

Working Together for a Better Community

# NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

Issue 42 - Winter 2021



*We wish to thank our friends at Taunton Racecourse for their continued support in sponsoring all of the costs for this issue of the Neroche Newsletter*

Welcome to the Neroche Villages' Newsletter, a quarterly publication delivered free to every household in Neroche Parish, helping the community to stay connected and up-to-date on local issues.

# Neroche Autumn Craft Fair

*By Karen Learoyd*

The morning of this year's Craft Fair dawned dry and bright, a marked difference to the last Fair in 2019, and a relief that it wasn't the following Saturday when the heavens opened!

Several keen exhibitors were already at the Hall when I arrived at 8.15am to open up so they could begin to setup their stalls. The next couple of hours were a whirlwind of activity as trolley loads of boxes, stands, decorations and items to sell, were brought into the hall, and the stands began to take shape. At the same time, loads of gorgeous looking cakes were being delivered by members of the WI. By 10.30am, everyone was ready, and the doors were opened to the public.

With over 20 stalls selling everything from jewellery to books, from wooden ornaments to pottery, from pet accessories to art, weaving, natural skincare, decoupage, and everything in between, there really was something for everybody. There were also stands to support the work of The Woodland Trust and Somerset Wildlife Trust. Many of the stallholders were local, and for three of them, it was their first fair. Fay Mackenzie (Alannah Jewellery), Annabel White (Speckled Earth) and Sharon Bradford (pottery) were all making their first foray into the world of craft fairs, and it proved very successful. Sharon had even sold items before the doors had opened! People were streaming in by 11am, and every stall had plenty of interested customers, purchases were being made, and everyone seemed to find something they wanted to take home!



*Alannah Jewellery*



*Speckled Earth*

*Continued on next page*



*Boo Botanicals*



*Gothic Mirrors*



*Sharon's Pottery*

When spending money became too tiring, a cup of tea and a slice of cake beckoned, and there was a wide choice of wonderful homemade cakes, as well as ploughman's lunches available. A chance to 'show and tell', or just to catch up with a friendly

face or two while resting the feet before it was time to take a second or third circuit around the hall. Meanwhile, the wonderful ladies serving refreshments were working their socks off!

Trade slowed down a little over the lunch period, although there remained a steady stream of people until the end of the fair at 3pm. Advertising had been more extensive than in the past, and there were people from much further afield than Neroche, which was a huge bonus for the event. The stallholders were extremely complimentary about the success of the fair, and are looking forward to the next one....watch this space.

Thanks, as always, to the amazing team of helpers on the day, especially the ladies in the kitchen who worked tirelessly to cope with the hordes, and to the chaps who helped with unloading, loading, and clearing away. A special mention to the cake makers from the WI, who donated their time and fabulous creations in support of the Hall.



# **Neroche Hall Fish ‘n’ Chip Quiz**

## **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September**

*(Report by Alan Perrior)*

As we look forward to a post-pandemic world, the extended amount of time that we’ve spent living with various Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions has reshaped many aspects of our lives. We’re social creatures and are not normally comfortable with being isolated for long periods. Therefore, it was with a huge sigh of relief that we (Jill and I) entered a team for the quiz – in prospect was a fun evening out with convivial company, a fish “n” chips supper and a couple of drinks.

And we weren’t disappointed. Of course, the number of teams was down on previous years although that was to be expected in these uncertain times – the important thing is that the event went ahead and was enjoyed by all who took part.

The quiz wouldn’t have happened without the hard work and enthusiasm of the organising team who showed great courage in planning and holding such an event without really knowing who, if anyone, would turn up. So, it’s “Well Done” to:



Karen Learoyd for taking advance bookings and sorting out the mid-quiz food orders.

Nicky Baxter and Mary Bell for the scoring.

Carole Wensley-Dodd and Alison Brown for the raffle.

Kingsley Beck for being the doorman and collecting the entry fees.

(If I've left anyone out, I apologise).

And last, but not least, Andrew Morgan for being the quizmaster.

A good quiz should inform, educate, and entertain and Andrew managed this "in spades". He even managed to throw in a few questions requiring educated guesses which produced an appreciative "Whoop" and "Yeeeeeeees" when teams managed to work out the correct answer. (Not many groan-worthy questions / answers this time though.)



Especially successful was his innovative music round. Incidentally this round catapulted the winning team to the top of the leader board with their remarkable ability to recognise the ~~vocal talents~~, singing, serenading, ~~erøening~~ voice of William Shatner (aka Star Trek's Captain Kirk). Another sign of a good quiz is when the gap between the top and bottom teams is just that, a gap – not a chasm. The contest was close throughout with the winners scoring 92 points and the bottom team scoring a very creditable 76, most teams scored somewhere in the 80s. So well done Andrew.

It was also great to see "new blood" at this village event; so, it's a big welcome to Ned Binding and to the Coombes family – all recently moved to Bickenhall.

However, it wouldn't have been a fish "n" chips quiz without fish "n"



chips! Well done to 'Layz Ricks' who, once again, performed miracles by providing all those hot meals in an unfeasibly short time for the mid-quiz interval.

So, who triumphed in this contest for the bragging rights to be called 'The **Brains of Neroche**'?

The winners were '**Ear Wig Go Again**', i.e. Alan and Jill Perrior of Bickenhall, Sue Whitehouse from Stoke St Mary, Ross Henley from Wellington (Councillor for Hatch and Blackdown) and Paul Hart, Bellringer extraordinaire from Staple Fitzpaine. They won the quiz by just one point from Karen Learoyd's team!

**Let's hope that we come out of this dreadful Covid situation before too long and the next quiz will, with luck, be bigger and better.** (oops, was that a split infinitive? If so, it was in honour of Captain James T. Kirk, who managed to boldly provide the winning point for 'Ear Wig Go Again'!

**Roll on the next quiz.**

## CHRISTMAS FAMILY BINGO



**FRIDAY 10th DECEMBER 2021**

**(6.30pm FOR EYES DOWN 7pm)**

**Neroche Parish Hall**

**RAFFLE BAR Bring your own nibbles**

**Booking essential**

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



# Parish Council debates A358 upgrade plan

*By Sarah Hyde*

The planned upgrade to make the A358 an Expressway, a change to the access proposals and the impact on our villages was discussed by councillors and residents at a special meeting of Neroche Parish Council.

The extraordinary session on October 28 followed the publication of revised and more detailed plans by National Highways (NH), and a renewed invitation to join 12 surrounding parish councils who have united to state their views with a single voice.

The main difference affecting Neroche is the proposal to keep open both Bickenhall Lane, and the road that leads to Capland, referred to as Staple Fitzpaine Road, with flyovers at both locations across the A358. Previously, Staple Fitzpaine Road was planned as the sole access route remaining, and this was Neroche's favoured option. There are fears that keeping both routes open will lead to increased traffic through our villages. However, retaining both access routes is preferred by the 12 parishes, and this is now in the updated NH scheme. Neroche council had previously declined to join the 12 parishes due to this difference in views.

Councillors and 15 residents took the opportunity to discuss the wider pros and cons of the upgrade.

## **Points made included:**

- The proposal will mean longer journeys through narrow roads for residents to access the A358, either at Ashill or Mattock's Tree Hill.
- Agricultural and slow-moving traffic and cyclists could be banned from the Expressway at some point, as on the A14 in Cambridgeshire.
- Communities either side of the A358 are being used as collateral damage to solve problems in other areas.
- The new road will take traffic off the A303 on to the already-oversubscribed M5, adding delays to wider journeys and business travel.
- The flyovers and trenches will be an 'urbanisation' of the villages.
- The traffic data used for modelling is from 2015 and is out of date. The Henlade bypass will be a benefit to us - people are already

avoiding the A358 and coming through our villages because of the delays there. Doing nothing will mean the traffic here will get worse.

In their response, the 12 parishes object to the creation of an Expressway - a 'mini-motorway' - which they say will have no beneficial impact on safety or traffic speed. They highlight that our stretch of the A358 cannot be an Expressway in line with NH standards as it ends in roundabouts, which is contrary to strategy. They also highlight that NH says 813 properties will be negatively affected by noise.

Neroche councillors agreed with the 12 parishes' preference for a dual carriageway with better access to local villages, rather than an Expressway. There was concern that there was further detail in the joint response that wouldn't be of benefit to our communities, and they wouldn't agree to.

The council agreed to remain an independent voice, and to encourage input from local residents to help shape a standalone response, focusing on what will best serve the needs of the Neroche community.



## Forestry England Update

*By Dave Peck &  
Robert Greenhalgh*



We have recently welcomed our new Forester to the team. Dave Peck will be covering Jon Burgess whilst he is on secondment to a role with Forest Services until spring/summer 2022. Dave brings extensive knowledge with him and a real enthusiasm for forestry and conservation. Having spent the early part of his career in the south district and supporting important projects like the white-tailed eagle reintroductions on the Isle of Wight, Dave is proving to be a real asset to our team.

We have recently completed a successful operation to remove all Chalara infected dangerous Ash trees along significant stretches of the Staple Hill road, at the bottom of Castle Neroche, and also the B3170 which intersects Priors Park wood. Chalara is a chronic fungal disease which causes Ash dieback and poses a significant health and safety risk, especially when in a close vicinity to public rights of way and



highways. As a team we inspect all Ash trees twice a year, which sit within close proximity to areas of high public use and make necessary arrangements to remove if deemed as unsafe.

There are no active harvesting operations planned for this winter within the Neroche area, however next summer we plan to harvest and thin the southern end of Staple Hill, concentrating on the Sitka Spruce. This Spruce has now reached its threshold and is ready to be thinned, which will allow for increased space and light for stronger trees to develop. We are also currently busy tariffing for upcoming thinning operations within both Bickenhall and Thurlbear, which is likely to take place later next summer if contractor availability allows.

Volunteering activities have also returned to the estate which has been great to get up and running again – many of the benefits of group working, socialising and just getting out and about were clearly visible to many people who were affected by lockdown, something which many of you I'm sure felt keenly as well. We've targeted 'hard to reach' community groups to support our work, and a huge thanks must be extended to the team at Neroche Conservation Volunteers and the Blackdown Hills AONB for their continued support and hard work. All the activities have been focussed around continuing to halo the ancient oak trees within Piddle Wood, Wych Lodge and helping to clear the coniferous regrowth at Staple Common to improve the SSSI status of the site. The ancient oaks are now even more exposed than ever, and I'd encourage you to take an adventurous stroll to view these when you can – amazing specimens that leave you completely awe-struck.

The positive feedback for the new trail at Staple Hill continues to roll in which is fantastic to hear. We've now installed two new picnic benches at the site which, apart from some initial vandalism, seem to be going down a storm!

We've also been working with the Blackdown Hills AONB to generate the '30 ways to explore the Blackdown Hills'. The aim of this initiative is to provide people with mindful and creative ways to explore the Blackdown Hills. They don't cover everywhere or everything to do, instead we wanted to inspire people to connect more with nature and the landscape with these simple ideas. Take a look and see what you can discover!

# Harvest at Thurlbear School

*By Jo Moore*

Our chosen charity for our Harvest celebrations this year was “Taunton Open Door”, a charity committed to helping those without homes in Taunton and surrounding areas, offering warmth, food and advice.



Thurlbear pupils made a fantastic effort to support the project and a carload was dropped off to a delighted Centre Manager, Mark, who had previously come into school to explain about the charity to our pupils. The response from our families was inspirational and truly encapsulated what makes us a strong school community.



If you would like to find out more about the charity and the important work it does, further details can be found here

<https://www.tauntonopendoor.org.uk/>

# Christmas Trees For Sale



**Staple Farm, Staple Fitzpaine, TA3 5BE**

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

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

## A LOSING BATTLE?

*By John Learoyd*

Since the inception of the fingerpost restoration project in Neroche 3 years ago, it is very disheartening to report that there have been four incidents of damage within this period. The New Road junction with Cold Road had a finger broken off just before the project commenced. The Thurlbear junction post was decapitated, and this year two of the recently refurbished posts joined the list. The Broadway junction post has had the Broadway finger twisted round, and the post is now at an angle and will need to be straightened. The most recent damage is to the post at the crossroads near The Greyhound that has had a finger broken off, one of our new castings.

Not wishing to apportion blame on any individual although all this damage was certainly not caused by the likes of Alison Brown dashing around the parish in her Skoda Yeti! The spotlight must surely focus on agricultural and larger delivery vehicles. All we can do is appeal to the farming community and businesses to make their drivers aware of the locations of the posts and how much they mean to us all.

Hands up everyone in the parish who is not proud of what we have achieved and when driving around the county see other parishes posts and say to themselves "Oh they have done a good job" or "They are not looking after theirs, they need to get a team together"!



*Crossroads*



*New Road*



As I write this article, the last three posts have been collected from the foundry, painted and are now ready to be installed. You should hopefully see this happening over the next few weeks. However, a new casting will need to be commissioned to replace the latest broken one at a cost of £150. Without the team of volunteers who then paint, erect, and maintain the posts, this individual piece of damage would cost us around £1000 to repair. This leads me to think, are we fighting a losing battle? I hope not.

Going forward we want to work with the community to make sure the finger posts are kept in a good condition. Teams will be checking for signs of corrosion and touching up when needed, as well as ensuring that hedges around them are kept clear by regular cutting in advance of any hedge trimming undertaken by the landowners, making them visible for all to see and be proud of.

Hence my appeal to all businesses and users of large vehicles to be vigilant, thereby keeping the posts looking great and sending out the message to all that pass through, that Neroche parish is proud of what it has achieved.



*Thurlbear*



*Broadway*

## Neroche Woodlanders at Young Wood

During the COP26 Glasgow conference there was much talk about trees and forests. There was a new global commitment to stop deforestation because of the importance of our remaining forests in storing and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. Meanwhile, planting a huge number of trees is seen as a major - albeit long term - way of sucking carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) out of the atmosphere.



As you walk through the Neroche Forest in the aftermath of all this climate talk, you might find yourself wondering - just how much CO<sub>2</sub> are all those trees actually taking in?

The metabolism of trees, which allows them to absorb carbon, is based on photosynthesis. Plants absorb water and minerals through their roots to make sap, and the sap travels up through the tree to the leaves. The leaves absorb carbon dioxide and light, and use chlorophyll and the sun's energy to convert the CO<sub>2</sub> and the water in the sap, into glucose. Oxygen is released in this process, and the glucose is transported off in the sap to nourish the tree.

On average, 50% of a tree's weight is water, and the other 50% is dry mass. 47.5% of that dry matter is carbon. A 25 metre tall oak tree with a trunk diameter of 60cm weighs around 9 metric tonnes. 4.5 tonnes of that weight is water, and 4.5 tonnes is dry mass, so it contains 2.1 tonnes (2100 kg) of carbon.

It takes 3.67 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> to lay down 1 kg of carbon in the tree. So, for the example above, the oak tree has absorbed  $2100 \times 3.67 = 7707$  kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. If we assume the tree is 100 years old, then on average it has been absorbing 77 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year throughout its life. But does it absorb more when it's young than when it's older? In their youth, trees grow faster and so absorb CO<sub>2</sub> more quickly, although in older age their density is much greater, and so they can absorb proportionately more CO<sub>2</sub>.

*Continued on next page*

Softwoods tend to grow much faster than most hardwoods, so they can absorb more CO<sub>2</sub>. However, because they also live shorter lives, they ultimately store less carbon over their lifetime than a long-lived hardwood. So, there is a dilemma: planting conifers will make for faster absorption, although the trees will be harvested sooner, and become carbon sources rather than sinks. For this reason, mixed woodlands may be the best compromise – and a diverse structure with lots of different ages of tree within a given woodland, is better still.

Carbon dioxide makes up only a small proportion of the volume of air (despite its disproportionate impact on our climate), and so in the process of growing by one cubic metre, a tree will purify nearly one million cubic metres of air of its CO<sub>2</sub>.

After you've had your walk in the woods, if you have driven there, you'll get back in your car to drive home. Assuming your car runs on an internal combustion engine, on average it will emit around 112 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometre. That means that by the time you have driven 690 km (430 miles) you will have emitted as much CO<sub>2</sub> as our example oak tree can absorb in a year. If you drive 10,000 miles a year, you need twenty three big oak trees to be working just for you, throughout the year, to deal with the CO<sub>2</sub> from your car travel alone.

Trees work hard for us and do us good in so many ways – and we need more of them.

Gavin, Jenny, Sarah, and the team at Neroche Woodlanders  
[www.nerochewoodlanders.org](http://www.nerochewoodlanders.org)



# SCHOOL TERM DATES

**1st November to 17 December 2021**

**4th January to 18 February 2022**

**28 February to 8 April 2022**

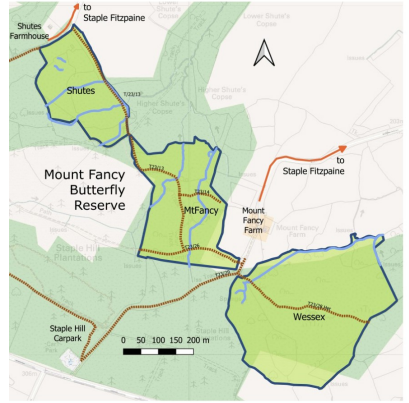




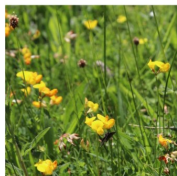
# Mount Fancy Butterfly Reserve Needs Volunteers

The big pleasure in starting our role as Volunteer Wardens was that we began to see and better understand the whole of the Butterfly Reserve at Mount Fancy. Previously, over the years, we had just carried out conservation tasks in small unrelated pockets.

As many of you will know the 27Ha Reserve is in three parcels, Shutes, Mount Fancy and Wessex. Each parcel has varying aspects of the rich mosaic of habitats that range from grassland, scrub, swamp, and woodland.

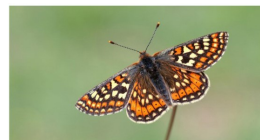






The Reserve forms part of the far wider SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) known as 'Ruttersleigh'. It was set up because of these types of habitats that are now so very rare in England. Our Reserve was previously grazed by tenant farmers until it passed into the ownership of what is now Forestry England. It is particularly rich in plant species along with other open grassland. Butterfly Conservation took on a lease to manage and improve the management of these habitats about twenty years ago. The idea was to reintroduce grazing, and then through grazing and other management of the vegetation, to investigate and demonstrate how to manage the site to benefit the key butterfly and moth species of the area, along with other priority nature conservation features. Why butterflies? Well, they are important indicator species that will show how well the land is responding to its management, and how it is responding to climate change.

Many of the common butterflies that you will recognise, such as the Peacock, Large White or Red Admiral, are unfussy hardy generalists, can travel some distances and some even overwinter. At the other end of the scale are specialist butterflies that may have very intricate lifestyles, or very specific habitat requirements, or may not migrate more than a few hundred metres, or only appear for a very short time. Initial surveys were carried out from about 1905 onwards, these established the range of butterfly species to be found. Then in 1998 the transect, a fixed route walked weekly during the season, was set up and the butterflies were counted on this regular basis. What we do know is that some of these rare butterflies, such as the Wood White or the Marsh Fritillary, that used to be present within the Reserve have not been seen over many recent years. The good news is that the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary was recorded this year after six years absence!



On taking on the lease for the Reserve it was fenced to contain the grazing by mainly Exmoor ponies but supplemented, from time to time, by the mild natured



Longhorn cattle that you may have encountered. Areas were cleared of Willow or Hazel regrowth that were threatening to shade out many ground-cover plants. Contractors are also used annually to contain any dense bracken or bramble areas where they can operate their machines safely. Some of the specialist butterflies evolved in the grassy forest rides with its mix of young trees and open grass glades with their dappled sunlight. These measures are not sufficient by themselves to achieve that required delicate balance, and volunteers have also been used to have an impact in areas where very sensitive management is required.

The wet conditions parts of the Reserve can be unforgiving, where the wet flushes emerge, or around permanent swamp areas where it can become very boggy. Nature responds with vigorous growth spurts to these damp patches particularly should there be any moments of inattention, or there is an absence of willing workers. On taking up our Warden's role and looking around, we knew numbers of species and number of butterflies counted were in decline. We also noticed that the bracken in particular this year, has been vigorous and that there were many small pockets that needed just a little attention to keep them open, so their ground cover was able to flourish and that everywhere the regrowth, willow, hazel birch, and blackthorn needed to be kept in check.



We have been so very fortunate that this year several local people have stepped forward and, working in pairs, have kept the butterfly transect recording going. But there is so much else to be done. This is where you come in. We desperately need your help. Whatever your background, we can use your enthusiasm, whether you relish simple manual labour, love rooting around in forgotten corners, enjoy spotting and identifying species, or just want to explore and learn more about the natural world, we have simple tasks that will be suitable just for you.



Of course, it is not just about the butterflies (and moths), though we would welcome more transect walkers, but also the birds, plant life, trees, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects, mosses, and lichens—there is so much to discover. Discover by doing and working alongside others. In discovering, you enrich your view of the world and your ventures out into the wilder spaces become so much more rewarding. That is what our Reserve can offer you. Yes, it can be wet and boggy, yes it can sometimes be challenging to push through the bracken or bramble, but when the sun comes out and wildlife respond, what joy! To take your first step, just get in touch with either of us, tell us your interests and availability, and we will work with you to find the task where you too can contribute to the well-being of the Mount Fancy Reserve.

Specific roles available we need help with:

- **Habitat assessments** - assess 150 x 50m squares within the reserve to create a baseline habitat record to help with future management – no plant ID skills required.
- **Veteran tree recording** - help to identify and map the many veteran trees found in the reserve and over time collect their details.
- **Flora and fauna recording** - if you have expertise or interest in anything likely to be found in the reserve such as lichens, fungi, reptiles or amphibians, birds, bats, small mammals. We would love to hear from you and what you might be able to offer.

**Tony and Anna Spiess**

**Butterfly Conservation Reserve Wardens**

**Mount Fancy Reserve**

**Contact us at: [mountfancy@somersetbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:mountfancy@somersetbutterflies.org.uk)**

## **Neroche Thursday Lunch Club**

**Neroche Hall  
12.30pm for 1pm**



**2nd December, 6th January, 3rd February**

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

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

## News from Neroche Hall

*By Kingsley Beck, Chairman*

I don't expect any introduction to myself is necessary since I've lived here in Bickenhall since 1987. In fact, my first day at "Brass Knocker" was that frightening afternoon when gales destroyed most of the trees in southern England. It was pretty scary here too, particularly as our house insurance didn't start until the next day!

All that was a long time ago and I make no apology for playing little or no part in village matters since Sue and I had to work all hours to buy our new house and keep sweet with the bank manager, promising that I would do my bit when I had more time.

Well, that time eventually came some three years ago when I retired, and my neighbour Alison Brown informed me that I should join the village hall committee!! After surviving the first meeting, although nobody was quite sure what I was doing there, I came to realise that this was quite a good cause, keeping this lovely old building going. Richard Davies and the committee had that rare ability to make the meetings enjoyable, yet somehow get the important things done. Perhaps some of that enthusiasm survived and I was surprised when recently Richard said that he wanted to retire as chairman and would I consider taking over. So that's where we are now and I would like to thank Richard and all the other trustees, then and now, for making me most welcome.

From myself, and on behalf of the other trustees and probably all of us living in the parish and nearby, a huge thank you to Richard for all the work you have done as Chairman of our hall over the past ten years. I am naturally very grateful that you are staying with us on the committee as I know I will need a lot of advice. I am also very aware that your only function now is supervising Diana emptying the cigarette-end box outside the hall once a year, obviously this doesn't





justify the huge number of perks associated with being a trustee, so we'll try to keep you busy.

I would also, on behalf of the trustees, like to say a huge thank you to Graham Glasper for his contribution to the hall over the years. We miss you at the meetings Graham although I know your work keeps you very busy. I look forward to seeing you around and about sometime and best wishes from all of us.

Despite the past Covid restrictions, our village hall is in good shape. This is in part due to several grants we have received and a special thanks to Marianne Bray who made sure that we got all that we were entitled to. Thanks also to Mary Bell who spotted that for years we had been incorrectly paying the higher rate of VAT on our electricity bills. If you are reading this, Customs & Excise, hurry up and pay it back!!

We already have new lighting installed, which I'm told, the badminton groups are delighted with. The outside rendering has been freshened up and our 'time warp' loos are hopefully in for a makeover during the winter months.

The weather stayed pleasant for our October craft fair which was extremely busy, and I hope the exhibitors were able to benefit from this. Huge thanks to everyone who helped on the day. The quiz night back in September was an enjoyable evening for everyone although numbers were down, and maybe this reflects a need to be cautious at the moment.

At the time of writing, our local infection rates are soaring, amongst the highest in the country, so it's anyone's guess what this may mean for village facilities such as ours in the future, although if you are visiting the hall, do make a point of using the hand sanitisers provided. It's still a time to exercise extreme caution.

Keep safe.

## News from the Parish Council

*By Mark Palmer*



As I sit at my keyboard to write this article, the clocks have gone back an hour. The days are shorter, and dusk arrives a whole lot quicker than I feel it should, and I am trying to get as much done outside as possible before the night takes hold. Hopefully, we can look forward to some pursuits or starting a hobby indoors by the fire.

Since the last Parish Council meetings and the Extraordinary meeting, I hope you have all taken the opportunity to have your say on National Highways proposed plan for dualling the A358 during the public consultation period. By the time of reading this, you will have been asked for your opinion of the scheme by the Parish Council and, with that, and the response from the Parish Council, we hope to advance a little way towards a plan that is beneficial to our local community. There have been many meetings regarding this road scheme, and I have attended (as an observer) meetings at other parish councils to gauge their reaction to National Highways plan.

While on the subject of the A358, it is hoped that the puddle at the junction of the A358 and Bickenhall Lane will be gone by the time this article is published. It has been reported several times to Highways and a highways engineer has tried to clear it. It has now been handed over to a contractor with a jetting lorry to clear.

From the Autumn Newsletter, Jane Hole wrote a wonderful article on the history and subsequent restoration of the fingerposts, which is still ongoing (thank you Jane for your determination for this project). It may be a little late in the year for this request, although I hope it has been made and passed on prior to this Newsletter's publication. We have already had a finger partially amputated at the crossroads in Staple Fitzpaine which will require disassembly, fabrication of a new finger and reassembly to repair. Both the Neroche Heritage Fingerpost Project and the Parish Council request that drivers of high/wide sided vehicles and hedge cutting contractors have a

regard for these heritage monuments. Volunteers have been cutting the hedge either side of the posts for a distance of 5 to 7 metres to improve the fingerposts visibility.

Following damage to a garden wall in Curland Green by a motor vehicle, alas the perpetrator failed to stop and report the incident (or maybe they failed to realise the damage caused). The Parish Council has contacted SCC with the aim of improving this junction for agricultural vehicles or vehicles with trailers. A meeting was held (on site) between Neroche Parish Councillors and the Highways Superintendent back at the start of November. Two possible solutions were discussed, and it is hoped that a plan formulated and actioned as soon as possible to give Curland residents peace of mind from further damage to their property and make the junction safer for road users.

I can remember when I first started attending Parish Council meetings that a request was made to have a village gateway installed on the road into Staple Fitzpaine. I believe it was decided to be a good idea and should be put forward to Somerset County Council Highways department under the Small Improvement Scheme. This scheme has a limited budget and many requests for funds around the county for such small improvements. Neroche Parish Councillors will once again pick this issue up with the assistance of John Thorne (our Somerset County Councillor) and we will keep you updated on the progress of this issue. The aim of this gateway is to warn drivers that they are entering a village and should adjust their speed accordingly.

Looking to the future, it is hoped that we will be celebrating the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum jubilee with a beacon in the Neroche Parish. The arrangements are at an early stage, although it is hoped that as many of you will attend as possible. The beacon lighting will be held on Thursday 2nd June, time and place yet to be decided upon. So, if you have a piece of land on a hill that we may use for this occasion please get in touch with the Parish Council.

All that remains for me to say, on behalf of the Parish Council, is that I hope you all have a very merry Christmas and that 2022 is a better year than this one.

Hip Hip Hooray, it was lovely to all meet in person for the first time since lockdown for our October meeting, we had an excellent speaker, Mike Spencer, who recounted stories about the West Dorset Coast. He spoke about the coastline from Lyme Regis to Abbotsbury. He had some very interesting and entertaining facts and (fiction) about this area of coastline. His stories included the Charles II escape after the Battle of Worcester, 3rd September 1651, and how he avoided detection by hiding in the famous oak tree. He ended up in Charmouth, masquerading as an eloping lover with the niece of Lady Wyndham. Finally, he escaped via Bridport, then on to Shoreham and finally to France on October 15th, 1651.

Another story was that about the death of Mary Anning's mother - when Mary was 15 months old, her mother and two friends along with Mary, were sheltering under a tree when it was hit by lightning. All three women died although Mary survived, it was said that this incident attributed to her curiosity, intelligence, and lively personality!

Going back in time to our September meeting on Zoom, Ursula Franklin, an exceptional and passionate photographer, spoke about Mission Penguin. Following the death of her husband in 2012, Ursula set herself the goal of seeing and photographing every species of penguin in their

natural habitat. She shared her experiences of how she did this, telling us how she travelled around the world to track down these delightful penguins, cataloguing her journey by taking spectacular photographs. 17 penguins seen and



photographed with only one to go! Information on Ursula's photos can be found at [www.f4inspirationalimages.co.uk](http://www.f4inspirationalimages.co.uk).

## Somerset Federation Events

Some of our members went on the trip to Hauser & Wirth gallery and gardens in Bruton, followed by Westcombe Dairy. At Hauser & Wirth gallery, a talk was given about the history of the gallery and garden, followed by guided tours of the excellent art exhibitions. The highlight for many were the gardens designed by Piet Oudolf, a leading proponent of the new perennial movement, which includes prairie planting. The second part of the trip was to Westcombe, a traditional Somerset cheesemaker. Many a cheese was tasted and purchased.



We were disappointed that the Flower Food and Craft show was cancelled in September, as many of us had entered the show, confidence was high, and we were hoping for some good results! Perhaps the other WI's knew they had some stiff opposition!!!!!!

## National Federation Events

Many of our members attend virtual courses run by Denman College, these include subjects such as crafts, cookery, music, poetry, and historical talks.

The WI had a stand at COP26 in the public zone showcasing the work that WI's have done in increasing awareness of climate change.

## 2022

Our programme sub-committee are busily producing a varied programme for next year's meetings, and we hope we can welcome some new members to our small and friendly group.

*Bickenhall and District WI usually meet the second Wednesday of each month, at Neroche Hall*

*if you would like to join our meetings, please contact Tricia Dryden*  
[tricia@witchlodge.co.uk](mailto:tricia@witchlodge.co.uk)



## **News from your District Councillor**

***By Ross Henley***

I recently attended a special Neroche Parish Council meeting at Neroche Hall on an absolutely appalling night weather wise. It literally rained torrentially all day and night. The Parish Council decided at the meeting not to formally join with the other 11 parishes who have presented alternative plans to National Highways regarding the A358 dualling proposals.

I do not support the dualling of the A358. I am concerned at extra traffic through Neroche, Hatch Beauchamp and West Hatch parishes. I think the National Highways plans are an utter monstrosity which look like a super-highway, and I fear could greatly urbanise these deeply rural parishes, and lead to extra traffic through Hatch Beauchamp and Bickenhall in particular. I am supporting the work of the parishes that have come together, and I will totally support residents in this parish concerned about extra traffic in Bickenhall and across the parish. I also fear the National Highways plans could lead to more chance of large-scale housing development at Orchard Portman.

On other matters I've been enjoying getting out in the parish. I have especially enjoyed going to the village lunches both in September and November. It's lovely to see so many locals there and to chat to lots of people and enjoy fab home cooked food! I also enjoyed being at the Neroche Hall quiz in September. I was even more pleased when our team won, led by our team captain, Alan Perrior. It was a lovely evening, and the fish and chips were very nice too. I had to rush back from London to get to the quiz, as during the day I had been to the Municipal Journal awards ceremony where the neurodiversity support policy I introduced into Somerset West and Taunton won a national award in the Inclusion and Diversity category. Since then, I have also been pleased to present this policy to a Housing association in London, and I was a guest speaker on this subject at the West Midlands



# ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2021

**THE MJ**

## Innovation in Building Diversity and Inclusion HIGHLY COMMENDED



SPONSORED BY  Gatenby  
Sanderson

employees conference too. Society needs to do much better to support people with autism and other neurodiversity issues, and I will campaign passionately for positive change.

Thanks to my work in this area, I am honoured to have been asked to join the board of national charity bibic, based in Langport, who support so many people under the age of 25 with autism, brain injuries, ADHD, and other related issues across the whole of the United Kingdom.



# Christmas Celebrations

**Handel**

Zadok the Priest & Messiah extracts

**Vaughan Williams**

Fantasia on Christmas Carols

**Audience Carols**

**7.30pm Saturday 11 December**  
**St Mary's Church, Taunton**

**Tickets £15 (Students £7.50 and Under 12's free)**

Tickets, information and much more at

[www.tauntonchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.tauntonchoralsociety.org.uk)

Registered Charity - number 900773



## News from Taunton Racecourse

Welcome back Taunton. After far too long without a spectator in sight, bars and grandstands were opened to the public in late October to enjoy chasing at Somerset's most endearing course.

Racing in and around Taunton dates from the 18th century, when Broomhay, West Monkton hosted racing until 1812. The Napoleonic wars and certain local difficulties occasioned a move to Bridgwater for the next dozen or so years. It recommenced again in Taunton, on what are now the grounds of King's College. In 1825, a few years later, after a devastating rainstorm washed away much of the course, the races were on the move again, this time to Trull Moor. Another fifteen years later, racing moved back to Bridgwater. *The Times* announced in 1927 that Viscount Portman had generously made it possible for a racecourse to be built on its present site, and until Chelmsford and Ffos Las were created within the past 20 years, Taunton held the status of the country's youngest venue for the latter part of the twentieth century. On the autumn equinox of that year 1927, the first meeting on the present course was held, and the first race, a seller, was won by Baalbek.

There is something of a county show atmosphere that creates the warm and comfortable ambience that pervades proceedings. The stand offers uninterrupted views across the entire course yet standing on the inside of the track at the third last can be an even more thrilling vantage



point. Throughout the day one can mingle in the bars and excellent restaurants both with the local farming folk and those regular aficionados who have taken the train from the big cities to Taunton rail station.

For unrivalled rural pleasure it is hard to beat a day at Taunton races, even if we say so ourselves.

## 2021/22 Membership

Membership at Taunton allows you access to all race meetings held here between 1st October 2021 and 30th September 2022 at a cost of £182 per person.

Enjoy our jumps season from the comfort of the Paddock Stand which has exclusive access for Members, Owners and Trainers.

With your Taunton Badge you will be welcome at our reciprocal courses as and when dates are released, currently over 40 race days scheduled.

In addition, you can buy 2 for 1 tickets for the Royal Bath & West Show from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

## Fixture List 2021/22

	<b>First Race</b>	
Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> November	12.55pm	Short Run Press Raceday
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> December	12.30pm	Festive Fixture
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> December	12.15pm	Christmas Meeting
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> January	1.30pm	2 for 1 Race Meeting
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January	1.05pm	Portman Cup Day
Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> February	2.15pm	Love Musgrove Charity Race Meeting
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February	2.00pm	Royal Bath & West Raceday
Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March	2.20pm	G&WCT Raceday
Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> March	2.15pm	William Hill Free Race Meeting
Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> April	2.10pm	Dave Criddle Travel Ladies Day
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> April	5.25pm	Evening Race Meeting

Tickets bought in advance at up to 40% discount.



## *Dates for St Peter's Church December 2021*

Holy Communion Service Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December

Pop-up Café Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 10am to 12pm

### **Christmas Tree Decorating**

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am to 12.30pm

Children & (grown-ups) are invited decorate the Christmas tree  
In St Peter's Church, decorations provided and the café will be open.

### **Decorate a window**

Village Organisations/groups are being invited to decorate a window

Theme --- A Carol

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December and Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December

***Carol Service - Wednesday 15th December at 7.00pm***

*A traditional Christmas celebration at St Peter's Church.*

*We will be inside this year—Covid-19 permitting*

***All welcome!***

*Remember the Coronavirus safety code - wear a mask, use hand  
sanitiser, do not attend if not well.*

***Join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ!***

***Midnight Communion Service***

***Christmas Eve 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm***

***All welcome!***



St Peter's Church is part of the 'Seven Sowers Benefice' of which  
further details can be found at [www.sevensowers.org.uk](http://www.sevensowers.org.uk)



# WORLD'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING

**MACMILLAN  
CANCER SUPPORT**

## Community Cafe Macmillan Coffee Morning

In September the Community Cafe hosted a Macmillan Coffee Morning, this involved lashings of coffee and tea, and tremendous piles of scrumptious cake, along with a plant and craft sale. The event raised **£460**. A big thank you to all the bakers, the gardeners, the crafters, and to everyone who donated so generously. Also, thank you Pauline Phelps for organising the event.

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## Poetry Corner

### Help Wanted

Santa needs new reindeer.  
The first bunch has grown  
old.  
Dasher has arthritis;  
Comet hates the cold.  
Prancer's sick of staring  
at Dancer's big behind.  
Cupid married Blitzen

and Donder lost his mind.  
Dancer's mad at Vixen  
for stepping on his toes.  
Vixen's being thrown out -  
she laughed at Rudolph's  
nose.  
If you are a reindeer  
we hope you will apply.  
There is just one tricky  
part:  
You must know how to fly.

*By Timothy Tocher*

# Jazz in the Village

from Scotland



**Ian Millar**  
*saxophone*

**Dominic Spencer**  
*piano*

*"Beautiful soaring magic! I was blown away by your show, just breathtaking!"*

*"...expect warm, intelligent, reflective, human music..."*



Ian Millar & Dominic Spencer  
*accessible, melodic jazz*

**NEROCHE HALL**

Bickenhall, Taunton, Somerset TA3 6TY

**Sat 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 8pm £10**

Accompanied  
under 16s free

tickets from committee members,

[enquiries@nerochehall.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nerochehall.org.uk) or tel: Nicky Baxter 01823 480675



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

## To dual or not to dual, that is the question

*By John Thorne*

A well-known Shakespeare soliloquy has come to mind quite often in recent weeks, recent months, and even recent years, because that is how long the debate over the proposed upgrade of the A358 has been going on. The proposals were unveiled five years ago just as I was in full flow with my campaign to be elected as your county councillor. Then, the debate among campaigners was largely centred around the route the various options might take and whether or not a new motorway junction was needed.

Today, the conversation has moved on, with National Highways having chosen its preferred route and campaigners now focussed more on whether or not the upgrade is really needed at all. The counter argument is that all National Highways needs to do is improve the M5 Junction 25, and the Southfields roundabout at Ilminster, and everything in between will be fine.

Unfortunately, that is to overlook the fact that National Highways is improving Junction 25 and is improving Southfields, and it is partly because of those improvements that the dualling of the A358 will be necessary. The road is already operating at greater than its design capacity and making it easier for traffic to get onto it at either end means the over-capacity will become worse. I completely get that there are major implications for the communities alongside the route and residents are absolutely right to be concerned. Some of the parishes have been working collaboratively to argue against National Highways' plans and to put forward their own extremely detailed proposals. An incredible amount of work has been put into this effort by many individuals and I am immensely impressed by their knowledge of the subject. I suspect that quietly, National Highways may realise that here



*A358 Consultation 2021*

in this part of Somerset they have met their match when it comes to throwing around highways and traffic statistics. Some of the proposals from the parishes have therefore been incorporated already into the National Highways plans.

In Neroche, your parish councillors have decided that they want to express their views as a single strong voice for the parish rather than to be a small part of a larger grouping. So, they have recently been consulting publicly on what local residents think before they make a submission as part of the A358 statutory consultation. I am not sure if the deadline for the consultation will have passed by the time this newsletter is distributed, although I suspect it will.

I was asked at a parish council meeting where I stood on the issue. Not for the first time, as all the parishes along the route have also asked the same question. It was one of those occasions when the Shakespeare soliloquy 'To be or not to be' came to mind again. For, the question being asked boiled down as 'To dual or not to dual?' The populist answer for those wanting to win votes is to say, 'absolutely not' and refuse to accept the reality of the matter. However, I am not a populist councillor, as many parish councils in our county council division will confirm. We often have to agree to disagree. But I always continue to help those parish councils voice their concerns and seek answers for them.

So, my answer to your parish councillors was that yes, the A358 does need to be dualled, and the task for local communities is to work with National Highways to get the best possible tweaks to the scheme which will lessen the impact on their residents, not to try to stop it altogether. It was an answer I gave in full knowledge that I am likely, in Shakespeare terms, to 'suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' for saying so.

And for anybody who is curious, no, I am not a Shakespeare expert! I have seen the RSC perform several of his plays in Stratford and read much about him, and that is about it. A self-deprecating story to illustrate my ignorance is how on a trip to Italy with my Italian tutor group I bought an Italian language copy of Macbeth and loudly declared to my fellow students that I wanted to see how the phrase 'Alas poor Yorick...' translated. Nobody told me until after our return that it was, of course, Hamlet and not Macbeth! True.

# News from RSPCA West Hatch

**Wildlife Centre** – open for admissions every day 8am-9pm

**Animal Centre** – open by appointment only

At the time of writing the centre is busy adapting to the threat of H5N1, avian influenza. We have birds in both our wildlife and our domestic animal centre and so we have to be extremely careful to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff and the birds. As such we are likely to have to change our admission processes throughout this time so please do keep an eye on our Facebook pages and website to stay up to date on this topic. General disease information can always be found here: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/diseases> so do check in periodically to ensure you are up to date with the latest developments.

**Do you keep chickens, ducks, geese...?**  
Help protect your birds from the risk of #birdflu

**Did you know?**  
There is a constant risk of bird flu in the UK from wild birds. As it's highly contagious take action to protect your birds from catching it.

**Remember**  
Any very sick birds, or unexplained deaths, must be assessed by your vet. By law suspicion of bird flu is notifiable and can affect poultry movement and trade.

**Tip 1: Cleaning**  
Clean footwear before and after visiting your birds. Keep areas clean and tidy, and regularly disinfect hard surfaces. Humanely control rats and mice.

**Tip 2: Feeding**  
Place your birds' food and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and remove any spilled feed regularly.

**Tip 3: Fencing**  
Keep your birds separate from wildlife and wild waterfowl by putting suitable fencing around the outdoor areas they access.

**Tip 4: Register**  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration) Register your birds online and get alerts on any outbreaks of bird flu

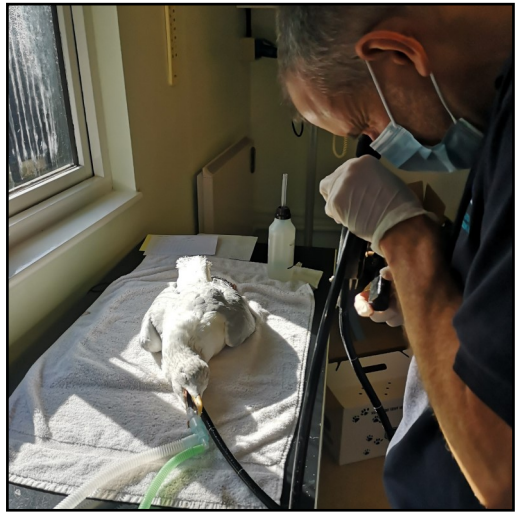
Supported by:  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Scottish Government  
NFU  
RSPCA  
The Poultry Club of Great Britain

Meanwhile, our advice for people with birds at home is as follows:

Sadly, birds continue to face a whole range of threats alongside the current avian influenza outbreak. Our wildlife centre recently admitted a Herring gull that had been rescued with fishing line hanging out of its beak. He was given a general anaesthetic and endoscope and x-rays were used to see if there was a hook attached to the end of the line.

As you can see from the x-ray (next page) there was a large, three-pronged hook stuck inside the bird. Surgery





was performed to attempt removal of the hook but sadly the damage it had caused and the way it was embedded in the tissues and internal structures meant safe removal was impossible and the gull had to be humanely euthanised.

The RSPCA receives thousands of calls about animals affected by angling litter every year. Incidents reported to the RSPCA included birds swallowing fishing hooks and entanglements in fishing line, often

leading to death.

We urge all anglers to follow the Angling Trust's Take 5 campaign and make use of the recycling scheme to dispose of waste tackle and line. Angling litter recycling points are now sited at the RSPCA's four wildlife centres at West Hatch in Taunton, Somerset; Stapeley Grange in Nantwich, Cheshire; East Winch near King's Lynn, Norfolk and Mallydams Wood in Hastings, East Sussex as well as hundreds of other sites throughout the UK.



The RSPCA encourages members of the public who see discarded litter to pick it up and dispose of it safely. Their action could save an animal's life.

Despite the sad stories that we see in our work, there is so much that people can do to help animals – wild and domestic alike. If you know a

school or youth group that would like to learn more about animal welfare then please pass on the information below: We would also welcome people sharing information on the animals in the centre that are in need of new homes. At the moment we have plenty of mice looking for a new start – you can read more about all our animals on our main website here: [www.rspca.org.uk/findapet](http://www.rspca.org.uk/findapet)

Finally, we would like to say thanks to everyone in Neroche for their help and support this year. Community members have contributed in numerous ways – from volunteering at the centre to making donations. We couldn't do the work we do for animals without this assistance and so want to say a big THANK YOU to everyone that has played a part in our year.



# St Peter's Church Flower Guild

*By Jacqueline Kolkowski*

The Church looked spectacular during Harvest Festival - displays by the Flower Guild included Candy Janes and Peta Trott's harvest wheatsheaf bread, corn dollies made to protect the spirit of the harvest, which decorated the pew ends.

We organised a "come help decorate the church" morning for harvest where the children were invited to decorate jam jars and fill them with flowers. I did not know you could get so many stickers on a jam jar!

As well as making harvest animals out of pinecones (super googly eyes) the children and grown-ups had great fun in decorating and eating Carole's super cupcakes.

Scarecrows and crows from the scarecrow competition looked wonderful in the corner.

The font was piled high with produce for "Open Door".

Thank you to all those who helped make our church look so lovely by donating produce for decoration and Open Door, greenery and flowers, providing Jack Sparrow and the Phantom of the Opera, decorating and filling jam jars, making pinecone animals, and of course to all the members of the Flower Guild.







As a group we are concerned about the use of flower foam that we use to produce flower displays in the church. It is an excellent product although unfortunately, not biodegradable, and the so-called greener product is not one hundred percent biodegradable. So, we will



be trialling ways of holding the flowers in place including chicken wire, which was used in churches before the introduction of foam. Peta and Candy trialled a pedestal display last month using chicken wire, super for a first attempt.

Excitement in the air!! It will soon be Christmas, which is a very special time for the church, and decorating the church is a big part of that. This year it will be lovely to hold our "come decorate our Christmas Tree" in the church on Saturday, 11th December 10.30am -12.30pm, for children along with their grownup helpers. Carole will



be running the cafe with her decorate your own cup cakes (I want the sparkles on mine). Other cakes and biscuits available!

We are also asking groups in the parish to decorate a window in the church with a theme of a Christmas Carol or Christmas song, so the decoration of the church this year will be a very community event.

If you would like to be part of our small flower guild, you might only want to help in a small way, please do not hesitate to contact me.



## November Village Agent News

We are DELIGHTED to share that our Talking Cafes are open again, offering drop-in support at venues across Somerset! No need to book!

Talking Cafes are a place for you to find help, advice & support in an informal, relaxed environment. Just drop in to meet your local Village Agent for a friendly chat, or 1:1 support! They can help with:

- benefit paperwork or if you are worried about your finances
- if you're feeling lonely, or isolated where you live - pop in for a chat and a cuppa!
- If you are struggling to cook for yourself and/or your family – especially if you are a Carer for others and would like a break from cooking.
- if you look after someone else – you might need some advice for them or emotional support for yourself
- if you need support with a health condition .... and so much more!

Village Agents are problem-solving, solution-finders! No matter how big or small you think the issue is, if you don't know where to turn, come and chat to us, we help often when others don't, won't or can't!

A full list of venues open can be found here:

<https://somersetagents.org/talking-cafes/> & below:

**EVERY MONDAY:** (except Bank Holidays)

**South Petherton:** South Petherton Library, 10am-12pm

**Taunton:** Great Western Hotel, Station Approach, 10am-12pm

**EVERY TUESDAY:**

**Musgrove Park Hospital:** On the concourse near M&S, 2pm-4pm

**EVERY WEDNESDAY:**

**Chard:** The Guildhall, 14 Fore Street, TA20 1PH, 10am-12pm

**Highbridge:** Hope Baptist Church, 106 Church St, TA9 3HW, 2pm-4pm

**EVERY THURSDAY:**

**Langport:** The Angel, Bow Street, TA10 9PQ, 10am-12pm

We are not quite back up to the 22 venues we had pre-covid times, although we are growing each month!

If you can't make it to a venue, we are still here to support you – just call 01823 331222 or complete the short form here: <https://somersetagents.org/agent-call-back/>

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## **Thank You to Sheila Green**

***By Mike Aspray***

After more than 11 years service to our local community, Sheila has stood down from the Neroche Communication Action Group (NCAG). She became involved in community affairs in 2009 as part of the Neroche Parish Plan Steering Group. Following an 18-month period of extensive consultation with businesses, farmers and residents, The Plan was adopted by the Parish Council in 2010. Building on this success the NCAG was formed, with Sheila being one of its founding members and has continued to play an active part within the Group. On behalf of the Neroche Communication Action Group, I would like to thank Sheila for her commitment, dedication, and service to our local community.



We, the committee members past and present, and of course you the residents of the Neroche parish, wish her well and all the very best for the future.

If you would be interested in joining our Group, or finding out more about our activities, please contact the Newsletter Editor at [nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com)

## News from Your MP

*By Rebecca Pow*

Hello again,

### COVID-19 UPDATE

Many constituents have been in touch with concerns over whether rates might be expected to rise over the winter months, and whether vaccine protection may wane after 6 months. The best advice to help assuage worries is to get the booster. Booking details can be found online. If you haven't received an invite for your booster and it's been 152 days (5 months) since your second dose, and you're aged 50 and over, or aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts you at higher risk from Covid-19, you can book an appointment. You can also book to receive a booster dose if you're a frontline health and social care worker and it's been at least 182 days (6 months) since your 2nd dose of the vaccine. I contacted the Secretary of State for Health as well as local health stakeholders after it became clear that some constituents were encountering problems booking their boosters early on and these problems seem to have been ironed out now with more appointments available through the National Booking Service at local vaccination sites, including some pharmacies and the Firepool site in Taunton.

### COP 26



At the time of writing in early November, I am returning from COP26 in Glasgow where I was delighted to play a key role in Nature day which focused on making the clear links between climate change and catastrophic biodiversity loss, and highlighting how we can work with nature to not only restore it, but also help tackle climate change

by utilising the free services nature provides us with, such as aiding

flood control, cleaning water, and of course the vital function plants provide in taking in carbon dioxide.

In a tremendous acknowledgment of the need to halt deforestation and the degradation of land by 2030, 132 countries have so far signed the Glasgow Leaders Pledge, and this is backed by \$12 billion of private finance to ensure accountability as well as a major commitment from the global financial sector to shift their focus to environmentally positive investments.

The UK's presidency of COP26 has shown us as leaders on the world stage in the drive to tackle climate change globally. The UK has a proud record on climate action, being the first major economy to legislate to achieve net zero by 2050. The Prime Minister has set the ambitious climate change target into law of reducing emissions by 78 per cent by 2035, compared to 1990 levels and the commitment to decarbonise the UK's electricity system by 2035 is integral to achieving this.

Internationally, when the UK accepted the COP Presidency, under 30 per cent of the global economy had signed up to a net zero commitment. At the time of writing this figure has increased to 70 per cent, with around 120 countries committed to, or developing long-term climate neutral plans. The Government is dedicated to working with all countries to inspire action, including pressing for more countries to set net zero targets. And at every stage it is important to work with local communities and indigenous peoples, many of whom I had the privilege to meet at the conference.

At last, the environment is getting the attention it needs, both through the G7 which was hosted in Cornwall, COP26 (and as I write we are awaiting the final text on the actual negotiations) and next year we have the UN Biodiversity Conference in China where more hopes are pinned on global decisions being made that will avert the nature crash.

Our new ground-breaking environmental legislation (the Environment Act which I have had the honour of steering through Parliament over the past two years) dovetails with the whole agenda, giving us the tools to deliver the transformative change we need to provide clean air, water, restore nature and a circular economy where we waste less and recycle more. And this in its turn links to our new environmental land management scheme being rolled out for our farmers.



## Wellington Rail Station



Great news that the Chancellor listened to the case I made with colleague, Neil Parish MP, and we have been allocated £5 million to progress plans for Wellington and Cullompton rail stations. Wellington station has already been fast

tracked by the Department for Transport, and this next tranche of funding is an essential part of the journey.

A station in Wellington will unlock other development which will help boost the local economy and it is an important part of our decarbonisation plan encouraging people away from reliance on cars.

## Musgrove Park Hospital Upgrade

Since becoming the local MP in 2015, I have worked hard to achieve more investment to improve local health services across the constituency. I am delighted that in recent months work has begun on the new acute assessment hub at Musgrove Park Hospital, as well as a new sterile services department. These projects are part of the Musgrove 2030



programme, which involves upgrading a whole range of buildings across the entire hospital site, and I was pleased to work with stakeholders to help secure the necessary funding commitments from Government. These facilities will further enhance the already outstanding care given to the people of Somerset by the hospital staff, and particularly improve the outcomes and experiences for those who need surgery.

# Household Recycling & Refuse Collections



There will be NO Garden waste collections in the 2 weeks after Christmas.

Usual collection day	Revised collection day
Friday 24 December	No change
Monday 27 December	Tuesday 28 December
Tuesday 28 December	Wednesday 29 December
Wednesday 29 December	Thursday 30 December
Thursday 30 December	Friday 31 December
Friday 31 December	Sunday 2 January 2022
Monday 3 January	Tuesday 4 January
Tuesday 4 January	Wednesday 5 January
Wednesday 5 January	Thursday 6 January
Thursday 6 January	Friday 7 January
Friday 7 January	Saturday 8 January



## Ella Foot Health Mobile Clinic

Foot Health Practitioner (RFHP)  
offering foot care and advice:

- Nail trimming and filing
- Difficult toe nails
- Callus and corns
- Fungal infections

Call Ella on 07729 733452  
to book a home visit

Do you have any

## Items for Sale

you would like to  
advertise in the  
next Newsletter?

If so, please send  
details to the editor  
at [nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com) by  
the end of January

## 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](http://www.somsetelectricians.co.uk)

[somsetelectricians@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.lendology.org.uk) or call 01823 461099

\*subject to eligibility

# Local Communication and Information

## **Websites:**

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

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

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

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

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](http://www.sevensowers.org.uk)

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

## **Email Information:**

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

## **The Parish Magazine:**

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

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

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

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