

“Working Together for a Better Community”

NEROCHE VILLAGES

Newsletter

Issue No 20

Summer 2015

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

Neroche Hall

Neroche Hall began life in 1849 as St Paul’s Church, the Anglican church for the parish of Bickenhall. In 1972 it closed as a church and a group of villagers recognised that the Grade Two listed building would make an ideal village hall for the community. In 1976 it was purchased and converted to become the village hall for the civic parish of Neroche.



Neroche Hall is a focus of activities for the villages and hamlets of Badger Street, Bickenhall, Curland, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine, Thurlbear, Whitty and Winterwell and is well used by the wider community for social and commercial events. It is the policy of the Neroche Hall Committee to make the hall as accessible as possible to the community by keeping hiring charges to a minimum, and by allowing the hire of equipment for functions held within the parish.

Welcome to the 20th issue of the Neroche Villages’ Newsletter, which hopes to satisfy the need identified in the Parish Plan for a ‘hard copy’ local news and information medium delivered free to every household in Neroche Parish. The aim of this publication is to improve communication within the Parish by providing news and information on a wide variety of subjects and issues.



Foreword

By: Wally Torrington (Project Coordinator) & Alan Perrior (Editor)



As announced in the March issue of the Newsletter, and further expanded upon at the Annual Parish Meeting last month, we (Wally and Alan) are looking to retire from working on the Newsletter at the end of this year, with the December issue being our last publication.



We have already had some promising approaches, and hope to be able to handover to a small team of similarly motivated enthusiasts, when the time comes. If any of you fancy getting involved, to a lesser or greater extent (most people will prefer *'to a lesser'*, which is fine), then please make contact with either Wally wallytorrington@hotmail.com or Alan nerochenewsletter@yahoo.co.uk

There is the opportunity of understudying either or both of us for the following 6 months, so that, by the time the new team take-over at the beginning of 2017, they'll be totally conversant with the operation. The systems, including: supply of articles from regular contributors; formatting the Newsletter; printing; delivery (with a well-established team of volunteers); and funding streams, are all well established.

It is a perfectly organised and well-honed project, which is *'up-and-running'*, so the task of the new team will be to simply to *'keep the plate spinning on the stick'*. The task is more pleasurable than onerous; in fact it is great fun.

The roles would suit either long term residents or recent arrivals to the parish (for new arrivals it would be a great way of getting to know the area and the people). All that having been said, we are not *'running for the door'*, we will still be here after December 2016, and willing to give a hand if required.

If you are *'in two minds'* as whether to get involved or not, then come and have a *'no obligation'* chat, on the basis you can walk away if you don't fancy it.

News from Neroche Hall

Richard Davies, Chairman of Neroche Hall Trustees, has kindly agreed to produce a regular article for the Newsletter.

By the time this article is published we will have held our Annual General Meeting and our committee will once again have been reconstituted. In due course, the various reports will be available on our website, but we hope to be able to give an update in relation to the outcome in the next edition of the Newsletter, especially with regard to the elected officers and co-opted members.



As many of you will probably have gathered, much of the hall committee's work goes on in the background, often on a day-to-day basis, to ensure the smooth running of the hall at the same time as making improvements and additions to the facilities. As part of that process, we are always looking ahead at trying to encourage more use of the hall by local



residents, as well as appealing to a wider audience who may wish to hire the hall. Wedding receptions/parties can and are held in the hall, whilst providing excellent facilities at a competitive price; and the committee are always willing to try to accommodate new events.

You will have noted that the monthly Film Night is taking a break over the summer months, but will return later this year,

with a varied programme of films, hopefully to suit all tastes. We will, of course, be advertising the date when the film selections are chosen and available for circulation, so keep an eye out on our website, as well as the local noticeboards, not to mention 'Wally's Alerts'.

A couple of events for your autumn diary: firstly, a proposal to hold a Barn Dance on Friday 30th September 2016, this is currently in the planning stage and the date is currently a provisional one, details will be released nearer the time; secondly, our Fish & Chip Quiz will be held on Friday 7th October 2016 and, by popular demand, the 'Chip Cart' will be on site to cater for your individual food orders, once again, Colin Croad has kindly agreed to be our quizmaster for the evening.

Finally, as always, I would remind everyone that all the information you may require about the hall is contained on our website: www.nerochehall.org.uk

Neroche Litter Action group

By Jayne Hunt

On Saturday 16th April we had an excellent turnout of eighteen volunteers, who 'fought the war on litter'. We welcomed both new and regular volunteers. In two hours we filled 37 refuse bags with litter from the various roadsides in the parish. The vast majority of the rubbish came from fast-food outlets; namely Costa, MacDonald's and various supermarkets. In addition, there was the usual collection of eight wing mirrors (most of which were picked-up in the Badger Street area), four car radios, a number of car parts (as a result of recent roadside collisions), and various registration plates. We also recovered someone's roll of red carpet!



Dianne, Alison, Peter, Jacqueline and Christine

Meg, Karen, Allison and Anthony did an excellent job on the Orchard Portman stretch of the main road, which was particularly heavily littered on this occasion.



Karen and Meg

Our roadsides looking very clean and tidy, and protects the wildlife from the dangers which rubbish presents.

A big thank you to Alison and Anthony Brown who kindly provided their pick-up truck for the collection of all the full sacks, and to Taunton Deane Cleansing Department who then collected the load from Neroche Hall on the Monday morning.

Viridor kindly donate the jackets and refuge bags. We have an existing supply of pick-up sticks but we are in need of replacing some of these and purchasing some rubbish-bag hoops (these make the bags easier to use, especially when the collection of large amounts of litter is required). If anyone knows of sources where we can get additional equipment or funding to replace present items, then please make contact with me at jayne.haynes@hotmail.co.uk.



Loading the first of the 37 sacks

On behalf of the Neroche Litter Action Group, I would like to say an enormous thanks to everyone involved and who assisted in their various ways.

*STAPLE FITZPAINE, BICKENHALL, CURLAND
SCARECROW FESTIVAL 2016*

The Theme is 'Heroes and Villains'



23 July - 30 July

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

Enter your scarecrow and / or vote for your favourite
Entries £5.00 per Household

Entries close 16 July

Voting forms in St Peter's Church, Staple
Fitzpaine during the festival

23 July Teddy Bears Tea 2.30 - 4.30 at St Peter's Church

Teas en route 3 - 7 pm on 27 and 28 July at Woodcott, Curland

Prize presentation at a BBQ, 30 July, Battens Farm, Bickenhall

Contact Mal Lee 01460 234282, lees.curland@gmail.com

Proceeds to St Peter's Church

Neroche Hall Fun Quiz

By Alan Perrior

11th March 2016 saw the latest of Colin Croad's Fun Quizzes to be held in Neroche Hall – with Fish'n'Chips! This ever-popular event proved to be another triumph as 19 teams battled for the 'bragging rights' to be called the **brightest brains (?)** in Neroche.



And it wasn't just the quiz that

A full house for the Quiz

proved to be popular; nearly everyone took advantage of the mid-quiz Fish'n'Chips. In the past, the quiz organisers have tried various ways to provide hot food in the interval. Taking food orders on the night and travelling to Ilminster to collect them was a major undertaking and didn't always provide "hot" food. Another way of trying to guarantee hot and fresh food was to cook it on the premises as the hall has excellent catering facilities. However this meant that the volunteer cooks, worked hard all evening and weren't able to

join in with the quiz. This quiz, like last Autumn's quiz, had the advantage of using Lazy Rick's mobile catering van. Lazy Rick's managed to serve up over a hundred hot and fresh meals in a very short space of time; an ideal solution to the problem.



The winning team : 'Labour In Vain'

The quiz itself was a hard fought affair with David Spears' team once again

emerging victorious – this time by the narrowest of margins. His ‘Labour In Vain’ team, consisting of David Spears, Mary Bambridge, Sheila Green, Ross Henley and Alan & Jill Perrior, finished with 87 points, closely followed by ‘Village People’ on 86 points, with ‘E14’ in third place with 83 points.



The scorers: Marianne Bray & Madeleine Spears

Regarding the quiz itself, an analysis of the answer sheets makes fascinating reading. Who’d have thought that Neroche residents were ‘fashionistas’? Of all the categories, ‘Fashion’ achieved the highest scores with an average of 9 (from 10 questions) across all 19 teams; whereas the average score for ‘General Knowledge’ was a mere 6! You must draw your own conclusions from these remarkable results.

Some other interesting statistics from the quiz are:

There were 16 scores of ‘10 out of 10’ throughout the quiz. Incidentally, the team who came last (no names - I’ll spare their blushes) actually achieved 10 out of 10 in ‘Popular Culture’ and ‘Fashion’ but were rubbish at most of the other categories.

Many teams, after debating their answers and eventually committing them to paper, actually lost points by occasionally changing a perfectly good answer to something that was completely wrong! For example, ‘Village People’ knew the cost of Mayfair (on a Monopoly board). However, after writing ‘£400’ on the answer sheet, they inexplicably decided to change their answer to ‘£200’ – which lost them the point. Such a shame, as they actually lost the quiz by one point!

Another team, again no names, went one step further. In reply to the question, “What was the fate of the Tolpuddle Martyrs?” they wrote ‘Hung’. Obviously they had second thoughts as they changed their answer to ‘Deported to Australia’. *Hooray – the correct answer!* Unfortunately there was dissent in the team and they changed it back to ‘Hung’! If they’d left it as ‘deported.....’ they’d have moved up from eventual 8th place to 6th!

In 1968, Andy Warhol predicted that *"In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes"*. Well, he was certainly correct about Jenny Beavan, the subject of Colin's 'Popular Culture' question – *"For what did Jenny Beavan make the news in the last fortnight?"* (ie, late February / early March).



Jenny Beavan

To the good burghers of Neroche;

She was a supersize/overweight fashion model.

She swam the channel.

She was the English ladies football captain.

She played cricket in Australia.

She rowed across the Pacific.

She was the oldest member of the all-female crew who rowed across the Atlantic.

She rowed around the world wearing "no lower garments".

She falsely claimed to have won the lottery – with a damaged ticket.

She was born on 29th February and had a baby on 29th February.

*What a busy and talented lady! But she still found time to win the
'Best Costume Design' Oscar for Mad Max:Fury Road!*

Of the 100 questions in the quiz, 23 questions were answered correctly by every team; however the following five questions proved the most problematic.

General Knowledge: *What was Take That's first top ten single?*

Words with Double Meanings: *What word can be an "opening" and also a "delight"?*

History: *Which political party took its name from groups of Irish brigands?*

It's All About Money: *Who said "The love of money is the root of all evil"?*

Doctors: *What are Doctors Egon Spengler, Raymond Stantz and Peter Venkman collectively known as?*

Turn to the next page for the answers.

General Knowledge; answer: *It only takes a minute girl*

Words with Double Meanings; answer: *Entrance*

History; answer: *The Tory Party*

It's All About Money; answer: *St Paul*

Doctors; answer: *The Ghostbusters.*

Not as one team thought: “*Physicians to the Queen*” -
the imagery makes the mind boggle!



Quizmaster: Colin Croad

If you answered these questions correctly, and weren't at the quiz;

WHY NOT?

Congratulations on a job well done to Colin and his scorers (Marianne Bray and Madeleine Spears). A great quiz and a fair result – *although I may be biased*. Details of the Autumn quiz will be published in the next Newsletter.



THURSDAY LUNCHESES AT NEROCHE HALL

Come along to Neroche Hall and enjoy a great home-cooked 2-course lunch.

Meet people from the locality, take time out from your busy daily routine and enjoy conviviality & friendliness at a community lunch.

Lunches take place on Thursdays at 12.30 for 1.00 pm
2nd June, 7th July, 4th August

Please phone or email to book (need to know for catering purposes).

Transport / special diets can be arranged.

Contact Alison Brown tel: 01823 480441,
Email: alison-anthony@battensfarm.fsnet.co.uk

Organised by Friends of St Peter's Church

News from the Neroche Village Agent

Trudi Morgan is our Village Agent, and she has kindly agreed to produce a regular article for the Newsletter.

Beware of SCAMS!

The press and Television are making concerted efforts to warn people about ‘scams’, and I am sure, like me, you cannot always identify a scam at first sight. At the moment there is a particularly unpleasant scam operating in the Somerset area. It has been identified and highlighted by Nat West.

The fraudsters are calling people, purporting to be from the Metropolitan Police. They are telling their victims that they have managed to stop a fraudulent transaction on their bank account but in order to keep the person’s money safe, they ask the individual to remove the money from the bank so that it can be handed over the ‘The Met’, to be held in a safe account and returned at a later date. They then groom the victim to such an extent that their victim does not trust Bank Staff, family or friends.



They target the elderly and those living on their own. They tell their victims to go and cash funds, which they arrange to collect from the person’s home, usually after dark. I have been informed by a Village Agent in the Mendip area that these fraudsters have been successful. One lady has lost: her life savings; money via a loan she was persuaded to take out; and money borrowed from a relative. Most of the money, if not all, will not be paid or covered by her banks. Thankfully, her local community are now rallying around to help. However, scams happen, and when they do the result, as seen above, is

life changing and dreadfully upsetting. Please inform as many people as you can about this Scam as the fraudsters do move around and target different areas.

The Future of Hubs and Libraries



Somerset County Council is seeking information from residents to help ascertain how and when they access public services, and how the Council could meet residents' needs in the future. As we all know, the use of the Library Service is changing as technology continues to make strides in communication. The Council is organising drop-in sessions, and there is an available questionnaire. For more information please visit website: www.somerset.gov.uk/hubsandlibraries or email LLC@somerset.gov.uk Or phone 0300 123 2224

Somerset Skills and Learning

Somerset Skills and Learning, previously a part of Somerset County Council, are now an autonomous Community Interest College. The organisation is able to put on training courses for groups of people throughout Somerset.

The courses include all types of computer uses, business administration and office skills, using Microsoft Office, digital cameras and photo editing, using tablet computers, website design, computer maintenance and many others. The organisation can bring laptops computers to outreach venues or use their own centres.



The full range of courses can be seen on the website: www.sslcic.co.uk or email Duncan Macgregor at dmacgregor@sslcic.co.uk or phone him on 01278 426828.

If you wish to discuss the information contained within this article or require further information, then please contact me on 07908 160736 or email trudi@somersetccc.org.uk All queries are dealt with confidentiality.

Neroche Friday Film Nights



After the showing on 27th May 2016, the Friday Film Night programme will be taking a summer break. Film nights are scheduled to begin again in September 2016 and will be advertised in the newsletter, the email alert system and on the various Neroche websites.

The organisers would like to thank the film night “regulars” for their support and look forward to showing the best in modern cinema over the autumn and winter period.

For more information please contact Nicky Baxter on 01823 480675 or go to the Moviola website: www.moviola.org

Friday 27th May 2016 @ 7.30pm **Bridge of Spies (12a)**

A dramatic thriller set against the backdrop of a series of historic events, Bridge



of Spies tells the story of James Donovan (Tom Hanks), an American insurance lawyer who is recruited by the CIA during the Cold War to negotiate a swap of Russian spy Rudolf Abel (Mark Rylance) for Francis Gary Powers (Austin Stowell), pilot of the U2 spy plane shot down over Soviet Russia in 1960.

Negotiations for the exchange are deftly handled by director Stephen Spielberg and the overall result is an entertaining and suspenseful story.

Tickets: £6.00 - Bar & Snacks available

Starting the Day

By 'The Staple Fitzpaine Correspondent'

On waking, I usually metamorphose into something akin to human life to the



sound of John Humphreys and Sarah Montague as they circle a hapless politician corralled in the Radio 4 studio. I pour my orange and mango as these linguistic warriors circle, seeking the slightest defensive chink which might support a lunge for the kill. Having cosseted my porridge for the requisite ninety seconds, the microwave bell rings and simultaneously heralds 'Thought for the

Day', which doggedly tries, Canute-like, to stem the flotsam of doom the Today Programme endeavours to wash up onto its listeners. By the time my toast tries in vain to leap from its crematorium, I am tempted to switch to Chris Evans, but sanity prevails; surely things aren't that desperate...

But in April of this year, my mornings changed; my head was turned. I digitally stilled John and Sarah, and instead devoted my aural attention to a young male who, to be frank, is rather full of himself. His habit of proudly cocking his head over a rather obviously decorated chest whilst proclaiming his feelings for the fairer sex might not be to everyone's taste, but he's doing it outside my window. I refer not to an adolescent servant trained to meet their master's every whim (it is possible you may be thinking of another property in the Blackdowns...); the young male who sings for me each morning is perched atop an Ash tree and is singing to the love of his life.



He is a Song Thrush and is giving his best; there is none of the exaggerated emotion of the television contest hopeful (although it's true that his Gran was recently run over by a truck); his song is aimed solely at his partner to be. His pride is justified; his mate will shortly lay a clutch of bright blue eggs with brown speckles and their chicks will be the first of three broods in 2016.

Perhaps I'm becoming wistful; harking back to a pastoral innocence that prevailed before contracted muck-spreaders competed in daily Grands Prix around the village (displaying, I might add, a significant degree of bravery; after all, how often does the pampered Lewis Hamilton, flat out on the home straight, meet a Milk Tanker coming in the opposite direction?)

I recall a conversation with an elderly widower in the 1980s, whose sole remaining pleasure was the birds that visited his garden. He had lost friends and relatives in two world wars, and later his wife and only child to illness; as he explained this to me and looked into the distance with rheumy eyes, he mused, "*I just hope they don't do anything to the birds*". I felt then, and do now, that this was a noble request; if the maleficence of sections of humanity identified by the pronoun 'they' must eradicate something as he feared, perhaps it could be passive aggression in the media, and not my happy, full-of-himself songster?

Neroche Local History Group

St Peter's in Staple Fitzpaine has six bells, the oldest dating from 1480. If you live or walk within the sounds of the bells, you may be interested in the upcoming talk.



**A History of Bells and English Church Bell Ringing
Tom Harris**

7.30pm Wednesday 25 May

Neroche Hall

All welcome

Non members £2.50

Thurlbear School Old Boy - Bobsleigh Ace

By Alan Perrior

George Johnson, a former pupil at Thurlbear School, has climbed two places to second in the world youth Bobsleigh rankings, following two weeks of racing representing Great Britain.

George, who can reach speeds close to 90mph in his bobsleigh, is the highest ranked youth driver in Great Britain, after smashing the competition by 0.56 seconds to win the last race of the Omega Series Races in St Moritz in February.

He said: "I was really happy with the result because I was one of the fastest in training all week but I wasn't expecting that to be replicated in the race. I knew my main competition had gone before me so I knew what I needed to beat. When I crossed the finish line, I thought I'd had a good run and I was so happy when I saw my time."

The 17 year old Blackbrook teenager competed in the recent Youth Olympics in Lillehammer, coming 3rd and 9th in his two heats, to finish 6th overall. He now has his sights set on the 2022 Winter Olympics.



Hatch Beauchamp & Neroche Garden Club

By Wendy Morris

Following a lively AGM meeting in March, the Garden Club visited the garden of the new Chairman Pat Hunt in Hatch Beauchamp.



Members enjoyed an idyllic and relaxed afternoon, strolling around the lovely manicured lawns admiring the abundance of spring flowers; the mature trees; the ponds and shrubs all beginning to show signs of life with the arrival of Spring. This was followed by a relaxed afternoon tea of very

generous proportions and discussion of the programme for the rest of the year.

One of the club's planned trips is to Court House Gardens in East Quantoxhead; a lovely 5 acre garden featuring many rare trees and shrubs, herbaceous and woodland gardens and a traditional kitchen garden (chemical free) with views of the sea and the Quantocks.



For details of forthcoming events please contact Wendy Morris by email at staplemead@waitrose.com

Forestry Commission

By Jon Burgess

The Forestry Commission has been busy over the winter months planting over twenty thousand native broadleaf trees in the areas of Middleroom Wood to replace those harvested over recent years. The planting went well, and at the time of writing the buds were bursting and the site was slowly coming to life. Really quite a change, as this time last year it was impossible to walk the site as it was choked with windblown trees from the previous crop.

One down-side has been the occasional gusts of storm force winds, although sheltered at the bottom of the slope, the site has been hit and several of the mature trees have blown down, taking the deer fence with it – we just hope we have been able to respond quickly enough each time and that there is not now a small family of deer fenced in with our trees. If anyone happens to see a deer inside any of the fenced areas we would welcome a phone call.



Blackdown Hills deer

We have also received a few questions about the entrance works at two sites – Sturms Hill and Grove Coppice. These sites are due to be thinned, so we have reviewed them for access. When they were last worked, the trees were much smaller, and the machinery used to harvest and extract could also be smaller, however, now we are looking at felling much bigger trees as they have grown on well. We have decided it is time to improve the entrances so we can access the sites with lorries. The felling work will take place later this year, aiming for a dry period at the end of summer/early autumn, this will help avoid damaging the delicate forest soils so that the new seedling trees will have perfect conditions, with the increase of light, to thrive and start the next generation of forest.



In the ongoing battle against the bramble, which rapidly encroaches on the grazing areas for the Longhorn cattle, we have found a new tool, only this one is bigger, more powerful and a lot more fun! It is a remote control mulcher, basically, the biggest lawnmower you have ever seen, that can cut through small trees if needed. The photo shows the operator sending the machine into an otherwise impenetrable thicket.

The ‘after photo’ shows that, although the machine weighs nearly 1 tonne, it has barely left a mark on the soft soil. This trial took an hour and completed the work that would have taken an estimated 4 days of hard graft otherwise.



Staple Hill Easy Access Trail

This trail allows everyone to explore the beautiful countryside of the Blackdown Hills from the car park at Staple Hill. New viewpoints have opened up some spectacular views across the Vale of Taunton. On a clear day you can see all the way to Wales.



The trail has been designed and built to national ‘all ability’ access standards, so it is easy for everyone to use, including those with limited mobility. The two viewpoints have picnic benches and seating, and the kissing gates are big

enough for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are also no steep gradients and the wide compacted path surface makes pushing wheelchairs and pushchairs easy.

Bickenhall & District WI @90

By Nicky Baxter



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is not the the only one to be celebrating 90 years in 2016. Your local WI was also born in 1926, so we are having a 90th birthday too.

There are a number of projects planned to commemorate our birthday. One particular project will be to update our book, originally published in 1990, about the district and the people who live here in Bickenhall, Curland and Staple Fitzpaine. This will include a reprint copy of the original book.

This is a very exciting undertaking which you can help with by providing up-to-date information.

The original book contained :-

A Brief History

Houses

People

Farming

*Community Services - Local Govt, Education, Health
and Welfare Services in our area and Transport*

Gardens

The Weather

Wildlife - Wild Flowers, Birds and Animals

Footpaths

Churches

Neroche Hall

The WI



Perusing the book we have seen that much has changed since 1990. Whilst there is much to be sad about (the people and the way of life that has been lost in the last 26 or so years) there are many positive things that have evolved. We want the updated book to reflect what was and what is.

If you would like to help us update any of the above headings please contact Pauline Phelps pmphelps@enterprise.net 01460 234455 or Nicky Baxter ncbaxter@hotmail.co.uk 01823 480675.

(Editor's note: The pictures (above) are 'black & white' photocopies, taken in 1990, of the tapestry work on the cover of the original book, which is held in the WI archives. It is hoped that we'll be able to acquire colour copies for a future issue of the newsletter.)

Escape to the Country

By Jacqueline Wanstall

After years of watching the endless ‘relocation’ and ‘escaping to the country’ style of programmes on TV, Mark and I decided that we would love to move to the West Country when we retired. Then, last year, we started to question why-on-earth we were waiting so long, and started to put the wheels-in-motion to embark upon this huge life-style change.

We decided on Somerset for its stunning countryside, lovely villages, proximity to great beaches, and super location; for access to Devon & Cornwall for weekends away, and perhaps, as importantly, train and road links into London for work. Friends and family thought we were either very brave or just plain crazy, moving to a place that was unfamiliar and where we didn’t know a single soul, having lived our whole lives in the Home Counties.



We began looking at houses in June, and had sold our house, moved and settled into beautiful Bickenhall by Christmas; so once we set our minds to it, we didn’t hang around!

My biggest fear with embarking upon such a big move was homesickness. However, the friendliness and community spirit that we have found in the Neroche villages has surpassed our expectations, and now we wish we had moved here years ago.

Within days of arriving in Bickenhall, we had been welcomed by neighbours with cards, chocolates and wine. It was certainly a wonderful introduction to what is a friendly and beautiful place. We have found the Parish Magazine, the Neroche Villages’ Newsletter and Wally’s informative Email Alerts vital to helping us settle-in. The local adverts have been great in assisting us locate all

manner of services we required, from pet care through to freshly baked bread and chimney sweeps!

Of particular interest to us are the notices of social events, as we are keen to get involved with the community, meet people and make new friends. We have been to several Film Nights at the Neroche Village Hall and think they are wonderful. We also attended the recent Quiz Night with neighbours and came a very respectable 7th place!! In addition, we have visited many of the local pubs (vital research!) and been to the Warehouse Theatre in Ilminster to see Murder on the Nile.

Finding all the local walks has been really important to us, as Wesley, our young Labradoodle, needs plenty of exercise and loves to run and play. While we have found some great places on the ordnance survey map, meeting local dog walkers, and chatting with them about the best places to go, has been really helpful. Wesley now has some firm favourites among the ever growing list of walks we do with him. I think that is one of the



best elements of our move, having more space and seeing how happy Wesley and our 2 cats, Monty and Freddie, are in the country. They love pottering around the garden and fields and we will never grow tired of looking out of the window and seeing our amazing views.

Everybody said *“When you move to the country you will have guests all the time, who want to escape town life and have a relaxing weekend away”*. I must say, I didn’t really believe that, and did worry that we would lose touch with people; how wrong was I?! Since moving, we have had only 3 weekends free of visitors!! Suddenly, we are more popular than ever, with friends and relatives already booking until the end of the summer! Poor Frank and Carolyn, at the Artisan Baker, must be up all Friday night making our extensive bread orders for our Saturday morning collection, so we can feed everybody!

Along the way, we have learnt a number of important lessons, vital to helping us settle - in no particular order:

1. Logs must be seasoned and dry.
2. The direction of the weather can truly matter.
3. It is not a luxury to own more than 1 pair of wellies.
4. Living without mains gas means that running out of Calor gas highlights the importance of point 1 above!

One thing is for sure though, our friends and family who visit, see how happy and settled we are, and know that moving here was, without doubt, the best decision we have ever made; it truly was.

Thank You

We wish to thank all our readers who contributed to the production costs of the Newsletter by completing the form included in the March edition and forwarding a donation. The Newsletter is produced by just the two of us, and delivered in 'hard copy' free to all 230 households and businesses in the parish, by a terrific team of volunteers, led by Roger Keat, who has been with us since the very start. The only costs incurred are circa £1200 per year for printing, the maintenance of a laptop and its software, and a few minor expenses for postage and other ancillaries. The Newsletter is a self-funding, not-for-profit enterprise that depends on donations to cover a significant element of its costs. If you made a contribution then very many thanks from the both of us; if you forgot or mislaid your form then it is not too late, just make out a cheque to 'Neroche Communication Action Group' and send it to Wally Torrington, Myrtle Farm, Bickenhall TA3 6TS. All contributions are acknowledged with a written reply.

Many thanks for your continued support,

Wally Torrington (Project Coordinator) and Alan Perrior (Editor)

News from our MP

Even though she is now extremely busy with her duties in Westminster, our MP, Rebecca Pow, has not forgotten us, and has agreed to continue producing a regular article for our Newsletter. Calculated in terms of speaking and written participation in Westminster, Rebecca is the 10th most hardworking MP of the 185 that newly joined in 2015.



Spring is truly here and I have certainly had a spring in my step as I travel between the constituency and Parliament – there is always plenty to attend to! Just to give you a flavour of life on home turf recently: I've opened a Children's Parliament held at Shire Hall in Taunton (our politicians of the future); taken part in an excellent 'Clean for the Queen' litter-pick in Halcon, with over 40 local people; as well as attending a sustainable forestry workshop in Milverton. However, my personal highlight was chairing a meeting in Wellington to discuss the proposals for a new railway station. The meeting was extremely well attended and demonstrated the clear support for this project, I will now meet with the Rail Minister and work with local stake holders to really push this forward.



I spend much of my time in Parliament chipping-away bringing issues that affect the constituency to the attention of the powers that be. Therefore, it's heartening that results can be achieved. For instance, by working with the parliamentary Rural Services group

I was able to gain an additional £47,000 for Taunton Deane through its Rural

Services Delivery Grant; every little helps. Similarly, I am so pleased that Defra listened to my voice, amongst others, and has given the National Wildlife Crime Unit a reprieve, committing to the full funding required to run this valuable service, which protects our wildlife until 2020. The Government went one step further too, and has contributed extra funding to deal with online wildlife crime also. Hurrah!



uk|National Wildlife Crime Unit

You may have seen in a recent article in the Gazette that I have, after much deliberation, announced it is my intention to vote to stay in the European Union. In

a nutshell, I believe that we are safer and economically more secure being tied to our European partners. In our beautiful corner of Somerset it is easy to forget how connected our local economy is to Europe; two major industries in the South West, food-and-drink and agriculture, would undoubtedly be damaged were we to vote for Brexit. If you would like further information on my reasoning, then please do get in touch or visit my website where I have provided a fuller statement.

Another area that is inextricably linked to Europe is the environment, and with a firm green streak running through me, it is an area of policy that I find myself drawn to more and more. In Westminster, I recently spoke in a debate about the protection of our precious bees and the threat they face from Neonicotinoids. I urged the Minister to recognize the value of our bees, pollinating



90% of our crops and providing in the region of £360 billion worth of services; they are the unsung work horses of the environment. A little closer to home, I recently visited the Taunton Beekeepers teaching apiary in Bradford-on-Tone.



We spoke about the vital role of the bee inspectorate and actions that homeowners could take to encourage the bee population. As a keen gardener myself, and being that a million hectares of land is tied up in our gardens, I am conscious that we could all help-out the bees and other pollinators. There are a few simple steps we can take to make our gardens more wildlife friendly, such as planting plenty of nectar rich flowers and cutting out sprays.

as microchipping became compulsory in England, Scotland and Wales on April 6th. The Dogs Trust is doing this for free but otherwise do visit your local vet.

As always, please get in touch if I can be of assistance with any issues you have. As usual you can follow me on Facebook/Twitter or contact my office on 01823 443062 or rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk

Finally, if you have a dog – do get it micro chipped,



Neroche Parish Council Meetings

Thursday 14th July

Thursday 8th September

Thursday 10th November

7.30 pm at Neroche Hall

Curland Golden Wedding Anniversary

By Wally Torrington

As life expectancy increases, golden wedding anniversaries are not uncommon, however, very few of these lucky couples will have celebrated their happy day in such style, and with the wonderful support of their family, friends and the local community as was afforded to Brian and Dawn Phelps earlier this year.



Brian is very much a local lad, born in Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard on 27th October 1947, the second child of seven (four girls, three boys). Dawn was

born in Aldershot on 5th July 1948; she was a soldier's child who moved to Taunton as a young girl when her father received a posting to Sherford Camp.

On retiring from the Army, he settled the family in the Taunton area where Dawn grew up and has since spent all her adult years.



Blessing the Ring

Brian and Dawn started courting in 1965, after meeting at a dance in the recently modernised County Ballroom; he asked her for a dance, they spent the rest of the evening in each other's arms, and have been together ever since. Brian had known of Dawn's existence for some time prior to that meeting, because she was a work colleague of his sister Linda, but he was never confident enough to 'ask her out' because, in his words "*I thought she was far too good and beautiful to look at me twice*". Brian and Dawn were married on Saturday 12th March 1966 in Taunton Register Office. They set up home at 14 St Alban's Place, at the top of Cheddon Road, where their first daughter, Debbie, was born on 28th July 1966, and their second daughter, Sharon, arrived a year later, on 21st October 1967. They

moved to Curle Cottage on 6th of August 1982, where they have lived ever since.

Brian and Dawn celebrated fifty years of marriage on Saturday 12th March 2016. Sixty five members of their family, together with close friends, gathered at their home to help make their special day, **extra** special. As well as enjoying lots of good food and the odd smidgen of fine wine, the day was filled with lots of fun, laughter, reminiscing, storytelling and nostalgia, which made them appreciate, even more, how rich and rewarding their lives together have been, and how blessed they are with such a wide spectrum of wonderful family, friends and acquaintances.

Three weeks later, on Sunday 3rd April, Brian and Dawn reaffirmed their vows of marriage at St. Peter's church, Staple Fitzpaine, where our local Vicar, Paul Reynolds, blessed their continued union. Knowing what an important event this was, and as a mark of



The Top Tiers of Their Original Cake



Dawn, Paul Reynolds and Brian

the church and congregation came together to organise what can only be described as a command performance: the church bells rang out with the wedding peal; the choir sang beautifully; the organ pipes resonated with hymn music; and the congregation could not have been in better voice. The overwhelming, joyous musical ensemble resulted in the most extraordinarily warm, moving and poignant ceremony. And if that wasn't enough, at the end of the service, teas, coffees, wines, bubbly and cake were served to all. As Dean Martin sang in the 1950s, *"Memories are Made of This"*

Brian and Dawn were totally overcome with all the kindness, support and good wishes that they received during their Golden Wedding celebrations, and were keen to send the following message:



"We would like to publicly thank Paul Reynolds for the wonderful way in which he conducted so special a service for us. We thank the bell ringers for ringing an unexpected wedding peal especially for us; an uplifting experience. We thank the choir who surprised us with their presence, managing to lift

both the roof and the hearts of all assembled. We thank Julie Pope for giving us the pleasure of her professional accompaniment on the church organ. We thank Mal and John Lee, together with Alison Brown, for all their hard work in ensuring the smooth running of the entire service, and for their invaluable help with refreshments. We thank the congregation for their extended warmth and goodwill. Lastly, and most importantly, we thank our Daughter Sharon and her husband Steven for all their hard work, dedication and love. Also our Granddaughter Laura and partner Joe, our Grandson William and partner Zoe for working so hard to make it a second 'extra special day'. Plus Robin, Karen, Daisy, Caiden and Jasmine Street, with Jasmine's partner Luke, who all helped to make it a day to remember."



When chatting with Brian to gather the information for this article, he told me some fascinating tales, then, under some duress, has agreed to pen some notes for a follow-up article in the September Newsletter titled **"The Life Story (so far) of a Local Lad"** I promise you it will make for a fascinating read.

Taunton Racecourse Half-Year Membership



If you have ever considered joining the racecourse as a member, to enjoy all the wonderful facilities of the newly extended and refurbished members stand, but, for whatever reason, hesitated; well here is a fantastic offer to 'give it a try' at half price (£85) for the remainder of 2016. This membership offer also includes free entry to meetings at Newton Abbot, Bath, Exeter, Chepstow, Cheltenham and many others.



Members and their guests, together with owners and trainers, have exclusive use of the Paddock Stand, Members Restaurants and the Members Car Park. Wearing their badges, members enjoy free entry to Taunton Racecourse and to numerous reciprocal racecourses shown on the opposite page. Also included in membership is discounted admission to the Royal Bath and West Show and a reciprocal at The Royal International Horse

Show at Hickstead on Sunday 2nd August - King George V Gold cup Day.

Half Year Membership, for the remainder of 2016, is available now for just **£85**. Full membership facilities and privileges apply.

Reciprocal Racecourse Meeting and Dates

(Free Entry)

JUNE - Hexham Saturday 4th, **Newton Abbot** Friday 10th, Southwell Monday 20th, Brighton Tuesday 21st, Pontefract Monday 27th, Catterick Wednesday 29th

JULY - **Bath** Wednesday 6th, Cartmel Saturday 16th, Stratford Sunday 17th, Worcester Thursday 21st, Uttoxeter Sunday 24th

AUGUST - Wolverhampton Monday 8th, **Newton Abbot** Wednesday 10th, Newbury Friday 12th

SEPTEMBER - Sedgefield Thursday 1st, Newcastle Friday 2nd, **Bath** Saturday 10th, Great Yarmouth Tuesday 13th, Newmarket Saturday 17th, Plumpton Sunday 18th, Hexham Friday 30th

OCTOBER – Ludlow Wednesday 5th, Exeter Thursday 6th, Kempton Wednesday 19th

NOVEMBER - Musselburgh Thursday 3rd, Sandown Sunday 6th, Lingfield Tuesday 8th, **Cheltenham** Sunday 13th, Fakenham Tuesday 15th

DECEMBER - Leicester Thursday 1st, **Chepstow** Saturday 3rd, Fontwell Tuesday 6th

Also, KELSO, AYR and PERTH (any one, non-festival, meeting during the year on the day of your choosing, and tickets must be requested in advance through Taunton Racecourse.

Taunton Race Meeting Dates for Remainder of 2016

10th and 24th November / 8th, 20th and 30th December

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

News from Neroche Parish Council

Our Clerk to the Parish Council, Gillian Midworth, has kindly agreed to produce a regular feature for our Newsletter.

Housing Needs Survey

I am pleased to confirm that the Parish Council is able to proceed with the Housing Needs Survey as it has been successful in receiving funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

This survey has been commissioned following the termination of Crown Estate tenancies, because it is important that the Parish Council is aware of the housing needs of the community. The Parish Council has commissioned the Community Council of Somerset (CCS) to carry out this survey, which is enclosed with this newsletter.



Please take the time to complete the survey, and I would like to stress that any sensitive information given will remain confidential and will not be divulged to the Parish Council.



CCS
COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOR SOMERSET
SUPPORTING ACTION
IN YOUR COMMUNITY

I realise that several of the Crown Estate tenants have since left the Parish, therefore, if you know of anyone who would wish to return to the area, should there be suitable housing, then please encourage them to complete the survey. Extra forms can be obtained from CCS on 01823 331222 or email info@somersetcc.org.uk

Broadband Voucher Scheme

You will be aware that BT has now ‘enabled’ the ‘green cabinet’ adjacent to the A358, and those properties within its 2km radius should be eligible to receive superfast broadband. Please be aware that increased speeds do not automatically

occur; you will either need to apply to your existing internet provider for an upgrade, or shop around for the best deal.

Unfortunately, large areas of the Parish will not be included in the initial 90% coverage, and as an interim measure Connecting Devon and Somerset has introduced the Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Connecting Devon
and Somerset



If you are not yet able to receive broadband speeds of over 2Mbps, you may be able to get connected through the CDS voucher scheme. The scheme will

provide a subsidy of up to £500, in the form of a voucher code, to fund the installation of a new broadband connection. Each premises can choose its supplier from an approved list, with every solution guaranteeing a minimum of 10Mbps download speed.

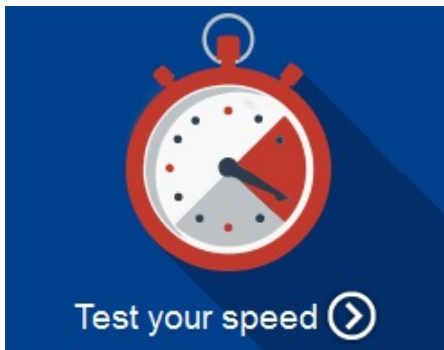


The scheme will run for one year, up until March 2017, and is open to individual residents, small businesses and communities. Any premises connected through the scheme is still eligible for later extensions of the broader programme.

Further details can be obtained from the CDS website: www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-broadband-voucher-scheme In the meantime, the Parish Council will continue to work on behalf of the community to ensure that as many properties as possible benefit from good broadband speeds.

from the CDS website:

Details of the scheme are also available on the Neroche Villages website www.nerochevillages.org.uk.



Parish Councillors' Responsibilities

Neroche Parish Council is unusual, insofar as it consists of four separate parishes, which in turn provide three Councillors to form the 12 member Parish Council. The Parish Council has recently reviewed the wider responsibilities of its members, and in addition to representing their individual wards, several Councillors have taken-on further responsibilities, as follows:

Lynne Spoor – Broadband issues
Wally Torrington – Communication
Jason Jackson – Planning
Marianne Bray – Village Hall Liaison
Karen Street – Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Jon Bell – Somerset Association of Local Councils

Contact details of all Councillors are available on the Neroche Villages' website www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish meeting took place on Thursday 21st April and, as in previous years, was a very successful and enjoyable evening, with circa 70 parishioners in attendance.



Rebecca Pow, John Williams, Ross Henley, Jon Bell

Also present were all the locally elected representatives; MP, Rebecca Pow; SCC Councillor, Ross Henley; and TDBC Councillor, John Williams, who were happy to discuss with local residents, any matters of concern.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Jon Bell, gave a report on the Council's activities during the previous year, and this was then followed by a series of presentations.

Representatives from Highways England gave a short presentation on the A358 improvements, from the Southfields Roundabout at Ilminster to Junction 25 of the M5. It is hoped to create an 'Expressway' between these points.

The scheme is currently in its early stages of planning but it is hoped that later this year, public consultation exercises will take



**highways
england**
driving forward

place, where several possible schemes are presented for consideration. Following this, a preferred route will be identified (subject to further consultation) for which approval will be sought in 2018 from the Secretary of State. Work will commence in 2020.

Highways England is keen to engage with local communities, who will be affected by the changes, and the Parish Council will continue to maintain contact with the project manager and ensure the Parish is fully informed of new developments.

Jane Birch, from the Community Council of Somerset, updated the meeting on the Housing Needs Survey (as mentioned above) and parishioner Jane Hole gave a thought provoking presentation on the maintenance and condition of the local footpaths.

Those that attended enjoyed wine and nibbles, and the WI were on hand with an assortment of delicious 'cakes and bakes'. There was ample opportunity to socialise and visit the stands manned by local groups and organisations.

The success of the evening is a true reflection of the community spirit that exists within Neroche Parish, and I would like to add my thanks to everyone that contributed to the event.

The Farming Calendar

By Mark Pope

As many of us living in the Parish do not fully comprehend the world of farming, Mark Pope of Staple Farm has kindly penned a few words to give us an idea as to what he is up to at this time of the year (written late April).

As I sit down to write this article, I do wonder if I have been asleep for the whole of summer and woken up at the start of winter; yesterday we had snow, hail, rain and a biting cold wind.

The crops are not looking their best. The oilseed rape is very uneven, some over 4ft tall and flowering, then in other parts of the same field we have the crop barely above my knee. Deciding when to treat the crop is proving a real challenge; it looks as if harvesting could also prove difficult. When oilseed



Field of Oilseed Rape

rape is ripe, the pods that contain the seeds become very brittle, however, if the crop is not ripe, the seeds will not produce the correct oil. Likewise, the wheat and barley are very uneven.

As well as looking after the cereal crops, we have also been getting the grass ready for cutting. We have fertilised the grass and prepared the fields with a big heavy roller, to push down the stones, which do not go well with mowers. We now need the sun and warmth to return, this will increase the sugars in the grass.

During the next few months we need to be monitoring the crops for disease and pests. As the weather warms up, pest and disease levels can increase very quickly.

We have also planted another batch of 1000 Christmas trees and started to cut the grass in the plantation.

Dung is being spread and the ground is being prepared for planting maize on the neighbouring farms.

All last year's wheat and barley has now been sold, and it's time to give the grain store a spring clean. Starting at the top of the store, we use an air compressor to blow off all the surfaces.

We then brush and vacuum-up all the dust, leaving a clean building. During the next few months we will monitor the store, to check there are no bugs present, using small traps.



A Combine Harvester with GPS

I have already mentioned in an earlier article that we are now using GPS equipment on the tractor. This year, for the first time, we will also be fitting GPS to the

combine harvester. This will enable us to utilise the full cutting width, and will also help make operating the machine for long hours less tiring.

Also this Year, I have been helping with some large school farm visits. The first was for 1000 primary school children to the Bath and West Showground. They saw cows being milked, sheep being sheared and lots of machinery. The day went really well, with lots of happy youngsters. In May, I will be helping with another school day near Wedmore, for about 500 children. The events give the students a chance to see how and where their food comes from.



Children Watching Sheep Shearing

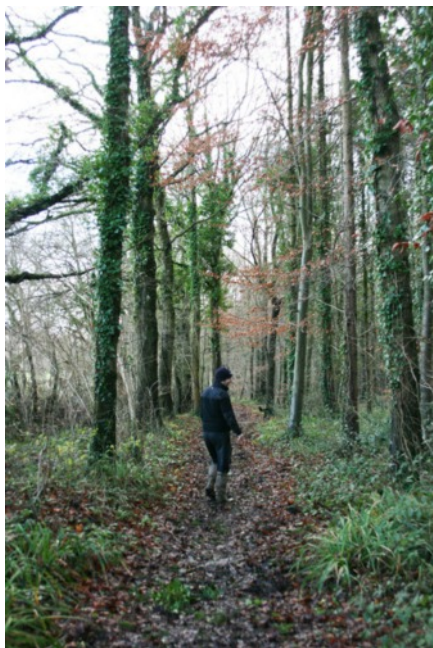
Taunton Deane Borough Council News

John Williams, Borough Councillor for Neroche Ward and Leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council, has kindly offered to write a regular column for our Newsletter



Forestry Commission Works in Neroche.

I was interested to see that Contractors commenced work recently in a small Coppice in Frost Street, just off Badger Street, and no doubt some of you will have noticed that a splendid new entrance has been formed into the woods. I followed this up with enquiries to the Forest Enterprise arm of the Forestry Commission, eventually speaking to Jon Burgess, who manages the whole of their forests in the Blackdowns, to enquire why major works



to form the new entrance had taken place. It appears that Grove Copse, as it is called, is about to undergo coppicing and harvesting works to thin the trees and allow the remainder more space to mature. Further, that this is part of a rolling programme to keep the forests healthy and productive and built into the system is that all forests are routinely inspected every five years to determine action, if any, that should be taken.

Works in Grove Copse are anticipated to commence post the nesting season and weather permitting, so expect action late August or after. I was further advised that all the trees to be removed are pre-identified by inspection and marked with a red spot.

Sturms Hill Plantation - all of this was fields in the 1880s

Further information, that may be of interest, is that following works in Grove Copse it is intended to move on to Sturms Hill Copse (along the road from the Farmers Arms to Staple Fitzpaine) which is to be similarly thinned by coppicing. I did take the opportunity of raising the state of the Herepath through this wood. The indication was that they would try and improve this once their works were complete as part of the maintenance programme following harvesting of the trees. I will pursue this at the appropriate time.

Finally, as regards the forward plans, Thurlbear Woods is due for its regular five year inspection and assessment next year (2017) so I will follow this through as to results at the time. For information, the contact number for Jon Burgess is 0300 067 5803 and he is happy to answer any queries you



Entrance to Thurlbear Wood

may have. I have also raised the question of security to prevent unauthorised camping on the enlarged and improved entrances that do not have any means of preventing access; I await an answer on this.

Devolution of Powers By Central Government. This is a very hot topic nationally at present but I am not sure if the wider community will be aware of the proposals which, although hopefully not directly impacting on the services received, have the potential to implement enormous change to our means of Governance and funding. In conjunction with all of the Somerset and Devon Authorities, we are part of a joint bid to Government for the Devolution of powers and funds as part of a 'Combined Authority'. Our Local Enterprise Partnership, Heart of the South West is also an integral part of this partnership. **Please see my full report on this subject on your community website at www.nerochevillages.org.uk**

Proposed Firepool Development.

This is engendering some good debate which I am pleased to see but one thing is certain we need to develop this site sooner rather than later. It is a strategically located central site adjacent the railway station and I believe in an extremely sustainable location. In addition it is a brownfield site, which, combined with the East Goods Yard, will deliver in the order of 800 dwellings when completed.



Growing Space Town Centre regeneration schemes on the way

Railway Station Enhancement

A new 'gateway'



Taunton
Growing Success

Add to this that it will still provide substantial employment space, provide necessary retail space to protect us from 'out of town' applications for retail, and develop further the 'in town' leisure and recreation activities, whilst tidying up an eyesore that has existed for many years!

There have been some representations against the scheme recently but prior to that the overwhelming majority of responses to consultation have been positive, and welcoming of the refreshed proposals. Why have we had a 'rethink'? Simply because the original concept, as a strategic employment site, although perfectly sound at the time, failed through lack of demand, caused by the worst peace time recession in living memory. We are now emerging from that recession and have amended our proposals to what is commercially desirable and, most important, deemed viable to deliver.

Coupled with delivery of new development on Firepool, is the completion of the NIDR, which truly opens the site for business and the planned redevelopment of Taunton Railway Station. This latter development is a huge vote of confidence for our own plans, as they have near £10 million earmarked for the rail station upgrade, multi-storey car park and bus interchange, all necessary to deal with a projected 40% growth in rail passengers through Taunton station by 2020.



The Urban Square

That is enormous growth that will obviously feed into the proposed development on Firepool.

We need to take action to address this eyesore and develop what is an already derelict site that will deteriorate even further if not dealt with. We all had high hopes for just such a development back in 2008 but then recession hit and demand evaporated, not just for us but all towns and cities in the area. We still have substantial employment opportunity on the site but it is not employment lead as it was previously, it is now a mixed development to provide for diverse uses.



Priory Bridge - Looking North

Neighbourhood Bird Watch

Neroche Parish, Spring 2016

By Doreen Marsh

Many people living in the Neroche villages have expressed a real interest in this topic, perhaps because we live in such a diverse area, giving an opportunity for many types of birds to make it their home. We have: the flat lands of Bickenhall Plain to the east; the Forest of Neroche is on hills just above Curland; and while the centre of Staple Fitzpaine is flat, there are hills to the west of that village. There are many small streams in the parish but also more sizeable rivers in Bickenhall and Staple Fitzpaine.



Cirl Bunting

Many of the birds mentioned by village residents can be described as ‘little brown jobs’! These, however, are all valued as much as the few exotic birds that are seen. Most of us note the first sighting of house-martins and swallows as they return from warmer climes in the spring. It gives us hope that summer is on its way. This year the first swallows were seen in the centre of Curland on telegraph wires on Thursday April 7th but there were no more sightings until April 13th.



Yellow Hammer

Here in the cold winter months many residents feed the birds with seeds and fat balls, although many of us are cautious how and when we do it because of grey squirrels and rats. The squirrels are adept at climbing on to bird feeders and taking their pick of food provided for the birds. The rats take advantage of food not eaten by birds and left on the ground.



Goldfinch



Greenfinch

Chaffinches, robins, blue tits, great tits, coal tits and long tail tits, all visit the bird tables in our villages on

a regular basis. The long tail tits are birds that feed together most amicably. Others, such as great tits, bicker and see each other off instead of concentrating on feeding.

Blackbirds look for food on the ground under the tables and they are joined by chaffinches. Some local residents see goldfinches on a regular basis, while others see them infrequently. The greater spotted woodpecker can be heard pecking away on trees and will visit feeding areas from time to time.



Song Thrush

The large, handsome jay is seen by many, sometimes feeding on tables, and the jackdaws, rooks and crows strut around on lawns in a rather lordly way, but only rarely visit a bird table; despite their size they can be quite cowardly. A moorhen has been seen in central Curland this spring, some distance from the nearest pond. To the east of our district we have reported sightings of barn owls, and tawny owls can be heard there. At this particular place there were once small owls; why have they disappeared?



Collared Dove

Bird Sightings in April 2016.

Commonly seen: Blackbird, chaffinch, great tit, blue tit, long tailed tit, dunnock, house sparrow, rook, crow, jay, wood pigeon, collared dove, greater spotted woodpecker, goldfinch, magpie, wren, nuthatch, pheasant,

Seen less often: Mistle thrush, siskin, pied wagtail, green woodpecker in summer months, starlings, greenfinches, blackcaps, goldcrests, girl buntings, mallards (seen by those who have ponds). Barn owls and tawny owls can be heard.



Dunnock

Seen in the sky above: Buzzards, kestrels and ravens.

Rarer visitors: kingfishers, herons.

A full list of all birds spotted in the parish, by location, has been posted on the Community Website at www.nerochevillages.org.uk

The response to this survey has been very encouraging. However, we must note that many species of the birds we have listed are under threat. Maybe a further Birdwatch in the autumn would be worth doing?



House Sparrow

To help you, there is a terrific 'bird identifier' web page at; www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdidentifier Here the images and names of birds are categorised by size or location; when you've found the one you are looking for, click on the image and it will take you to a full page on that specific species.

Are You Interested in Gardening? Have You Got Time on Your Hands?



Brian and Dianne Hood grow vegetables in Staple Fitzpaine and would welcome a gardening volunteer to come and help with various tasks. They also keep bees and make cider, so there are lots



of different things to do. Take home healthy fresh seasonal produce in return. Ring 01823 480927 for more information.

The Greyhound Pub Quiz

1st Wednesday of the month @ 7:30pm

Quizmaster: Paul Hart

Teams of 6 - £1 per person

(Why not have a meal at the pub before the quiz?)



Focus on Local Business

Rupert Ryall's Cars of Class

Rupert Ryall's 'Cars of Class' is focused on 'Making a Grand Entrance' and provides a touch of style for a very grand occasion with a range of thoroughbred Classic British Cars. Which would you choose? A Rolls Royce, no problem, there are three, and perhaps accompany with one of the JaguarXJ6's from the early 90's or a 1968 Rover P5B.



Operated from Curland, Cars of Class offer a professional chauffeur-driven service to help make a wedding the special day it should be. If you want to travel in style, with a highly experienced driver, wearing a traditional chauffeur



uniform (supplied from Anthony Keith outfitters in London), you couldn't do better than these eye-catching classics.

(following the ceremony) in the superior Bridal Car, accompanied by a vehicle for the bridesmaids, family members and sometimes even wedding guests in total comfort, ensuring that the official transport for the day is outstanding. Cars arrive with ribbons carefully and professionally attached and an arrangement of fresh flowers on the rear window shelf.

The outstanding range of vehicles would be ideal for all manner of functions, appropriately lending themselves to transporting the bride and groom

Cars of Class take particular pride in how vehicles are turned-out, immaculately presented, highly polished and maintained to the highest of standards.

So if you want to arrive in style and make a special entrance in a stunning classic, chauffeur-driven vehicle contact Cars of Class on 01823 480898 or visit the website www.carsofclass.co.uk

Rupert started Cars of Class in 2002 when he decided to buy a Rolls Royce,



initially offering up the Silver Shadow Mk 1 as a wedding car and driving himself, but little more than a hobby to ensure that the vehicle was used and any financial gain assisted with maintaining and insuring the car. Rupert had a keen interest in cars from an early age and during the school holidays, when he wasn't staying at his godfather's farm in Hemyock

worked for Roger Bridel serving petrol at Hatch Beauchamp Garage, a short distance from the family home. The petrol pumps are no longer there, falling as a casualty following the building of the bye-pass, although the workshop is now run by John Spencer, for whom Rupert also did some holiday work. Befitting that Rupert's vehicles are still maintained and MOT'd at his workshop and they have remained good friends for many years.

In 2003 Rupert went on to purchase a number of black hearses and limousines which he operates under the name of AJZ Funeral Services. The funeral fleet now consists of eight limousines, one saloon car and four hearses. they are Mercedes and Volvo's and detectable by the AJZ in the registration numbers.



After leaving school in Dorset, Rupert returned briefly to work at Hatch Beauchamp Garage before starting a career in Road Haulage, moving to Tone Vale Transport at Wiveliscombe before, many years later, running the Sales Department for the same company, now owned by the Nagel Group of Germany. Although he moved to Taunton Meat Haulage, part of the same group, which amalgamated to become known as Langdons, prior to being sold.

In his spare time, Rupert enjoys: off-roading in his modified Range Rover P38; and water skiing; has a boat which he normally takes to Lyme Regis and for many years attended Glastonbury Festival. He still finds time to occasionally ring bells at Hatch Beauchamp and West Hatch and normally plays badminton most weeks at Neroche Parish Hall. In addition to this, he can be seen locally during the summer in an old Ford Transit, off to erect marquees at various people's houses for parties. The tents were purchased originally to support an annual party, Roopstock, which Rupert has hosted for, in excess of, 20 years (with only two years off !). Originally this was held at Curland with much of the set-up and clearing carried out by Rupert's brother Robin. Sadly he died at the age of 39, in 2004, from a sudden heart failure and since then, in Robin's memory, the majority of proceeds from the party have been donated to British Heart Foundation and have amassed in excess of £20,000. A small contribution annually has been made to Neroche Parish Hall, which is a great credit to all locally who have continued to support and help to put on the function, which now takes place in Hare Lane during the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of August and to whom Rupert is most grateful as without this help he would be unable to continue.



LIVE MUSIC

BAR / FOOD

RR

ROOPSTOCK SPECIAL

SUN 28 AUG 2016 - 7.30pm START

RYDINESS FARM TA20 3JT

FREE OVERNIGHT CAMPING

Featuring::
THE MAN FROM FUNKLE



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News from Somerset County Council

Ross Henley, our Somerset County Councillor, has kindly offered to write a regular column for our Newsletter

It was a pleasure to attend the recent Neroche Annual Parish Meetings. Every year it's attended by dozens of local residents (this year in excess of 70), always has interesting speakers, offers a great chance to catch up with everyone and, of course, enjoy the lovely refreshments prepared by the local Women's Institute. This year I had to attend two different Annual Parish Meetings on the same evening. The first one was in a parish with twice as many residents as Neroche, and attracted only 9 people! So it just goes to show how impressive the turnout is from the Neroche residents.



Walking the Rights of Way with Jane

They discussed with me the important subject of keeping these open and maintained. Jane led an excellent discussion on this subject at the Annual Parish Meeting.

This year in your area, I've been able to award some County Council Health and Wellbeing Grants to the Neroche Woodlanders and Thurlbear School. This grant scheme has funded a number of local groups in Neroche Parish. However, it looks like this scheme is under threat next year, as the government has cut the public health budget it gives to the County Council. I feel it's a great shame, because this scheme has really done some good over the years.

I enjoyed a lovely Saturday morning recently, walking some of the rights of way and

bridleways with Tim French and Jane hole.

I have made a return visit to the Neroche Villages' Lunch. The food is always so good; I always enjoy this event. What a nice way to spend Thursday lunchtime, and with such great company.

The twice yearly Neroche quiz took place at the village hall in March. It is as always very well supported, and I'm embarrassed to admit that I ended up on the winning team again (see picture on page 7). The fish and chips were very nice too. Many thanks must go to Colin Croad and his helpers who work hard preparing and putting on this twice yearly event for the local community. I'm going to start attending the quiz at the Greyhound some months, as that's been recommended to me as well.



A "full house" of 19 teams compete in the quiz

I attended a public exhibition from Highways England about the dualling of the A358. A similar presentation was given at the Annual Parish Meeting, where I asked if they were taking into account the effect the huge new business park proposed for Henlade will have on traffic using the a A358. The A358 is a very



important road for local residents to get into Taunton or to travel east out of the county, and, of course, to get across it to visit places like Hatch Beauchamp. I will continue to ask questions about the huge amount of extra traffic the new business park would bring to this area.

At County Hall it was budget time, and I was concerned that Somerset has set the highest Council Tax rise of any County Council in the country, at 5.4 per cent. Part of this rise is made up of a new flooding tax being levied on all Somerset residents. The only County Council to do so, and at a rate of about 15 pounds a year on

a band 'D' property. Somerset also took the decision to scrap the local flood alleviation fund. I'm watching this one very closely as it would be bizarre if Somerset is now taxing us all locally on flooding issues but making it harder for parishes to get funding to support local flooding schemes .



Also recently, on a very sunny afternoon, I met the organisers of the West Hatch Scouts, who told me they have members from the Neroche Parish. They showed me the old Wesleyan Chapel in West Hatch, which they own and use for storage.

Finally, I would like to thank the many local residents who have been understanding and kind to me at a very difficult time. My father has just spent six weeks in a local hospital, and I've been caring for my mum who has terminal liver cancer. Thanks for all the kind words and asking how things are

Outside the Wesleyan Chapel
from lots of local people.

Your VOTE
is your VOICE
Be HEARD
23 June 2016
The EU Referendum

Report on Footpaths and Bridleways at Neroche Annual Parish Meeting: April 2016

Jane Hole spoke briefly on behalf of Neroche Walking Group.

The walking group was established in 2011 as a result of the Parish Plan. It is run by Jane Hole and Sheila Green and the walks run once a month on a [Saturday morning](#), mainly within the parish. There is so much good walking within this area, miles and miles of paths and bridleways, many of quite ancient origin.

The Walking Group wanted to talk about the footpaths and bridleways in the parish and to open up a discussion about their future maintenance.

The good news is over the last 10 years or so there are more walkers about, occasional mountain bikers and several livery stables are now established in the villages. However, this means more footfall, bikes and a lot more horse traffic. These, together with the hilly clay based terrain and high rainfall lead to a continuous degradation of the paths and bridleways.

Middleroom Lane in the parish of Curland is of particular concern. As part of the Neroche Scheme a major and costly upgrade of this whole bridleway was undertaken in 2008/9. Prior to this, much of the ancient track was impassable, with waist high rushes and huge ankle breaking potholes.

Over subsequent years gullies have become blocked, winter frosts and the sheer volume of water are causing significant erosion, as can be seen in these pictures.



If no remedial work is undertaken, then this major part of the Herepath will return to its former state of impassability.

The walking group is also trying to do a rough audit of the state of other features, such as the stiles, gates and finger posts that need repair.



We recognise the Rights of Way (ROW) department at Somerset County Council has only a very small budget to manage nearly 4,000 miles of ROW within the county. We asked the question as to whether it is realistic and pragmatic to look to SCC for high level maintenance of our footpaths and bridleways. It may be the case that such an approach will lead to minimal action due the various cost constraints.

A very useful discussion was held and the following points agreed:

- The Walking Group would write to our County Councillor and the ROW department raising our concerns. We would also look for any practical ways our community can help the ROW department help us. For example, to repair tracks we could consider establishing a "work gang" to undertake the labour if the ROW can supply materials and supervision.*
- We can hope people come forward to take on The Adopt a Path Scheme whereby volunteers keep an eye on a section of path, report problems and help with cutting vegetation back from signs, stiles and gates. See www.somerset.gov.uk/rights for more information*
- The Walking Group would carry on reporting damaged stiles, broken finger posts etc.*

Jane Hole jane.hole@outlook.com & Sheila Green sfgreen@btinternet.com

WI Programme for June/July/August

8th June

Foot Health

Speaker: Hilary Norman

Competition:

A Flower From Your Garden

14th July

Simple Puddings

Competition:

A Small Flower Arrangement

10th August

Outing organised

by members

WI contacts: Pauline Phelps 01460 234455, Nicky Baxter 01823 480675



ROYAL (Almost) GARDEN PARTY

To celebrate the 90th birthday of HM The Queen

At Neroche Village Hall

Saturday. 11th June 2016 3pm

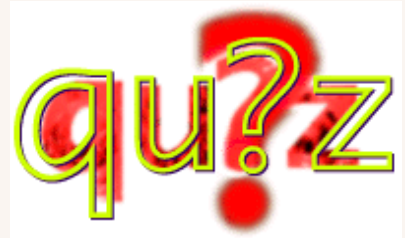
Afternoon tea/ cream tea/ homemade cakes

‘Bake a Cake’ competition

Games and quizzes

Best dressed Hat

Write a limerick competition



Contact Marianne Bray 01823 480888 for more information

www.nerochehall.org.uk



Bickenhall Man Represents GB in the ETU Duathlon European Championships

By Marianne Bray



James proudly wearing his Team GB vest

On 14th April I travelled to Kalkar, situated in the lower Rhine district of North West Germany, to support and watch my son, James, representing Team GB in the European Duathlon Championships. The event was staged in the nearby Wunderland (which I would describe as Hinkley Point meets Butlins!). It was constructed but never commissioned as a power station, so has been turned into a theme park. Apparently it is very popular with stag and hen parties – lots of bars and no neighbours!

On the Friday afternoon, we were transported by shuttle bus into the pretty, medieval town of Kalkar. The town band led the way, and all the competing athletes (GB had the largest

number of participants) proceeded into the town square behind their national flag. There were competitors from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, to name a few. There were speeches by the town Mayor and the President of the European Triathlon Union, who declared the



Team GB parading

championship open, followed by the releasing of balloons and more music from the band.

Friday finished with a very busy pasta party at Wunderland for all athletes and their families. The hotel staff was very helpful, happy and courteous throughout our stay.

Saturday was a full day of racing, starting at 9am for the parathletes, continuing until the final women's



The Town Band leads the parade

event at 7pm. James' group set off at 10.30am when the weather was cold, windy and dry but it soon turned into squally showers – not ideal conditions for a bike ride.

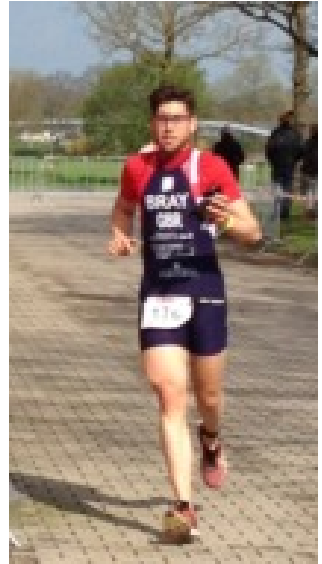


James 'in full flight'

of different age groups competing at the same time, so it was difficult to work out final positions, and we had to wait until the results were published later in the day.

We were both pleased to find out that James came 9th out of 14 in his age group, 30 – 34 years, with a time of 2hr 5mins 34secs, and was the third GB athlete home in his group, which should mean automatic qualification for the 2017 championships. I was a very proud mum, and it was a trip worth making.

Anyway, I was able to position myself along the route so that I had a good view of the stages of the event which comprised a 10km run then a 40km bike ride and finishing with a 5km run. There were a lot



A sprint finish

Broadband Update

By Tim French

(Editor's note: This is an edited version of Tim's report; please refer to the village website for the full version - www.nerochevillages.org.uk)

There has been a mixture of good and bad news on the broadband front. The good news is that new technologies are becoming available which could provide superfast broadband to Neroche Parish in the foreseeable future.

The arrival of the fibre optic enabled green box in Bickenhall

The 'green box' (local distribution telephone cabin) which provides Bickenhall, Curland and Staple Fitzpaine with telephone and broadband was connected to the Hatch Beauchamp exchange by fibre optic cable. A small number of Bickenhall premises close to the green box now get an improved broadband speed, some even achieving superfast speeds (more than 24Mbps). As predicted, the majority of properties in the three parishes have not benefited. This method of delivering broadband, provided by BT, is called fibre to the cabinet (FTTC); it fails to deliver superfast broadband when the final connection to premises is by a long copper wire.

Interesting news on future developments

In April there was a meeting in Taunton organized by small firms that deliver superfast broadband in rural settings by alternative technologies to FTTC. Speakers came from Somerset Country Council, Connecting Devon and Somerset, Broadband Development UK (BDUK) (the government office responsible for broadband), and firms currently delivering broadband by fibre directly to the premises, fixed wireless, satellite, or a mixture of technologies.

Alternative Technologies

Three alternative ways of delivering superfast broadband to rural communities were discussed.

Fibre to the premises (FTTP): This is certainly the gold standard with fabulous download and upload speeds and excellent reliability. It is expensive to install but has low maintenance costs.

Fixed Wireless Microwave Technology: This is used by the company Airband to bring broadband to Exmoor and Dartmoor. It can provide speeds of 10Mbps to 1Gbps for both download and upload. It has low latency which means that there is not a lag when communicating over the internet.

Satellite Internet: This is not new technology and is used by several households in our parish. It is not without its problems, being affected by weather conditions and a long latency problem which affects some usages.

A Mixture of Technologies: This was best outlined in the BDUK presentation. They had commissioned small firms to come up with local solutions in difficult to reach areas, including firms using a combination of the technologies above.

Broadband Voucher Scheme

Connecting Devon and Somerset has a scheme to allow everyone, not yet able to get broadband speeds of over 2Mbps, in the programme area to receive broadband through the CDS voucher scheme. The scheme will provide a subsidy of up to £500 to fund the installation of a new broadband connection from an approved supplier, with a guarantee of a minimum of 10Mbps download speed. Full details of the scheme, including timescales, are on the CDS website; www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-broadband-voucher-scheme

Future Plans and Timetables

Sadly, one has to be a little cynical about promised improvements in the broadband service for Neroche Parish, and the timetable for their being achieved, after years of having our hopes raised and dashed, with countless delays and with yet no improvement seen by the majority of us. On the other hand, it took till after the Second World War for electricity to reach parts of Staple Fitzpaine and now it works well!

Conclusion

Well, if ever there was a curate's egg, the above must be it. However, I came away from April's meeting feeling that at last there was real hope that there would be a solution for a proper broadband service to Neroche Parish, albeit a few years away. What it will be is uncertain but I would put my money on it being either a fixed wireless system or a hybrid one, with a combination of technologies. It may involve community involvement to achieve the best.

One thing for certain is that we should fully participate in the consultation process, when it comes, to make sure we get the right one that fits our particular geography and requirements. In the meanwhile, those getting less than 2Mbps should look carefully into the voucher scheme, particularly businesses or families with multiple broadband users. But beware, Connecting Devon and Somerset needs to clarify whether it might affect their access to a better service in the future.

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 etc etc) then why not add your email address to the 350 plus individuals that have already signed-up to the service.

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

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

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

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

School Holidays

It is always useful to know the school holidays dates. The dates below include, where appropriate, the weekends either side, as these are equally affected by school breaks, especially regarding family holidays and road traffic.



Half-term Holiday
Saturday 28th May - Sunday 5th June
Summer Holiday

Thursday 21st July 2015 to Sunday 4th September



Household Recycling & Refuse Collections
for June 2016 to August 2016



Recycling: 1st June - Revised Collection 2nd June

To view all actual dates, go to
www1.tauntondeane.gov.uk/tdbc/sites/waste/pdf/WednesdayB.pdf

Events For Your Calendar

May

- 25 *History Group - A History of Bells and English Church Bell Ringing (see page 15)*
- 27 *Friday Film Night - Bridge of Spies (see page 13)*

June

- 1 *Greyhound Quiz (see page 44)*
- 2 *Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see page 10)*
- 4 *Neroche Walking Group*
- 5 *British Driving Society Somerset Area Show - Racecourse*
- 8 *WI Meeting (see page 52)*
- 11 *Neroche Royal Garden Party (see page 53)*
- 23 *EU Referendum*
- 26 *Pony Club Mounted Games - Racecourse*

July

- 2 *Neroche Walking Group*
- 6 *Greyhound Quiz (see page 44)*
- 7 *Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see page 10)*
- 14 *WI Meeting (see page 52)*
- 14 *Parish Council Meeting (see www.nerochevillages.org.uk)*
- 23-30 *Scarecrow Festival (see page 6)*

August

- 3 *Greyhound Quiz (see page 44)*
- 4 *Neroche Thursday Lunch Club (see page 10)*
- 5&6 *Taunton Flower Show (www.tauntonfs.co.uk)*
- 6 *Neroche Walking Group*
- 10 *WI Meeting (see page 52)*
- 28 *Roopstock (see page 47)*



**For further information go to the parish website
www.nerochevillages.org.uk**

Local Communication and Information

Websites:

Neroche Villages – www.nerochevillages.org.uk

Community website run by the Neroche Communication Action Group. It has an up-to-date calendar of events; a news section; information about residents' action groups, e.g. on 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 official documents.

Neroche Hall– www.nerochehall.org.uk

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

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

This website 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. It forwards information of a general nature about local events and issues - please contact Wally Torrington at wallytorrington@hotmail.com if you would like your name added.

The Parish Magazine:

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

Many thanks for taking the time to read this Newsletter.

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

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