

Working Together for a Better Community

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Newsletter

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

Issue 28 - Summer 2018



Flower & Music Festival

It combined community, stunning floral displays and musical talent over three memorable days in May.

See inside for report and pictures

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.



St Peter's Singers performed on Saturday afternoon



The Badger Street Band in action, left

The Beacon Choir from Musgrove Park Hospital, below



Jacky Kolkowski with her display





Festival organiser Kath Michaels with her arrangement

Flower and music festival success

St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine, truly was the heart of the community during the stunning Flower and Music Festival in May.

The focal point, of course, was our lovely country church, filled with flowers, people and music, but the festival involved people from across the whole community, church members and those who don't attend alike, many who worked hard to make it a memorable festival, and others who supported it by attending events and enjoying the WI café.

The Rev Paul Reynolds, rector, said: "When the festival was first mentioned to me some 18 months ago, I thought that's a very long way off and let it slip from my mind. Thankfully those who first came up with the idea, particularly Kath Michaels, did not and the fruit of their immense labour was clear for all to see over the weekend of 11 - 13 May.



Karen Morgan, above, with her Sky Full of Stars arrangement, and right, Di Grabham with Clair de Lune



“It was truly a feast of flowers and music which will stay in the minds of many of us for a very long time to come. It was a wonderful example of what can be achieved when the community comes together and works on a project for the benefit of everyone.

“The flower arrangements, each one linked to a particular hymn, were absolutely stunning and demonstrated the imagination, thought and skill of those who had worked on them. The diversity of music over the weekend was a real delight and again highlighted the giftedness of those in our community and further afield, older and younger. To see the church building full of people and buzzing with activity was a particular joy to me.

“It goes without saying that we are hugely indebted to so many who gave of their time, energy and gifts to make the weekend such an overwhelming success. Very particular thanks must go to Kath and Jacky for masterminding the whole event and working tirelessly to bring it to fruition.

“Someone asked me if we held the event every year. I was tempted to respond 'not yet' but decided the organisers might have a slightly different response!”

The final word goes to Kath Michaels:

The weekend was truly wonderful, everything I hoped it would be and more. People came in their hundreds from all over the county and beyond and many came back time and again, either to take advantage of the calm and to enjoy a more relaxed tour of the church and flowers or to be bathed in the joy of live music.

Saturday afternoon was unbelievable with wave upon wave of people pouring in to listen to the music. The WI ladies were rushed off their feet that day.

The evening concerts similarly were sold out and kept the bar staff very busy. We made more than £5,300 profit which is truly wonderful and will allow the next stage of installing much needed toilet facilities at St Peter's to progress.



I would like to thank the entire community for supporting me with my initial vision and for encouraging me every step of the way. Everyone played their part in making the festival the success it was and for that I am truly grateful. The hugest thanks of all need to go to Jacqueline Kolkowski.

Above left: Ave Maria by Sarah Covey.

Left: The WI refreshment team with some of the goodies available in the festival café



2018 Annual Parish Meeting

By Wally Torrington

A most successful Annual Parish Meeting was held at Neroche Hall on Thursday, April 19. Local residents filled the hall and were joined by a number of local dignitaries, including our MP Rebecca Pow, John Williams, leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council, and Neroche ward member; John Thorne, our county councillor, and a number of parish councillors.



*Chairman
Jon Bell*

Attendees perused the displays by local clubs, groups and organisations including the Garden Club, Local History Group, Parish Council, Neroche Hall, Communication Action Group (Neroche Villages Website, Newsletter and Email Alert), St Peter's Church, Thursday Lunch Club, WI, Neroche Woodlanders, St Peter's Flower and Music Festival, Forestry Commission, RSPCA, Litter Action Group, NatWest (linked to the 'Digital Safety and Scam' presentation), and the A358 Improvement Scheme.

There was chance to chat to club representatives, event organisers, Action Group members, and meet their MP and parish, Taunton Deane and Somerset County councillors.



This was followed by a short, illuminating update by Rebecca Pow MP on her work at Westminster and in support of the local community, and being named

*Alan Perrior and Anthony
Brown catching up*

as the 'Greenest New MP' by the Climate Coalition at the 'Green Heart Hero' awards ceremony in Parliament.

Then Jon Bell, chairman of the parish council, delivered a most comprehensive, interesting and informative Annual Report. It provided a summary of the year's activities, events and issues.



David Spears at the Rogues' Gallery...

That was followed by a presentation from a NatWest Community Banker on Digital Safety and 'Scams'.

There were then a number of other briefings and updates. John Thorne gave an insight into the County Council's budgetary problems and Jane Hole, chair of the Neroche Local History Group, introduced the group's first book 'Village Life in the Lee of the Blackdowns' (now on sale).

Kath Michaels announced the full programme for the St Peter's 'Flower and Music Festival' and a representative from the Forestry Commission gave details of the Blackdown Hills Forest Plan.

Alan Hyde appealed for volunteers to take over the production of the Neroche Villages Newsletter from Spring 2019.

The WI carried out a sterling job providing refreshments of tea and coffee accompanied by a wide variety of delicious cakes and pastries; there was also a cheese-and-wine buffet.

All snacks and beverages served to visitors during the evening were free of charge.

Many thanks must go to:

- the Parish Councillors and volunteers who prepared the hall and set it up for the meeting
- Mark Porter who constructed the staging
- the WI for the delicious refreshments and cakes, helping with all the washing-up and tidying-up after the event
- and, of course, to our presenters and all those who contributed on-stage to the formal part of the evening.

New editorial team wanted

By Jacq & Mark Wanstall and Alan & Sarah Hyde

It is with sadness that we, the current newsletter editorial team, are stepping down at the end of this year.

We have all loved running the Neroche Newsletter, which has enabled us to get involved with the whole community and hopefully make a positive contribution.

However, due to full-time work, commuting and family commitments, we have reluctantly resigned our posts, offering a full year's notice. The Winter 2018 edition will be our last.

This quarterly newsletter is a vital part of the community, keeping everybody connected and updated, so we are very keen to find new volunteers to run it.

The next two editions give us the chance to train up a new team and hand over the baton in time for the Spring 2019 edition. The role is ideally suited to members of the community who are retired or semi-retired, but all offers will be very welcome.

Please get in touch at nerochenewsletter@gmail.com to find out more about what is involved.



The Spring Fish'n'Chips Quiz

By Alan Perrior

The biannual quiz, held on Friday, March 9 at the Neroche Hall, saw every one of the 20 available tables taken by quizzers eagerly anticipating a fine evening's entertainment.

There was also the added attraction of a hot Fish'n'Chips supper. Yet again 'Lazy Ricks' rose to the occasion by providing 95 hot meals, mostly fish and chips but other options (such as sausage and chips) were offered as well. And they did it in an impressively short time. Orders were taken at the start of the quiz and it was all ready, individually boxed and labelled, by the time we'd finished five rounds of the quiz. How do they do it?

Regarding the quiz format, the organisers introduced a novel twist in that they used two quizmasters; each setting the questions for half the quiz either side of a "lyrics" round. First up was Mike Michaels with five tough rounds of questions.

During the break for fish and chips the quizzers worked on hand-out sheets listing lyrics from 30 popular songs; everything from Frank Sinatra to Queen to Adele.

The hall resounded with about 100 people eating while trying to sing lyrics in order to more easily identify the songs. It would have been more harmonious if we'd all been trying to sing the same lyrics at the same time! It was quite disconcerting hearing one table singing



about Captain Beaky, another warbling “You’re the one that I want”, while you’re trying to remember which song contains the lyrics “Let me play among the stars, Let me see what spring is like on Jupiter and Mars”!

The quiz continued with five more rounds and Andrew Morgan as quizmaster. It must be said that most teams found this half of the quiz slightly easier – the questions being more Eggheads than University Challenge! The average score per team per round in the first half was 5.5 (out of 10) whereas it was 7.5 in the second half.

One of those “1,000 to 1” coincidences occurred in the literature round when the answer to one of the questions was A.A. Milne’s book ‘Christopher Robin’. It took some teams quite a while to realise that on each table there was a flyer for the next Neroche Friday Film Night – when the featured film was A.A. Milne’s Christopher Robin! What were the chances of that happening?

The only downside to the quiz was the occasional inconsistent marking. Each team passed their answer sheet to the next table for marking and, quite frankly, some teams ‘marked’ more leniently or

“interpretatively” than others. For example, one of the questions concerned the classic quote from the 1966 World Cup Final. Which commentator said, “They think it’s all over. It is now.” The answer is, of course, ‘Kenneth Wolstenholme’. However some teams awarded marks for “near enough” answers such as ‘Henry Worthenson’.

There were also wide variations in the marking for other questions. I know that it’s only a local fun quiz and it doesn’t really matter who wins, but this sort of inconsistency can be quite annoying. Perhaps a better system would be for the answer sheets to be collected and marked by the scorers – at least it would guarantee consistency.

However, it was a fun and successful evening. Perhaps the most enjoyable round was the ‘Movie Music’ round, with eight teams recording perfect scores. And to demonstrate how technology has even crept into the world of quizzing – Andrew Morgan had prepared the music on his “smart” phone and he posed the questions by holding the microphone against the phone’s speaker! Who needs a stereo system?

Throughout the quiz, the most consistent team, and the only team to achieve four perfect scores of 10, were ‘Bob x Two’ who deservedly won the quiz by two points from the ‘Barboys’.

‘Bob x Two’ were captained by Colin Croad, the other team members were Pat Croad, Robbie Bale and Rob, Paul and Liz Harwood. Well done!

Overall it was another good evening’s entertainment and a great fundraiser for the village hall. Roll on the Autumn Fish’n’Chips Quiz!



Traffic Survey – Autumn 2017

By Alan Perrior

Have you ever wondered how many vehicles pass through the parish everyday?

The chart opposite shows the statistics from one of the Highways England preparatory surveys for the A358 Taunton to Southfields scheme. Highways England carried out two surveys in 2017 and this chart is from their September / October survey. The survey earlier in the summer (July / August) recorded the Monday to Thursday figures and Friday figures separately.

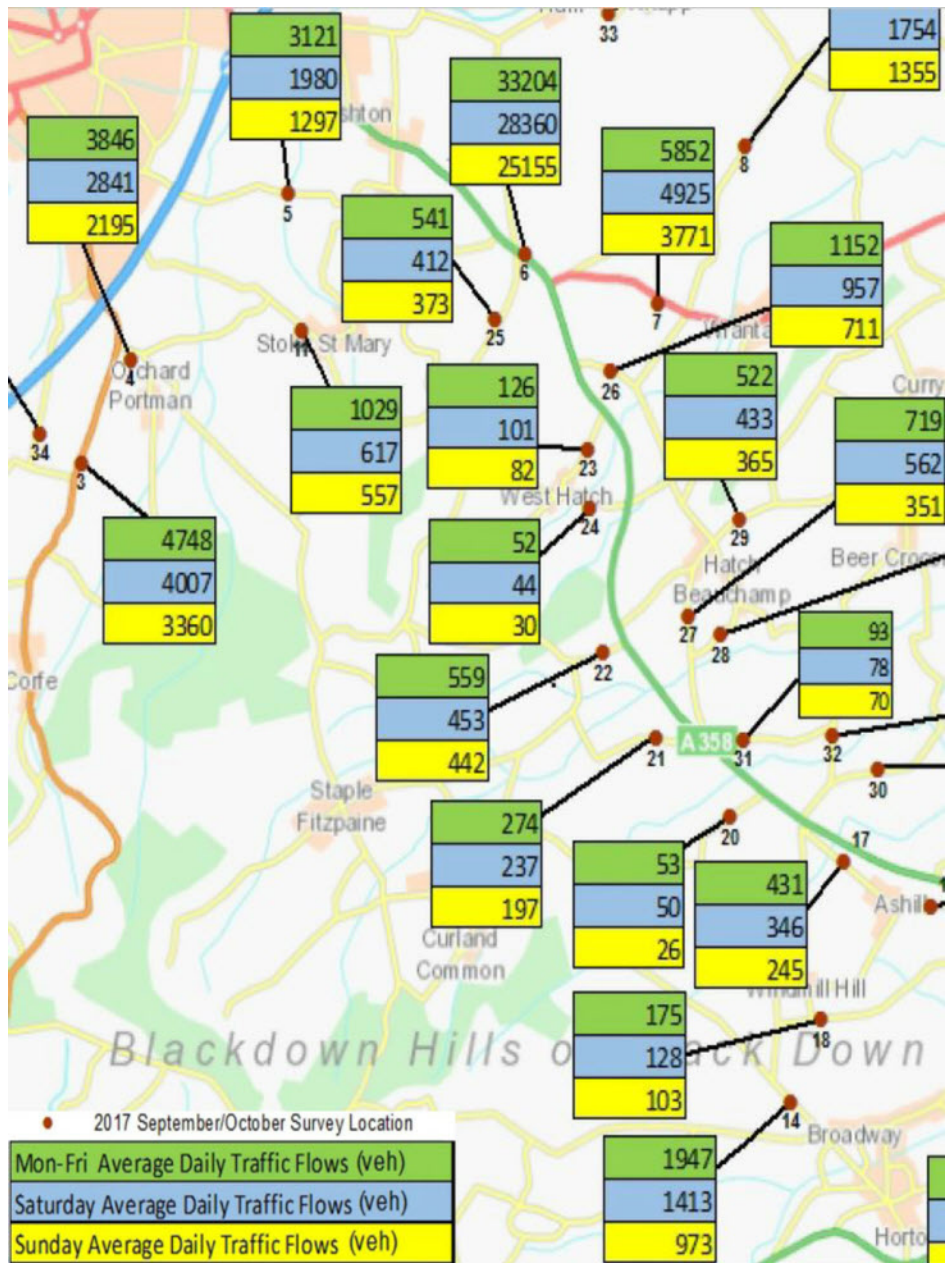
The A358 carries the vast majority of the vehicles passing between Taunton and the Southfields roundabout, and the survey shows that 33,204 vehicles used this part of the A358 on a typical weekday last autumn; however, a significant number of vehicles enter and leave our parish everyday – and they can't all be local drivers.

In the north of the parish, the average daily traffic flow, on Monday to Friday, through Orchard Portman is 3,846 vehicles! (The earlier survey shows that on a typical Friday 3,910 vehicles passed through Orchard Portman.) Presumably many of these vehicles are en-route, through Staple Fitzpaine, to and from the A303.

The number of vehicles entering and leaving the parish via the Broadway road is significantly lower than at Orchard Portman with an average Monday to Friday daily figure of 1,947. The July / August survey shows that on a typical Friday 2,280 vehicles passed through Broadway on the Curland road.

The chart also shows the number of vehicles using the various side roads which connect with the A358. No doubt further surveys will be carried out in the coming months (and years) before the A358 project actually starts.

What the survey doesn't show is WHY and WHERE they're all going!



**Bickenhall, Curland and Staple Fitzpaine
Scarecrow Festival**

Saturday July 21 to Sunday 29 July

Entries £5

Last entries July 18

**1st prize £50 2nd
prize £25 3rd prize
£10**



**Teas en route 3pm-
7pm on July 26-27 at Woodcott, Curland**

Lunchtime BBQ

**July 29 12.30pm at St Peter's Church,
Staple Fitzpaine**

**Voting forms in St Peter's Church porch
throughout the festival - voting closes
11am on Sunday 29 July.**

**All entries very welcome - contact Mal
Lee 01460 234282 or
lees.curland@gmail.com**

Writing A History Book Can Be Fun!

By Jane Hole

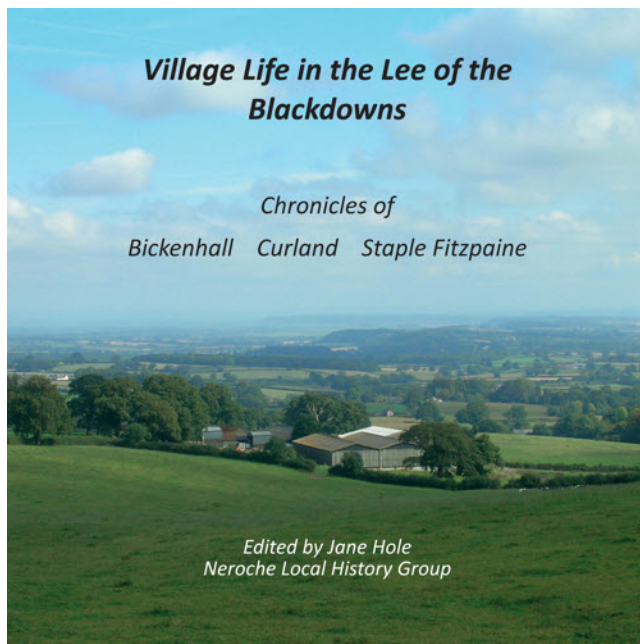
It is a pleasure to report that editing and writing *Village Life in the Lee of the Blackdowns* has been a very positive experience. It has brought together some of the previous research conducted by history group members.

And aspects of my own research at the South West Heritage Centre means we now have new information about our villages not known to us before. It has been a voyage of discovery too.

It is necessary to obtain permission to publish and pay a fee to any organisation which

owns an image wanted for use in a book. Since I wanted to use an image from the Bayeux tapestry, it was with some trepidation I contemplated writing in schoolgirl French to the Bayeux Museum.

Help came from the most unexpected of places: I discovered that Reading Museum has a complete copy of the tapestry! This in turn unravelled another piece of our eccentric national history. In 1885 Elizabeth Wardle of Leek in Staffordshire visited Bayeux to research the tapestry. A skilled embroiderer and member of the Leek Embroidery Society, she returned home with the idea of creating a replica. Aided no doubt by the fact her husband was a leading silk industrialist, she gathered 35 worthy members of the embroidery society to stitch the 70m long tapestry in just over a year. It was an endeavour also supported by women from Derbyshire, Birmingham,





The English Bayeaux Tapestry at Reading Museum

Macclesfield and London, each embroiderer stitching her name beneath her completed panel.

Having toured many cities in the UK, Germany and America, and following an exhibition in Reading, it was bought by a benefactor and donated to the museum in 1895.

Such are the quirky delights of history research. Another, through the kind offices of the Archaeology Department at the South West Heritage Centre, was viewing and holding an Bronze Age axe head found on the property next door to our house in 1937.

Touching a 3,000 year old axe head that had probably been used by the inhabitants of nearby Castle Neroche was quite a thrill for someone who loves history.

The whole experience of working on the book has been a reminder of how very many people have lived their lives in the places we now occupy.

One of the many other positives was the support and encouraging forward to the book written by Tom Mayberry, Chief Executive of the South West Heritage Services who wrote: "The book is a fine achievement and a tribute to all those who have undertaken and inspired the research and writing it contains. It is a gift to the present and the future that deserves to be widely read."

The book costs £8. If you would like to buy a copy please email jane.hole@outlook.com

News from Neroche Hall

By Richard Davies

It is always challenging to write an article for the Newsletter in that one is always playing catch up with events that are either a distant memory or at an embryonic stage. Planning forthcoming events or activities can take quite some time and involves a good deal of time and energy on the part of the hall committee.



Our committee has unfortunately seen the loss of another member, who has decided to leave our midst, but we are hopeful that we may have found another willing member of our community who will join the ranks in the near future.

I would appeal to anyone who may be interested to get involved with the hall to get in touch with myself or any other committee member to talk through what is involved. It is not onerous and would suit anybody who has an interest in the community within our Parish.

New people often bring fresh ideas and momentum to any organisation and the hall committee is no different. If you are new to the area and want to meet new people it is an ideal way to do so.

The Summer months tend to be quieter for hall events and fundraisers as many people are either away on holiday or out enjoying the longer daylight evenings. Our regular hall users will, of course, continue as well as one or two wedding receptions, which have also been booked. The Hall is an ideal venue for any couples looking to plan their wedding, so please give us a mention if you know such a couple.

Our Fish & Chip Quiz night held in March drew a capacity crowd and, as always, was a hard fought event with much inter-team rivalry. The Autumn quiz will be staged during October. The date will

be published later in the year and, once again, team captains will need to email me in order to book a table once that date is announced.

Under new Data Protection laws I cannot maintain an email list and will always take individual bookings on a first come, first served basis, so please keep an eye on our website and Wally's Alerts for the announcement.

Most of you will be aware that we stop our monthly Film Nights during the summer months when the committee takes the opportunity to review our last season before committing to another.

Finally, I would just like to mention New Year's Eve 2018/9. As our last party was a such a huge success the committee would be interested to know whether there is an appetite for a similar event this year and, more importantly, whether anyone is prepared to commit to assisting us should we decide to go ahead.

Putting on such a large event takes a lot of planning and effort, which last year fell to a small number of committee members, and therefore we would look to recruit a small nucleus of additional helpers. Please get in touch with any ideas or views you may have.

You are invited to a

Community Tea



St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine

Saturday 16th June from 3pm

Cream teas and home-made cakes

Details from Alison Brown 480441, Julie Pope 480282
or Mal Lee 01460 234282

Somerset lifting 'Beeching's axe' 55 years on

By County Cllr John Thorne

Wally Torrington mentioned in a recent email alert how he likes to use the Crewkerne to Waterloo line when catching trains to London, and also gave a plug for the brilliant Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group.

It set me thinking about the current revival in the railways and community aspirations to reopen local stations in Somerset which were closed under 'Beeching's axe' in the 1960s. Langport, Chard Junction, and Wellington are just



three campaigns which quickly come to mind. Last summer, I attended an impressive Christopher Maltin talk on the Langport plans during the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) annual meeting, in Taunton.

More recently, I have been keeping track (deliberate use of pun!) of the early discussions at County Hall about Chard Junction, because it is of importance to Otterford Parish Council, also in our county council division.

Some may know that I also sit on the town council in Wellington, where I successfully persuaded councillors to earmark £10,000 as a contribution to feasibility studies which will help inform plans for a new railway station.

Possibly very few residents of Wellington will be aware of this, but when the new station eventually opens - and we are still probably a

good 10 years away from it happening - it will have been thanks to your county councillor! Because, back in 2009 I founded a campaign which morphed into the action group Trains 4 Wellington (T4W), which in turn became a town council sub-group whose work was eventually taken on by the Deane and county councils.

We are lucky to have the station at Crewkerne, and fortunate even to still have Taunton Station, where our MP Rebecca Pow has persuaded the Government to invest £4.6 million in revamping it for the 21st century.

And I know first hand just how lucky, because in my newspaper reporting days I once interviewed Lord Beeching - yes, the man who 55 years ago oversaw the closure of a third of the country's railway lines and more than half of all the stations.

It was in the early 1980s, a couple of years before his death, and Mrs Thatcher's Government had mooted proposals which could have had a dramatic effect on the railways in Somerset and Devon. So, my news editor tasked me with finding out the thoughts of the man who first wielded the railways axe.

I do not now recall much about the interview, except a startling (and I think previously little-if-at-all publicised) revelation that Beeching had actually produced two versions of his report for Harold MacMillan's Government.

In the other version, trains would have stopped at Bristol. And by 'stop at Bristol', Lord Beeching meant just that. Every track and every station this side of the city would have been closed! Wally and the rest of us would now have to drive to Temple Meads to catch a train to London. Food for thought!

And on the subject of food, if space permitted I could have told you how British Rail taught me to eat tomatoes; a tale for another day perhaps ...

Contact Cllr Thorne: 01823 663146 or 07811 675262

JBThorne@somerset.gov.uk

Farming Update

By Mark Pope (Staple Farm)

As we enter Summer we are still waiting for Spring to arrive! The period of snow and rain seemed to go on forever. As I sit and write, we are still waiting for the ground to dry up so we have a chance to plant our 100 acres of spring barley. We need at least 10 dry warm days in a row. After that time, planting the crop is a real gamble to see if we will get a viable crop.



On a more positive note, we managed to plant a new block of Christmas trees this year just before the snow. These will be ready for cutting in about six to eight years' time.

We will be harvesting our miscanthus crop - when the ground dries up. We aim to cut this just as new growth starts to appear at the base of the plant. The miscanthus is used for burning in our biomass boiler to produce renewable energy.

As Daniel wrote in his last article, the Crown farms around the area are all experiencing uncertain times with the Crown Estate wishing to sell the farms. At this stage we simply do not know our future for definite, but all being well we will still be here but in a smaller setup still offering your Christmas trees.

We are currently selling the last of last year's wheat crop from the grain store. Once this has been done we start the dusty job of cleaning out the grain store before this year's harvest.

The other area of work I am heavily involved is helping to shape the future of English agriculture once we leave the EU. To that end the Government has published a command paper on just what will come after the Common Agricultural Policy.

Here we are firmly committed to producing good quality, safe, affordable food whilst also looking after and improving our environment. The secret will be in getting the balance right.



The clean-up brigade

By Wally Torrington

Following the cancellation of the Litter Pick-Up on March 3 due to snow, the date had to be hastily re-arranged once the weather had improved (which seemed to take forever!). The only possible alternative was Saturday April 21, which was probably a week or two later than hoped-for because the grass had already started to grow. Also, Jayne Hunt, the leader of the Litter Pick-Up Action Group, was away that weekend. As a result, Anthony Brown 'stepped into the breach' and did a sterling job of organising us all.

We met at the Greyhound car park at 10am, at exactly the same time as the Iminster Beagles were gathering (we stood staring at the pack wondering why they were there, and they stared back wondering what this odd group of humans were doing in 'Day-Glo' vests, carrying thick gloves, long sticks and a handful of rubbish bags; it must have been a very strange sight to behold!). Anthony put us into pairs, then allocated us a stretch of highway to clear; and

off we went to remove litter from the hedges, verges, embankments and roadsides.

We collected copious amounts of the normal 'stuff' e.g. beer cans, disposable coffee cups, crisp packets, fast food containers, plastic bottles and carrier bags, and a variety of paper items. However, the haul also included some very interesting 'bits' e.g. a music centre (together with speakers), paint tins, a variety of car parts (number plates, wheel hubs, sections of bumpers etc), trainers, cycle shoes, and the list goes on. As bags were filled they were left at the roadside.



Many thanks to Anthony for organising the event, and to him and Alison for collecting all the filled bags and arranging for their collection by the local authority. Thanks also to Mark Pope for the loan of his pick-up to collect and dispose of the filled bags.

A most successful morning, and hopefully some of our roadways and lanes are now looking a little tidier (but for how long?).

If you wish your name to be added to the list of volunteers for future Litter Pick-Ups, please contact Jayne Hunt 01823 480113; or if you wish to volunteer to regularly keep a stretch of road, lane or drove, close to where you live, free of litter, then please contact Anthony Brown 01823 480441.

We look forward to you joining us for the 'Autumn Pick-Up'.

Taunton Deane Update

Cllr John Williams, member for Neroche Ward and Leader of the Council

Days Gone By

Seeing the advertisement in the newsletter for delivery of newspapers and provisions in the area by Bailey and Down of Ilminster, took me back many years to my childhood when my parents owned the village post office and stores at West Hatch. I recollect the 50s and 60s when my parents organised fortnightly deliveries to, I estimate, around 20 houses on the top of the Blackdowns.



This was back in the days when telephones were few and far between and private transport was limited so my mother, who must have had an encyclopaedic memory, set about the task of packing boxes of groceries for each of the houses we served without any grocery list being sent.

Part of the service was to provide a boxful of groceries to see families through the next fortnight and this would include the infrequent items such as say mustard powder or salt and pepper based on when they would have last had it, included! It is also worth noting that the choice of food was quite basic as rationing had been in force from 1939 and was not lifted until 1954. It would also be rare to supply any fruit or vegetables as this was mainly home-grown at the time.

Once packed in boxes for the individual homes it would be loaded in the van and off we would go to deliver them. I can recall that rain, shine or snow, Dad would always make the trip because people relied upon this delivery of provisions.

I can even recall that in snowy/icy weather the “chains” would be fitted and a “sledge” packed in the van because he knew there were some hills to the houses that he would not get up or down.

What a distance he covered. We used to travel to just beyond the Eagle Tavern to Grange Cottage in the depths of the woods. From there, he'd go back to Blackwater and on to Rackley Lane, to Birchwood and then on through the lanes to Deadman's Hollow emerging on the road back to Castle Neroche by Beeches Farm and the way home back to West Hatch.

The groceries were unpacked on the kitchen table and checked to ensure they tallied with the account already prepared in the carbon duplication book. Unwanted items would be returned, or items would be added from the staple goods that Dad carried in case of need, such as sugar, butter or flour. The account would be adjusted and the bill duly paid!

This service continued into the late 60s or early 70s but was eventually discontinued because the growth of the supermarkets made it uneconomic. It is worth noting that the major supermarkets each have thriving delivery rounds now and it is great that businesses like Bailey and Down have found a successful market to offer a great service after its cessation almost 50 years ago.

A point of interest: Dad's first name was Walter and for years the deliveries were made in a 1947 Ford 8 van, with the registration letters (completely by coincidence) WDV, "Walter's Delivery Van".

Neroche Parish Annual Meeting

I must congratulate the Parish Council on yet another hugely successful Annual Meeting held recently. It is always a pleasure to attend and meet so many people. Very well done to the team involved and to all the exhibitors that makes the evening so interesting and attracts so many parishioners.

I must make special note of the launch of a fantastic book compiled by Jane Hole and team from the Neroche Local History Team. It is a wonderful history of "Village Life in the Lee of the Blackdowns" and if you have not already obtained a copy I would suggest it will be of great interest.

This book is also of direct interest as it brings back fond memories of my Grandmother, Granny Cottey, of Lane End Farm, Curland, pictured on page 60 of the book. There is also a picture of my Grandfather, Lewis, but alas he passed away before I knew him.

It is a fascinating and very informative book and I congratulate Jane and the Local History Group team for putting together a wonderful chronicle of the area's history.

Proposed Single Council for the Deane and West Somerset

The proposals to form a single council are progressing well and we are awaiting the final approval of Parliament

We anticipate a decision sometime mid-May to mid-June and provided it is positive, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) then works to agree the new ward boundaries. Reducing the number of elected members from 84 to 58 does mean a substantial re-drawing of the ward boundaries. From the proposals to be put forward the name of Neroche Ward will become Hatch and Blackdown Ward to reflect the increase in area.

In practical terms, this means moving Stoke St Mary and Corfe to adjacent wards, adding Otterford and Churchstanton to balance the numbers while ensuring whole communities are sensibly retained.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the LGBC will publish its proposals in early July and invite comments until 27 July. They will then review any comments and publish their findings.

Why are we doing this? Because ultimately it has to be good for the taxpayers in our community. We aim to make savings of £3.1 million per year for the newly-formed council.

This will directly feed back into the frontline services valued by so many. Whereas many councils are closing swimming pools, reducing maintenance of parks and gardens and cutting services generally, we are investing for the future and expanding our services for our communities.

Contact Cllr Williams at cllr.j.williams@tauntondeane.gov.uk

News from Neroche Parish Council

By Gillian Midworth, clerk

New email address

The Parish Council now has a new email address: **nerochepc.org.uk@gmail.com**

If you wish to contact the Clerk or Council please use this address in future.

Contact details for all the councillors are also available on the Neroche Villages website and if you wish to raise any concerns with the council, then please contact either myself or one of the councillors for your parish.



You will also find the agendas and minutes of all Parish Council meetings on the website together with a wealth of other information relating to the Neroche community and surrounding areas.

Annual Parish Meeting

As you will have read elsewhere in the newsletter, the Parish held another successful Annual Meeting on April 19. The organising committee endeavours to contact as many of these clubs and societies as possible but it may be that some are missed. If you are part of a club or organisation within the parish and wish to be present at a future Annual Parish Meeting please contact me.

The organisers aim to make the Annual Parish Meeting as relevant and interesting as possible to the parishioners and are keen to receive suggestions of topics of interest that could be included in the future.

Library Services Consultation

The closing date for the Library Services Consultation has been extended until June 13 to ensure that communities have sufficient time to explore the option of entering into a Community Library

Ilminster Library is under threat of closure

Partnership where appropriate. Full details can be found at: www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation, but in summary 15 of the 34 libraries in Somerset will be seeking community involvement to remain open.



For Ilminster, there are three options:

Option A No change to existing library services.

Option B Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Ilminster (supported by some funding from the County Council).

Option C Provide library services by delivering outreach library services (events and activities for young children, and health, wellbeing and reading activities for adults) and providing an additional mobile library stop in Ilminster (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

Rural Broadband Update

The Parish Council invited Gigaclear to the Annual Parish Meeting so that parishioners could learn of their current plans in bringing superfast broadband to the remaining parts of the Parish.

Unfortunately, the company was not able to attend but hopes to come to a future Parish Council meeting to share their plans and answer questions from parishioners.

In the meantime, Gigaclear will provide regular updates to Lynne Spoons, who is the lead councillor for this initiative.

Taunton Racecourse

By Wally Torrington

Even though there is no racing at Taunton during the summer months, the racecourse is still extremely busy with other events, including concerts, shows, exhibitions, conferences, weddings, private parties, corporate events and so on; it continues to be one of the busiest and most successful venues in the county.

Concerts

There are two major music events being staged at the racecourse this summer, The (One and Only) Testical Festival in June, then Simple Minds, The Pretenders and KT Tunstall in September.

The (One and Only) Testical Festival is on Saturday, June 23.

Registered Charity Number: 1163735

The (one & only) Testical Festival

23rd June 2018 12.00 'til late

Taunton Racecourse, Orchard Portman, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 7BL

Tickets £10, under 12's free

multiple acts, variety of food vendors and stall providers.

Camping available on site for additional fee.

Continued on next page www.itsinthebag.org.uk

In aid of **It's in the Bag**

@itsinthebag f #itsinthebag

Forget Glastonbury having a fallow year and go to The Testical Festival, back by popular demand. One stage, lots of acts, and plenty of fun things to do.

Headlining is the one and only **Chesney Hawkes**, plus:

Bandantree | The Twice Dailies (Wurzels Tribute Band) | Peloton

Twisted Vinyl | Secret Police

Festival tickets are £10



Simple Minds, The Pretenders and KT Tunstall

Simple Minds and The Pretenders in concert, with very special guest KT Tunstall, on September 2.

The event starts at 6pm with gates opening at 4pm. Tickets are priced as follows:

Golden Circle - £60 Premium view next to the stage

Silver - £45.00 With immediate proximity to the Golden Circle

Bronze - £37.50 General Admission

Why not enjoy the concert in style by adding one of the excellent hospitality packages?

For full details of both concerts, and to make bookings, go to the Racecourse website <http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk>

Dining and Parties at Taunton Racecourse

Taunton Racecourse is one of the most beautifully-located courses in the country, with outstanding views across the racecourse to the wooded slopes of the Blackdown Hills.

It is a unique venue for functions of all kinds. The range of accommodation available, ease of access with unlimited free parking, on-site catering, bars and its photogenic location make Taunton Racecourse an ideal venue for dinners, buffets, weddings

and private parties from 10 to 200 guests. The team has extensive experience in tailoring functions to clients' specific requirements, and the experience of the catering staff will guarantee a professional and friendly service, first class cuisine and a memorable function.

Weddings at Taunton Racecourse

Taunton Racecourse not only holds a licence for civil marriages, but it specialises in catering for wedding breakfasts, evening wedding parties, receptions and dinner dances. It can cater for up to 150 guests for the wedding breakfast and 200 for the evening reception or dance.



Contact troy@tauntonracecourse.co.uk or call 01823 325035

Half-Year Membership



If you have ever considered joining the racecourse as a member, to enjoy all the wonderful facilities of the newly-extended and refurbished members' stand, but, for whatever reason, hesitated; well here is a fantastic offer to 'give it a try' at half price (£85) for the remainder of 2018.

Members and their guests, together with owners and trainers, have exclusive use of the Paddock Stand Members' Restaurants and the Members' car park.

Wearing their badges, members enjoy free entry to Taunton Racecourse and to numerous racecourses shown overleaf.

Also included in membership is free entry to Hickstead for the Derby meeting and '2 for 1' Saver Tickets for the Royal Bath and West

Show. Half Year Membership, for the remainder of 2018, is available now for just £85. Full membership facilities and privileges apply.

Reciprocal Racecourse Meetings and Dates

June: Salisbury, Sunday 17th; Brighton, Tuesday 26th; Windsor, Saturday 30th.

July: Bath, Wednesday 4th; Newton Abbot, Saturday 14th; Cartmel, Saturday 21st; Stratford, Sunday 22nd; Uttoxeter, Sunday 29th.

August: Catterick, Tuesday 7th; Wolverhampton, Friday 10th; Newton Abbot, Wednesday 15th; Newbury, Friday 17th; Newmarket, Friday 24th.

September: Bath, Wednesday 5th; Newcastle, Friday 7th; Worcester, Monday 17th; Great Yarmouth, Tuesday 18th; Plumpton, Sunday 23rd.

October: Southwell, Tuesday 2nd; Exeter, Thursday 11th; Ludlow, Thursday 25th.

November: Sedgefield, Thursday 8th; Hexham, Friday 9th; Sandown, Sunday 11th; Kempton, Monday 12th; Cheltenham, Sunday 18th; Fakenham, Tuesday 20th.

December: Leicester, Sunday 2nd; Chepstow, Saturday 8th; Musselburgh, Monday 10th; Newbury, Wednesday, 19th.

Taunton Race Meeting Dates for Remainder of 2018

October 31; November 15 and 29; December 13 and 30.

Apply for half-year membership at the Racecourse Office: 01823 337172 or info@tauntonracecourse.co.uk. The membership application form can be found at <http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk>

News from Bickenhall and District WI

by Jacqueline Kolkowski

At our February meeting we welcomed Trudi Henderson, NatWest community banker, who gave a most informative talk on how to evade doorstep, telephone, online and banking deception attempts with good advice on setting passwords, how to spot spoof emails and how we can report suspect emails.

Thanks to our speaker at the March meeting, you can all rest assured that you are now in safe hands: we had a very informative talk on Everyday First Aid by the Red Cross. with simple and useful advice on dealing with a range of situations.

In April we were all at sea. Jan McNeill told us of her 35 years at sea on the cruise ship as a singer and later cruise director. It was very entertaining with songs, costumes and many anecdotes about her time on the ships, along with her story about the encounter with pirates (not Penzance!)

Events

Alas our table top sale in March had to be cancelled due to the bad weather, but do not worry folks, we will be back!

Prizes

Yes, this is the time of the year when the points collected at the monthly competition means prizes. Known as the Bickenhall Trophy, the winner was (drum roll please...) Frances Alford, with Wyn Balance runner-up and Brenda Crossley in third place.



The Bickenhall Cup is an award chosen by the President and this year it went to Debbie Hards and Candy Janes, *pictured left.*

Sporting events

Debbie Hards and her daughter Caroline organised a wonderful afternoon at Taunton Racecourse when members and guests had a super afternoon of racing



with excellent food and drink enjoyed from a box, with excellent views of the course. Monies were won and lost but everyone enjoyed the day and having the winner of the Gold Cup, Native River, parade before the crowd made it even more special.

Walking Netball, helping the WI get a wiggle on!

Somerset WI members are being invited to join a programme of walking netball. It aims to promote activity, wellbeing and reduce loneliness along with increasing WI membership. We start training in June - and might invite Tracey Neville to see if we are ready for Team England!

Iris Donovan

Many of you will know already about the sad loss of Iris Donovan who was a member of our WI. Iris enjoyed all aspects of the the WI especially the debates and she was always a joy to be with.

Somerset Federation events

Members attended a very enjoyable literary lunch at Oake Manor with a talk given by the author Susan Lewis, and a roadshow at East Huntspill with speakers from The Dogs' Trust and Chris Ewan, author of "A Life of Crime".

New members are always welcome: please contact Tricia Dryden at tricia@witchlodge.co.uk

Village Agent Update

By Sally Mitchell

Hurrah! At long last, we've reached the season to go outside in the evenings, chat to our neighbours over the garden fence, go for walks or bike rides and conclude with refreshment in the pub garden – all on a school night too!

Just 10 minutes of brisk walking is considered to give health benefits according to the NHS choices website which advises us to aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, of which brisk walking is one.



A brisk walk is about three miles an hour, so faster than a stroll. One way to tell if you're walking briskly is if you can still talk but can't sing the words to a song.

Look to your surgery to see where your local health walks take place. They can be great places to meet up for a chat and often have a range of walks for different abilities so don't worry that you may be the slowest person there. If you would like to take your walks up a gear, try the Ramblers at www.ramblers.org.uk website which provides information on groups, walking advice and lists of walks. Don't forget to wear suitable footwear!

There are also lots of gentle exercise classes such as seated boccia and over 50s exercise if you feel you need to start more gently. Just ask the health coach or receptionist in your surgery for more information.

Don't forget to hydrate during and after your exercise. There was some media coverage that the NHS guideline of six-eight glasses of water was considered to be excessive due to being sponsored by the bottled water companies. However, further research does support it.

Recently there has been lots of new research and conflicting advice about what makes up a healthy diet. The NHS eatwell campaign outlines the new findings in a simple manner and is a good point of reference:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Goodfoodhome.aspx

Dementia Awareness Week 2018 starts on Monday 21 May.

We are all more aware that many more people are living with dementia so this is a good chance to be aware of how a person with dementia may see the world so that we can be supportive of those trying to live independently with the disease.

Most people will have heard of Alzheimer's which is where proteins build up in the brain and stop the signals from being accurately transmitted. Vascular dementia is the result of small strokes which damage the brain. Both will get worse with time but how rapidly can vary. There are many other forms including damage to the brain through alcohol consumption.



The change to the person can also vary but you may see a change in personality, mood, confusion and frustration. People may start to avoid social situations as they feel anxious and exhausted. Later symptoms can include reduced hand/eye co-ordination, visual disturbance and of course forgetting the immediate information and living in the past.

You may come across people experiencing symptoms when you are out. Being aware that someone may become bewildered because they have forgotten where they are, or perhaps because the mat in a shop door looks more like a lake, will help us all to be more patient and understanding.

There is a huge range of publications available that are all worth a read. Ask me, your surgery and the Alzheimer's Society for information. There is also a super booklet called "When Grandma came to stay" to help children understand and be prepared.

sally@somersetcc.org.uk 07931 018019

Neroche MP's briefing

By Rebecca Pow MP

Success for Musgrove Funding Bid

It's a fact of life that wherever we live in the area at some point either directly or indirectly through family and friends we will come into contact with Musgrove Park Hospital's surgical services.

As I outlined in the last edition, whilst high quality care has continued to be delivered here the buildings are well past their sell-by date. After lots of meetings, debates and a petition which I presented in Parliament, I am delighted that approval for a new £79.5m Surgical Centre, with five operating theatres and an endoscopy unit, has been granted. More than 6,000 people signed the petition and I would like to thank every one of you as this definitely helped to make the case.



It's a great achievement for all concerned and will benefit not only those who live locally but also patients from the whole of Somerset and indeed the wider South West.

Still on a health note, I was also pleased that our hard working nurses have been awarded a 6% pay rise over the next three years. There is more to do to ensure the health service is fit for purpose as our population in Somerset ages and I am engaging with a range of stakeholders to do what I can on this agenda.

I am co-chair of the All Party Rural Services Group and we are conducting a mini-inquiry into social care and funding mechanisms for rural areas and feeding into Government.

This same group will also be assessing Community Transport Schemes to inform a consultation on this issue and as part of this I shall be meeting with Transport Minister Jesse Norman. Do feed in any useful information on either of these subjects.

Broadband

I am constantly making representations to improve matters for individuals and businesses who are not yet well served. Current combined Connecting Devon and Somerset and commercial superfast coverage across Taunton Deane is a commendable 88% and set to reach 96% by 2020 but that's of little consolation if you fall outside the covered areas.

CDS are launching a new broadband voucher scheme for residents and businesses. The previous scheme has demonstrated the success of this type of support with more than 1,800 installations being completed offering a choice of 4G, fixed-wireless, satellite and fibre solutions. The scheme will help people in areas not in line for commercial or publicly-funded broadband infrastructure. Details will be published shortly and may help some cases. CDS is also planning to launch schemes to support community broadband solutions in the summer.

A358 Upgrade

Following the closure of the second public consultation, I have recently approached Highways England to urge them to consider continuing public engagement prior to announcing their preferred route. There is much support for this idea from Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and



plenty of locals. If it helps determine the right outcome for the area, for local businesses and for this much needed and long awaited strategic route then it must be worth considering.

Rail Station

Having secured the £4.6 million to transform Taunton Rail Station, I have met with GWR recently and am pleased to report that at last they are set to start work next year. I have fed in local views following a survey I carried out on what was important to people in relation to this development and I look forward to following the progress.

Greenest New MP

As well as working hard on specific constituency issues, I have also been able to work on an area close to my heart, which touches on all of us, and that is the environment. I mean this in its widest sense: air, water, soil, agriculture, climate change, flood resilience, the homes we live in, health and wellbeing and more.



I have had the opportunity to work on this agenda as a member of two Select Committees (DEFFRA and Environmental Audit) and now as a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department of Food Farming and Agriculture with Michael Gove and his team.

I have also run campaigns calling for a ban on microplastics in cosmetics, for extra protection of ancient woodland and veteran trees (there is some of this special habitat on the Blackdowns) and for soil to be afforded the attention it deserves to reduce erosion.

I am delighted to say that the Government is acting on all these areas, including a big push recently on reducing polluting plastics, something I have also personally been working on. There are also exciting opportunities to re-think our land use policy as we leave the

EU and with it the Common Agricultural Policy and I've been meeting with farmers and other groups to discuss their views on this.

In light of my passion for this agenda I was touched to be awarded the Green Heart Hero Award recently from the Climate Coalition for being the Greenest New MP (since 2015) in Parliament. In my first couple of years in Parliament I received more correspondence on bees than almost anything else which indicates how important such issues are to local people.

As ever, please get in touch if you need to, by visiting my website www.rebeccapow.org.uk

To receive my e-bulletins email rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk and follow me at Facebook: [fb.com/rebeccapow](https://www.facebook.com/rebeccapow) and Twitter: [@pow_rebecca](https://twitter.com/pow_rebecca)

Blackdowns Community Bus

Calling all clubs, groups, schools and organisations in the Blackdowns!

Blackdowns Community Bus Committee has taken delivery of a new 13/14 seater bus to help those who need cheap transport due to age, isolation or any sort of disability. The new bus is for the use of the whole of the Blackdowns area.



It is available for hire by any group or individual for any activity, such as transporting a football team, school trip, garden club outing, theatre trip, transporting wedding guests etc.

We are working on our pricing policy, which initially will be £75 a day (£50 a half day) plus fuel. In order to cover our costs we need to hire out the bus at least 40 times a year at that price, so please spread the word and book your trips now! Phone 07762 813967 or email blackdownbus@gmail.com to book or find out more.

Forestry Focus

By Rob Greenhalgh, Forestry Commission

The Forest Plan outlining the management of the public forest estate in and around the Blackdown Hills has recently been published.

Hopefully you will have seen one of the myriad of posters that appeared on our forest gates and entrances to try and encourage as many people as possible to read through and input to the decision making and land management plans for the next 10 years.



We care a great deal about our users and their opinions so we hope you had sufficient chance to feed in your ideas and comments.

We'd also like to highlight that, sadly, there has been a number of instances of vandalism and fence snipping in and around the grazing units on the Blackdown Hills. We'd like to ask that you feed any information you have about this back in to us in the hope we can try to prevent further instances. My contact details are below so please do get in touch.

Family event

We will be hosting a family focused partnership-led event on Tuesday, 29 May between 10.30am-3pm.

The Blackdown's AONB, Neroche Woodlanders and Forestry Commission staff and volunteers will be on hand to offer an array of activities aimed at connecting people with nature and hopefully building on the success of previous year's events at the monument.

Please come along, the event is free but booking is essential so we can keep a tally of expected numbers. Full details can be found on the AONB Facebook page, or website.

Finally...we're proud to say that we, and our associates at Neroche Woodlanders, have been shortlisted for awards in the RFS (Royal Forestry Service) 2018 nominations.

The Woodlanders enjoyed success in the category for 'Community Forestry Award' and we have been successful in the 'Silviculture Award' nominations, so watch this space.

We will have an official site visit in early-mid May by the judges and panel. It's very exciting for us as we managed to beat of competition in the same category from several of our internal colleagues giving us some serious bragging rights!

Call me on 07780 493753 or email robert.greenhalgh@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Primroses encased in ice in February, left, and in all their spring glory, right



A spring in our step

By Gavin Saunders, Neroche Woodlanders

The winter seemed to last for ever, and the ground could take no more rain. In the woods, the rainwater just sat on the surface of the clay soils and made the going pretty tough.

We take a pride in running activities right round the seasons, but in long wet winters that becomes a real challenge. Fortunately we can rest some areas and our paths and camps don't become quagmires, like some nature reserves do with constant foot traffic. But eventually the spring arrived, with a huge collective sigh of relief. The plants of the woodland floor began to show their leaves and faces – wild garlic

(which always graces our campfire lunches at this time of year!), wood anemones, bluebells, and less common plants like spurge laurel and early purple orchid.

Then the trees begin to show their subtle flowers and unfurl their leaves – catkins on hazel and then willow and alder, then elm and lime and oak. The knobby buds on the ash swell and eventually burst, and the woods are green again. It's a hugely hopeful time of year, though there are some clouds on the horizon.

We wait with trepidation for Ash Dieback - the ash tree disease - to reach the Neroche forest. It is advancing rapidly, with cases confirmed in the western Blackdowns in 2017. How much it will affect us is hard to predict, but ash is a major component of our woods.

On a happier note, we've a full programme of activities taking place through the spring and summer, with two wellbeing sessions a week at present, plus our regular volunteer days.

And we've an **Open Sunday on May 20, from 1.30pm-5pm**, with have-a-go activities and a pop-up café in the woods. Please do come along any time during that afternoon, to say hello and enjoy the woods with us.

We're also pleased to have been shortlisted, with support from the Forestry Commission, in the Royal Forestry Society's 'Excellence in Forestry 2018' Awards, under the Education and Learning category.

As ever, anyone is welcome to join us on volunteer days at Young Wood, on the fourth Wednesday of the month. We also run volunteer days on local nature reserves on the second and third Wednesdays. Take a look at www.ncv.org.uk for details.

With the better weather, we have charcoal to sell – just get in touch if you would like to buy some. And you can support Woodlanders' work by becoming a shareholder member – see www.youngwood.org.uk for details.

Gavin, Jenny and the team at Neroche Woodlanders

Spotlight on RSPCA West Hatch

By Bel Deering

Here at West Hatch we see all animals as equally worthy of our help. Animals come to the centre for a variety of reasons ranging from cruelty and neglect to accident or injury. Each year across the whole site we care for over 5,000 animals from 150-plus species, but whether an animal is a pigeon, a pig or a Patterdale terrier we do our best to help them all.

This article highlights our work with just two species but hopefully shows how we strive to have a positive impact on the lives of all the wild and pet animals we admit.

Staffordshire Bull Terriers

We admitted and cared for 148 dogs in 2017. Although we see many different dog breeds coming through our doors we always have Staffies amongst those in our care. Sadly this breed does experience negative press and opinion but here we so often see another side with dogs showing themselves as amazing family pets and sometimes real heroes.



Police dog Roxy with PC Lee Webb

Many of the Staffies that come into the centre go on to find their perfect home with a family, but some go out to live both a family life and a working life too.

One example is Roxy, who came here when her owner could no longer care for her. Animal care staff soon noticed that Roxy had an impressive talent for tracking down hidden tennis balls, and were quick to let police dog trainer PC Lee Webb know.

He came to see for himself and signed her up for police training. Roxy showed great skill and focus in

training and made it through the course to qualify as a police explosives dog. We are delighted that she has shown she is the best dog for the job irrespective of her breed and background.

Another West Hatch staffie with a police career is Stella. She joined the police in 2014 and has turned out to be a star sniffer dog, trained to find guns, cash and drugs.

Her career highs include a find of £25,000 in her first week at work and being crowned Public Service Animal of the Year at the Animal Hero Awards in 2015.

Since then she has been called upon to demonstrate her skills at Crufts and is a social media star too. These two fantastic staffie ambassadors are proof that we should judge dogs on their deeds rather than their breed.



Police dog and hero Stella with her handler

Red Foxes

Typically we admit around 60 red foxes a year, from orphaned cubs to adults that have suffered injuries from snares, cars and other human impacts. When we rehabilitate and release adult foxes we have to be careful to return them to the location they were found at, and sometimes a fortunate cub can be reunited with its family too. But things are not always that straightforward.

Each year we care for a number of less fortunate fox cubs that have become separated from their mothers, or orphaned due to accident or disease.

For example mum may have been disturbed when moving them from one den to another and have dropped a cub and fled. A vixen in this situation will usually wait for an opportunity to retrieve the youngster but there are times when a human gets there first. Occasionally too, cubs will leave the safety of a den if the mum does not return having

been killed or injured on a road. Driven by hunger they will emerge during the day and may be found and picked up by concerned passers-by.

When a fox cub arrives at the centre it is assessed by our vet to make sure it is free of injury and disease. This examination should determine whether the animal will likely make it through to release and will feed into a treatment or rehab plan for that individual. Occasionally it is necessary to hand rear a cub for a while

These cubs spend about the first 12-16 weeks of their lives at the centre. They are routinely assessed to monitor their health and wellbeing but we try to minimise contact especially when cleaning and feeding so they retain their wariness of people and will survive in the wild.

To help with the next stage of rehabilitation we have a number of supportive land-owners who are happy to 'host' a fox pen for a few weeks in a suitable habitat. Once the pen has been built the young foxes spend about four weeks in this closed pen to get used to their new environment. When the pen is opened the foxes are free to go - but back-up food can be offered as long as necessary. We carefully time this release to coincide with the natural patterns of dispersal of cubs from their mum so that these youngsters have the chance to behave in the same way as their wild counterparts.

Research at other RSPCA wildlife centres has shown that foxes raised and released in this way have a good chance of settling into a normal wild existence and so we are happy to help these animals when they need it the most.



Fox cubs in the centre



New library at Thurlbear School

By Jo Moore

At Thurlbear School we are very excited about our new library.

The library that the school had previously was very out of date and underused, consisting of a few shelves in a corridor space. So a project has been underway this year to create an attractive space to inspire our pupils about reading and books.

The PTA has raised a considerable amount of money that has been used for this project involving relocating the library, redecorating the space and providing new shelving and books.

We have purchased a system that allows each child to have their own barcode and scan books out as they borrow them in a similar way to a public library.

Children can even write reviews and recommend books to friends within the safe online library system.

We hope that as we begin to make full use of the new library in the coming months children will be enthused about borrowing new books and sharing their reading.



*Festival fun:
Left, Grenham with a friend; and right, the Avara stand is a hive of activity*



Science festival goes with a Big Bang

By David and Madeleine Spears

The Big Bang Science and Engineering Festival took place at the Tropicana in Weston Super Mare on April 27-28. It turned out to be a huge success with over 2,600 people attending over the two days; at least 1,600 of these were children.

So how did it originate?

In 2015 David had an exhibition of his microscopic images of small organisms at CICCIC in Taunton. Guernsey Museum got wind of this and in 2016 asked him for the exhibition. Since then it has been to Salisbury, Nottingham, Guildford and is about to be seen in Kingston upon Thames.

A friend suggested Dave looked at the Tropicana as an exhibition venue. The manager felt the show was too small for the space and suggested Dave organise a science and engineering show. The rest, as they say, is history.



Badminton School ran a display on magnetism

For just over 12 months we contacted local companies, organisations, colleges and universities to find sponsors

and stand exhibitors who would provide stimulating activities. Anne Perry joined us to help with the organising such a big undertaking.

RS Components, our headline sponsor, provided not only sponsorship but also a giant truck called the Titan with pop-out sides which opened to make a large exhibition space to demonstrate all kinds of electronic and mechanical devices.

There were over 40 exhibitors ranging from Bristol University Biomedical Department who brought furry viruses, white cells and bacteria that taught youngsters how our immune system works; the girls from Badminton School explored magnetism with dramatic and interesting demonstrations and several industrial companies put on mindblowing virtual reality shows.

The manufacturers of Henry vacuum cleaners, Numatic, had interactive games and tasks for youngsters to do and the Explorer Dome, a giant inflatable bubble big enough for 30 children to watch projected shows of astronomy and weather.

The DE&S, more commonly known as the MOD supplies, were having fun dressing up youngsters in body armour, battle helmets and night vision sights. Edwards Engineering pulled the stops out with a huge

stand complete with Van de Graff generator to make your hair stand on end and a spectacular VR system.

The food science department at Bath Spa University brought chocolate cookies that contained cricket flour; these were very popular and tasted great. Part of modern food science is looking at including insect and other invertebrate protein in human diets. Microscope displays were a big draw for youngsters who looked at live video microscope displays of plankton from the sea, beautiful displays of diatoms and huge views of insects.

As organisers, we were delighted by the attendance figures, but also by the feedback which sometimes felt like fan mail. We owe a special thank you to our friends and neighbours from Neroche who volunteered to do various important roles in planning, building and running the event particularly Tricia Dryden, Matt Keoghan, Jacky Kolkowski, Karen and Andrew Morgan, Pauline Phelps, and as mentioned earlier, Anne Perry. We were also delighted that several also came to the event.



Chris Baxter tests a cricket

We have been asked to run another Big Bang@ Weston next year and a planning meeting is taking place and we are particularly keen to encourage the food and farming industries to get engaged.



Tricia Dryden, Daisy and Meghan from Weston College and Liz Hartley on reception.



Blackdown Hills

Repair Café

Toss it? No way!

Hemyock Parish Hall
Saturday 28th July 2018
10am to 12noon

Bring along your items for repair

ELECTRICAL

CERAMICS

CLOTHING

TEXTILES

COMPUTERS

FURNITURE

BIKES

GARDEN TOOLS



Volunteer specialists will be on hand to help you with repairs.
A selection of repair materials will be available, or please do
bring your own

**Donations
for Repairs
Welcome**

Tea, Coffee and Cake will be on sale

The Blackdown Hills Repair Café is an initiative of the Blackdown Hills Transition Group.

Contact trishacomrie@gmail.com or 01823 602908 for more information. Village Hall Postcode is EX15 3QW



RepairCafeBlackdowns



Flippin' heck! That seems a long time ago!



Young and old alike turned out for the annual fun-fest that is the Neroche Pancake Supper.

Judging by these photos, a good time was had by all. Congratulations to the winner, right, and runner-up, left.



Email Alert Parish Notices

If you wish to be kept informed of all that is happening in the community (including: crime alerts; road closures; community activities; local events; important meetings) then why not add your email address to the 280 plus individuals that have already signed-up to the service.

Your details will be kept secure, as all Email Alerts use the BCC address system so that nobody sees the full list.

If you are not on the list, then you are missing out on 'up-to-the-minute' information on all that is important and happening in the immediate area in which you live.

To join, send an email to: wallytorrington@hotmail.com with the message "**please add me to the list**".

We look forward to you becoming a fully-informed Neroche resident.

School Holidays

Summer holidays this year are:

24 July - 1 September inclusive

Household Recycling & Refuse Collections

Changes due to bank holidays are:

Recycling only on Thursday, 1 June

Refuse & recycling on Thursday, 10 May

To check collection dates go to:

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





Events for your calendar



May

29 - Wild Day Out, Castle Neroche (free) -
blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk

June

6 - Quiz Night at the Greyhound
7 - Thursday Lunch Club, Neroche Hall
12 - Neroche Hall AGM
13 - Women's Institute, Neroche Hall (7.30pm)
16 - Community Tea, St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine
23 - Testical Festival, Taunton Racecourse

July

11 - Women's Institute, Neroche Hall (7.30pm)
21-29 - Scarecrow Festival (last entries 18 July)
28 - Blackdown Hills Repair Cafe
29 - Lunchtime BBQ, St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine

Updates at: nerochevillages.org.uk



Plastic Fantastic

Somerset Waste Partnership has confirmed that every recycling site in the county is now taking plastic food pots, tubs and trays (including black plastic food ones), as well as plastic bottles.

However residents are reminded to remove all foil, film covers and cardboard from the pots, tubs and trays and discard all lids, flip-caps and trigger-tops from plastic bottles. Thin plastic such as cling film, carrier bags and bubble wrap should continue to be excluded. More info at: www.somersetwaste.gov.uk

Local Communication and Information

Websites:

Neroche Villages www.nerochevillages.org.uk

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

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

Neroche Hall www.nerochehall.org.uk

A new-look website which lists the coming events, facilities and availability for hire of our village hall, and has an online booking form.

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

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

Email Information:

The Neroche Communication Action Group runs an Email Alert System for sending information to those wishing to receive it. Please contact Wally Torrington at wallytorrington@hotmail.com if you would like your name added.

The Parish Magazine:

Full information on benefice matters, a great source of news, coming events and general information, and details of many local businesses and services. For new subscriptions phone Kate Reynolds on 01823 444023.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this Newsletter.

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

Newsletter coordinator: Jacq Wanstall nerochenewsletter@gmail.com

Editor: Alan Hyde; Designer: Sarah Hyde; Treasurer: Mark Wanstall

Official Photographers: David and Madeleine Spears

david@cloudshillimaging.com

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