

**Working Together for a Better Community**

# **NEROCHE VILLAGES**

## **Newsletter**

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

**Issue 27 - Spring 2018**



*Local residents at the extraordinary parish council meeting on 19 February to debate the proposed road schemes*

## **Highways England runs extra consultation on A358**

After last year's shambles of a 'consultation', when only one road scheme was put forward for consideration, Highways England is undertaking a new, additional consultation on plans to upgrade the A358 between Southfields roundabout near Ilminster and the M5 near Taunton. Interested parties have the opportunity to comment up to midnight on 27 February 2018.

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.

# Proposed A358 upgrade - consultation & next steps

*By Alan Hyde*

*continued from front page ...*



This time the consultation offers three route options between West Hatch Lane and the M5, plus more detail on the proposed dual carriageway between Southfields roundabout and West Hatch Lane.

The proposals were outlined at a number of consultation events, which were attended by many people from Neroche.

However many questions remain, especially to address concerns about ease of access to local communities and increased traffic on rural roads.

Neroche Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting on 19 February to get local feedback in order to shape its response to the consultation. It favoured the 'Pink' route but raised issues about connections and cross-overs for local residents and the agricultural community. The meeting was also attended by our county and borough councillors, as well as chairs of neighbouring parishes.

Following this extra consultation, the Highways Agency is expected to announce its preferred route this autumn before a formal community consultation is held in advance of an application (called the Development Consent Order) to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Planning Inspectorate will hold a public examination of the application, once received and accepted, before making a recommendation to the Transport Secretary who then decides whether the road scheme goes ahead.

Highways England still hope to start construction in 2020.

More information on the proposals and maps of the route options can be found at: [www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields](http://www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields)



## **Neroche Hall - New Year's Eve Party** *By Alan Perrior*

I suppose it's one of those things we prefer not to think about too much. How is the village hall funded? After all, it's an expensive enterprise, what with maintenance, insurance, electricity, air conditioning, heating etc. The list goes on; and unfortunately, so do the costs.

Therefore it was gratifying to see so many locals, ex-locals and some not-so-locals contributing to village hall funds by attending the New Year's Eve party – and what a great party it was too!

The organising committee - formed from the main Neroche Hall committee - did a fabulous job and provided a great night's food, drink and entertainment for the lucky people who were there to see in the New Year. Reminiscent of Max Boyce (for those of us of a certain age), in years to come, we can say: "We were there! We were at the first Neroche Hall New Year's Eve party in 2017".

The hall started to fill up, with the 70-plus ticket-holders, well before the start time of 8.30pm and Chris Baxter had to work hard to set up extra tables and re-arrange the seating until the available areas of the main hall and stage were full.

It was gratifying to see some "outsiders" at the event and, of course,

it's always a pleasure to see old friends, Pat and Colin Croad, back in the parish. We should be really grateful for all the help and support they've provided over the years.



In fact, Pat & Colin were so impressed by the party that, a few days later, they were moved to write: *“Although we no longer live in the parish, we have managed to keep in touch with many of our old friends, not least through the activities at Neroche Hall. Neroche Hall has a dedicated committee. Although small in number for a challenging event like this, they were quite superb. We're already looking forward to a repeat performance next New Year if, that is, the committee can face another exhausting evening on 31st December 2018.”*

The evening started with unobtrusive background music while raffle tickets were sold, drinks, including lovely chilled bottles of Prosecco, bought from the bar - ably overseen by Richard Davies - and the noise levels gradually increased as the party-goers settled down and relaxed into the party spirit.

Then Marianne Bray's team took over by serving a delicious cottage pie followed by a selection of fruit crumbles for everyone. They'd even anticipated all dietary requirements by providing vegetarian and gluten-free options.



To help the dinner go down, Chris Baxter, resplendent in his sporrán and kilt, cajoled the crowd onto the dance floor for a session of country dancing, which he



also “called” – a skill he picked up from the internet, no less. Actually, he didn’t really have to cajole people to join in, by now the party atmosphere had taken over and some dances were oversubscribed. Unfortunately the dancers’ competency didn’t always quite match their enthusiasm; but that didn’t matter as the shrieks of laughter and the beaming faces on the dance floor more than made up for any mistakes.

Accomplished musical accompaniment for the dancing was provided by members of the Badger Street Band: Sheila Green, Nicky Baxter and Di Davies on recorders, Julie Pope on accordion, Mark Porter on guitar and Rebecca George on fiddle – who knew that we had such talent in the parish?



The evening’s repertoire included Marie’s Wedding, Glenside Polka, Teribus, Trip to Margate and, inevitably, Scotland the Brave.

If the partygoers thought they could relax after the country dancing;





they were wrong! DJ Dan from Qudraphonic Sound of Taunton played the best selection of disco music I've heard in a long time. He kept the dancers on the dance floor right through to midnight despite having to cater for ages ranging from pre-teens to grandparents!



Midnight came and went with the traditional chimes of Big Ben, balloons cascading from a net strung across the ceiling and party-poppers galore – followed by a rousing chorus of Auld Lang Syne. Everybody squeezed onto the dance floor, linked hands and,



as tradition demands, advanced towards the centre of the circle and retreated to the outside in “ragged” waves.

Then it was back to the DJ Dan’s disco for those who still had any energy left. Later, some even had enough energy to help the committee with the task of tidying the hall – well done them; it was much appreciated.

And so we said “Goodbye 2017” and “Hello 2018”.

**Comments from the partygoers included:**

*“A fabulous evening. I ached the next morning from all the dancing and from laughing at myself for getting the country dancing so completely wrong! Thank you to all those who organised the night, you did a great job. Really looking forward to next year – can we have more of the Badger Street Band and the country dancing please?”*

*“A huge thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make it such a lovely evening – really appreciated it and thought the country dancing was a fab idea.”*

*“A fantastic occasion to get together with people from our scattered community whom I hardly ever see”.*

*“The food was really tasty. I hope you’re going to repeat it next year”.*

*“I’m amazed that you did all this yourselves. It must have been a lot of hard work but was really worth it”.*

*“The organisers should be congratulated. It was nice to see a mixture of generations all enjoying themselves together.”*

It was a lovely evening and, looking back, I realise how lucky we are to have this superb facility and such hardworking committee members. Long may they continue. But one thing is clear; the committee could do with some help. OK, you may not be ready to commit to being a committee member; but can you help by becoming a ‘Friend of Neroche Hall’? Can you spare a little time to help the committee with some of the functions. Think about it, then contact the committee via the hall website ([www.nerochehall.org.uk](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)) – they’d be delighted to hear from you.

## **Broadband making the world a smaller place** ***By County Councillor John Thorne***

I wonder how many people locally watched the 'breaking news' recently on Sky News about a little difficulty the country's second largest construction firm was having with its banks.

And how many of those viewers, appreciated that their lives were being directly shaped by what they were watching unfold on their television or, probably, if you are under 24, on their mobile phone.



Because Carillion has not just been building the HS2 rail line for the Government, nor just constructing football World Cup stadia for Qatar, nor just developing a new Royal Hospital in Liverpool. The now-broke company has also been digging trenches and laying an ultrafast fibre broadband network for homes and businesses in our Blackdown and Neroche county division.

Carillion is the major partner in a joint venture with German company Telent, to whom Gigaclear sub-contracted the work for the contract it has with Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS).

I spotted this impending disaster quite a while ago, and began asking questions at County Hall about how CDS was going to cope once the proverbial electric fan was switched on. Unfortunately, after bigging up our by-and-large wonderful officers in the previous newsletter, I never received any answers, even after Carillion went under. The best I have seen to date is a bland statement saying CDS is determined to do its best to deliver the programme on budget and on time.

So, again, using my own initiative, I went out and discovered that there is nothing to worry about: Telent has immediately taken on all



the Carillion workers via an insolvency clause in the partnership and will crack on with the fibre broadband network itself.

This is a relief, because I believe ultrafast broadband will revolutionise our rural business community and is probably the single most important investment the council can make to help protect and create jobs outside the urban areas. Speeds of up to 1Gbps cannot be bettered outside the City of London.

I do not know how many hedge funds jobs we have in our parish but I am pretty sure that such a connection to the global marketplace is going to do wonders for our local small businesses. Broadband is definitely making the world a smaller place, and shaping all of our lives in one way or another.

### **Council tax**

I should mention that readers will probably by now have seen or heard some moans and groans about council tax going up again.

As a single parent to two young sons, I am personally acutely aware of any rise in any household bills, with my low-wage, part-time job, so you can be absolutely sure that I would not support any council tax increase unless it was absolutely necessary.

In Somerset's case, despite having made around £140 million savings in the past seven years, we have little choice if we are to maintain vital frontline services.

Even with the latest increase, Somerset will still have the lowest council tax of any county in the country.



### **Contact Cllr Thorne**

01823 663146

07811 675262

[JBThorne@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:JBThorne@somerset.gov.uk)

**Taunton Deane update**  
***Cllr John Williams, member for Neroche Ward and  
Leader of the council***

**Budget setting for 2018/19**

Now is the time for budget setting and the council is proposing to continue its investment in boosting the local economy as part of its budget plans for the year ahead.

The council embarked on a major investment programme some three years ago, allocating £16.6million over five years towards its growth and development ambitions but also determined to maintain front line services that are so valued by all. The investment is due to continue in the year ahead with money earmarked for some of the major schemes as follows:



**Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation** The allocation towards the Flood Alleviation project has been increased to £5million in line with the Council's commitment to flood relief, by reallocation from the Urban Extension project.

**Major Transport Schemes** The overall allocation increased from £3.5million to £4million

**Town Centre Regeneration** The overall allocation increased from £2.5million to £3.050million to enable the delivery of major town centre schemes, such as Firepool and Coal Orchard.

**Employment sites, enterprise and innovation and marketing** – overall allocation of £4.5million.

The investment is continuing despite the council seeing its overall funding all reducing. The Government Revenue Support Grant has been reduced by £365,000, New Homes Bonus by £470,000 and retained business rates by £13,000.

With careful past budgeting we are still able to commit to our pledge to invest in our economy despite such significant decreases in funding.

We will be able to set a balanced budget in the coming year despite the challenges we face, without the need to cut services. We have delivered substantial savings through our partnership with West Somerset Council - £1.8million annually since 2013 – and, subject to Secretary of State approval, we will be able to increase this by a further £3.1million a year by changing the way we work and creating a new, single council.

The good news for the community we serve is that the sports centres, parks and gardens, street cleaning and floral displays, besides much other, will remain. In fact for the swimmers amongst us we have invested £1.5million in Station Road pool and £5.5 million in a brand new pool at the Blackbrook leisure centre.

What does this mean to householders, subject to full council approval council tax is due to increase by £5 or 3.3% a year which equates to around 10p per week – for the average Band D property. This will set the annual tax rate at £154.62 - or £2.97 per week. Taunton Deane's share of the overall council tax bill is about 10% of the total billed, with the remainder going to fund Somerset County Council, police and fire services, and town and parish councils.

### **Broadband installation by Gigaclear**

Just a quick update, following the recent failure of Carillion. In a joint partnership with UK technology and network specialists Telent, Carillion was the main civil engineering contractor employed by Gigaclear to deliver the full-fibre broadband network on behalf of Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS).

CDS has been assured that Gigaclear has a range of options available to it to deal with any change in circumstances affecting its sub-contractors. CDS is in constant dialogue with Gigaclear and in light of recent developments has discussed the detail of contingency plans and options. Gigaclear is working to ensure that the new publicly-funded broadband network is delivered on time and on budget despite this setback.

Contact Cllr Williams at [cllr.j.williams@taundondeane.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.j.williams@taundondeane.gov.uk)



*The hard-working team behind the superb Neroche Christmas Lunch*

## **Neroche Christmas Lunch** ***By Magnus Stewart***

More than 70 guests of all ages enjoyed the Neroche Christmas Lunch on December 7, organised by members and friends of St Peter's Church.

The hall was beautifully decorated and the tables had been thoughtfully laid out with traditional Christmas trappings.

The Christmas meals, having been prepared by members of the splendid group of organisers and helpers, were served with care and consideration, as the guests marvelled at how such a repast could be produced and presented so efficiently.

With a choice of puddings to follow, plus teas and coffees, the event was rounded off with carol singing accompanied by the Neroche Hand Bell Ringers.

A huge 'thank you' to all the organisers, the cooks and helpers for their invaluable contribution to this community event.





# Neroche Annual Parish Meeting

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

**Thursday 19 April 2018 - Neroche Hall  
Opens 7pm - Formal Presentations start 7.30pm**

Jon Bell, Parish Council  
Chairman, will present the  
Annual Report

The evening will also include  
a number of presentations of  
local interest. Watch out for  
details nearer the time in  
the Neroche email alert



Stroll around the stands representing numerous local clubs,  
organisations and groups, speak with club representatives,  
event organisers, Action Group members and meet your  
parish, Taunton Deane and Somerset County councillors.

**This is the most important local event of the year.  
Your support is essential; please be there.**

A variety of FREE cakes, pastries, beverages and  
refreshments will served all evening

## News from Neroche Hall

*By Richard Davies*

Since the last newsletter, we have enjoyed a number of successful events at the hall, which were well supported by our local and wider community.

Our popular Fish and Chip Quiz in early October was a sellout and our quizmaster Mike Michael once again provided some challenging questions covering a wide variety of topics. It will therefore be good news to those of you who enjoy an opportunity to air your knowledge to hear that our next quiz will be on Friday 9

March and that once again Mike has kindly agreed to reprise his role as quizmaster. Fish and chips will again be available to order. Quizzers will need to book their tables with me in advance as usual.

The Craft Fair, held at the end of October, again proved very popular with stalls being manned by a number of local entrepreneurs as well as many from further afield. It is always difficult to know when to stage such an event as there tends to be a proliferation of fairs prior to Christmas, but hopefully some early bargains were snapped up.

It is not very often that an event is cancelled, but unfortunately the Take Art theatrical event in early December – ‘An evening of wintry Brilliance’ by Farnham Maltings was one such victim. The production could not go ahead due to one of the actors becoming unwell. Luckily all ticket holders were informed before they arrived at the hall and all money has been refunded. Our next Take Art production will hopefully go ahead on Saturday 24 March when the folk duet ‘Ninebarrow’ will be performing.

Our monthly Friday Film Nights continue, with Goodbye Christopher Robin on March 23 and Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool on April 27. As always, all information on forthcoming events can be found on the hall website: [www.nerochehall.org.uk](http://www.nerochehall.org.uk)



If you have not recently visited our website please do so as it has been completely re-designed and I believe is easier to navigate. It is fresher and includes all you need to know about any event at the hall, plus the facilities and how to hire the hall with preferential rates for residents.

The climax of 2017 was our New Year's Eve Party which was the culmination of many months' work by a small sub-committee. A full report and pictures of the event starts on Page 3, but it would be remiss of me not to express my thanks to all those committee members who staged the party, and to friends of the hall who gave generously of their time and effort.

It was a real success and I have a suspicion that it will become a regular event. We are already considering 2018 and will be looking to start the ball rolling once again later in the year. The committee would love to hear from anyone who would like to be involved either with the organisation or with constructive comments.

Importantly, the event raised funds for the hall which are much-needed to cover all our outgoings and general maintenance expense. Sadly, the profit has already been earmarked towards repairs to one of the heaters within the main hall which went defective over the festive season and is likely to be a four-figure sum! Your support is therefore much appreciated and is essential to the continuance of the hall as a prime community resource.

@2K THEATRE PRESENT A NOËL COWARD DOUBLE BILL

**RED PEPPERS & STILL LIFE**

AN AMATEUR PRODUCTION BY ARRANGEMENT FROM SAMUEL FRENCH

MARCH 2018:  
1ST NEROCHE,  
2ND OTHERY,  
3RD TACCHI MORRIS,  
8TH STOGUMBER,  
9TH HATCH BEAUCHAMP,  
10TH BISHOPS LYDEARD.

VILLAGE HALL VENUES EXCEPT TACCHI MORRIS.

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM:  
WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK / 2K-THEATRE  
OR TACCHI-MORRIS.COM  
OR BOX OFFICE 07943 495088

WEB: WWW.AT2KTHEATRE.COM EMAIL: AT2K@ICLOUD.COM

*Find out more about this production at the hall on Page 49*



## Neroche Friday Film Nights

Our popular film nights at Neroche Hall continue with some more delightful movies.

### March 23 - Goodbye Christopher Robin (PG)

A behind-the-scenes look at the life of author A.A. Milne and the creation of the Winnie the Pooh stories inspired by his son Christopher Robin.



### April 27 - Film Stars Don't Die In Liverpool (15)



A wonderful cast including Julie Walters, Annette Benning and Jamie Bell tell the story of the relationship between older Oscar winner Gloria Grahame and younger actor Turner.

**Films start at 7.30pm | Tickets £6 | bar | snacks**

**Contact Nicky Baxter on 01823 480675**

# News from Neroche Parish Council

*By Gillian Midworth, clerk*

## **A plea to horseriders**

As many of you who live in Bickenhall and Curland are aware, repairs have recently been carried out to Footpath T2/7, a short stretch of path which links the end of Abbey Drove to Fordbridge. The surface of this path had become eroded and impassable for pedestrians due to use by horse riders.



I am sorry to say that the newly-repaired surface is already showing signs of deterioration due to the continued use by horses along this path. I would like to remind everyone that there is no public right to ride or lead a horse along a public footpath, as their hooves can cause considerable damage and rutting which has been the case in this instance. There are signs at both ends of this path reminding riders of this restriction.

## **Precept for 2018/19**

At the January meeting, the Parish Council discussed its budget and precept requirement for 2018/19. The budgeted expenditure is forecast to be £4,580 and the council agreed to levy a precept of that amount to cover the proposed expenditure. This equates to £18.48 a year for a Band D property. Included in the budget are contributions that the Parish Council makes to the villages' website and newsletter.

The Parish Council carefully considers whether items of expenditure are necessary or beneficial to the community and wherever possible looks to source outside funding for major items of expenditure.

## **Annual Parish Meeting**

The Annual Parish meeting will be held on Thursday 19 April. This meeting is entirely separate from a Parish Council meeting, although some members of the Parish Council help to organise it together with

other members of the community. It is hoped that Rebecca Pow, our MP, will be able to attend.

The meeting also provides an opportunity to learn about all the amazing events that regularly take place in the parish as many local clubs and organisations are represented. In addition, it provides a chance to socialise with neighbours and friends over a glass of wine or piece of cake. See the notice on page 14 for more information.

### **Library Services Consultation**

Somerset County Council is carrying out a major consultation on the future provision of library services and members of the public are invited to respond. Full details can be found at:

[www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation) but, in summary, 15 of the 34 libraries in Somerset will be seeking community involvement to remain open. Where this is not possible services will be provided by outreach services at community venues or additional mobile library stops.

The closing date of the consultation is 22 April and final decisions are expected in June/July.

**Neroche Hall Quiz with fish and chips**

**Friday March 9**

**Buy beer/wine on night or BYO**

**Maximum of six to a team**

**£2.50 per person entry (food extra)**

**Doors open 7.00pm for prompt start at 7.15pm.**

**Advance Booking essential on 01823 480286**

**email [r.davies507@btinternet.com](mailto:r.davies507@btinternet.com)**

## Flower and Music Festival Progress *By Katherine Michaels*

Three months to go and the excitement and terror are building accordingly!

A huge thank you to everyone for supporting the various fundraising activities during 2017. We have doubled our original fundraising target, having raised just shy of £3,000. Consequently, all costs will be covered in advance of the festival.

We are delighted by the response of the professional and amateur florists alike that have offered their time and creativity to decorate St Peter's Church. In addition,

we are very grateful to Cottage Flowers, Ilminster, for their generous sponsorship towards the cost of the flowers. The floral theme is "Songs of Praise" with a wide variety of song and hymn choice so the church promises to look spectacular and smell glorious too!

The festival runs from Friday, 11 May, to Sunday, 13 May, 10.30am to 4.30pm, closing with a "Songs of Praise" service. Thanks to Bickenhall and District WI, a café serving light refreshments will be open throughout.

The musical entertainment is taking shape, and with the exception of the evening concerts, the festival is free to enter, with donation welcome. There will be a licensed bar in the evenings. We also hope to have two bands of visiting church bell-ringers each day.





## **Musical programme:**

### **Friday, 11 May**

**Daytime:** Thurlbear School Choir | Taunton School Advanced Vocal Ensemble | Neroche Handbell Ringers

**Evening:** King's College Choir and Jazz Band. Tickets Adult £10, Student £8, Under 10s free.

### **Saturday, 12 May**

**Daytime:** Beacon Choir (Musgrove Park Hospital), St Peter's Choir, Isle Abbot's Community Choir, Badger Street Band

**Evening:** Amici Chamber Choir - Songs from the Stage and Screen  
Tickets: Adults £16, Students £14, Under 10s free

### **Sunday, 13 May**

**Daytime:** Fiddlin' Folk-youth folk band from seven-18 (plus parents)  
Other aspiring young musicians.

There is an "early bird" combination ticket available up until March 1 for the cost of £20 for adults, £18 students.

Please contact either Jacky or me to purchase tickets.

The emphasis is now on marketing and we are publicising the event via websites, social media, local magazines and newspapers alongside letters of invitation to flower arranging societies, WIs, residential homes, Mother's Union across Somerset.

Anything you can do to spread the word and encourage friends and family to come along would be much appreciated.

See you in May!

**Contact festival organisers Katherine Michaels on 01823 480474  
and Jacqueline Kolkowski on 01823 481326.**

**flowerfestival2018@gmail.com**

# News from RSPCA West Hatch

*By Bel Deering, manager*

RSPCA West Hatch is a unique facility that admits sick, injured, orphaned and abused wildlife, domestic and farm animal species. We take in animals from all over the South West and South Wales, and aim to rehome domestic and farm animals, and release wildlife back to the wild.

In 2017 we admitted 4309 animals to the wildlife centre, with the 'top ten' species as follows:

**Herring gull - 632; Hedgehog - 525; Wood pigeon - 333; Mallard duck - 323; Manx shearwater - 303; Feral pigeon - 183; Blackbird - 145; Rabbit and Carrion Crow - 99; Mute swan – 86**



*A rescued juvenile Herring Gull*

September was one of our busiest months, when wildlife staff and volunteers were suddenly called on to care for 303 Manx Shearwaters rescued from the beaches of Wales and the West Country after stormy weather.

The birds arrived at the centre exhausted and battered but our fantastic team worked long days to ensure every bird was given the best possible chance. Manx Shearwaters do not eat in captivity so staff had to tube-feed hand-made fish soup to each individual up to four times a day. When the birds had gained weight and fitness they were washed, dried and put out on a pool before being released back into the wild.



*Washing a Manx Shearwater*

At the moment our most numerous in-patients are hedgehogs and Grey Seal pups which have come to us from Cornwall, Devon and

South Wales, many of them orphaned and injured by winter storms. We try to give every animal a second chance and we could not do it without our fantastic volunteers. Last year volunteers donated 4,015 hours to help us clean and feed animals, and many other local people helped with donations of sheets, towels and shredded paper.

Due to the record numbers of seal pups we have cared for this year we also have a Seal Appeal running to help us raise funds needed for their food: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rspca-west-hatch2> .

Last year was busy at the animal centre too. We cared for 618 animals including 150 dogs, 230 cats, 71 rabbits and 167 other animals from rats and mice to chickens, pigs and ferrets.



These animals are brought in by our Inspectorate colleagues for a variety of welfare reasons and so often

*These adorable kittens were found dumped by the canal*

need veterinary and behavioural support to get them back on their feet and ready to find a new home. If you are looking for a companion visit <https://www.rspca.org.uk/findapet> . You will see dogs and cats – but also farm birds, rats and sometimes even pigs or goats. Jake's story illustrates just how fantastic it can be when an animal finds a new home.

Jake the Lurcher arrived at RSPCA Bristol Dogs & Cats Home in a pitiful state. Not only was he painfully thin, but his fur was so matted that the knots pulled at his skin when he walked, causing him to cry out. Despite all this and being an elderly dog of 15 years he still had a lot of life left in him and a big personality. We often take dogs from RSPCA Bristol when they are really pushed for space and Jake was one of them.

We put him up for rehoming and that prompted a call from a lady who had lost her Lurcher, Murphy, four years earlier whilst out on a walk. She had never given up on the search for him and when she saw Jake's photo on our facebook page she thought Murphy had been found. The dogs were almost identical – but Jake had a different microchip number. She could not stop thinking about Jake so came for a visit and set her mind at rest.



*Jake when he first came into RSPCA care, above, and enjoying his new life*

Jake was not Murphy. But she did fall in love with him instantly and offered to give him a home. It turned out to be the best happy ending we could ever have imagined. Jake now lives with Veronica's other dogs, he goes on caravanning holidays, he dives in her pond, he barks in his sleep, and he steals her sandwiches! The old boy is living the life he always deserved and he is adored. We couldn't have dreamed of a better outcome.



As Jake's story shows we often help animals that have come from extreme situations of abuse and neglect. Our staff and volunteers help to turn their lives around and give them a new start. If you are looking for a good resolution why not join our volunteer team?

We are always on the look-out for dog walkers, cat cuddlers and rat socialisers – drop us an email on [whdomcen@rspca.org.uk](mailto:whdomcen@rspca.org.uk) to find out more and make a difference for animals in 2018.

## Pets Reunited

*By Wally Torrington*

I am pleased to report that the Email Alert has continued to help reunite pets with owners. Here are a trio of happy tales:

### **KitKat takes a break**

On 14 November, Patricia and Raymond Hake of Seymour Cottage, Curland, emailed to say that they had found “a tiny ginger kitten” and an alert was quickly issued.

Within a short space of time, Tami Boden-Ellis contacted the Hakes to claim the family pet. When I contacted Tami to check whether their cat was back at home, she said: “Peter (husband) and KitKat are safely re-united. As our three cats are ‘outside-and-fend-for-themselves’ cats, we didn’t know KitKat was lost!”



*Peter and KitKat reunited*

### **Border control**

At 8.30am on Sunday 14 January, I received an email from Lizzie Ginbey of Mistletoe Cottage, Bickenhall, saying she had lost two dogs. “I’m afraid my two terriers escaped out of the gate as someone drove in last night. They still aren’t back! There is a brown Border Terrier cross called Pippin and a black scruffy one called Digby. Both are very friendly.”

A Special Alert went out immediately, with a couple of photographs attached. Just before midday, another email from Lizzie happily



stated: "They have been found! On my way to collect them. Thank you for your help!"

And when she returned back home she wrote: "They are back home but very tired! They were found last night only a short way from home and kindly taken to St Giles Kennels. Due to the Email Alert, a kind lady [Arlene Denning] phoned me and let me know they had been found. A fabulous rescue and many thanks to all who helped! We made a donation to the kennels for looking after them."

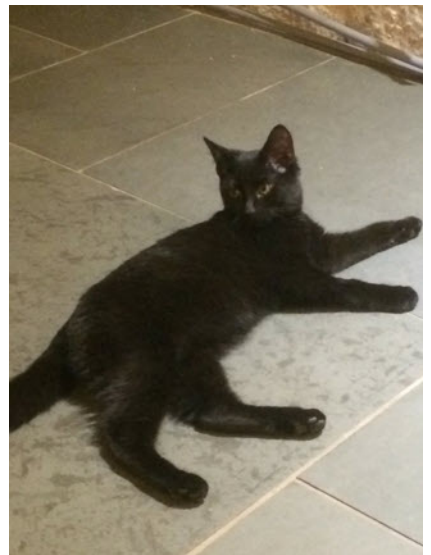


*Pippin and Digby*

### **Roaming Rufus**

Only a few hours after Pippin and Digby were found, an email landed from Ben Grave of The Barn, Crosses Farm, Curland: "Sorry to trouble you late on a Sunday evening, but I was hoping you could send out another lost pet special as Rufus has decided to disappear again!"

Four days later, after an email alert had been issued, I received another email from Ben: "Thanks so much for sending the Alert out. Rufus turned up last night. I have no idea where he has been and to be honest, we had lost hope. We are very thankful for his miraculous return! He looks healthy and is full of mischief."



*Rufus, back home for now...*

## Neroche MP's briefing

*By Rebecca Pow, MP*

Since my last update I seem busier than ever, with local matters such as the A358, social care in Somerset, working with Musgrove Park Hospital on a plan to build a new surgical centre, speaking up for the Royal Marines, continuing to fight for improved broadband and more besides.

My time is as usual divided between London and the West Country but, as always, Taunton Deane is at the heart of my Westminster work. As I have said from the outset, I was elected to represent Taunton Deane in Westminster – not the other way around! Campaign for a new Surgical Centre at Musgrove Park Hospital.

In Parliament I have been making the strongest possible case for a £79.5m new surgical centre at Musgrove Park Hospital. Our county hospital is a valued part of life here and many of us will all have had close associations with it for one reason or another.



*Rebecca at Musgrove Park Hospital*

Whilst the dedicated and skilled team of staff working at Musgrove have recently been rated as 'outstanding' for patients, for many years they have had to work in less than ideal conditions on some parts of the estate. Some operating theatres built in the 1940s by the American Forces as a temporary hospital for the D-Day landings, complete with flat, leaking roofs, antiquated pipework, and an archaic air conditioning system are still in use.

I supported the bid to NHS Transformation for five new theatres and a new state of the art endoscopy unit which will enable the hospital to cope with the dramatically increasing demands being made on it, as patients numbers escalate and Somerset's elderly population grows.

I have been working to bring this issue to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and, following the announcement of a £3.5 billion government fund for upgrading hospital infrastructure, I am optimistic that the project is drawing nearer.

To make this case even more robust and to demonstrate public support I will be launching a parliamentary petition. If you would like to sign it please email my office on [rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk) or call on 01823 443062. Visit [www.rebeccapow.org.uk](http://www.rebeccapow.org.uk) to see a speech I made in Parliament on this.

### **Basket Case**

My ambition for wider use of Somerset wicker shopping baskets may at last be bearing fruit. I have had my basket for over 25 years (just renewed the handle), bought from the Willow and Wetlands Centre in Stoke St Gregory. It is still standing me in good stead. Using a local basket like this is a great way of not just carrying the shopping, but also supporting a local industry, local craftspeople and the tourist trade.



### **A358 upgrade**

Many people thought the last consultation was flawed as there was only one route offered and it did little for Taunton Deane. As your Member of Parliament I was pleased to play my part in pressing both Highways England and the Secretary of State for Transport to open a second and improved consultation and I am pleased that my calls, together with those of many others locally, were acted upon.

Many of you will have attended the exhibitions and, no doubt, fed in your views as part of the new consultation process. This time, three options were offered, with links to the new Nexus business site included, as well as clearer links to Junction 25 and the M5. I shall continue to monitor the process closely and represent my constituents' views, where appropriate, to both Highway England and the Department of Transport to ensure the best outcome for those in Henlade, the wider local area, the economy of Taunton, as well as achieving the strategic aim of moving traffic more quickly east – west.

### **Raising Rural Issues**

I was pleased to launch the first ever Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament recently and to make a reference to it in The Chamber itself during Business Questions with the Leader of the House.



*Rebecca launched the Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament*

The problems being faced in rural areas, from Wiveliscombe to Wellington, the Blackdowns to the Quantocks, often get overlooked and the aim of bringing together organisations to share experiences, with the Rural Services Network as a lynchpin, was to highlight the deprivation often suffered in our country areas.

Delivering services to remote areas, such as transport, social care and leisure activities, is costly in sparsely populated areas and yet the need is great, particularly as a higher proportion of people over 65 live in our rural areas. Anyone with knowledge of this area is being encouraged to feed into the Government Green paper on Social Care being published shortly, making a special case for the challenges of our rural areas.

As ever, do get in touch if you have any particular issues you'd like to raise or views to share. Facebook: [fb.com/rebeccapow](https://www.facebook.com/rebeccapow)  
Twitter: [@pow\\_rebecca](https://twitter.com/pow_rebecca)

## **Hello from our new village agent by Sally Mitchell**

Hello! I'm the new Village Agent for Neroche and surrounding area. The Somerset Village Agent project is run by the Community Council for Somerset and funded by The Big Lottery. Our aim is to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded and lonely individuals together with statutory and/or voluntary organisations to offer specific solutions for needs that are identified.



As a Village Agent I can offer a holistic signposting and referral service for you on a wide variety of issues. Whether it is finding local activities or groups to join, or assisting you to find organisations that will give money and benefits advice; computer training; sourcing services to help you in your home, or organisations that will give you fire safety advice. If you are feeling vulnerable or worried about a friend or relative, maybe I could help?

As a Village Agent I can help individuals feel less isolated and more involved in their community and engage with local groups, agencies and organisations to aid people to connect.



Part of my role is also to help to shape services in your community by identifying needs and feeding the information back to the appropriate body. Have you identified a community need and would like to set up a group? I can assist with that too! If you have an issue - big or small - that you think I can help with please give me a call on 07931 018019 or email me at



[sally@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:sally@somersetccc.org.uk) Please look on the Community Council for Somerset website to find the range of services we are involved with.

On a personal level, I have a wealth of experience in being a service user of health and social care, both as a patient and as an informal carer. I hope that this gives me an empathic way of understanding needs to provide relevant sign posting, advice and a sympathetic ear! I look forward to helping you.

**Please support your Neroche Newsletter**  
*By Jacqueline Wanstall*

**It is that time of year again, when we try to raise some much-needed funds for the running of the Neroche Newsletter.**

**If you enjoy receiving this free, informative magazine, which is packed with all your local news and events then please help to secure the future the newsletter by sending in a donation.**

**There is a donation form accompanying this edition, but here are the details again:**

**Please make cheques payable to: 'Neroche Communication Action Group' and send to: Jacqueline Wanstall Barton Oaks, Bickenhall, Taunton, Somerset TA3 6TX**

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

**Many thanks for your support, from your Newsletter Team.**



## **Village Lives in the Lee of the Blackdowns**

***Edited by Jane Hole***

*Chronicles of Curland Bickenhall Staple Fitzpaine  
Neroche Local History Group*

The long-promised book on our local history is on schedule to be ready and printed in time for the Annual Parish Meeting on 19 April.

The focus is on the local topics we have researched. Several villagers have written chapters on a diverse range of subjects including farming, the 1968 floods, brief histories of the three villages from Domesday onwards, the lost houses, a family's social history, Curland Church, Staple Fitzpaine Almshouses and memories of a forestry apprentice. We will also have village life as captured in stories from people who were born and grew up in our community.

Fascinating snippets of local information collected from the SW Heritage Office will interest us all. There will be plenty of local maps, photos and illustrations. Copies of the book will be on sale at the Annual Parish Meeting - see page 14 for details.

## **Farming Update**

### ***By Daniel Macey***

In my last article in the Autumn magazine I ended by commenting that the weather had turned dull for the harvest and, like many other farmers, we were hoping it would improve. I can now confirm that it did not!

When we started our harvest on 6 August we did not seem to have more than two dry days together followed by two or more wet days. As you can imagine, this made our wheat harvest very stressful. Yields were OK but nothing exciting. The fields that we had high hopes for got weather beaten, with the rain knocking grain out of the ear and pushing parts of the crop completely flat, making it difficult for the combine to pick it up. The straw was very variable, not just locally but country-wide. We are now buying straw in as we normally would during this time of the year. Rather than it being £70-£75 per ton it is now trading at £120-£130 per ton due to poor quality and shortages.

Following our wheat harvest we moved on to the maize harvest and, although all of the rain in August and September made ground conditions very soft, we did have exceptional yield of approximately 20-30% more than in previous years. However the sticky conditions made it very difficult to get the wheat back in behind the maize.

Since August we have calved 207 cows with only three assisted calvings, which is a very good percentage. Also the dairy industry seems to be recovering as the milk price is much better at the moment in comparison to this time last year, and we hope that this continues.

As you may know, our landlord the Crown Estate is selling its assets in Somerset covering 7,000 acres of farm land with 3,500 acres on the North Taunton estate and 3,500 acres on the South Taunton estate, which is where we are located in Staple Fitzpaine. The Crown is talking to tenants about their options which are: to buy, surrender the tenancy, or stay with a new landlord.

Each tenancy is being dealt with on an individual basis and we await the outcomes.



## **Taunton Racecourse**

*By Wally Torrington*

Taunton Racecourse has enjoyed a great start to the season, followed by a most successful Christmas and New Year programme. There are lots more great racedays and events coming up soon (for more details please refer to the notices which are included in this article, or go to the website at [tauntonracecourse.co.uk](http://tauntonracecourse.co.uk))

### **Annual Membership**

*(From January to December)*

I'm sure that those of you who are members, or considering membership, would agree that Taunton Racecourse offers tremendous value, with a record-equalling 59 reciprocal race meetings at 47 different courses throughout the country, plus a reciprocal free entry to Hickstead for their Derby meeting and the Royal International Horse Show, and 2 for 1 Saver Tickets for the Royal Bath and West Show; with full membership facilities applying to both.

At Taunton, annual members and their guests, together with owners and trainers, have exclusive use of the Paddocks Stand, which they believe is quite unique in this day-and-age. The two-course racing lunch, in the Paddock Stand Restaurant, continues to be very popular. Members are welcome to bring up to four guests per race meeting into the Paddock Stand.

What a wonderful way of reciprocating hospitality, by wining-and-dining your friends in the Members' Restaurant whilst enjoying a great day's racing.

## **Taunton Racecourse as an Events Venue**

Taunton Racecourse is an easily accessible, picturesque location in which to hold your outdoor event. They have played host to car and caravan rallies, camping fairs, equestrian shows, circuses, athletics events, auto cross sales, French property exhibitions, religious gatherings, rural shows, car boot sales and performances by the 'Sealed Knot' which re-enacts English Civil War battles as well as open air pop and classical concerts.



More than 135 acres are available with parking for more than 1,000 cars, and the events area can be used together with the accommodation in the Racecourse stands if required. To find out more contact 01823 337172.

### **Remaining Fixtures for 2018**

**Thursday, 1 March** First - 2.20pm Final - 5.10pm

**Monday, 12 March** First - 2.20pm Final - 5.20pm

**Monday, 26 March** First - 2.20pm Final - 5.00pm

**Thursday, 12 April** First - 2.10pm Final - 5.35pm

**Wednesday, 25 April** First - 5.20pm Final - 8.05pm

**Wednesday, 31 October** First - 1.15pm Final - 4.15pm

**Thursday, 15 November** First - 1.15pm Final - 4.15pm

**Thursday 29 November** First - 12.45pm Final - 3.25pm

**Thursday, 13 December** First - 12.30pm Final - 3.50pm



# Cheltenham Festival Preview Evening

in aid of the MH & WSH Point to Point

Refreshments  
& Bar Available

Tickets: **£10.00**  
(£12.50 on the door)

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

at  
**Taunton Racecourse**  
**Friday 9th March 2018**  
**7:00pm**  
(doors open at 6:00pm)

## FREE RACING

TAUNTON  
RACECOURSE  
& CONFERENCE CENTRE

\*Maximum 4 per household

### Monday 12th March 2018

**\*A LIMITED NUMBER OF FREE ADMISSION  
TICKETS AVAILABLE IF ORDERED ONLINE NOW!**

## HURRY BEFORE THEY RUN OUT!

For more details visit [www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk](http://www.tauntonracecourse.co.uk)



**SIMPLE MINDS**

**KT TUNSTALL**



**THE  
PRETENDERS**

Simple Minds and The Pretenders in concert with very special  
guest KT Tunstall at Taunton Racecourse-2nd September 2018

# Taunton Racecourse Business Club

Offering businesses around the region a range of racecourse benefits alongside social and networking events



## Gold Cup & Grand National Lunches 2018



Enjoy the two most prestigious jump races of the season with us here at the Racecourse,  
The package includes the following..

Welcome drink, 2 course lunch, Afternoon Tea,  
In-house Bookmaker, Racing Host and much more...

£30 pp or £50 pp for both events



## Winter in the woods with Neroche Woodlanders By Gavin Saunders

It's a hard time to be a small creature in the woods. All that frantic eating of berries and cuts in the autumn proves its worth now, as you fight the cold and damp to stay alive. Yet life goes on, despite the sense of locked-down torpor, and signs of that life are breaking through – the hazel catkins are already extended and creamy yellow on sheltered ride sides, and even a few primroses are lifting up their faces in the occasional sunshine.



Despite the weather it's a busy time of year for humans in the woods, as this is the period we do most of our harvesting work at Young Wood, cutting coppice, thinning canopy trees and stacking firewood for seasoning.

As well as producing wood to feed our campfires and make charcoal, we've been felling larches, stripping their bark and using them as poles for our current building project, erecting a wood-framed meeting room and office, which will have a green roof and insulated walls (incidentally we're on the look-out for surplus insulation material - rock wool or equivalent - and old scaffold boards or floor boards – if you have any to get rid of please do get in touch!).

In early January we welcomed the Quantock Orienteers who used Young Wood as a base for a big event for all ages, navigating the



woods and valley around Wych Lodge. Forests are great places for testing your senses, both in terms of how much there is to see and hear, and in terms of how easy it is to lose your bearings and see whether you can find your way.

Meanwhile we've a Greenwood Carving course on 25 March - see [www.youngwood.org.uk](http://www.youngwood.org.uk) where you can also find out how you can support Woodlanders' work by becoming a shareholder member.



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](http://www.ncv.org.uk) for details.

*Gavin, Jenny and the team at Neroche Woodlanders*

## Flippin' good fun



**Read all about the parish Pancake Party in the next Neroche Newsletter**



## **Christmas Trees at Staple Farm** *By Mark Pope*

Well Christmas has been and gone, and thanks to all who came and bought trees from us. Here at Staple Farm we had another good year.

The open day worked really well again with lots of families out in the field choosing their trees. In fact the first families had an added treat of seeing four deer come out of the trees.

This year people have collected their trees in a variety of different vehicles - we had three soft tops cars this year.

We are now busy preparing for next Christmas and we have started to prune the trees. And we are planning ahead too - we will shortly be planting another batch of trees that will not be ready for harvest for another six years.





# Thurlbear School Memory Tree Event

*By Jo Moore*

Thurlbear School was delighted to be invited to be part of the Churches Conservation Trust Memory Tree event again this year.

Christmas is a wonderful time of year in our church school and it is also a time of reflection when we think about family members no longer with us and the times we shared with them. A Memory Tree is a way of remembering and sharing memories of someone special at Christmas by placing a decoration or message of remembrance on a Christmas Tree showing that these people live on inside us. It is also a lovely way to make the church look beautiful at this very special time of the year.



Each class had their own Memory Tree to decorate in St Thomas's Church, Thurlbear. Visitors from the Trust worked with the children to create and make a decoration to hang on their class tree while teaching the children about how memories are shared through words and pictures.

The school extended this event to the wider community as well as school families and friends by inviting them to make their own Memory Tree to be displayed alongside the children's trees and an invitation for coffee and mince pies served in the church.

## **Carol Singing around Neroche Villages**

*By Alison Brown*

Carol Singing around Neroche Villages in 2017 took place just two days before Christmas. A motley crew of singers young and not so young piled into Alison Brown's horsebox at Staple Farm for a prompt start at 6.30pm.

When this tradition started at least 10 years ago transport was provided in Mark Pope's shooting wagon behind a tractor! Restrictions on red diesel use for non-farming activities stopped this.

Christmas carols and songs were performed lustily at various venues with the company of neighbours and friends. The singing was led very skilfully by Julie Pope on her accordion. Julie seems able to remember every tune by heart.

The trip started with a warm-up at Ladyacre in Staple Fitzpaine, followed by a visit to William Portman House, where the hallway, stairs and landing resounded to 30 or so voices. The Manor was the next port of call, where we were well-lubricated with mulled wine, and snacks. The scene outside the Manor in the near dark is very magical, quite like a Victorian Christmas card.

Pooles Cottage, Curland was the next stop with a lovely gathering of Curland "hill-dwellers" to greet us. A bit more nourishment and singing and then we were off to the middle of Curland and a warm reception from children and friends at Ridge. Final call was to the yard of Dairy Farmhouse in Bickenhall, where a lighted brazier provided warmth for us to gather round to sing. A little more sustenance gave the singers stamina to return to Staple Fitzpaine and finish our evening singing at the Greyhound Inn!

It was lovely to see so many singing their favourite carols and celebrating the birth of Jesus in this time-honoured way. We thank all the hosts for so generously providing us with food and liquid refreshment. As a result of everyone's support, funds of £288 were collected for the Women's Refuge in Taunton.

# Forestry Commission – Castle Neroche update

*Jon Burgess, forester, and Rob Greenhalgh, community ranger*

By the time this article goes to press we will have already replanted the area at Castle Neroche where we were forced to fell the stand of diseased larch.

To keep the site in harmony with the rest of the wood we have planted a mixed woodland which will be dominated by beech. Beech is the main tree in the rest of the woodland. A small patch of Scots Pine has been chosen for an area at the bottom of the old castle earthworks where the soil is noticeably drier and beech would not thrive as well.



Having more species increases the diversity of the woodland, this is a large factor that makes a woodland visually attractive but also importantly more resistant to future disease.

Thanks to the support from Blackdowns Hills AONB, Zing Somerset Partnership Project and Somerset Council we have been working towards improving the monument itself after last year's felling operation. Whilst lots of the area will be replanted, we invited the above groups along to help us plant grass and wild flower seed on the lower sections of the monument.

Historic England has supported the work which involves the exposure of the monument, and we have managed to complete phase one of this work – the removal of trees from the site and



the planting of hay meadows. Much of the wild flower and grass seed came from Donkey Field, a flower-rich meadow at Staple Hill Park and also from areas around Buckland Wood.



Thanks to the hard work from volunteers, visitors and family groups from Taunton, armed with over 30 sacks of seed, we spent an autumnal day scattering these all over the lower northern section of the site. So far so good – the grass seed seems to be taking root and we're hoping for some native flowers to colonise the area this spring, including species such as yellow rattle and orchids – watch this space!

The plan will be to continue working up the monument hillside removing most of the trees to replace with extended hay meadows. If you'd be interested in helping us with this process, please contact Rob Greenhalgh for further details on [robert.greenhalgh@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:robert.greenhalgh@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) or 07780 493753.

### **New website for Bailey and Down** ***By Keith Bailey***

We have just launched our Bailey and Down website to showcase our local delivery service - for existing and new customers!

We are a small family-run business, probably stuck a little in the dark ages if I am honest, but we now have a website and we're on social media so you can tell all your friends, family and neighbours in the local area so that we can start to deliver to them too!

Go to <https://baileyanddown.wixsite.com/home> to find out more and please do get in touch with us via our website or facebook, email at [baileyanddown@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:baileyanddown@hotmail.co.uk) or phone 01460 432745.

***Editor's note: Keith delivers milk in glass bottles - perfect if you are trying to reduce your plastic use!***

Take Art presents...

**NINEBARROW**

at Neroche Hall

Saturday 24 March



Rising stars of the modern folk world Ninebarrow have won many awards and widespread acclaim.

"A rather lovely thing...like two halves of one voice" Mark Radcliffe's BBC R2 Folk Show

"Another example of how strong British folk music is at the moment" The Telegraph

Doors open 7.15pm for a 7.45pm start | Bar & Nibbles available

Tickets £10 before March 14 then £12.

Book by phone: Sheila 01823 480758 or Anne 01460 234377  
(07775 912928)

online at [www.wegottickets.com/event/423266](http://www.wegottickets.com/event/423266)

email [anne@poolesfarm.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:anne@poolesfarm.eclipse.co.uk)



# The repair revolution is coming to the Blackdowns!

*By Trisha Comrie*

Start searching your lofts, scouring your garages and rummaging in your spare rooms for those broken, and sometimes cherished, items that otherwise might end up in landfill. On Saturday 24 March, at Hemyock Village Hall, there will be experts on hand who will try their best to lovingly restore them to full working order, all for the "price" of a small donation!

Over the past few months, Blackdown Hills Transition Group has been gathering together volunteer repairers with skills in clothing and textiles, bikes, small electrical appliances, garden tools, small items of furniture, computers and toys who are happy to pass on their knowledge and expertise so that fewer items find their way to the tip.

Other than the obvious environmental advantages, this is a wonderful way to pass on much-needed skills (people bringing items for repair are encouraged to watch and learn from their volunteer "buddy").

We could still do with one or two more qualified "sparks" and "computer buffs" on our team and as we are, initially at least, only going to run the Repair Cafe once every two months (on the fourth Saturday of March, May etc), hopefully this won't be too onerous. So, if this could be YOU, please get in touch because you'll be helping a great community initiative get up and running.

Come along to celebrate the launch of our new Repair Cafe. Look out for further details on our Facebook page (RepairCafeBlackdowns).

And, oh yes, did I mention there will be cake?

Contact Trisha at [trishacomrie@gmail.com](mailto:trishacomrie@gmail.com) or phone 01823 602908)



## News from Bickenhall and District WI

*by Jacqueline Kolkowski*

Our November meeting had a Christmas feel with Wyn "Mary Berry" Balance demonstrating how to make a Christmas pudding, with members bringing their own ingredients to make their own puddings. There was a lot of stirring going on, as well as the sipping of the unused stout and brandy!



The December meeting was a Clothes Swap Party, we invited other WIs, friends and ladies from the Parish, although we did not get too many visitors (I think the weather did not help). We all enjoyed a glass of fizz and nibbles, and a few excellent clothes swaps were had, gaining some 'new' items for their wardrobes. We were entertained by a short but unusual version of Cinderella. Well done the thespians.

For the new year and our new programme the first speaker was author Michael Malaghan, who gave a humorous and factual account of his travels abroad. We also welcomed three new members: Sheila Green, Peta Trott and Carole Wensley-Dodd.

Thanks were given to Brenda Crossley who has for many years run the monthly competition, and with a few helpful tips she has passed this role on to Debbie Hards.

### **Somerset Federation events**

In November several members attended the County Annual Meeting in Taunton, which included excellent musical entertainment from Two Men and a Piano that had everyone singing and laughing. Speakers were Chief Constable Andy Marsh and Mandy Hickson, one of a handful of female pilots to fly the Tornado fighter jet, who was the highlight of the day. Her enthusiasm and dedication to achieve

inspired the audience - what a remarkable woman.

### **Annual Carol Festival at Wells Cathedral**

Members attended this event of wonderful music and singing, when our member Di Grabham read one of the readings beautifully.

**Skittles** After our close shave in Hatch we met West Buckland at the Victoria Arms in Wellington. After a warm welcome we played our best match and we went on to win by 6 pins. This gave us the confidence to face our next opponents, Kingston St Mary. We were feeling very confident and excited about this 3rd round tie at the Lamb and Flag.



*The squad at Blagdon*

YES we could win this - but we were terrible. We were down after our first round! Was it the alley? No we were just bad! We managed to claw our way back to be in the lead, but we lost the match by 9 pins. Despite losing we had a most enjoyable evening. We look forward to next year's competition. Many thanks to Pauline Phelps for organising.

**Ten Pin Bowling** Three of us attended the County bowling morning at the Taunton Hollywood Bowl in January although we came nowhere near the winners, but we had a most entertaining morning.

### **TABLE TOP SALE**

**We are holding a tabletop sale at the Trident, Galmington Road, TA15NN on Saturday March 3, 1.30pm - 4pm  
Clothes, bric-a-brac, accesories etc. Refreshments and free entry for buyers**

**Tables £6 - to book, text 07821 547181, 07714 718072 or email [tricia@witchlodge.co.uk](mailto:tricia@witchlodge.co.uk)**

# Really Rather Remarkable - it's Noel Coward

*By Rachel Buttell, @2K Theatre*

Neroche parishioners will be able to enjoy the wit and wisdom of Noel Coward on 1 March, thanks to a touring double-bill production of *Red Peppers* and *Still Life*, brought to the stage by @2K Theatre.

The group brings theatre to local communities and is proud to present this double bill of plays from Coward's 'Tonight at 8.30' collection.

## **Red Peppers - directed by Mike Leach**

A lovingly cynical tribute to the music hall, 'Red Peppers' features a performing couple whose onstage choreography and off-stage marriage leave something to be desired.

Lily and George are still doing the same venerable routine of lamely comic songs and hackneyed patter that George's parents were doing before them, and as they change out of their sailor costumes after a disastrous performance, they snap and scrap in a comic but sympathetic picture of variety show life.

## **Still Life - directed by David Northey**

*Still Life*, the play later adapted by Noel Coward into the classic film *Brief Encounter* (1945), traces the development of three love affairs over a period of 12 months. The guilt-ridden passion of Laura and Alec, torn between their love for each other and their stable but passionless home lives, is played out against a background of the less fraught dealings of two other couples, 1930s class-conscious society and the daily bustle of a railway refreshment room.

The show will be at Neroche Village Hall on Thursday 1 March at 7.30pm, doors open at 6.45pm with a bar and light refreshments.

Tickets are £12, £10 in advance from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/2k-Theatre](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/2k-Theatre) or by phoning 07943 495088. @2K Theatre is a member of NODA and the Somerset Fellowship of Drama.

Find out more: [at2ktheatre.com](http://at2ktheatre.com) or email [at2k@icloud.com](mailto:at2k@icloud.com)

## ***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](mailto: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**

Easter holidays this year are:

Monday, 24 March to Sunday, 8 April inclusive

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## **Household Recycling & Refuse Collections**

No changes scheduled for February and March. Exceptions to April and May are:

Recycling only on Thursday, 5 April

Refuse only 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

## February

27 - Highways England closes consultation on A358 upgrade

## March

1 - Neroche Lunch Club

1 - Noel Coward double-bill production - Red Peppers and Still Life - see page 16 and 49

7 - Quiz night at the Greyhound

9 - Quiz Night with Fish & Chips, Neroche Hall - see page 19

14 - WI meeting - 'Everyday First Aid'

23 - Film Night - Goodbye Christopher Robin

24 - 'Ninebarrow' concert, Neroche Hall - see page 45

## April

4 - Quiz night at the Greyhound

19 - Neroche Annual Parish Meeting - see page 14

22 - Closing date for Somerset Libraries consultation

27 - Film Night - Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool

## May

2 - Quiz night at the Greyhound

11-13 - Flower & Music Festival, St Peter's Church - see pages 20 & 21



## 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)

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](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 contact Wally Torrington at [wallytorrington@hotmail.com](mailto: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.*

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