Man



Cleopatra

In the glorious weather of Scarecrow week, people travelled around by car, bike, foot and even horseback. Whenever you took the tour, you could be guaranteed to see someone else doing the same, maps and pens in hand to record their favourites. Over 90 voting slips were lodged at St Peter's in readiness for the grand prize giving at the BBQ on Sunday afternoon.

During the week, Alison Brown hosted a tea at Battens

Farm, which was well attended, even though it was scorching hot! The scrummy cakes and cream teas were served by Carole Wensley-Dodd, Nicky Baxter, Kirsty Summerhayes and Jane Hole, as well as Alison. A lovely afternoon was had by all.

Onto the BBQ where the rain kindly held off until food had been eaten, drinks drunk and the winners announced. Many thanks go to Jon Bell,

Jac Kolkowski, Rebecca George and Mark Porter for their assistance. Over £600 was raised for St Peter's throughout the week, and Alison reported that many of the voting slips had messages on them highlighting just how much people enjoyed seeing the fabulous creations, and how difficult it was to pick a favourite!

But a winner there must always be, and the results were:

First Place – Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines (John Cooney)

Second Place – James Bond 007 (Harriet and William Lister)

Third Place – Cruella (RSPCA West Hatch)

Children's Award – James Bond 007

Special mention to all the children who got involved, including the Macey, Allen, Young, Chapman, Lister, and Lewis families, as well as all the 'older' participants who came up with the ideas, and hopefully had lots of fun creating their entries. And special thanks to Alison Brown, who masterminds the festival each year, and with her drive and determination, makes it such a success.



Cruella



James Bond



Mary Poppins



Phantom of the Opera



Beauty and the Beast



The Little Mermaid



Eliza Doolittle



Scooby Doo



Gromit



The Greatest Showman



Paddington

Crown House B&B - Community Food Hub!

By Rachael Knight

Where to start!!!

After such an 18 months I suppose the best place would be at the beginning of my story. It's important to document periods in history, especially within villages and the people that lived there. If you have the Millennium Book 2000 for Staple Fitzpaine, Bickenhall and Curland, you will find my young family and myself living at Bow Green. Having started the toddler group at Neroche Hall with my good friend Katherine Michaels, as well as the job as Secretary at Neroche Hall thanks to Chris Baxter, we soon built up several great friendships and were involved in so much in the local community.



Roll forward 21 years and the word 'community' became so important as we experienced a global pandemic. Some people won't have been affected much by the pandemic, although others were deeply affected financially, socially, and obviously by the virus itself.

My story starts again when my neighbours here in Creech Heathfield (doctors and nurses at Musgrove Hospital), were unable to stock up with essentials from the supermarket after finishing work as the shelves were empty! I had just brought a large order of meat back for family and friends as usual from our farm in Cornwall, a chance to see my family as I knew it would be a while before we were able to see each other again. My neighbours were struggling to get fresh fruit and veg to go with the meat.... And that's where it all started really. My connections over the years from the B&B held me in good stead for such an emergency. Wholesalers were happy to supply us with fruit and veg boxes, and of course my brother supplied meat boxes so I could keep all of my neighbours and friends fed.

Word spread, and the business grew. We improvised as needs changed, and over the past 18 months, it's been such an incredible experience to have set up a new way of shopping for people, and also to provide a lifeline whilst in lockdown. For some people I was the only contact they were getting through their collections or deliveries. As the

months went on, we realised that local producers wouldn't be able to showcase their products at the bigger shows and events, and that we wouldn't be able to travel to our favourite areas to bring back produce. So, the next step was to contact local producers who were struggling with outlets and see if we could add them to our already fabulous list of quality products. Fresh Cornish fish boxes, local jams and marmalades, local free-range eggs and potatoes, free-range scotch eggs, hand baked luxury cakes and brownies, take away afternoon teas and cream teas were all very popular and still sell every week.

'Community'.... I've been lucky enough to be supported by my friends in my old neighbourhood and also by their friends and neighbours I'd never met before. We have lived through a pandemic together and supported each other when the going got tough. I was even nominated for the Somerset Medal by one of my oldest friends in Bickenhall, for which I was extremely honoured.

So, I'd like to take this opportunity to say how grateful I am for your ongoing support. With the B&B closed and my husband's gyms shut, it's been a tough year. Not everyone was supported financially by grants, so I found myself in the centre of those who were struggling and those who were doing well. We were quietly able to support members of the community who needed a little extra although wouldn't ask, by those who were happy to pay it forward. People really showed strength and kindness in the community, and this time will never be forgotten as new friendships have begun, and existing bonds strengthened.

If you'd like to know what products we can supply you with, please take a look at our Facebook page 'Crown House B&B'. So, thank you once again, we hope to see you all again soon for an afternoon tea. Stay safe and don't be a stranger. You're always welcome at ours....

Rachael

Rachael and her brother James



Summer Update from Thurlbear School

By Jo Moore

July in schools is traditionally seen as the time to start winding down for the summer break whereas, in reality, it is an incredibly busy time ensuring that the academic year ends well and the next one starts smoothly. This year is no exception, and alongside the list making, 'post-its' and planning for the start of the new term in September, we have also seen an increase in positive COVID contacts across school as the end of term draws close.



Despite this, our pupils have continued to be educated either face to face or via remote home learning and still able to enjoy a wide range of activities. Our 'socially distanced' 'bubble' sports day was an excellent day of participation and teamwork. The sun shone and the day culminated in a win for St Mary's team. Due to the pandemic restrictions, our usual overnight residential visits were not able to go ahead, although we were able to ensure that those year groups did not miss out and Mendip Outdoor Pursuits came to us instead. The children took part in Disc Golf, Archery, Axe throwing and Orienteering. I can highly recommend Axe throwing as a stress buster!

As well as some of our families, our younger pupils also took part in the 'Churches Count on Nature Love Your Burial Ground' by visiting and

exploring our local churchyard at St Thomas' church to count and record all the different plants and small creatures that live there. Among the spiders, woodlouse and snails there was great excitement at seeing a pheasant. A big thank you to Mary Bell for her help with this.

In keeping with the nature theme, we have had some swift nest boxes put up with the hope of attracting summer-visiting swifts and giving them a place to nest and breed year after year. We are delighted to be supporting swifts in Taunton and raising awareness.

And finally, we say goodbye to our Year 6 group, and we send our thoughts and prayers with them to their new schools. School staff will also have an opportunity to take a step away from all things 'school' and have a break before welcoming new pupils into our Foundation Stage class and across all year groups at the start of the new school year in September.



Swift Boxes

Pop-Up Café

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

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



Meet old friends and
make new ones

For more information contact

Tricia Dryden
tricia@witchlodge.co.uk

Neroche Heritage Fingerpost Project Final Update

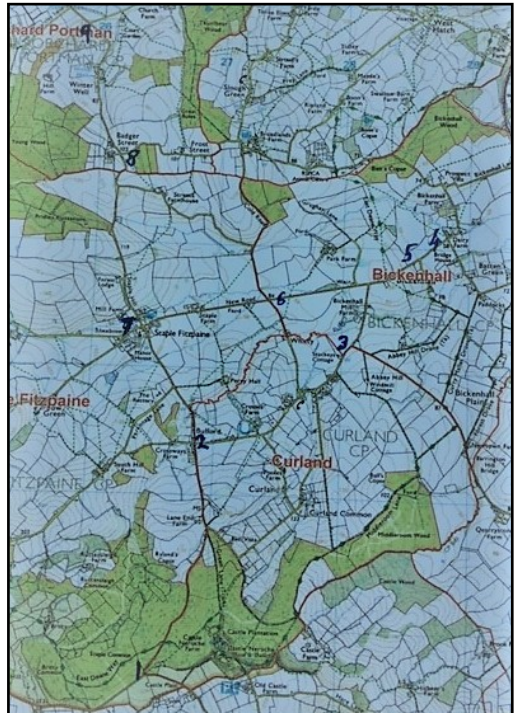
By Jane Hole

From the late 19th C, cast iron fingerposts were adopted to aid navigation as touring cycles and motorised vehicles began their ascent over horses and carts. Most of the fingerposts, including Somerset's, were removed in WW2 due to concerns they would aid an enemy invasion. All our posts were renewed by Somerset County Council between 60 to 70 years ago. They were made by the Sheldon Foundry at Wells in cast iron. Over the years damaged or missing arms were replaced with aluminium, or latterly plastic ones by SCC. When the county council stopped maintaining the posts the Neroche Heritage Fingerpost Project was established to protect, repair, renew and retain these iconic posts.

The Project is joint funded by Neroche Local History Group and the Parish Council.

There are 9 fingerposts in Neroche Parish: 1 Castle Plain, 2 Curland, 3 Curland/Broadway, 4 Dairy House Farm, 5 Neroche Hall, 6 New Road, 7 Staple Fitzpaine, 8 Badger Street, 9 Thurlbear.

Our community is a mine of remarkable talents as anyone who saw the recent scarecrow competition will agree. The Fingerpost Project is a case in point as an intrepid group of local volunteers with a wide range of skills came forward to help. One of them, John Learoyd, has made all the wooden patterns needed for casting the 15 new aluminium arms, 3 uprights and 1 finial. John is a true craftsman, without his skills the project would have been in serious jeopardy because of the prohibitive market cost of patterns.



Map with Fingerposts numbered in blue

We have been beavering away over the last two years, sometimes working directly on the posts, other times in our sheds and garages as we restored and prepared the arms and finials for painting.



Wooden pattern for new finial

It is an ambitious project requiring the restoration of the cast iron posts. Then, new arms, finial (the triangular top embossed with SCC) and uprights which have been cast in aluminium at a Bristol foundry. Two completely new posts will soon take shape at Dairy House Farm and near to Neroche Hall. A new upright will be added to the post at Badger Street. We needed

external contractors help with only two posts due to their dangerous position on roads. Even here our volunteers did all the renovation work on the arms and finials. Alongside this was the need to renovate the posts in situ at Castle Plain, Curland and Curland/Broadway.

The arms for Badger Street were removed and have been painted. Currently we are working on the new arms for Dairy House Farm and Neroche Hall. We hope the three new uprights are back from the foundry in Bristol in time for us to complete the project before the autumn.

We are proud of our project. The nine posts have between them 32 arms, 9 uprights and finials. There are 15 new aluminium arms and 17 are the original cast iron. 32 arms have been primed and rust proofed, then given several coats of white paint. Over 150 village and town names have been painstakingly overpainted in black, 9 uprights will have been painted grey. Quite an impressive total for a team of local volunteers who have willingly donated many, many hours of their time. We are all delighted to be part of such a worthwhile project to protect a local heritage that would otherwise have been lost to posterity. We aim to have a celebratory topping out party for all our volunteers and kind local benefactors later in the year!



Staple Fitzpaine fingerpost from this to this

However, it is not all over! The Neroche Heritage Fingerpost Project will be continuing. There is a need for ongoing maintenance, especially for the cast iron arms that get rusty. Another aspect will be the repair work required when a fingerpost is hit by a car, tractor, or lorry. You may have noticed the post at the Curland/Broadway junction has recently been walloped by a high sided vehicle. It will be added to our repair schedule!

If you would like to volunteer to be part of this project, please contact jane.hole@outlook.com

SCHOOL TERM DATES

**6th September to 21st October
and
1st November to 17th December**



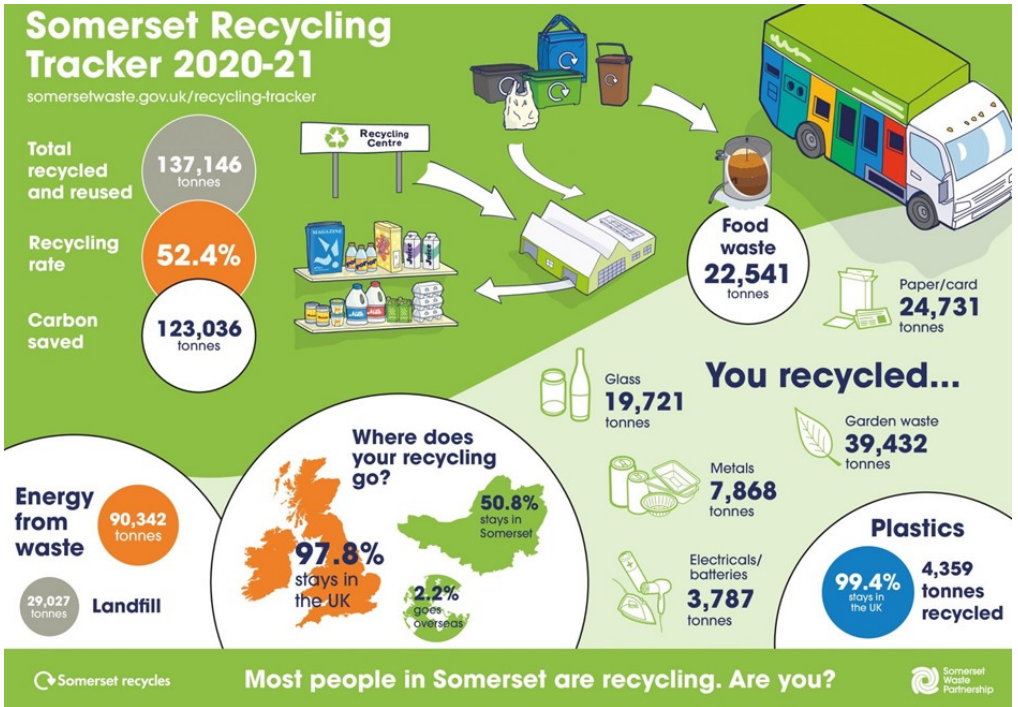
ANNUAL VILLAGE CRICKET MATCH

**Stoke St Mary Cricket Ground
Sunday 12th September 2021
from 2pm**

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

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

Somerset's big success: where does all your recycling go?



Impressive progress and more to come is the message from a new Somerset Waste Partnership report.

The Somerset Recycling Tracker report shows what happens to the thousands of tonnes of recycling that residents add to kerbside collections or drop-off at recycle sites. It tracks every tonne to the location and company of first use, whether in Somerset, elsewhere in the UK or anywhere overseas. The excellent figures in the latest report, for financial year 2020-21, are down to the enthusiasm for recycling shown by Somerset residents, and the impressive efforts of our new collections contractor SUEZ, and our recycling site operator Viridor.

Tracking all recycling shows that the companies are legitimate and that no recycling is dumped, burned, or ends up in the sea. It also highlights the kinds of products and packaging that Somerset's recycling becomes, from new plastic bottles to newsprint and compost.

Somerset Waste Partnership and its contractors have a commitment that all materials collected for recycling will stay in the UK, if there is reprocessing capacity and demand here. Due to that, a stand-out figure is the 97.8% of Somerset's recycling reprocessed first in the UK, up from the already-impressive 90% of the previous year. More than 50% of Somerset's recycling stays in the county itself. Most of the 2.2% exported was card and paper going back to firms in Europe and Asia to make yet more cardboard boxes for imports of white goods and electronics.

Another big positive is Somerset's performance on plastics. The 4,359 tonnes collected – compared to 3,266 tonnes in 2019-20 – reflects the early success of the new expanded Recycle More kerbside collections that are rolling out in phases across Somerset. They add plastic pots, tubs and trays, cartons, household batteries and small electrical items to weekly recycling. The far emptier rubbish bins are collected every three weeks. A remarkable 99.4% of plastics were reprocessed first in the UK, going to Northamptonshire, Cleveland, Manchester, County Durham, and Kent. Just 0.6% were exported to Lithuania, Poland and Spain and Italy, where they become new bottles and other packaging. In 2008, Somerset was the first UK authority to publish its pioneering annual recycling tracker, offering transparency and trust in its management of waste. Others have since followed that lead. Somerset's 52.4% recycling rate puts it in the top fifth of authorities for recycling, with 60% or more within reach. And it also makes Somerset one of the very best areas for carbon saving, at 123,036 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. Somerset's success demonstrates the value of double sorting – by you and your collection crew or recycling site staff. This ensures that we have the kind of high-quality, low-contamination materials that the market demands.

Of the 137,146 tonnes recycled or reused – bottles to cans, cardboard to cartons, wood to metals, and electrical items to clothes – the largest single material is the 39,432 tonnes of garden waste composted in Somerset and turned into the Revive soil improver. Another hefty load is the 22,542 tonnes of food waste. This is transformed by the Somerset anaerobic digestion plant at Walpole near Bridgwater into electricity for homes and businesses and farm compost to help grow more food.

Heaviest of the “dry” materials is paper and card at 24,731 tonnes, which goes to make newsprint and cardboard in Dorset, Kent, Norfolk, and Wales, while some also goes to France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Thailand, and Vietnam. The 19,721 tonnes of glass bottles and jars go to Sheffield and Wales, while 7,868 tonnes of metals – mainly steel and aluminium cans – are recycled into anything from new cans to car parts via companies from Devon to Doncaster. And 3,787 tonnes of electrical items – your old fridge or TV – and household batteries head for Merseyside, Wales, and the West Midlands to recycle metals and chemicals.

Recycling progress is matched for rubbish. Somerset has switched from landfilling all rubbish in the county to sending all kerbside rubbish and all suitable recycle site rubbish (more than half) to an energy-from-waste plant in Avonmouth. The 2020-21 Recycling Tracker shows 90,342 tonnes went to energy-from-waste and just 29,027 tonnes to landfill, figures likely to fall as Recycle More boosts recycling.

Most people in Somerset are recycling. Are you?

Neroche Thursday Lunch Club

**Neroche Hall
12.30pm for 1pm**



September 2nd, October 7th, November 4th

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a superb home-cooked lunch in wonderful company for just £7pp (transport and special diets can be arranged). Meet old friends and make new acquaintances - ideal for both long term residents and those who have recently arrived in the community. A wonderful way to spend a weekday lunchtime.

**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**

Brave the Shave!

Have you ever been brave enough to consider shaving your head for a charity? Well, that's exactly what Tami Boden-Ellis did in support of Macmillan Cancer Support's Brave the Shave.

Since 2015, thousands of intrepid shavers have taken the plunge and removed their hair in support of this worthwhile charity, raising over £22.7 million in the process, enough to pay for 140 Macmillan nurses for 3 years!

Setting herself a target of raising £100, Tami smashed it by raising over £1000 with the support of friends and neighbours. A word from Tami – “So many people have been so, so generous, it has been most overwhelming. I know Macmillan are so grateful. So, thank you all you good people”.

This is the not the first time that Tami has shaved her head for charity, having done it for several charities while living in the U.S. Many charities, including Macmillan, also use the hair removed to make real hair wigs for children and young adults who have lost their hair through cancer or other illnesses.

Well done Tami – we are in AWE!





BARN DANCE

NEROCHE VILLAGE HALL

SATURDAY 2nd OCTOBER

7.30pm

MUSIC From The Badger Street Band

BAR – RAFFLE

SPUDS/CHILLI & PUDDINGS

TICKETS: £10 in advance only

FROM: Marianne

treasurernvh@gmail.com

01823 480888

New Parish Council Chairman

My name is Mark Palmer, and I have the pleasure of being your new Parish Council Chairman. First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jon Bell for such a sterling job as the outgoing Chairman for the past 8 years. A feat in itself with all the meetings to chair and Parish items to deal with. So, thank you for your service Jon, and I know I can call upon you for advice should I need it.



My wife and I moved to Bickenhall at the start of 2015 to renovate a farmhouse and start a new life in Somerset from a small town just south of Salisbury. Having recently retired from working offshore, lately for the renewable energy sector, and before that the oil and gas world, as a geotechnical engineer. I began attending Parish Council meetings out of interest in the local community and having shown an interest I was soon co-opted onto the Council.

As I sit down at my desk to write this article for the Newsletter, the country has started the slow return to the new normal and all the scarecrows have been put away again until next year (oh that we could put this virus into storage for the next twelve months or longer). Congratulations to the winners of the competition and to all the others (myself included), there is always next year to show our skills.

On a housekeeping note, we have managed to co-opt onto the Parish Council two new members, and we welcome Mr Dave Knight and Mr Mike Vacher. Welcome to you both.

We have just received news that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government has made the decision on the unity status for Somerset with the decision that it is to be the One Somerset route (no longer to be under this title). On the face of it, this decision will have some impact upon all Parish Councils in Somerset, so we will wait and see how much change this will make.

The A358 planned route has been discussed by many of the parishes in the area, who have raised a number of objections and changes to Highways England's proposed route. For those who did not attend Neroche Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting, it was decided at this

public meeting that we would not raise any objection on the grounds that the route had little impact on our parishes. We are however, keeping in touch with the other local Parish Councils (to ensure we are fully updated on all discussions and meetings), however meetings with Highways England and parishes are still ongoing.

Taylor Wimpey purchased a large area of land, a significant portion of which is inside the parish of Orchard Portman, with a view to developing a new town, this is also a bone of contention and one which we are whole heartedly opposed to.

The next Parish Council meeting is to be held on the Thursday 9th September at the Neroche Hall, Bickenhall. All are most welcome.



Karen's Flowers



Carole's Flowers

MEMORIAL SERVICE

For Richard Coate

**Formerly of Hewetts Farm, Curland
who sadly passed away 30th May 2020**

**To be held on
Thursday, September 23rd at 2.30pm
At St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine**

All welcome

Neroche Hall Chairman's Update

By Richard Davies

August 2021

I concluded last year's Annual Report with the phrase 'let us be optimistic for the coming year' and that sentiment will probably also be my finishing wish at the end of this report. Given that the hall only opened to limited bookings a couple of months or so ago, it is pleasing to report that we have managed to stay solvent. This was due in no small way to the grants given to us through the local authority as part of the Government's initiative to give financial assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.



A brief period during the Autumn of 2020 permitted limited re-opening of the hall to badminton, and several afternoon tea-parties in lieu of the monthly lunch club, although this was short lived and followed by a further 'lockdown'. It is therefore encouraging that with the lifting of all restrictions last month we have some hope of returning to a more inclusive and 'normal' life at the hall. The hall committee have already planned several events in the lead up to the end of this year (Quiz Night, Barn Dance and Craft Fayre) and hopefully some additional bookings will develop with this new freedom.

I am pleased to report that during this fallow period we have managed to replace all the hall lighting with new LED units which have made an excellent improvement throughout the building. I am sure that it enhances the hall experience for our users and will also deliver savings over time in respect of our electricity expenditure.

I would like to thank my fellow Trustees and committee members for their support and work over the last year as we have negotiated yet another uncertain year. We are now in a good position going forward and I hope we can continue the next year without the need for any further periods of 'lockdown'.

It is therefore against this positive and optimistic background that I have decided to stand down as Chairman after a decade in the seat, and pass the baton over to a new Chair, Kingsley Beck. It has been a very rewarding and challenging experience, and I remain committed to the notion that Neroche Hall is a valuable asset to the local community, and that they should continue to use and support this facility. I am sure that my successor will also receive the support of their committee and I hope that the community will also make that investment.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues past and present, during my tenure, for their help, friendship, and commitment.

Richard Davies
Chairman of Trustees

News from your District Councillor

By Ross Henley

This is the first article I have written for the Newsletter since lockdown eased in the spring and early summer. I have been able to get out and about and meet a number of residents at local events. I was delighted to see the Friday Coffee mornings have started again at the Church. I was able to get to the second one that was held, and it was so lovely to see lots of people and catch up with them over coffee and a cake. I have to say the chocolate brownies were lovely. By the time this Newsletter is delivered I will have attended the September village lunch. It's great to see this event start up again as we need events like this to bring people together, especially after nearly 18 months of stop start lockdowns due to Covid. Like every other community, COVID has had such a terrible impact on people's health and mental health.

I really enjoyed this year's Scarecrow festival with a movie theme. It was great bumping into residents while I was driving around the parish looking at the entries. They were all magnificent. My personal favourite was the Birds in Curland. I've always been a fan of Alfred Hitchcock films.

I've been involved in trying to support several local parishes who are concerned at proposals to dual the A358. I remain incredibly sceptical about the whole project to be honest. I attended a packed public

meeting at West Hatch Village Hall at the end of July to give support to alternative proposals which have been agreed by several Parish Councils and have been submitted to Highways England for consideration. I did say at the meeting that I felt that Highways England must be the only people who believe that long term, that daily traffic levels will return to pre Covid levels. I was asked if I supported the A358 dualling in general and I said that I did not in principle, but that if it does eventually take place, I support the alternative proposals put forward by lots of the local Parish Councils, rather than those put forward by Highways England.

I have also been campaigning on the Taylor Wimpey issue. I am appalled by the decision of the Crown Estate to have sold a large area of land in Orchard Portman to Taylor Wimpey. I believe there should be a parliamentary enquiry into the sale of the land. I helped set up a petition in the summer on this issue and over 25 per cent of the adults in the Neroche villages have signed it to date. I am also very concerned that the proposed Government planning reforms are a major developer's charter, and that local resident's concerns and objections to huge new planning applications will be ignored in favour of large-scale development by national companies. I will continue to campaign on this issue and do all I can to protect our beautiful countryside against large scale housing plans.

On other Council issues, I heard recently that the neurodiversity support policy I introduced into Somerset West and Taunton Council had been nominated for a national award. The Municipal Journal has nominated the policy for its 'Innovation in Diversity' award. I am really pleased that my Council policy which supports council staff and job applicants with neurodiversity issues is receiving national recognition. We can as a society still do so much more to support people with autism and other neurodiversity issues.

Finally, I wanted to say that the last few weeks have been very challenging for me as my dad passed away very suddenly at the end of July. It came as a terrible shock, and I wanted to thank everyone who has contacted me and been so kind and thoughtful to me at this very sad time.

In these strange times it is difficult to report on what we have done via our Zoom meetings and not sound the same each edition. Although all being well with the changes in the lockdown rules, we hope to be starting our meetings back at Neroche Hall in September.

We have had some excellent Zoom talks. The Somerset Federation talks ended with Carol Drinkwater, actor and author, best known for her portrayal of Helen Herriot in the original series of *All Creatures Great and Small*. The National Federation meeting was also held on Zoom. The invited speakers being HRH, the Countess of Wessex, Dame Cressida Dick, and Baroness Brenda Hale. All three speakers gave inspiring speeches covering strong women and empowerment, along with the need for more diversity in public life, and the issue of domestic violence.

On a more local stage our meeting in July was presented by Helen Emery of *The Painted DragonFly*. Helen spoke openly and honestly about events in her life, some sad, that decided the path her life would take. Not to be an engineer, but a potter and entrepreneur. Her talk was both inspiring and moving, Helen has just written a chapter for 'Shine on Crazy Daisy' about female entrepreneurs and their personal journeys into the world of running your own business. Her chapter is aptly titled 'The Painted DragonFly from Creation to Flight'. Helen felt that she did not have a story to tell, although I know our WI knew she had. Later this month we have a hands-on pottery day with Helen, so watch this space for photos!

Lap Blankets

A big thank you to Molly's sister who helped in the knitting efforts for the lap blankets by making 96 squares (I haven't finished my first square in 2 years!!!). A big thank you also to Frances and Pauline for sewing them together. Some of the blankets were taken by Carole to Calway House.

Doreen Marsh

It's with great sadness that I mention the death of Doreen Marsh. Doreen had been a member of the Bickenhall and District WI for many

years, and held many offices including President. She was always supportive of new and existing members in encouraging new ideas and suggesting how new members could help support our small group. She was an inspiration in many aspects of her life and especially to members of our WI and will be greatly missed.

Sporting events

Marilyn Clarke is coaching our WI ladies at Neroche Hall in the art of Tai Chi after her excellent Zoom presentation in June and at a previous meeting before lockdown! We hope with the changes in the Covid restrictions rules for the use of school halls, we will be able to start WALKING NETBALL again in September.

Future Events

EYES DOWN for the most entertaining event of the season with loads of prizes (Covid allowing). Christmas Bingo at Neroche Hall on December 10th - 6.30pm for 7.00pm. Look out for further information in posters, Facebook and email alerts.

Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month at Neroche Hall, we hope to be back in September

Covid allowing

if you would like to join our meetings, please contact Tricia Dryden

tricia@witchlodge.co.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

Statistics for 2019

(the latest year for which statistics are available on the Somerset Intelligence website)

Crime and Community Safety

Avon & Somerset Constabulary has 11 Police stations in Somerset.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue has 24 Fire stations (3 whole-time and on-call, 21 on-call only) in Somerset.

In Somerset in 2015/16, there were:-

7,118 emergency incidents reported to DSFRS.

292 dwelling fires.

2,230 Home safety visits and 132 schools talks made by DSFRS430.



Neroche Hall Fish 'n' Chip Quiz

Friday 17th September

Maximum of 6 per team -

£3 per person entry
(Food extra)

BYO beer / wine and a glass!

Doors open 7pm for prompt start 7.30pm

Advance booking essential on

07895 002185
from 1st September



Email
karen.wensley@gmail.com

Wildlife in Our Churchyards

By Mary Bell



CHURCHES
COUNT ON
Nature

During the week 5th to 13th June, Staple Fitzpaine and Bickenhall churchyards participated in the National Nature Count led by the conservation charity, 'Caring for Gods Acre', during 'Burial Ground Week'.

The sun shone throughout, and the churchyards looked glorious. With recent rain and grass cutting delayed, wildflowers flourished. Highlights included Ox Eye Daisies, Vetches, Speedwells, Twayblades, and several species of Orchids in Bickenhall. With 'I spy' activities, trails, spotter charts, information sheets and reference guides, all ages enjoyed spending time in our tranquil, long preserved green spaces. Everyone's findings contributed to our growing tally of wild species. Thurlbear School children also joined in the event, counting wildlife in St Thomas' churchyard, Thurlbear.

All plant and animal species recorded in our churchyards during the week have been submitted for entry onto the National Biodiversity Network database.

Let's get together and feel all right

By John Thorne

My sister lives near Glastonbury. I don't hold that against her! I love Glastonbury and its culture and people. It brings back memories of my youthful hippy days. Yes, hair down over my shoulders, tight fitting loons, and, ahem, a few other habits of the era. Memories which were relived some years ago when I worked with the Glastonbury-based Sunrise Festival organisers, led by a bearded and cloaked university educated enigmatic who went by the name, Sun Bird. And, as I write this, it is six years and one day since Sun Bird was tragically killed in a car crash in the Alps. To this day, I never found out his given name.



The late Sun Bird, co-founder of the Sunrise Festival, giving a television interview on site arranged by John Thorne

Some might say Glastonbury is like another world. Certainly, if some local politicians had had their way, then Glastonbury would be in a different part of our world. For that is what would have happened had the local government minister Robert Jenrick, not decided Somerset should in future be administered by a single local authority. I am talking of course about the One Somerset model being adopted from next year for a unitary council in Somerset.

Under this format you will still have your hard-working parish council looking after your interests at a very grassroots local level, and then one county-wide council looking after everything else. Gone, for instance, will be the days of fly-tipping being reported to the district council unless it is toxic material, in which case it goes to the county council; or district councils being responsible for collecting your household refuse (which they have been failing to do adequately in recent weeks!) and the county council being responsible for disposing of said waste. My council leader summed it up with the following comment: "One Somerset is simple, it is clear, and it delivers what our residents want – better services, better value for money, decisions

made locally, and an end to the confusion and bureaucracy of having multiple overlapping councils.”

You may know there was an alternative plan to split Somerset in half which was put forward by the leaders of the four district councils, three of whom are politically opposed to myself and my group. Unfortunately, they seemed to allow party politics to drive their agenda rather than what was best for residents. They wanted to create a West Somerset and an East Somerset, each with its own unitary local authority, claiming my sister lived in a distinct environment and culture different to my half of the county. What these district leaders never accepted, or maybe did not understand, was that the contest between the two models was not a beauty pageant. It was not all about choosing the contestant who looked the most attractive. It was as much about character and brains as well. Which is why One Somerset was always going to be chosen.

Unfortunately, politics being the dirty game that it often is, some of my opponents are now thinking ahead to headlines for their election campaign leaflets next May. Watch out for literature attacking Conservatives for ‘riding roughshod over the wishes of the people of Somerset’ (remember, you read it here first!). This is, frankly, a nonsense, so I feel it is worth setting out a few brutally honest home truths.

The claim that the people of Somerset have three times ‘decisively rejected (the) proposal for a single unitary’ is nothing more than fake news. It is based most recently on an advisory poll run by the districts where they claim 65 per cent of people voted in favour of Stronger Somerset. In fact, it was 65 per cent of the 25 per cent of people who were bothered enough to vote in the knowledge that the poll was simply an advisory exercise. You can do the maths, I’m sure: Only 16 per cent of eligible voters supported two unitaries and 84 per cent did not.

Then, there was an Ipsos MORI poll with a random sample of 2,049 people ‘stopped in the street’ where only 29 per cent (604 individuals from our population of 550,000) supported two councils. Bear in mind the pollsters sowed confusion by also giving two other choices of ‘no change’ or the councils all working more closely together, neither of which were options under consideration. They then took the 489 people

who had responded 'no change' and asked if they would prefer one or two councils and came up with 58 per cent of that small group backing twin unitaries (272 people).

Lastly, the district leaders referred to 2007 when the county council was run by a different political party who simply proposed a unitary takeover of all local government services, very different to what is being taken forward today. Thankfully, Mr Jenrick also saw through this and is allowing my sister and I to continue inhabiting the same world. Finally, yes, the headline is a Bob Marley lyric, a message I know was endorsed by the late Sun Bird.

DID YOU KNOW?

People and Neighbourhoods

An estimated 562,225 people live in Somerset.

Somerset's population rose by an average of 4,000 per year over the last 5 years.

48% of Somerset's population live in a rural area (whereas the figure for England is 18%).

17.6% of Somerset's population are children in the age range 0-15 years.

Almost 25% of Somerset's population are over the age of 65; West Somerset has the highest percentage of over 65s in the UK.

6% of Somerset residents were born outside of the UK; of these the most common country of birth was Poland.

Somerset covers 1,333 square miles.

430,171 people are eligible to vote in local government elections.

Economy and Jobs

Somerset's economy is worth £11.6 billion.

The county has 24,510 businesses.

78% of Somerset's businesses have fewer than 5 employees.

82.7% of people aged 16-64 are employed.

Median gross annual pay for Somerset is £29,112 just below the UK average of £30,353.

Somerset has a high concentration of employment in the aerospace and food and drink sectors.

4,650 MoD personnel work in Somerset.



CRAFT FAIR



**Saturday 23rd October 2021
10.30am to 3pm**

NEROCHE HALL, BICKENHALL TA3 6TY

**Lots of different gifts and crafts
including jewellery, pottery, wooden
items, natural skincare, books, cards etc.**

Buy your Christmas presents here

Free admission and free parking

**Refreshments on sale including Coffee,
Tea, Cakes and Ploughman's lunches**

News from RSPCA West Hatch

Wildlife Centre – open for admissions every day 8am-9pm
Animal Centre – by appointment only

We are very lucky at West Hatch RSPCA to be able to care for and rehabilitate a wide range of animals. The West Hatch animal centre is unique in that it is divided into two sites - the Wildlife Centre and the Domestic Animal Centre. The RSPCA has a long history in West Hatch with the Animal Centre originally opening in 1963 and being joined by the Wildlife Centre in 1993. In 1997, the Domestic centre was extensively rebuilt to modernise and be able to accommodate a wide range of animals. Alongside the typical animals you may expect such as dogs, cats and rabbits, we are also able to care for a variety of other small animals, exotics and farm animals big and small - we are one of the few centres that are able to accommodate pigs!

The majority of our animals come to us via our frontline RSPCA inspectors, often due to poor welfare conditions. This summer an inspector asked if we could take some Multimammate Mice, there were over 140 mice removed from a single property.



Over the long history of the centre, we have never been asked to take this type of animal before. We had to do some research to ensure we could meet their specific needs. They are fascinating little creatures and highly social, so it is important to keep them in same sex groups. We had to ensure their dietary needs were met, as they are not commonly kept as pets, there isn't any commercial complete food available. Naturally they eat a variety of seeds, insects and fresh forage, herbs and vegetables. A collective noun for a group of mice is Mischief and this group were certainly very inquisitive and mischievous, especially when it came to their daily head count and check, as they love to bury between folded layers of towels on shelves in their cage! They are called multimammate mice because they can have 8-12 pairs of mammae (milk producing glands) in comparison to other mouse species which only have five. They are able to raise large litters

and are typically bigger than other mice species and more comparable to Syrian Hamsters weighing approximately 100g with males being larger than females.

Fortunately for these mice they didn't end up as snake food, which is what they were being bred for. We still have a couple of groups looking for homes although the majority have gone on to their new lives and we have had some wonderful feedback from their adopters as to what amazing little animals they are!

In the Wildlife centre summer madness is underway. Babies of all species are in need of our care and the recent hot dry spell has seen an influx of juvenile swifts which are keeping staff busy round the clock. Here are just a few of the animals in our care right now.



Baby Weasel



Brown Long Eared Bat



Baby Hog

There are so many ways in which you can help the animals at West Hatch. Simply sharing Facebook appeals and encouraging friends to 'adopt don't shop' when taking on any new animals - both have a big impact. You can also donate animal-related items in our donation bins in the car park. We are always grateful for supplies such as animal food, bedding and newspapers. If you would like to be more hands on we also offer voluntary roles at both the Wildlife and Animal Centre. These can be applied for through the website rspca.org.uk/ volunteer and can range from working with the animals, admin work through to garden and maintenance. Fostering an animal is also another way to get involved if you are not in a position to adopt.

Thank you for supporting us in whichever way you can!

St Peter's Church Flower Guild

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

Now the church is open every day and services are being held, it's good news that the Pop-Up Cafe is **NOW OPEN every FRIDAY 10.00 till 12.00**. It is delightful that more people can enjoy the stunning displays of flowers produced by our small band in the flower guild. We were gifted some superb wedding flowers in July from Ness and Nick in Bickenhall, from Ben's wedding, they were just beautiful.

We are now looking forward to fully decorating the church for Harvest Festival in October.

If you are interested in joining our small group who make up our flower guild, please do not hesitate to contact me.

More photos on page 21.



Wedding Flowers



Candy and Peta's Flowers



Kath's Flowers

St Peter's Church Plant Sale

By Jacqueline Kolkowski

Our first full scale plant sale was held in May. It was touch and go if we would be able to hold it due to Covid! We were going to hold the sale in Brian and Dianne Hood's paddock but due to the wet conditions and impending rain, Jan and V let us hold it in The Greyhound car park, thank you.

I was helped in the organisation by Patsy Giblett, who also provided many plants. We received many donations of a great variety of plants, some being very unusual. Due to the fabulous amount of tomato plants donated, those which were leftover were donated to Thurlbear School, and to an agricultural/therapeutic day centre in Merriott called Ark.

The rain kept off for most of the morning, just the odd shower, and we did get a bit wet packing up. It was a super morning, and so nice to see so many people meeting together and also making £525 for the Church. We could not have done this without the donation of so many plants from so many people, along with all who came along to buy. Thanks to those who helped on the day. Patsy and Letty both gave excellent advice on the plants and their growing conditions. Our other excellent support came from Alison, Tina, Peta and Mark.

We will be doing small plant sales at the pop-up cafe (held on Fridays) so look out for information in the e-mail alerts.



DID YOU KNOW?

Health and Wellbeing

Somerset has:-

- 1 Clinical Commissioning Group
- 74 GP practices
- 2 NHS Hospital Trusts
- 12 NHS community hospitals
- 103 pharmacies
- 75 NHS opticians
- 81 NHS dentists
- 68 Nursing/Care homes

Life expectancy in Somerset is 80.4 for males and 84.1 for females. 81% of Somerset people say their health is good or very good. About 14% of the adult population of Somerset currently smokes.

Environment and Transport

Around 15% of Somerset is either at or just above sea-level. The highest point is Dunkery Beacon, at 520m above sea level
Somerset contains:-

- 1 National Park (Exmoor)
- 4 Areas of Outstanding National Beauty: the Quantock Hills, Mendip Hills, Blackdown Hills, and part of Cranborne Chase);
- 127 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

In 2018/19 3.2 million passengers used the 10 railway stations in Somerset, an increase of 23% since 2010.

In 2018/19 there were 6.3 million bus passengers a year, down from 9.8 million in 2009/10.

In 2019 there were 959 licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in Somerset, down 11% since 2015.

Somerset has 4,230 miles of roads.

August Village Agent News

Summer is in full swing! And we are delighted to share with you a new project 'GET OUTSIDE IN SOMERSET'!

Being outside brings huge benefits for our physical and mental health, and for a large majority of people, the Covid-19 pandemic has created many barriers to getting outside, and this has amplified feelings of loneliness and isolation.

That's why we're working with organisations from across the county to support people in Somerset to get outside and move in more ways that suit them.

There is a new website covering a wide variety of activities, events and challenges, as well as information on a wide range of topics across health and wellbeing, the website will be regularly updated with new activities to inspire the Somerset community.

From yoga in the park, fishing, and geocaching, to cycling, climbing, and forest bathing, there is something for everyone. For more information, please visit <https://getoutsideinsomerset.co.uk/> and use the really easy search function to discover something near you! If you would struggle to take part, but want to, let us know and we can help find a solution!

If you are involved in any outdoor activities you would like listing on the website, get in touch with the Get Outside team! We are also looking for passionate people to support the project and inspire the community to get outside to improve their physical and mental health – so share your passion with Somerset and become a Get Outside Ambassador!

Loneliness: We all feel lonely from time to time. Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different. One common description of loneliness is the feeling we get when our need for rewarding social contact and relationships is not met.

But loneliness is not always the same as being alone. You may choose to be alone and live happily without much contact with other people, while others may find this a lonely experience. Or you may have lots of social contact, or be in a relationship or part of a family, and still feel lonely – especially if you don't feel understood or cared for by the people around you – there is more on this here:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness/#WhatCausesLoneliness>).

Lockdown has amplified this for many people, as groups and regular social activities stopped running temporarily, although hopefully now they are slowly reopening, and there is always support and help at hand from us Village Agents – we have reopened many of our face-to-face Talking Cafes, as well as our Facebook live sessions – so book an appointment for a chat - www.somersetagents.org/talking-cafes/

We can arrange regular Talk & Support calls for you for free, just to have someone to chat to, arrange befriending services and link you to Good Neighbours schemes where they are set up – our Agents are very skilled in helping people overcome loneliness and reduce isolation. Also, check out the many groups that meet on the Get Outside website – you might discover a new hobby and new friends!

As ever, Village Agents can be contacted by calling 01823 331 222 or visit the website to find your local Agent, or request a call back:

www.somersetagents.org



DID YOU KNOW?

Education, Skills and Learning

There are 268 state-funded schools (including 110 Academies), 4 Further Education colleges, 4 Free school and 32 Independent schools in Somerset.

71,190 pupils attend state-funded schools and 8,124 attend Independent schools.

62.2% of pupils achieved a standard pass in English and Maths GCSEs in 2018/19.

81% of students achieved at least 2 A-levels (2018/19).

35.2% of Somerset residents aged 16-64 have a Level 4 (degree or equivalent) qualification.

39% of Somerset pupils go into Higher Education institutions.

83.5% of schools in Somerset were judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding (2019).

Housing

There are about 227,000 households in Somerset (Census 2011).

Median house prices vary from £472,500 in the wards of Tower (South Somerset) and The Pennards & Ditchat (Mendip), to less than £150,000 in parts of Bridgwater (Sept 2019).

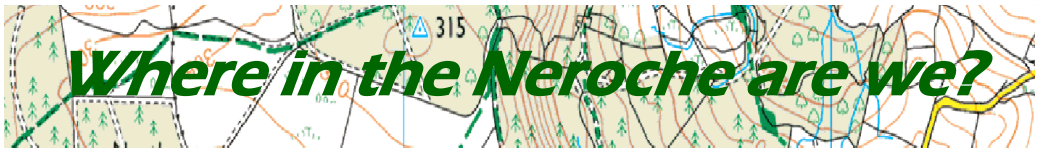
3,146 dwellings in the county are second homes (2019).

Do you Run a Local Business?

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

**For a small fee, you can advertise in the quarterly Newsletter, and
have your business included on the Neroche Villages website.**

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



Part Two

By Mike Aspray

I hope you have been able to get out and enjoy the two walks in Part One of the quiz, continuing on from the last edition, here is Part Two.

Answers are on Page 51 together with maps and notes on where to find them.

Once again, good luck and happy hunting!

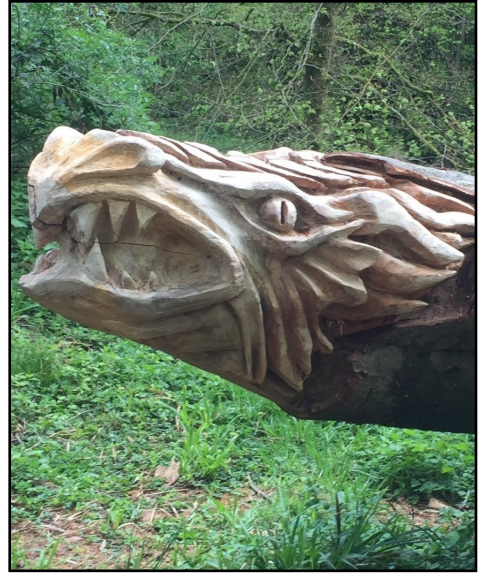


Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

News from Westminster

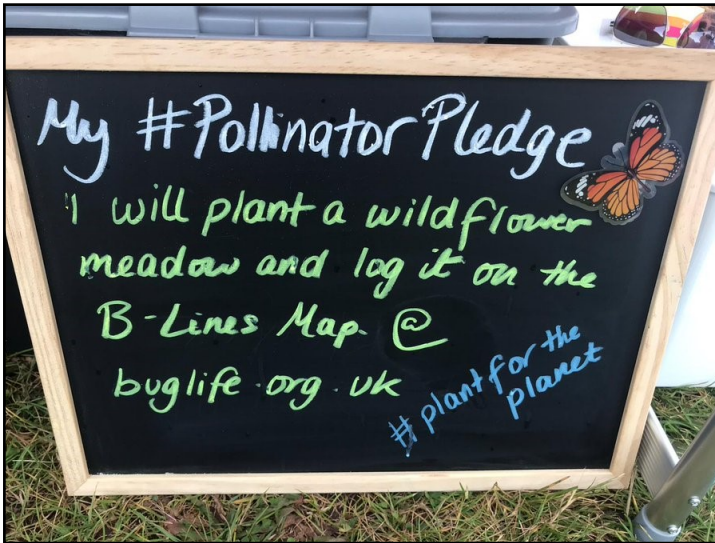
By Rebecca Pow, MP

Hello again,

COVID-19 UPDATE

Life as far as possible has been getting back to 'normal' thanks to the laudable rollout of the vaccine programme, with, (at the time of writing) more than 92% of adults in the SW having received a first dose, with 76% fully vaccinated and thank you, as ever, to all involved in this mammoth effort. It is still important for everybody who has not yet received their vaccine, including their second dose, to do so.

PLANT FOR THE PLANET



Earlier this summer in my capacity as Environment Minister, I was delighted to launch the Government's campaign 'Plant for Our Planet', to encourage businesses and communities to get planting, and protect nature through green actions ahead of the international environmental

summit COP26. The campaign is being supported by a variety of green organisations including the National Trust, Woodland Trust, The Wildlife Trust, and the Royal Horticultural Society.

I would encourage you all to take part where you can, whether planting flowers for pollinators, letting lawns or your local verges grow wild, or joining an existing nature project. The entire world has an extraordinary opportunity at COP26 to come together to tackle climate change and reverse biodiversity loss, and through thousands of individual actions,

Plant for Our Planet, can help to restore nature. Do have a look at the website which is packed with ideas that you could try whether individually or in a group. Just leaving a patch of lawn to grow wild, or leaving roadside verges unmown can help, and if space is at a premium, plant up a tub or a window box. Do share with me what you have done and make some recommendations for our Nature's Heroes designation.

I planted a mini wildflower meadow in my garden, and it's been a joy to watch as it has burst into flower, and the insects are certainly beating a path to it to enjoy the nectar. I will also log it on the B-lines map; this is a Buglife initiative to map a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, proving corridors for our precious pollinators to move around. The more of this we can do the better.

For more details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-urged-to-plant-for-our-planet-in-a-new-campaign-launched-today>

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

FUNDING FOR FARMERS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

Water pollution and the impact of water quality have been the focus of much attention recently, and in this respect with my Environment Ministers' hat on, I was delighted to announce an additional £17m to expand the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme which provides many more specialist advisers to work with farmers on taking action to reduce water and air pollution from their land. I saw action in progress on a recent visit to Higher Blindmoor Farm in the Blackdown Hills where positive action on this dairy farm, including extra slurry storage, covers on dairy sheds, hard tracks to reduce run off from rain, and planting of cover crops to reduce soil erosion, are making a useful contribution to reducing pollution, improving water quality, and importantly boosting farm profits.

ANIMAL WELFARE (KEPT ANIMALS) BILL

Many constituents have been in touch with me regarding the issue of puppy smuggling and the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill.

The UK has a long history of leading the way on animal welfare. I am pleased that now we have left the EU, the Government is committed to improving our already world-leading standards by delivering a series of ambitious reforms, outlined in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

Building on the Action Plan, the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill will bring in some of the world's highest and strongest protections for pets, livestock and kept wild animals.

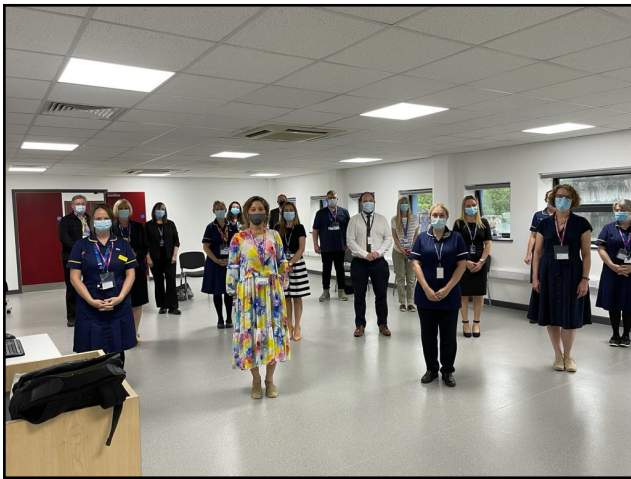
Primates are highly intelligent animals with complex needs and require specialist care. I am pleased that through the Bill the Government will deliver on the manifesto commitment to introduce a ban on keeping them as pets, ensuring that all primates being kept privately in England are being kept at zoo-level standards, and that ownership of primates at a level below these standards is phased out.

I understand that live animals can endure excessively long journeys during export, causing distress and injury. EU rules prevented any changes to these journeys, and the UK Government is now free to pursue plans which would see a ban on the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening. This Bill will ensure that the UK is the first European country to end this practice.

In addition, illegal imports of puppies are covered in the Bill. It will introduce new powers to tackle the unethical trade of puppy smuggling by reducing the number of pets, including dogs, cats, and ferrets, that can travel under pet travel rules. It will also provide powers for the Government to bring in further restrictions on the movement of pets on welfare grounds and allow for enforcement measures to support these restrictions. Further restrictions could include an increase in the minimum age of imported puppies, as well as the prohibition of the import of pregnant dogs, and dogs with mutilations such as cropped ears and tails.

NURSING DEGREES AND APPRENTICESHIPS

I had an inspirational visit to Bridgwater and Taunton College (Somerset University Centre) recently, which has become the first college in the country to be accredited to deliver Nursing Degrees and Nursing Apprenticeships. This is a really important step for Somerset; education has the power to transform lives and these programmes will unlock career pathways for students locally, which in turn, will benefit



local people through the provision of highly qualified health care professionals helping to meet the historic shortage of nursing skills across the county. The collaboration between the College, the local NHS trust and the University of West England is an exemplar partnership in action. The purpose-built training facilities

developed at the College are second to none; a huge well done to all involved. The next challenge will be to provide some additional accommodation for trainee nurses, a project I look forward to engaging in.

EMPLOYMENT MINISTER VISITS TAUNTON

It has been a tough time for many on the job front over the last year, and the highly professional and dedicated staff at our local Job Centre Plus in Taunton have been playing an invaluable role in helping to link prospective employees with local employers. I saw first-hand on an informative visit the remarkably positive results being achieved. In fact, one person was offered a job just as I arrived – his first in 18 months and he was over the moon.



It was a doubly exciting visit as our excellent Employment Minister, Mims Davies, joined me for the national launch of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Job Help Scheme. This campaign will help



inspire jobseekers to seize new opportunities, including through the Government's Plan for Jobs together with Kickstart, Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) and more. Importantly, these schemes demonstrate there are really good local jobs available with opportunities for training and progression right here in Somerset, and the employers I met at the event all said the Kickstart scheme in particular was opening them up to a whole new pool of young enterprising individuals. This will help to retain a much-needed skilled workforce, including many green jobs linked to the net zero future and nature recovery.

HALSE COMMUNITY PUB

I am certainly enjoying being able to get out and about in the constituency again, visiting communities and villages spanning from Langford Budville and Milverton, across to Burrowbridge. On my travels I was delighted to call in to the New Inn in Halse, recently taken over and being run by the local community. I was pleased to play my own part in helping during the last year by making representations to HM Treasury over their furlough issues; the community pub, complete with café and skittle alley, and five guest bedrooms has played a valuable role during the pandemic and it looks to be going from strength to strength.

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

Best wishes,

Rebecca

Forestry England Update

*By Robert Greenhalgh
Community Ranger*



As the team says farewell to Forester, Jon Burgess, as he undertakes a 12-month secondment extension, we now welcome our new Forester, David Peck. David has joined us from the South Downs and has graduated from the Trainee Forester programme which is run internally. David comes with an enthusiasm and passion for Forestry and has played a pivotal role in supporting the work of the White-tailed Eagle reintroductions on the Isle of Wight. Hopefully, many of you will have the opportunity to meet David and we look forward to what the next 12 months will bring – I'm hoping he'll bring an eagle or two along with him!

We have had a very busy summer finishing off a lot of the harvesting operations in the area. Many had to be delayed because of wet ground conditions and a variety of wildlife related factors, although it will be great to see the completion of works in Sturms Hill, Priors Park and a little further afield at Culm Davy. We had started operations in the very sensitive site located within Wych Lodge, in Piddle Wood, which houses the ancient and veteran oak and ash trees. However, this was also delayed due to the rain we experienced in May and June. This site presents a significant challenge as we aim to meander through the beautiful ancient giants that sit within Piddle Wood. We take every effort to ensure these special trees are protected and enhanced. No machinery is allowed within 30 metres of the trees themselves (although this can be variable depending on the ancient tree's diameter), so much of the harvesting work will be done by hand-cutters. This is the most sensitive approach. Thinning the beech crop around the ancient trees will allow more light to reach them which will only improve their longevity, ensuring they sit proudly for another few hundred years to come. We are also encouraging other established oaks in the area (impressive trees at a good age in their own right) and we hope these will grow on to become the next wave of ancient trees in

generations to come. There's something very fulfilling knowing that the work you do today will have a significant impact on future wildlife and posterity.

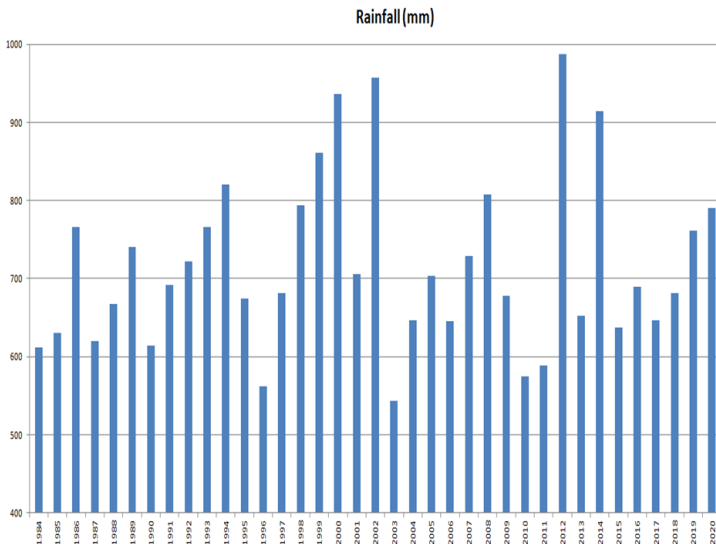
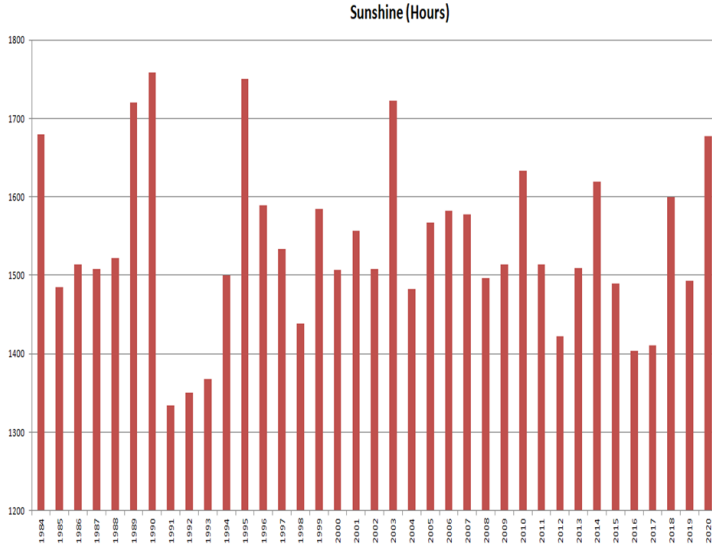
In other news, as the soaring summer temperatures depart and we look forward to a cooler autumn, things may be fairly quiet in the Blackdown Hills from a harvesting perspective. Sadly, we have had a large bout of Ramorum disease (phytophthora ramorum) in East Devon which attacks larch trees. Large swathes of timber crop will need to be removed and will likely absorb our attention for some time. However, on a more positive note, we have planted a huge 40,000 trees within the beat this year to date, and we have had another bumper year of wildlife sightings. We were very pleased to be supporting the great work of Somerset Ornithological Society (SOS) and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and working alongside the Blackdown Hills AONB to conduct another round of nightjar surveys. Similarly, we have been working alongside the Reptiles and Amphibian Group in Somerset (RAGS) to survey for adder and we have extended this to include moth trapping this year. And bats, bats, bats – it's all been about the bats this year. If they aren't turning up in our forests left, right and centre, then they are colonising our office, and even chasing our resident Woodland Officer from his cosy office chair on one occasion this year. Dr Andrew Stringer, Head of Environment and Planning, has commissioned a series of bat surveys to build on the data collected in 2019 – obviously Covid had a major impact on 2020. Some exciting species were recorded in 2019 and this work will help to better inform our management in future.

As things return to some form of normality, we hope to be able to start looking towards running volunteer opportunities on the estate again, and hopefully some events as well. It's been a long time since we were able to safely enjoy ourselves and sadly, we lost a lot of momentum on the activities and events side of things.

DID YOU KNOW?

Weather

There's an old saying, "*There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics*" so maybe we should take the following weather statistics with a pinch of salt. Actually these aren't statistics from Neroche anyway, the nearest 'official' weather station information I can find is Yeovilton. Make of these charts what you will.....





Poetry Corner

Help yourself to Happiness

Everybody, everywhere
seeks happiness, it's true,
But finding it and keeping it
seem difficult to do.

Difficult because we think
that happiness is found
Only in the places where
wealth and fame abound.

And so we go on searching
in palaces of pleasure
Seeking recognition
and monetary treasure,

Unaware that happiness
is just a state of mind
Within the reach of everyone
who takes time to be kind.

For in making others happy
we will be happy, too.
For the happiness you give away
returns to shine on you.

**By Helen Steiner Rice
(1900 – 1981)**



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

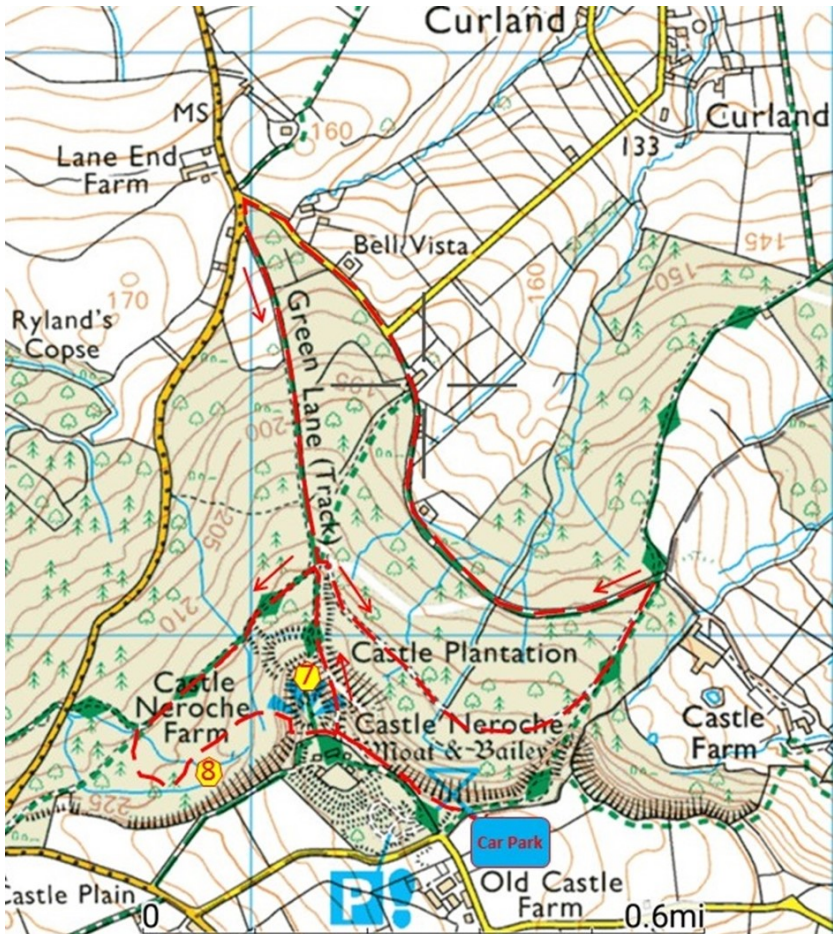
Where in the Neroche are we?

Castle Neroche

The next two photos are on a figure of 8 walk from the Castle Neroche car park.

Photo 7: So easy – one of the two dragon carvings either side of the bridgeway on the north side of Castle Neroche.

Photo 8: A beautiful spring/stream source tucked away high on the west side of the hill - tricky this one, as there are a number of them on the slopes around Castle Neroche.



The walk Starts/Finishes at the Castle Neroche CP – note, it is actually around the corner from where it's marked on OS maps. The figure of 8 loop is 3.2 miles in length with 682 feet of ascent and should take a little over one hour, again not including stops.

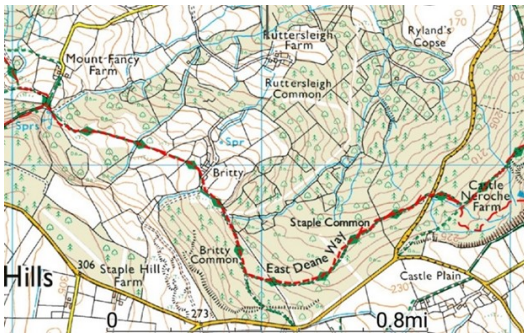
Exit the north edge of the CP (past the concrete plinth currently missing its information panel) through the gap, and into the iron age earthworks/moat which abound the top of the hill. Bear L, and go up and over the other side of the moat on a well-worn path which leads into a large open grassy area, in the centre of which is another plinth (c/w information panel!). Make sure you go to the bench by the fence on the R edge of the clearing and take in the magnificent views over the Vale of Taunton.

Cross the clearing and descend the obvious track heading N down the shoulder of Castle Neroche, passing the Dragon in **Photo 7**. Continue descending and at the track junction a few hundred metres on, turn sharply R (almost back on yourself) and follow the track, climbing slightly, then curving around the base of the steep N slope of Castle Neroche and down through the gap in a fence to join the access track to Castle Farm (green sign on your R).

Turn L and follow the access track, eventually joining the tarmac lane coming up from Curland on the R. Follow the lane to the junction with the Staple Fitzpaine road. Turn L and after a few steps go L again, taking the bridleway (ambitiously named Green Lane on OS maps!) back up to the track junction below the dragon carvings.

Turn R onto a wide straight track descending slightly back towards the Staple Fitzpaine Road. At the right-hand bend in the track, take the footpath on the L (not marked on the OS map) meandering up through the trees back towards the CP, climbing gently at first, then quite steeply soon after the spring/stream source in **Photo 8**.

Bear L at the top of the steep slope round the back of the outbuilding of Castle Neroche Farm, eventually up a set of wooden sleeper steps over a steep bank. Continue on the footpath until you re-join the main track leading back to the clearing, and retrace your steps to the CP. You can shorten this route by taking the bridleway on the L opposite Mount Pleasant house on the access track to Castle Farm, although I think Green Lane is a much nicer way up!



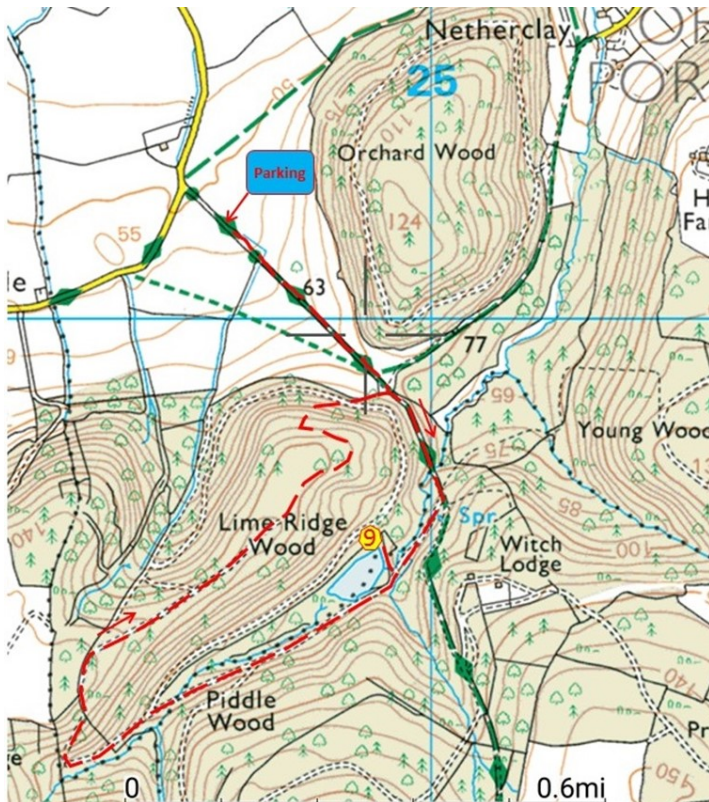
You can link the Staple Hill & Castle Neroche routes to form a splendid full day walk.

At the exit from the Nature Reserve turn L at the green 'Staple Hill' marker post and follow the East Deane Way across Britty Common and Staple Common. Cross the Staple Fitzpaine road then pick up the indistinct footpath (now on your R) up to the top of Castle Neroche.

Wych Lodge

The final photo is in Wych Lodge (note local spelling which differs to that used by OS). It is a bit further afield, although the walk along the top of Lime Ridge Wood is worth the effort.

Photo 9: Wood carving commemorating a former president of the Taunton Angling Association on the NE bank of Wych Lodge Lake.



The walk Starts/Finishes at the end of a track leading off the Orchard Portman/Heale Lane. There is very limited parking at the top of the track. This short walk is just 2.2 miles in length with 419 feet of ascent and should take about an hour.

From the parking area go past the water trough blocking vehicle access beyond this point, and continue up the bridleway with open fields on either side bounded by Orchard Wood on the L and Lime Ridge Wood on the R.

Go straight ahead at the track crossing where the bridleway from Netherclay joins from the L. Soon after, the track goes through a fenced section on both sides and crosses high above the outflow from Wych Lodge Lake followed by a short climb, at the top of which bear R till you reach the Taunton Angling Association sign.

Turn R and follow the anglers' path round the lake shore passing a bench on your L followed by the wood carving in [Photo 9](#). The path continues along the far side of the lake as far as the SW tip.

Retrace your steps to re-join the main track turning R and carrying on upstream for a further kilometre (note the OS map shows a track going R back past the N shore of the lake - ignore it as it is now a dead end). Soon after this the track turns R and climbs sharply up to the top of Lime Ridge Wood.

Follow the top of the ridge (past the track descending to the L) all the way to the end of the ride. At the end of the ridge, take the indistinct path to the R, initially along a fence line, which meanders down the slope to join a track leading back to the Netherclay track crossing. This descent off Lime Ridge Wood can be very muddy in wet weather, it can be avoided by taking the track L shortly after gaining the top of the ridge.

Turn L at the Netherclay track crossing and retrace your steps back to the parking area.

The Greyhound Inn

Country pub with rooms

Open daily

01823 480227

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



Somerset Electricians

Your Local Electrician

07860518025

www.somsetelectricians.co.uk

somsetelectricians@gmail.com



Lending with Heart and Mind

Somerset West
and Taunton

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

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

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

*subject to eligibility

Local Communication and Information

Websites:

Neroche Villages www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Community website run by the Neroche Communication Action Group. It has an up-to-date calendar of events; a news section; information about residents' action groups, including broadband, traffic; a business section and advertisements.

The website features a comprehensive list of clubs and organisations, including details of those in neighbouring parishes. It is also the website of Neroche Parish Council and lists its activities, agenda, minutes and reports.

Neroche Hall www.nerochehall.org.uk

The website lists the coming events, facilities and availability for hire of our village hall, and has an online booking form.

Church of England Seven Sowers Benefice www.sevensowers.org.uk

Has a calendar of events and church service times for Staple Fitzpaine and Orchard Portman churches, as well as other churches in the benefice.

Email Information:

The Neroche Communication Action Group runs an Email Alert System for sending information to those wishing to receive it. **Please note the email address for the EMail Alert:** nerocheemail@gmail.com

The Parish Magazine:

Full information on benefice matters, a great source of news, coming events and general information, and details of many local businesses and services. For new subscriptions phone Alison Brown on 01823 480441.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this Newsletter.

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

Newsletter Co-ordinator and Editor: Karen Learoyd -
nerochenewsletter@gmail.com

Treasurer: Mark Wanstall

Designer: Rachel Wakeman, Roche, Cornwall

Printed by Parish Magazine Printing - 01288 341617