

Working Together for a Better Community

# NEROCHE VILLAGES Newsletter

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

**Issue 38 - Winter 2020**



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.



## **A Letter from the Editor**

***By Karen Learoyd***

It's hard to believe this is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Newsletter that has been produced since the start of the pandemic, and I would firstly like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has contributed over the past few months, especially those who regularly write for us. I'm sure we all appreciate how difficult it is to write an interesting article when it feels as though the world has come to a standstill! But, write they have, and I hope this has continued to be a 'good read' for many of you.

You will see from this edition how many of our residents have engaged in fund-raising activities, supporting the multitude of charities who are struggling with income generation. Every single one of the charities deserves our support, so making that decision about who to help is sometimes difficult, although as we know the Royal British Legion, St Margaret's Hospice and Prostrate Cancer UK have been beneficiaries of the help from those nearby. As the London Marathon was cancelled this year, Lottie Michaels was unable to run in support of Blind Veterans UK. Nor was she able to complete her planned Big Busk due to the increase in infections and second lockdown, although she is determined to do something in the Spring, so we wish her well.

When the hospitality industry opened again, I hope many of you were able to visit some of our local hostelrys and eateries and take advantage of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme. It was great to see The Greyhound buzzing with life, and we hope it won't be too long before we are able to visit them again. Similarly, with Neroche Hall re-opened, I know many people appreciated the brief opportunity to play badminton again and attend the newly established Teas. Fingers crossed December brings better news for our social life!

John and I have been talking about setting up a Tool Loan facility – we have lots of equipment that we would be happy to lend to someone should you only need a concrete mixer for a few days, or a water pump for the afternoon. It made us think there must be plenty of people locally who have that unusual tool or item that someone else could use, without hiring or buying! Just the germ of an idea at the moment,

although if you have any experience of something similar, or would be willing to help, please email me at [nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com). Hopefully more information will be available in the next Newsletter or in the Email alert.

We are very pleased to confirm that Julie and Mark Pope will be selling Christmas trees from Staple Farm again this year, hopefully from December 2<sup>nd</sup>, assuming lockdown is lifted. There will be no Open Day, although trees will be available from the yard – full details to be confirmed. There will also be a 'Click and Collect' service. The trees from the Farm are always beautiful and you will see a few photos of last year's decorated trees in the following pages.

Once again, Taunton Racecourse have sponsored this edition of the Newsletter, and we thank them for their generous and continued support. We sincerely hope that they are able to welcome racegoers early next year, and to plan more exciting events for 2021 at their beautiful venue.

And finally, the Neroche Communication Action Group would like to wish you all a very healthy and happy Christmas and New Year. In spite of the challenges and pressures that 2020 has brought to many, the community spirit in Neroche lives on, we look forward to seeing much more of our friends and neighbours next year.



Take care and stay safe

Karen

# Great Exmoor Bike Ride Challenge

*By Karen Learoyd*

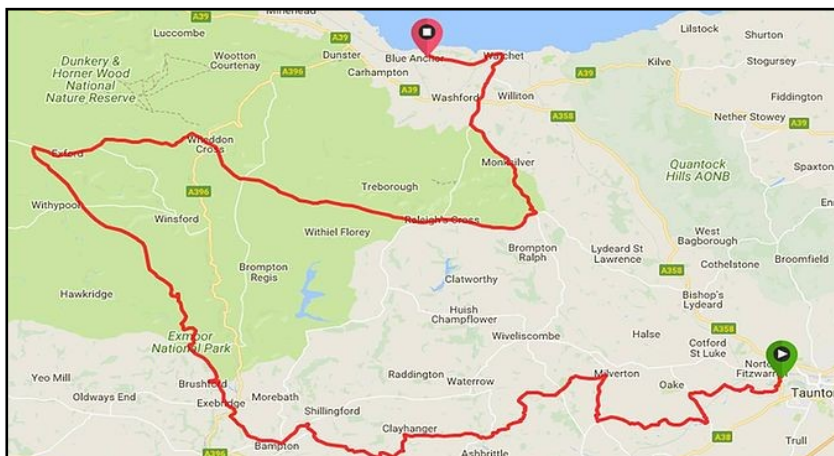
Have you ever considered cycling 66 miles across Somerset and Devon, including the hilly parts of Exmoor? For fun? No, nor have I!

Two of our intrepid residents did just that back in September, in support of the charity, Prostrate Cancer UK. Ellie and Trudy Clist decided to tackle this annual event after 'one too many rum and cokes' in honour of Fred Clist, Ellie's late grandfather.



Trudy was once a keen triathlete apparently, and rediscovered her cycling legs, along with Ellie who was a novice. They trained hard through the summer of lockdown, exploring the surrounding countryside and enjoying a sense of freedom. The big day dawned, a total of 132 miles covered between them, across 6000 feet elevation, through wind, rain and glorious sunshine, in a time of 5 and a half hours. What an achievement!! They both enjoyed it so much, they have already signed up for next year, and would love for anyone else to join them... Our lovely ladies have raised almost £600 for a very worthwhile cause and have sent their thanks to everyone who kindly supported them through donations.

If you'd like to know more about the route taken, here is just a taster.





The Ride starts on the west side of Taunton, through Bishop's Hull and several other quiet Somerset villages on a nice, flat stretch to get the legs going, before approaching Milverton and then encountering a number of modest but testing rises as the route rolls and undulates through yet more tranquil Somerset country lanes.



The route also pays a fleeting visit to Devon around this point as it makes its way to Bampton, then it's on through Exebridge and Brushford to reach the gateway to the magnificent Exmoor National Park at Dulverton.



Passing through Dulverton, riders face possibly the most challenging section of the Ride - ascending to the top of Exmoor. It's about 4 miles of climbing in total to the very top and it's quite challenging in places although, whether on bike or on foot, it's definitely worth the effort for the views that await!

Once up on the top of Exmoor the route rolls again as it heads north then turns east, combining some short(ish) ascents with some very fast and rewarding descents on its way through Exford, Wheddon Cross and on past Raleigh's Cross. The route then heads north again towards Watchet where it brings riders back down to sea level.

Riders get their first real glimpse of the sea as they pass through Watchet itself, then with around 1500m of climbing already under the belt there's one final sting in the tail - a bit of a climb out of Watchet - after which it's a steady and very pleasant gradual descent towards Blue Anchor, the final destination.

A superbly organised event, according to Ellie, and the first cycling event post the start of Covid-19. Well done to you both!!

## Teas to Please!

After lockdown restrictions were lifted and Neroche Hall was able to re-open for a limited number of activities, the Friends of St Peter's Church, who organise the monthly Lunch Club, decided to hold Afternoon Teas, in place of the lunches. With a limit on the number of people who can attend due to social distancing at the Hall, it was felt that a scrumptious tea would be more appropriate than providing a two-course lunch, with all the additional volunteers this requires.



The first Tea was held in September and was a resounding success. There were sausage rolls, dainty sandwiches, scones, and plenty of cake! Many of the guests said how lovely it was to be able to get out for the first time in ages to meet their friends – socially distanced of course!

Plans were laid for monthly teas from thereon in, and the follow up took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. All available places were booked in advance, so we knew this was going to be a popular event. The cooks surpassed their previous efforts with an even more delicious array of small, yet perfectly formed, cakes and savouries, including cheese scones and vol-au-vents, chocolate cake, mini meringues and ice-cream cupcakes! Tea was served at the tables on beautiful tiered cake stands, by two helpers, while our other two volunteers ably man (or woman) the kitchen.



Once again, our guests were delighted with the 'spread' and the opportunity to see friends for an hour or two. At only £5 per head, the Neroche Tea is far better value than The Ritz, and so much nearer....

Teas will be held at the Hall until the Spring when we hope to start up lunches again, COVID-19 permitting. In the meantime, if you'd like to fill your boots or tummies, do book a place at the monthly tea.

Unfortunately, as we go to press, the November tea has been cancelled due to the latest lockdown, although we hope to go ahead with the Christmas themed event on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **MULCH for your GARDENS**

Having taken down a number of Conifers and chipped the proceeds, we now have quantities of wood chipping available.

It makes wonderful organic mulch—ref RHS advice on the use of Mulch.

Bring your own bags and help yourselves to the pile on the concrete at Battens Farm, Bickenhall.

Any Donations to St Peter's Church will be gratefully received and can be left at the house. Further details from Alison or Anthony 01823 480441. Please phone before you come.

## **ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA?**

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



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

[nerochenewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nerochenewsletter@gmail.com)

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

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

**Neroche Email alert** – distributed every 3 to 4 weeks, bringing you information about local events, information from the Parish Council, and details of what's happening in our neighbouring villages. To sign up for the Email alert, just send your details to [nerochemail@gmail.com](mailto:nerochemail@gmail.com).

**Welcome to Neroche**

## November 2020 Update

**By Ross Henley, District Councillor**

As I write this article, we have just entered the second national lockdown. This will undoubtedly be a difficult time for many people in our rural location. Lots of people really struggled with managing their mental health in the first lockdown, and I know that I found it particularly hard myself. I hope everyone is keeping well and staying safe during these troubling times. We are so lucky that there are many people locally who looked out for others in the community not just in the first lockdown, but also during the summer months when the restrictions were initially eased. I know there is support again happening either through the local community support group which has an excellent page on Facebook, or through lots of other residents. The Neroche villages are a real community where people care about each other. One thing we are allowed to do is to go out and take daily exercise and we are so lucky to have such beautiful places to walk in locally. Since the swimming pools re-opened on 1st August, I have been swimming 5 times a week, and it was so good for my physical and mental health. I campaigned very hard at the Council for our leisure facilities to re-open as soon as possible, and I hope that will happen again very quickly once lockdown is eased again. Some areas like Exeter and Plymouth Council leisure facilities, never reopened at all after the first lockdown ended.



Somerset West and Taunton Council processed £45 million of grants to support local business across the district since the start of the pandemic, and a number of local businesses were recipients of these grants. I do however worry about a number of businesses who fell through the cracks and didn't get any support - this year has been so hard for anyone trying to run an independent business.

During the summer I was able to get out and about locally. My family and I enjoyed visiting the Greyhound for a meal. It was great to catch up with a number of local residents, and to see the pub so well frequented on the evening we were there. I'm really looking forward to a return as soon as lockdown ends. I had booked for the November afternoon tea at Neroche Hall and was so looking forward to attending

before we were back in lockdown. As soon as these events start again, I will book my place. In an area that is so rural, events which bring the community together are so vital.

Still no further updates on the A358 issue, or the Taylor Wimpey saga of planned housing in the Orchard Portman estate. I will update everyone as soon as I hear more. I am concerned now at the proposed Government planning reforms which are being debated at present. Many fear these will make it harder for local residents to challenge large scale housing developments.

One issue which is still going on is the planning application for agricultural buildings, hard standing and formation of a private access drive in Curland. This was refused in July, and an enforcement action notice was issued by the Council. The applicant has now appealed against the refusal of planning permission, and the enforcement notice and a written representation appeal is being conducted by the Planning inspectorate. The deadline for written representations is early December. I have been engaging with local residents throughout and support the comments they have made about this application. It's been a very stressful time for a number of people who live close to that site.

One thing that has just come in which I will oppose is an application by Somerset County Councillor's to try and postpone next May's planned County Council elections. The term of office for County Councillors will expire in May, and they should face re-election as all County Councillors in every other county in England will have to. The future decision on any unitary council for Somerset has not yet been decided, so in the meantime I see no reason for Councillors to have their term of office extended without an election. To me that's democracy and Somerset needs an election.

Finally, I wanted to thank all those locally who watched my recent Facebook live interview about autism. I have had some lovely supportive comments from local people, and I am passionate about improving support for autism. The video is available to watch on my Facebook page, and on a page called Talking Cafe Somerset as well.



# St Peter's Church Flower Guild

*By Jacqueline Kolkowski*

It was lovely that we could at last produce a large flower display to decorate the church for a celebration, and Harvest Festival gave us that wonderful opportunity. We decorated every corner of the church with large and small flower displays, greenery, wheat sheaves, as well as fruit and vegetables from many parishioner's gardens.



Carole Wensley-Dodd produced her first pedestal which included a stunning display of dahlias from her garden.

The Lister family provided sunflowers they grew on their farm, and a most amazing giant pumpkin grown by Harriet and William.



The display also included some of the wonderful scarecrows made for the competition this year.

The Flower Guild were so pleased that the display was in place for Di Grabham's funeral.

As many of you know, she ran the Flower Guild for many years. When I told Di what we had planned this year for harvest, she was delighted that the church would have a country feel with some of her traditions still in place.

Thanks to all the florists of the Flower Guild and the Lister family, who spent time decorating the church, and to the members for looking after the displays so they would be perfect for Di's funeral.

Thank you to all who provided donations for Open Door. We received the most donations ever!

We all look forward to Christmas when we hope we can decorate and add sparkle to a very special time for you and the church.

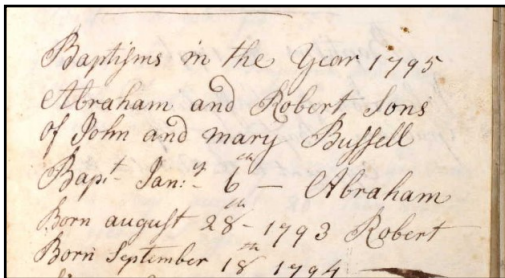
If you are interested in joining our small group, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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## Neroche Local History Group: What's In A Name?

*By Jane Hole*

As ever, while researching another subject I became intrigued with the first names of children born in our villages over the last 380 years. We are lucky enough to have the CoE Births, Baptisms and Burial Registers dating from the 1630s online. I have used the Curland and Bickenhall registers for this research. The registrations of children are mainly about their baptisms, the entries are short, with just the child's name and those of the parents. The unfortunate child of an unmarried mother is labelled either as base-born or bastard.



*Bussell brothers baptism 1795*

The baptismal date would be recorded and occasionally that of the birth as well. Sometimes two siblings would be baptised at the same time as can be seen by Abraham Bussell, aged 18 months, and his brother Robert, aged four months, who were baptised in January 1795.

There are poignant stories too as Eliza Newton, daughter of Thomas and Mary, is baptised 30<sup>th</sup> August, only to appear five months later for her burial in January 1813.

It is often the case that the collection of information was used for several purposes but chiefly to raise taxes. The 1695 Registration of Marriages Act was a tax on parish register entries levied in part to pay for the war with France. It was on a sliding scale according to status, with a basic rate of 2/- for a christening, 2/6d for a marriage and 4/- for a burial. Genuine paupers were exempt, thus the letter P or the word pauper appears next to the entries. It has been suggested that the regulations were too complex and defied the abilities of many parish clerks; it was found to be unenforceable and repealed after a few years.

What had caught my eye was the female name Betty which seemed to occur quite often starting in the late 1600s. Subsequently I collected the commonest names for the baptismal records from the 17<sup>th</sup> C to 1812.

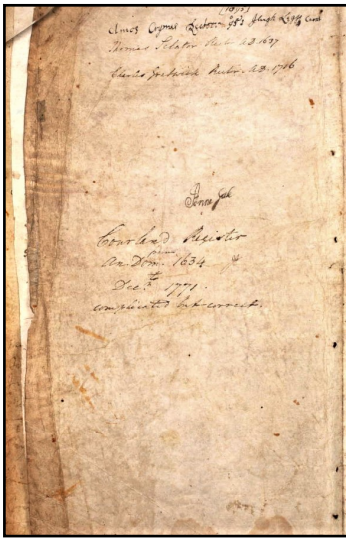
## **Bickenhall Parish Registers 1682 - 1812**

The four most popular girls' names in numerical order:

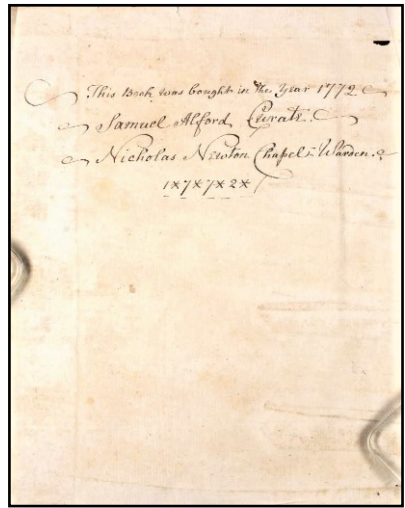
Mary	29	Biblical origin
Sarah	16	Biblical origin
Jane	13	Medieval English form of Jehanne, Old French feminine form of Johannes or John
Betty	11	Pet form of Elizabeth dating from 17thC

The four most popular boys' names in numerical order:

John	38	Biblical origin
William	22	Old French name of Germanic origin introduced to England by William the Conqueror
Thomas	15	Biblical origin
James	11	Biblical origin



Register for Courland  
(Curland)  
1634 – 1771



1772 Register for Curland signed by Samuel Alford Curate and Nicholas Newton Chapel Warden. At this time Curland Church was a Chapel of Ease for the Manor church in Curry Mallet

## Curland Parish Registers 1634 – 1812

The four most popular girls' names in numerical order:

Mary	28	
Betty	14	
Sarah	12	
Ann	11	Biblical origin

The four most popular boys' names in numerical order:

William	22	
John	17	
Thomas	9	
Robert	8	The Normans introduced this name to England

More flamboyant names appear; Curland sports Dorothy in 1636, a Prudence in 1800 whilst Bickenhall has a Priscillia in 1746, and a Robina in 1811.

The most popular UK baby names in 2020 are Olivia, Amelia, Ava and Isla for girls, and Oliver, George, Harry and Noah for boys.



## Diane Grabham (1938-2020)

Diane Grabham, a long-time resident of Staple Fitzpaine and Curland, died on 9 September. To most of us, known as Di, she was a stalwart of many different organisations over the years. She was born the only child to Raymond and Phyllis Sims on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1938 – her father, an Auctioneer with Greenslades, later a partner. She was brought up in Taunton and educated in Taunton. During her school years she made some close friends who remained close friends until the time of her death. At school, though not academic, she was good at sports, gymnastics, music and art.



During her early years she learned to ride, and, owning her own pony, developed her love of horses. She became a member of the Taunton Vale branch of the Pony Club, and followed the Taunton Vale Foxhounds. The Sims family moved to Highlands, a house on the outskirts of Taunton, which had some land, so pigs and cattle were kept, Di learning rapidly about farming and after leaving school she became an active member of the Taunton branch of Young Farmers, meeting her future husband, Hugh Grabham there.

They were married in 1960 in Thurlbear Church on a Wednesday because of Saturday Taunton Market, and settled down at Badger Street Farm where Hugh was developing a dairy herd. Di threw herself into farming life although found time for other activities including the Operatic Society, having a lovely soprano voice. She took several leading parts and in later years her acting experience showed well in several skits with the WI. Their two daughters, Penny and Tina, were born in the 60s, so life at this time was very busy, although Di still found time for the local Riding Club, a bit of hunting on her grey mare, and church activities. Hugh developed a great interest in polo and Di provided support at matches.

Sadly, Hugh died in 1981. After this, Di, the girls and ponies moved to Whitty Cottage in Curland and she threw herself into the many activities for which she will be remembered. She was a Committee member of Taunton Vale Pony Club and later District Commissioner; together with Barbara Cozens, running the PC Area Dressage competition at



Taunton Racecourse for many years. She became an expert at laying out dressage arenas, with a meticulous eye for detail. Woe betide you if you got a post a few inches out of alignment! Taunton Riding Club also benefited from her skills in this. Pony Club interest was maintained when her grandson Howie became a member. Dressage judging helped Di keep up her involvement with horses.

Di was very talented at floral decorating and was often found masterminding the flowers for local weddings, and fund-raising functions. She led the Flower Guild of St Peter's Church for many years, creating memorable Flower Festivals and patiently taught other members of the congregation to do better than sticking flowers in a vase! She was very sad in the last couple of years of her life to have to give up this activity, although still wanted to come to the church to impart a bit more knowledge to us. Neroche Hand bells were another of her enthusiasms, a local group originally founded by Edna Grabham, Hugh's stepmother, and then directed by the late Jenny Trood for many years.

Church life was very important to Di. She was a member of the PCC for many years; a member of St Peter's choir and a Trustee of the William Portman Almshouses until recently. Her opinions on changes within the church were respected and came from a deep love of the Anglican tradition, although she was not afraid to speak her mind! Her faith was of great importance to her, and she was always aware of others that needed help or support.

The Women's Institute was a prominent part of later life for Di, who became President of the Bickenhall branch for a time, and whose members were a great support during her ill-health in the past year or two.

After the girls had grown up and left home, Di found time to rekindle her interest in painting and art. She enjoyed the creativity very much, going on painting holidays and was able to sell her work. She belonged to Taunton Art Group and started a local art group at Neroche.

Di leaves her two daughters and two grandsons, Howie and Alfie. They and her many friends in the Neroche villages and the wider area will miss her friendship and lively interest in so many things, and we all thank God for the privilege of having known her.

**Alison Brown**

# Ruby Sunflower Competition In Support of St Margaret's Hospice

*By Jacqueline Kolkowski*

Early this year I was thinking of running a parish "Let's grow the tallest yellow sunflower competition" although during discussions with Pauline Phelps and Karen Learoyd, they mentioned that St Margaret's Hospice was running a ruby sunflower competition as a fundraiser for their 40th anniversary. The rest as they say is history!!

Many of you purchased seed to grow and some grew plants for others. The competition became very competitive with the growers in Curland in particular. Candy Janes' sunflower turned out be a very short and yellow prairie sunflower, although it flowered beautifully. The Larkman family had mixed fortunes with their three plants, alas the only one to survive was the one Joy grew! Alan and Sarah Hyde named their two plants after their daughters - not sure which one came out top!

Results for over 10's:

- 1st Pauline Phelps – height of 8ft 6ins
- 2nd Karen Morgan - height of 7ft 9ins
- 3rd Sarah Covey – height of 7ft 6ins

As the winner I entered Pauline's plant into the hospice competition. Unfortunately she did not win, although the winner's plant was amazing. When asked for the secret of her success, Pauline whispered seaweed extract.



Result for under 10's:

Joint winners - Harrison  
Spencer and Poppy Young

The two entries in the under 10's both deserved a prize, Poppy for the height of her sunflower, and Harrison for his gardening skills in caring for his plant.

It's lovely that the birds are doing well from the growing of the plants as they now flock to eat the seeds.

Thank you to all of you who grew plants and entered. Thank you so much for your generosity in donating directly to the hospice or donating to the £160 I collected, which included a birthday gift from Wyn Balance's daughter.

I received a lovely letter from the hospice thanking everyone who had been involved in the competition held in our Parish and for the donation. If anyone would like to see the letter, I will forward it to you.



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## **Neroche Woodlanders at Young Wood**

As I write, the new national lockdown has just been announced, so once again the opportunities for collective activities in the woods will sadly be constrained, which is a great shame not least because now is the best time for enjoying the autumn colours, and children (and adults!) love playing in the fallen leaves. We will be continuing to provide Nature Packs to some of the families in Taunton who once again won't be able to come to the woods in person – and our Crowdfunder appeal in the summer, which raised £1400, has helped support this work.

Also delayed will be a new project we have just begun, to build a tree nursery at Young Wood, to grow new young trees from seed harvested within the wood. We want to grow a new generation of trees to restock areas of the wood where conifers and diseased ash trees are cut down over the next few years. To that end we have started collecting seed: although once you look into it, the science of tree seed is rather more colourful than you might expect, with a cast of characters in a woodland drama all their own.

Seeds can be classified as Erratic, Unproductive, Suicidal, Malingering, Orthodox, Intermediate or Recalcitrant. These are all formal terms used by plant biologists to describe the 'attitudes' to life that trees and their seeds exhibit.

### Erratic

Trees do not produce the same quantity of seeds each year. Some years are feasts and some are famines. The most productive years are called 'mast' years, when trees like beech and oak produce seemingly excessive quantities of seed. This year is a mast year for oak – the quantity of acorns is overwhelming. Some human observers contend that



mast years are purposeful and engineered: if a tree produces deliberately few seeds one year, that causes a famine amongst the predators of those seeds – squirrels, mice etc. If the tree then cannily has a mast year the following season, there will be fewer predators and more seed will successfully germinate. The less romantic explanation is that mast years are simply a consequence of good previous growing seasons for the tree.

### Unproductive

Some trees, like beech and some conifers like Douglas fir, produce a lot of husks that contain no viable seed. Why? Again, some human authorities suggest that this is deliberate, as it means the predators of seeds spend ages opening barren seed cases and hence may gradually begin to choose not to bother with them. The more likely explanation is that producing a husk requires a certain amount of energy but producing one with a viable seed in it requires that much more.

## Suicidal

Trees like willow and oak produce seed which dies very quickly after it falls from the tree. Acorns, which seem well equipped to survive given their size, actually rot very quickly if they don't immediately germinate – it's not clear why. So, this year, because we want to grow oaks from our acorns but don't have a tree nursery ready for them yet, we have gathered acorns and put them in the fridge, to try and delay their inclination to germinate too soon.

## Malingering

A tree like the small-leaved lime produces small, rather perishable seeds, although they have extraordinary requirements in order to germinate. Rather than just grow when they fall, they need to undergo a period of being quite warm (a hot summer and warm autumn) and then a period of being pretty cold (a good frosty winter), before (maybe, if you're lucky...) germinating the following spring. That may reflect the fact that the tree evolved during a geological period when seasonal conditions were more reliably distinct – reliably hot summers, reliably cold winters.

## The Orthodox, the Intermediate and the Recalcitrant

If you choose to collect seed to store for future germination, trees tend to fall into these three categories. Orthodox seed is happy to be stored – hazel nuts, cherries, hawthorn, elms, apples, pines can be collected and kept dry until the following spring, to then be planted for good germination rates. Seeds of 'recalcitrant' species (sycamore 'helicopters', acorns, conkers and sweet chestnuts), by contrast, are the awkward squad – if collected and dried, they are likely to end up dead, and can't be stored. Intermediate species, like beech, cedar, Norway maple and fir, are in-between and will keep you guessing.

So, seeds are not just inert crumbs of autumn. They have characters and strategies, and like everything in the natural world they expect to be given some respect and understanding, before they play ball.

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



## Christmas at St Peter's Church

With the latest Coronavirus lockdown none of us can be certain of what life will be like after December 2nd. Will there still be restrictive measures in place? How it will affect Christmas events and church services?

St Peter's usually runs a "Come Decorate our Christmas Tree" event when we invite children and grownups to make Christmas tree decorations in the church, with the cafe serving scrummy cakes, and our local musicians, Badger Street Band, providing festive live music. Previously it has been a wonderful morning of music, fun and laughter.

This year, if Covid-19 regulations allow, we hope to deliver the Christmas tree decoration kit to you, for the family to make the decorations at home then you can bring them to the church and hang them on the tree over the weekend of 12th and 13th December.

Decorating of the Church itself will take place on 15th and 16th December, prior to the Carol service. Contact Jacqueline Kolkowski (01823 481326) if you would like to help, festive greenery always required.

Covid-19 regulations permitting, the following services will take place in the Church:

December 16th	Carol Service
December 25th	Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion

Numbers have to be limited at these services because of social distancing, so please book in with either Mark or Alison, the Churchwardens, Tel 01823 481132 or 01823 480441 respectively.



St Peter's Church, Staple Fitzpaine

Help Decorate our Christmas Tree  
By making decorations at Home

Kits available for all children (and  
grownups)

e-mail

[jacqueline.kolkowski@btinternet.com](mailto:jacqueline.kolkowski@btinternet.com)  
(please quote number of kits required and  
address for delivery)

Please come and hang your decorations on  
the tree on either  
Saturday 12th or Sunday 13th December  
10.30am till 12.30pm



## Farming At Staple Farm

*by Mark Pope*



At the time of writing this article, the rain is pouring down outside, although this year in this area, most of the farms have all their winter crops planted and all the maize has been harvested with not too much mud.

At Staple this year, we have planted mostly winter wheat and some grass. This season we had to do what is known as a primary cultivation prior to planting. This was done due to the wet August, causing the Spring barley crop to lose a lot of seeds onto the soil, which we were unable to harvest. This cultivation creates what is known as a stale seedbed, allowing these barley seeds to grow and then be sprayed off before we planted the wheat.

The next job taking place around the farm will be hedge cutting, starting in the fields and ending with the road hedges. We aim to cut about half of the hedges each year. Currently a lot of work is being done to see how much carbon hedges can store. This is all part of our plan to be net zero by 2040.

We are also starting to sell last season's barley crop for animal feed.

As many of you will have seen, we have applied for planning permission to build a free-range egg unit on the farm. We have spent over 2 years getting to this stage. This will enable the farm to continue into the future. I will speak more about this venture later next year, as and when things progress.

We are also getting ready for Christmas trees at the moment, however as we all know, 2020 is turning into a very different year. We are looking at how we can sell trees and at the same time all remain safe. This year the annual open day will not be the same, more details will follow in the Email alert, once we have finalised our plans.

Keep well and stay safe.





## **‘Every Little Helps’ with Climate Change Challenge**

***By John Thorne***

‘Every Little Helps’ is the very well-known advertising catchphrase of my former employer Tesco. Well, you may think the £1 million Somerset County Council is offering parish councils to finance climate change projects is not a ‘little’ amount. However, in the context of wanting to make Somerset ‘carbon neutral’ by 2030, it is rather tiny.

If I tell you that South Somerset District Council has calculated the cost of making just its district ‘carbon neutral’ at £2.93 billion (yes, that is ‘billion’), then you should get the point. That is the equivalent of their entire annual budget every year for 83 years! If you ‘do the math’ as the Americans say, and extrapolate the cost for the entire county of Somerset then you can appreciate the scale of the task. No, despite my A-Level, I am not clever enough to have worked it out! By the time you read this newsletter the county council will have voted on its proposed strategy to achieve carbon neutrality in Somerset by the end of the decade.

The strategy has 334 identified actions, of which so far only 35 have been costed. The complexity of tackling climate change is illustrated by an appendix to the strategy document which seeks to identify an appropriate carbon measurement tool for the council to use – it is 35

pages long (and one of 17 appendices)! Even the strategy 'summary' paper is 19 pages. For those who would like to read it, the full climate change strategy can be found here <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency>.

You may have noticed that I have not used the word 'emergency', and that is because I do not subscribe to that way of thinking. To my mind, an emergency is something which occurs suddenly, and which has to be dealt with immediately. Our climate has noticeably been changing for many, many years. It has not suddenly happened in the last 12 months. As someone who likes to pick blackberries and use the few I don't instantly eat to make a crumble with apples, I have seen how they have moved from not being ripe until September going into October, to now being ripe in the second week of July, as just one example.

As a football referee, and a player before that, I have noticed how 40 years ago I frequently played with snow on the pitch every winter, although today I referee in the snow perhaps once or twice in a season. And it is also not change which is going to be arrested overnight, nor over the next 12 months, nor, in my opinion, in the next 10 years. Rather, it is change which we might slow and which we will have to learn to live with (some parallels, perhaps, with the coronavirus pandemic).

So, my priority is to do every little bit possible to help to slow and cope with the change. Which is why the county council's £1 million community climate change fund is important despite the enormity of challenge it is addressing. Because parish councils can apply for grants of between £5,000 and £75,000 to fund local projects to reduce CO2 emissions and mitigate climate change, projects which can be started early in the New Year.

Projects in our county council division which have so far been put forward range from a hydro-electric scheme to solar panels, to electric vehicle charging stations, to replacing traditional lighting with LED lights, and lots more.

If you have any ideas which may help, please tell your parish councillors. They have until January 12 to submit funding bids.



## **News from RSPCA West Hatch**

### ***By Bel Deering – Centre Manager***

Life at the centre has changed again with the recent move to another lockdown. Our new procedures are outlined below although be aware these may change with national guidance, so check our web pages to keep up to date.

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

Anyone finding a sick or injured wild animal is urged to take it for help at the nearest facility – this may be a local vet or if closer, our wildlife centre. If you are coming to the site please observe this guidance:

- Please do not come to the site if you are experiencing any of the symptoms of Covid-19 (high temp, continuous cough, etc)
- We ask that only 1 family member brings the casualty to the centre
- Please wear a face covering if you are able and use hand sanitiser provided
- On arrival please ring the doorbell by the green gate and wait for attention
- Please ensure social distancing at all times and stay behind safety screens/signage as requested
- You may be asked to take the box/bedding you brought with you back home

**Animal Centre** – remote rehoming only – no visits to site permitted

- Please check our website [www.rspca.org.uk/findapet](http://www.rspca.org.uk/findapet) to see what animals we have available
- If you find a suitable pet, please ensure you have read the full description and can meet the criteria required
- Drop the centre an email to let us know of your interest and we will then send over a Perfect Match form for you to complete
- Be prepared to exchange information, including ID and photos of your home and animal accommodation by email
- Be able to watch videos we send you and look at photos to ensure that the animal is suitable for you and the one you want
- Be able to pay over the phone
- Be willing to have your chosen pet dropped off at your house by a member of our staff.

## Out in the field

Our colleagues in the field have been busy this autumn too, and these are just some of the rescues they have been involved in.

Kittiwakes, our most sea-loving gulls, are named after the sound they make. They nest in colonies on cliffs around the UK's coast, from February until August, and can live up to 12 years old. This black legged Kittiwake brought into West Hatch, was clearly a youngster, because it still has a black band around its neck and black wingtips. It made good progress in the centre and was recently released back at the coast.



It is the season for hedgehogs too, and Inspector Jo Daniel recently dealt with two of these prickly customers. This one was found out during the day during the hot spell at the beginning of September.

The unpredictable weather has been very confusing for our wildlife, a trend which is no doubt set to continue and is not helping our hedgehog population which is already under such pressure.



Worryingly, on the 30th July this year, the hedgehog was included in the International Conservation of Nature's "Red List of British Mammals", meaning they are now part of the quarter of native mammals at risk of extinction in the UK. This list also includes wildcats, and red squirrels.

According to The British Hedgehog Preservation Society the holes in fences, feeding, hedgehog houses, wildlife friendly planting and the

removal of hazards all make such a difference locally, although they are also calling on the Government to enforce wildlife friendly practices, from farming to development to transport.

Next, Jo was called to this hedgehog that had fallen down a drain. When she was stretched out on the ground with her face next to the pipe and her arm fully extended, grappling to get the hedgehog, the caller told her the reason the lid was off the drain was because her son liked to wee down it. She carried on with the rescue despite this and the hog was duly rescued and released unharmed!



### **Work at the centre**

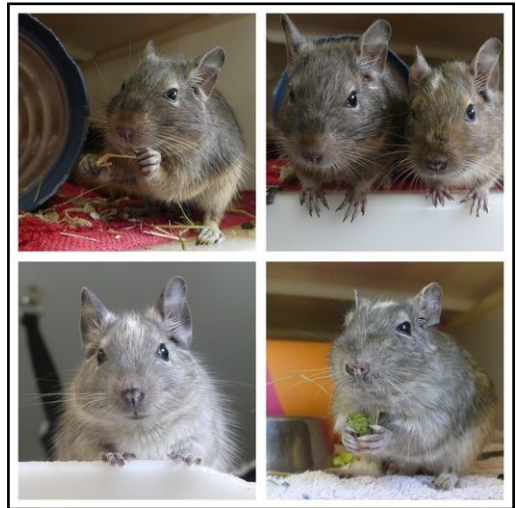
Autumn has been really busy in the wildlife centre. As usual we have started to see an influx of grey seal pups from Wales and the West Country. Like all babies

they are lovely – and so easy - when they sleep! We also had an appeal for paddling pools for the seals to give them access to water when they are in our intensive care wing. We specifically asked for hard-sided pools like the ones in this photo and we received an amazing amount of donations – green turtles, blue starfish, and plain round pools. Big thanks to everyone that made a donation and helped out.



In the animal Centre it is not just cats and dogs. This autumn has seen us admit a huge variety of different companion animals. For example, we recently cared for a





number of degus which were part of a group rescued from a property where around 300 were being kept in very poor living conditions. On arrival at the centre we found that they were all heavily infested with mites and had dirty ears, scabby skin

and extensive hair loss. Some of them were missing portions of their tails and they were all underweight. We treated them for parasites, and provided them with a good diet and a dust bath, and within a few weeks their condition improved. They still looked very scruffy as they are re-growing fur, but at the time of writing many had already found new homes.



We have also been looking after Rusty, a stunning cockerel who came to us after he had been straying for quite some time! Because he has been used to surviving by himself for so long, he is quite wary of people. At the time of writing he is still available, do take a look on our web pages if you think you could offer a secure home to this sweet boy.

And continuing on the farm animal theme, we have a new pig in the centre, Boris. He comes to us from Norfolk and is a gentle and friendly boy – here he is enjoying Hallowe'en at the centre!



There is always a lot more going on at the centre than we can cover in the newsletter – why not follow us on Facebook to keep up on a more regular basis.

You can find us at:

<https://www.facebook.com/RSPCAWestHatchAnimalCentre/>

and

<https://www.facebook.com/RSPCAWesthatchwildlife/>



# Neroche Parish Council Report October 2020

*by Jon Bell, Chairman*



Sadly, since my last report the situation with the Covid 19 pandemic is deteriorating again, although not as badly here as in many parts of the country. At least local infection rates are still lower than in most places. We were hoping when the council last met that our next meeting might be a face to face rather than a virtual one, although as things stand, I think we will have to stick to virtual meetings with Zoom.

The process of deciding the shape of future local government services in Somerset grinds on, although I think it will be the new year before any decision is made about which of the two proposed schemes, a single unitary authority covering all of Somerset to replace the existing County and District councils, or whether there should be two unitary authorities, will proceed. Whatever the case it is likely to put pressure on Parish councils to take on more responsibilities for local services, although how these new responsibilities would be funded is less clear. The worry is that if we take on new roles without transfer of sufficient funds from whoever does this now, we will be in the position of having to make major increases in our precept, the amount we add to the council tax bill. In our reply to a recent questionnaire I made our concerns clear. I think the proposal might work for large Town or Parish councils although for a small Parish council like ours it would be difficult in several ways. We await the outcome of the Secretary of State's decision with some trepidation.

We were recently notified of a Climate Emergency Community Fund set up by the County Council, which invites applications for grants from £5000 to £75000 for projects to reduce carbon emissions, reduce energy consumption, raise awareness of, and increase resilience to climate change impacts. We have already received some suggestions from parishioners about possible areas to cover although for any application a detailed description of the proposed project, why it is needed, what the benefits would be and how these would be measured, what the risks of the project would be and how these would

be mitigated, and not least what the costs would be, are all required. Preparing a submission would be a major undertaking and there is not much time before the deadline for the second round of applications closes on 12th January, I do not think there would be time to get something in before the first-round closes on 12th November. Anyone with experience of preparing such applications out there?

As we enter autumn, we shall commence the annual considerations of our finances for the coming year, and what we should set as a precept next year. In the last couple of years, we have made increases which look larger in percentage than in real terms as our precept is pretty low compared with many Parish Councils. The probable changes in our role with the coming local government re-organisation make it likely we will follow a similar plan next year, we will see.

Lastly, we have just had some bad news about the defibrillator, its battery is showing low which means it would probably not work. Although we replaced the battery a couple of years ago, we expected it to last at least another year. The trouble is the defibrillator itself is now an old model which the manufacturers no longer support, even if we could find another battery it is doubtful whether it is worth it. At our next meeting we will have to decide what to do about a replacement.

Meanwhile stay well and let's hope for a Christmas we can enjoy, Covid willing.



## **We are Still Us**

***By Steve Gillan, Head Teacher***

“It was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” The words of Charles Dickens from 1859 echo through the decades and could so easily have been written to express the myriad of feelings as school started again in September. What would we find? How would the children cope? How much change could they deal with in a COVID-19 landscape? Well, they would cope brilliantly, and deal easily with a lot is the simple answer!

At Thurlbear CE VA Primary School, we tend to be a pretty positive, pragmatic bunch. We were fully aware that a sizeable chunk of our pupils had walked out of school in late March and not returned until the beginning of September. It was at the forefront of our thinking: what does a return to school – safely – look like for us? Over the summer term, we planned our return carefully, taking into consideration the national picture and the guidelines of the government. Staggered drop-offs and pick-ups for every year group were devised. Classes would play and learn in class bubbles, and our social distancing would be sensitively managed (anyone with a 4yr old in the family will understand the futility of reprimanding them for hugging a best friend!). Families were prepared with detailed information regarding their own timings for school, and what to bring. By the end of the summer term, we had already welcomed back over 120 pupils to school, had been open throughout the holidays and also some weekends for key worker families and, so, we already felt we were ready for what was to come.

The return to school has been a joy. Anyone who knows my school, who is involved in the Thurlbear family, will know the hard work that goes into ensuring everyone feels part of the picture. The meet-and-greet in the mornings at the gate has been a lovely bonus of our new restrictions. No adults are allowed on the school site without prior warning, meaning that the drop off is done as a

queue of cars. This gives me a chance to say good morning, check in with parents and carers and welcome our pupils to a new school day. I have been so impressed with our youngest pupils. Due to the restrictions, these families could not do their usual transition into primary school, so they had every reason to feel most anxious although we sometimes underestimate the positive energy of a 4 year old. They have taken everything in their stride, and it is usually the parent who has needed assurance! All year groups have returned with a new vigour, a sense of perspective in their school day and an eagerness to make up for lost time. The smoothness, organisation and positivity have helped everyone get back to a routine that feels right.

In a term of such uncertainty, such flux, it is wonderful to have my Church school stand for everything consistent in our children's daily lives. We hope we can continue to make them feel: "It was the best of times".



**Schools will finish on Friday 18th December 2020,  
returning Monday 4th January 2021.**

**Half term will start on Monday 15th February 2021**

## **Do you Run a Local Business?**

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

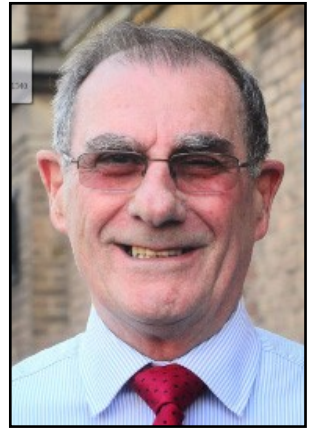
**For a small fee, we will place your business flyer or card in  
with each edition, which is then hand delivered to  
250 local houses and businesses.**

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

## News from Neroche Hall - Winter 2020

*By Richard Davies, Chairman*

My last Newsletter article outlined the need for us to close the hall as a result of the imposed 'lockdown' of halls and community venues, and our future hopes of re-opening in September or October. As many of you will be aware the return to 'normality' was accompanied by the need to implement a raft of measures to ensure we provided a Covid safe environment.



The committee worked hard to ensure that we met all the safety measures with signage, QR Code, sanitising stations, and a first aid area for anyone who suddenly exhibited Covid symptoms. Having achieved all requirements to re-open we were able to do so in September, although with reduced numbers due to social distancing requirements. We were able to welcome back several of our badminton groups, who were keen to resume after the many months of imposed rest, and the Friends of St Peter's Church were able to stage an afternoon tea party instead of their usual monthly Thursday lunch club.

It was therefore sad to find that barely a month later we were again required to close the hall due to a second lockdown, although we remain hopeful that this will not extend beyond the planned month. Whilst it is clearly for everyone's safety it is nevertheless a worrying time for us, once again we have no income being generated through events or hires. Our current financial position, as revealed at our recent AGM through our audited accounts, remains viable and healthy, in the main thanks to our Government grant.

I have said on many previous occasions that income generation relies solely upon the hall being hired out and events staged by the hall committee, and therefore the next twelve months will be crucial for us. I am confident that once we return to a proper state of normality, we shall be able to continue as in the past and that our community will again support the hall. The main fundraiser is our '100 Club', which is currently taking annual subscriptions for the



coming twelve months. A subscription of £15 per number entitles the holder to be entered into our monthly draw with a chance to win a cash prize of £25 or £15, which is enhanced at Easter, Summer and Christmas. Anyone wishing to take part, whilst supporting the hall, can do so by emailing their details to the website contact page on: [www.nerochehall.org.uk](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)

I have to announce that our long serving Booking Secretary – Alison Brown, retired from the committee at our recent AGM after many years of loyal and dedicated service to the hall. She was often the face of the hall when dealing with potential hirers and had an unrivalled knowledge of the hall and its facilities. She will be missed by all of us, although I am sure there will be occasions when she will volunteer her services to help us out. In appreciation the committee were pleased to give her a personal presentation gift in recognition of her service. Alison's role has now been taken on by two new additions to the committee with Mary Bell being elected as our Booking Secretary and Jeremy Carey being formally co-opted as Assistant Booking Secretary. The Committee is now at full strength having reached our maximum permitted number of twelve persons.



## The Poppy Marathon

As with many other charities, the Royal British Legion found it extremely difficult this year to raise funds through normal activities. Most volunteers who would usually sell poppies, either in the street or through door to door collections, have been unable to take part in the annual

Poppy Appeal ahead of Remembrance Day. One of their key supporters was Di Grabham, who sadly passed away in September.

To commemorate her memory, and to raise much needed funds for the Royal British Legion, Nicky Baxter had the wonderful idea of holding a poppy crocheting marathon and selling on the poppies. With the blessing of Di's daughters, Nicky set to work publicising her big day. Joined by Mary Bell, they crocheted throughout the day on 29<sup>th</sup> October until they were unable to stay awake any longer. Crocheting via Zoom is now the 'new norm'!



The demand for their poppies has been staggering, and both ladies continued after the marathon to fulfil all requests for the beautiful poppies. One poppy was even sent to Jersey to a girl whose Dad served in WWII.

Many donations were made via a JustGiving page, where the proceeds are sent to the national Royal British Legion. Alternatively, others donated to the local branch in Buckland St Mary, of which both Nicky and Mary are members. While the final toll is still rising, at the time of going to press, total donations were in excess of £1000 – a fantastic achievement by both knitters.

Nicky said “Both Mary and I have greatly enjoyed doing this and feel privileged that we are in a position to do so. We have been overwhelmed by the response”.

## More support than ever before for Carers!

We have some exciting service news for you!  
We have joined our Carers Agent and Village

Agent teams, so ALL 55 + agents can now support unpaid Carers in Somerset!

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown resulted in CCS Agents changing their approach to be 'whole population' focused. This was important for families as it now meant there was one point of contact within the CCS team, and no need to repeat themselves to explain their situation.

The model worked brilliantly, and as a result CCS Agents have supported over 7,000 Carers since the end of March 2020, clearly demonstrating that the One Family - One Agent approach was working to reach more unpaid Carers than ever.

CCS is delighted to announce that from September, all Carers Agents will become Village Agents and all existing Village Agents are ready to support unpaid Carers in Somerset.

Nothing has changed other than having a lot more people available to support the unpaid Carer in Somerset.

You may not even recognise yourself as a Carer as you may look after someone infrequently, or informally, although we are here to help you whether you care for your spouse, child, friend or relative.

To have a chat about how we can support you in your caring role, call 0800 31 68 600, text 'Carer' to 78070 or visit the dedicated Carers website [www.somersetcarers.org](http://www.somersetcarers.org)

## Rehome a Phone!

Do you have an unused smartphone lying around?  
By donating an unused phone to us, YOU can help reduce loneliness and isolation for a person in Somerset. We will be facing a very

different Christmas this year with a reduction in the usual festive activities, and the possibility of family gathering restrictions, so we are focusing on re-homing as many of these phones out into the community as possible to keep families and friends in touch with each other over the festive period.

We had a brilliant response to our last 'Rehome-a-phone' campaign - so many people in need in Somerset have benefitted from a donated device.

One person who received a handset said "You have made my day. This will help me feel not so lonely, and I will even be able to do my food shopping online now as I'm house bound and can't get out".

We will:

- refurbish the phone
- remove any personal data
- provide the new owner with a SIM card
- support them to use the phone with video tutorials and install apps that will help them to keep in touch with their loved ones

To donate, please contact our Village Agent Ellie Bishop on email: [ellieb@somersettrcc.org.uk](mailto:ellieb@somersettrcc.org.uk) or call her on 07985 748910

You can find out more here about the impact of our last rehome a phone campaign here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uT4wfflRZHU>

## **Talking Cafes Online**

We are still unable to bring Talking Cafes back to physical venues and we miss all our clients so much! However we are still live streaming every day at 11am on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/> and have recently celebrated our 100th broadcast!

If you are not on Facebook you can now watch previous Talking Cafes on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5goIPHD91le4VDI5NMJdrQ>

Recent Talking Cafes covered Art Therapy, Coping with Grief and changes to our Somerset Waste recycling schemes.

You can comment on the YouTube videos if you have any questions and someone will get in touch with an answer. We hope you enjoy them, let us know what you think!

CCS Village, Community & Carers Agents are in your communities across Somerset. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs. We can offer advice and support to find local groups and activities available in your community and help you with any queries you may have or situations that you need advice and support with. Please visit [www.ccslovesomerset.org.uk](http://www.ccslovesomerset.org.uk) and [www.somersetcarers.org](http://www.somersetcarers.org) or call us to find out who can advise you - 01823 331222

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## Taunton Racecourse

While racing is continuing at Taunton Racecourse, unfortunately it is happening behind closed doors, as with all elite sport. This means that you will be unable to get the winter buzz from the glorious atmosphere of cheering on your horse as it gallops towards the finish line. You can still follow all the activities of our local course from the comfort of your own home, until normal service resumes.

### 2021 Fixtures

### 2020 Fixtures

Thursday, November 26th  
Thursday, December 10th  
Wednesday, December 30th

Friday, January 8th  
Saturday, January 23rd  
Tuesday, February 9th  
Tuesday, February 23rd  
Thursday, March 4th  
Monday, March 15th  
Tuesday, March 23rd

In addition, the Racecourse are laying on an opportunity to watch live racing from Cheltenham on Saturday, December 12th, while enjoying a fantastic two course Lunch, followed by Afternoon Tea in the Orchard Restaurant.

A welcome drink will be available on arrival from 11am. An in-house Bookmaker and Racing Host will be with you all afternoon. Tickets cost £30 person from [www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk](http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)



## Forestry England - Winter

**By Robert Greenhalgh  
Community Ranger**



As we settle into winter and the uncertainty that this brings with the pandemic, we've been staying active and busy within Forestry England to try and understand our ever changing role managing the nation's forests for the public's benefit, wildlife and timber. If nothing else, this year of 2020 has shown how relevant we are when it comes to offering the nation freely accessible woodland in which to exercise and reconnect with nature during these troubled times. Now, more than ever, it's vital that we maintain our links to nature as a place we can escape our daily, now ever increasingly virtual, lives and (where guidelines permit!) enjoy these spaces with friends and loved ones. We hope to continue to succeed in managing these areas for your enjoyment, as well as maintaining our world leading sustainable forestry standards.

On that note, we will be subject to our annual audit in November. Forest management of the nation's forests is certified to, and independently audited against, the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). Forestry England is certified for FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody for timber and venison, plus FSC for Christmas trees, and we are very proud of that status. It essentially means we manage our woodlands to a high standard for wildlife, timber and public access. Everything we fell, we replace and increase. This year's audit will be conducted by the Soil Association.

There has been a lot of harvesting activity within the Blackdowns these last few months. Work has been completed at Priors Park, North Down and currently culminating at Staple Hill where the car park has been closed for a short period of time to ensure visitor safety. We apologise for any local interruptions during this period. Some of the sites may be a little churned and initially look a little messy, although please know that we do everything we can to reinstate tracks, footpaths and bridleways after any harvesting operations. We also protect and enhance wildlife and habitat sites through our work, and many of these felled areas should present new habitat opportunities for species such as nightjar and adder in 2021.

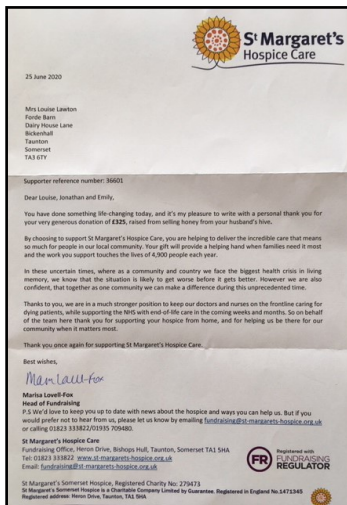
And on a final note, although certainly not a happy one. The team here at Smokey Bottom will be bidding farewell – for at least 6 months – to our Forester, Jon Burgess. Jon is heading over to our colleagues in Forest Services (now simply referred to as Forestry Commission) for an exciting secondment opportunity developing partnerships in landscape scale management. After 6 years in post here in the Blackdowns, we wish Jon the best and we look forward to welcoming a replacement for him in due course.

## Honey Bees do Their Bit

The Lawton family in Dairy House Lane, Bickenhall, have been keeping bees for a number of years, and this year decided to sell their home-produced honey in support of St Margaret's Hospice, who have struggled with the downturn in fund-raising activity throughout the pandemic.

Over the course of the summer a small basket filled with jars of cut comb honey and spun honey in jars was left outside Forde Barn for those passing by to stock up on the delicious goods. The word spread far and wide, and Louise Lawton was delighted to report that over £350 was raised for the Hospice during the summer.

Jonathan has once again started to produce the spun honey, and will also be making the combs – when available this will be advertised on Facebook and the Email Alert – watch this space!!





Neroche Thursday  
Afternoon Tea  
Neroche Hall from 3pm

December 10<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Theme),  
Jan 7<sup>th</sup>, Feb 4<sup>th</sup>

Organised by Friends of St Peter's Church,  
come along and join us for Afternoon Tea at  
the Hall - a scrumptious tea of savoury  
delights and sweet treats.  
£5 per person

Numbers will be strictly limited  
to ensure social distancing, and advance  
booking is essential.

If you wish to attend, please contact  
Alison Brown on 01823 480441 or  
[aabrown.battens@gmail.com](mailto:aabrown.battens@gmail.com)



# TRUESPEED

Truly better broadband.

By Fiona Gledhill

Truespeed are bringing fast broadband to rural areas in the South West. If enough of us register our interest, then they may come to our area. They have recently been featured in Somerset Life magazine, where they explain how they are bringing full fibre broadband to areas and making working from home a viable solution for many in the South West. I believe that our area would benefit if we could bring them here.

Why are they different to other suppliers?

- ◆ They can reach rural areas better than other suppliers because they use in part, overground methods of supply, using telegraph lines.
- ◆ Unlike other companies who provide fibre to a cabinet and then copper cables to your property, they only use full fibre, direct to the premises, connections which means they guarantee 200Mb/s speeds.

Will it cost me more?

- ◆ Their cost is comparable to other suppliers including BT.
- ◆ The installation to your house is included.

What do I need to do next?

- 1) Register your interest at [Truespeed.com](http://Truespeed.com). There is no commitment.
- 2) If enough of us register, then Truespeed may decide its viable to come to our area.



#### Ultrafast fibre to your door

Most providers rely on old copper cables to provide broadband even when they say you're getting fibre. These cables are also shared with multiple homes, meaning slow speeds at peak times and reliability issues. Truespeed runs full-fibre cables all the way to your home - so no sharing, just guaranteed upload and download speeds with great reliability.



#### No more bandwidth battles

All our customers enjoy guaranteed broadband speeds from 200Mbps when uploading and downloading, and unlimited data at no extra cost, even if multiple devices are being used at the same time. Which means families can browse without any buffering or banging on the ceiling.



#### Built with tomorrow in mind

As our lives become more and more dependant on reliable, fast broadband (hello Alexa!), having a connection that's capable of delivering ever faster speeds and can be easily updated is increasingly essential. Luckily, we can do both, so what are you waiting for?

✓ Free standard installation – T&Cs apply   ✓ No hidden costs   ✓ No in-contract price rises   ✓ Great value calling plans

## News from your MP

*By Rebecca Pow*

Hello again,

Touching on Covid-19 first - with cases increasing across the country, including the South West, the Prime Minister took the difficult decision to put further restrictive measures in place in England, asking people to stay at home as much as possible for four weeks.

I know many of you have been in touch sharing a very wide range of views, some calling for much stricter rules, others more lenient. Whilst I recognise that as a region we are not currently as badly affected as those in the North West and the North East who are experiencing higher infection rates, the advice as of 5<sup>th</sup> November, is that the R rate remains above 1 in the South West with a growth rate between 3% to 7% per day. So whether or not you believe these latest national measures are the best course of action, I would encourage everyone to make this period of time count and comply with the restrictions to give our dedicated local Public Health Teams the support they need to get this virus back under control locally.

I will continue to do everything I can to ensure we are taking the necessary steps to provide further financial support to protect jobs and businesses, and I welcome the extension of the furlough scheme, the self-employment support scheme, the continuation of the £3,000 per month cash grants to businesses which are closed, and the extension of existing loan schemes until the end of January, with an ability to top-up Bounce Back Loans.

On a local level, £1.1 billion has also been provided to councils to enable them to support businesses and local economies over the winter months, and councils will also have access to up to £500 million funding to support the local healthcare response. Somerset County Council have received £32 million since the start of the pandemic, including £3 million received in recent weeks. I will, of



course, continue to monitor this issue closely and properly scrutinise these measures as far as I can in Parliament.

Restrictions in a nutshell:

- 1) Stay at home, except for specific purposes.
- 2) Avoid meeting people you do not live with, except for specific purposes.
- 3) Close certain businesses and venues.

The new measures have been carefully judged to achieve the maximum reduction in growth in the number of cases, preventing the NHS from being overwhelmed, whilst ensuring that schools, colleges and universities stay open and that as many people as possible continue to work.

## **Environment Bill**

I am proud to be leading the Environment Bill through its committee stage in Parliament in my capacity as Environment Minister. This landmark legislation will transform the way we protect and restore our natural environment, setting us on a much-needed sustainable path for the future. Measures in the Bill cover air, water, nature and waste and recycling. It also dovetails with measures in the new Agriculture Bill.



## **Good news on Food Standards and Animal Welfare**

In really positive news, the Agriculture Bill has now passed, with the inclusion of an amendment to bolster parliamentary scrutiny of



*Hosting a roundtable with local farmers*

free trade agreements as well as extending the Trade and Agriculture Commission, placing it on a full statutory footing in the Trade Bill, and in doing so giving farmers a stronger voice in UK trade policy. This is an area I

have worked on hard at Government level, fuelled of course by the views of the local farming community in Taunton Deane.

The amendment to the Agriculture Bill places a duty on the Government to report to Parliament on whether, or to what extent, commitments in new Free Trade Agreements relating to agricultural goods are consistent with maintaining UK levels of statutory protection in relation to human, animal and plant life and health; animal welfare; and environmental protection. This report will be laid at the same time, or ahead of, any FTA laid before Parliament, demonstrating how we are meeting our commitments on standards. It's an important Government commitment.

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will also continue to report to the Secretary of State for International Trade and will continue with the report it is currently producing, which will advise on:

- Trade policies the Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, to ensure that animal welfare, food production and environmental standards are not undermined, and to identify new export opportunities.
- Advancing and protecting British consumer interests and those of developing countries.
- How the UK engages the WTO to build a coalition that helps advance higher animal welfare standards across the world.
- Developing trade policy that identifies and opens up new export opportunities for the UK agricultural industry – in

particular for SMEs – and that benefits the UK economy as a whole.

The Commission is also publishing an interim report shortly, and the full report will be published in February 2021 and presented to Parliament.

### **Winter Grant Scheme to support the vulnerable**

There has been much concern locally regarding the Government's policy on free school meals during the coronavirus outbreak. I believe the best way to support families and children during the school holidays is through the welfare system and not through the provision of free school meals. It ensures that support is reliably delivered to those who need it most, when they need it most and in a way that allows families to spend funding in the way which helps them the best. The welfare system is also setup to provide support all year round in a way in which schools are not.

I am delighted that my representations have been heeded on the welfare front, and in addition to the more than £9 billion that has gone into the welfare system since the onset of the pandemic, Government has recently announced a new £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to run up until March 2021. It will allow councils, who are best placed to help the hardest-hit families and individuals over the holidays, to provide food for those who need it. I am also very pleased that the Holiday Activities and Food programme for disadvantaged children which has been running successfully since 2018 will be expanded across England next year and cover Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021, with up to £220m of funding.

I am pushing for more cross-party support and collaboration in Parliament to ensure the issues of child poverty and holiday hunger are tackled in the most effective way going forward because the matter is complex and must be addressed in a range of ways.

## Remembrance Day 2020

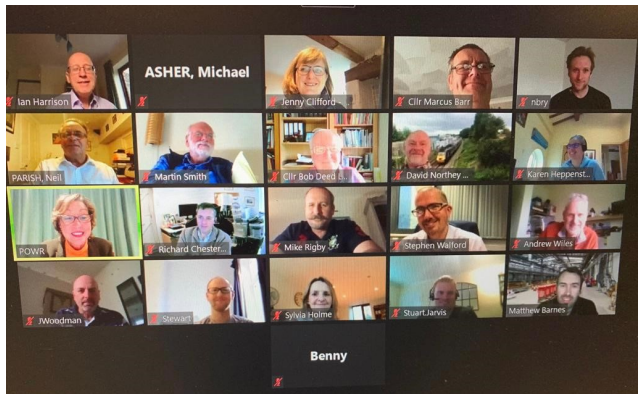
Although a very different Remembrance Day this year, it was no less poignant, and whilst the usual events could not take place, I was pleased a wreath was placed locally on behalf all of my constituents alongside others in Wellington and Taunton in memory of those locally who gave their lives for our peace. Also, on behalf of all those I represent, a wreath was sent from Taunton Station on GWR's 'PoppiestoPaddington' service, and then it was placed at a memorial in Paddington as a mark of respect alongside other wreaths from communities across the South West.



*GWR's PoppiestoPaddington*

## Wellington Rail Station

I had a very positive meeting recently with the Devon & Somerset Metro Group and we are making genuine progress on our joint rail bid for stations at Wellington and Cullompton. It is interesting to note that even during the Coronavirus pandemic, rail use across this area has held up, and forecasts for the future demand from the two new stations look promising, in particular the opportunity a station at Wellington provides for students to access colleges right across the region from Taunton, to Exeter, Bristol and Bath, as well as of course the opportunities for many other users. The stations will



*Recent meeting of Devon & Somerset Metro Group*

also play a major part in achieving climate change commitments and decarbonisation ambitions.

I made securing a rail station for Wellington one of my commitments when I was first elected in 2015, and I have been working ever since with stakeholders and in conjunction with colleague Neil Parish MP, to make this a reality. Our recent meeting was a good opportunity to take stock of the latest work and agree the next steps. I shall continue working on this project locally and at Government level, liaising with Transport Ministers to keep the momentum going, and would like to thank all those involved in helping us to get this far.

## **Culture Recovery Fund**



*Rebecca Pow MP meets with Sir Andrew Burns  
KCMG, Chairman of Hestercombe Gardens Trust*

Heritage and culture are such an important part of life in Taunton Deane, but many local enterprises in this sector have suffered badly due to the pandemic. I am delighted therefore that following my representations, £1.5million has been allocated from the DCMS Cultural Recovery Fund (total £1.57bn) for key businesses here including

Hestercombe Gardens, The National Trust's Wellington Monument Restoration Project, Taunton Theatre Association, who run the Brewhouse, South West Heritage Trust and West Somerset Railway.

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



## Fields of Gold

Can you imagine 30 acres of fields crammed full of 7 million sunflowers, all in full bloom and turning towards the sunlight! Thurloxtan Farm, near Taunton, planted this vast array of flowers and then invited people to visit, take some amazing photos, and go home with armfuls of these beautiful golden flowers.



For just £5 per adult (and free for children), you could cut half a dozen stems, or more for an extra donation of 50p per stem. All money received was donated to Kidney Research UK, and the event raised an absolutely staggering £34,456.19.

Hundreds of families attended over the weekend of 19th and 20th September, and it was an absolute delight to see people of all ages,



staring in absolute wonderment at the spectacular sight. For as far as the eye could see, there were just sunflowers... The event even made the news on Points West and the aerial shots were quite incredible.

Well done!



# Household Recycling & Refuse Collections

SEE DETAILS BELOW



To check collection dates go to:

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

## Christmas and New Year 2020-21

Usual Collection Day	Revised Collection Day
Thursday 24 December	No Change
Friday 25 December	Monday 28 December
Monday 28 December	Tuesday 29 December
Tuesday 29 December	Wednesday 30 December
Wednesday 30 December	Thursday 31 December
Thursday 31 December	Saturday 2 January
Friday 1 January	Monday 4 January
Monday 4 January	Tuesday 5 January
Tuesday 5 January	Wednesday 6 January
Wednesday 6 January	Thursday 7 January
Thursday 7 January	Friday 8 January
Friday 8 January	Saturday 9 January
Monday 11 January	Usual collections resume

**Garden waste** collections will not take place Friday 25 December 2020 – Friday 8 January 2021 (inclusive). Friday 8 January garden waste collections on Saturday 9 January. Usual garden waste collections resume on Monday 11 January. **Christmas trees:** decoration-free real trees can be composted at home, taken to any recycling site, or garden waste subscribers can add them to their collection.

# 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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***Printed by Parish Magazine Printing - 01288 341617***