

PARISH COUNCIL

Chair's Update

At our meeting on the 17 November, we were pleased to co-opt and welcome onto the Council 6 new Parish Councillors, bringing the council up to full strength with 11 councillors in all. The new councillors are Neil Bloomfield, Hugh Donovan, Chris Earl, Brian Evans, Marilyn Hart, and Malcolm Uhlhorn. Between them they bring a wide range of very useful skills, knowledge and lots of enthusiasm and we are looking forward to working with them.

New Boules Court

We gave approval for the installation of a new boules court on the Memorial Hall grounds, the court to be placed just behind the line of trees fronting West Street. This has kindly been donated by the Sports & Recreation Trust, and the maintenance of the facility will be paid for by the Parish Council. The court should provide a welcome central attraction for the village for all age groups, to complement the children's playground and the existing open space.

Annual Grants

We approved a further annual grant to the Boys Brigade and Youth Club, as part of our commitment to support youth facilities in the village, and to the Memorial Hall Committee to assist in running the Hall for the benefit of the community.

Methodist Church

A number of you may have noticed that there are petitions in the Charity Shop and in the Shop at the Cross. The Methodist Church in West Street has applied for change of use from community use to residential, so that it can sell the church and convert it to a residential house. The Parish Council and the Sports & Recreation Trust are working closely together on this and have put in formal objections, as it is currently being used for the Hamdon Youth Group and Little Fishes, and the building has the potential for much greater use for all sorts of youth activities which currently have to take place at other meeting places all across the village. The Parish Council has applied for the property to be placed on the Community Asset Register, which would prevent an immediate sale. This would give the Parish and the Trust an opportunity to have discussions with the Church to see if there is an opportunity of using it as a Youth Community Centre, subject to a viable business plan etc. At the end of the day, it is possible that nothing is achievable, but we feel it is important to try to protect community facilities as hard as we can. If you agree with this please sign our petition!

Potential Bus Funding Cuts

We have been notified by the County Council that a consultation exercise is under way on the future provision of bus services in South Somerset. The consultation starts on the 9 November and ends on the 11 January 2016.

There are two parts to the consultation: the first is about the withdrawal of free travel prior to 9.30, the withdrawal of free companion travel for disabled pass holders and a reduction in the half fare scheme currently in place for travel on Community minibus and Community Car transport. The proposal is to reduce the discretion to 25% of the fare in the future.

The second is the withdrawal of some funding for bus services. Two services going through the village are potentially affected; the route 81 from South West Coaches and the N9 Nippy Bus Martock. For both funding withdrawals are planned for the Saturday services, and so possibly reducing the number of times they run on those days. We have written to the bus companies for more information as to the practical impact on Saturday services.

Post Office

It is nearly that time of year when we have to send cards and presents. If you can, please support our local post office at the Shop by taking your parcels in there to post – we all fought hard to keep it in the village and they need our support!

Finally, may we wish all residents a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Contact details below.

Barbara Brooks

Chair of the Parish Council

chairsshpc@hotmail.com Tamarisk, High St (opp Working Mens Club)

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL TELEPHONE NUMBER

Somerset County Council has changed its telephone numbers from the old 0845 number to a single telephone number for all enquiries. This number is **0300 123 2224** and has been introduced to make it easier and cheaper for people to get in touch with them. Please make sure that this number is used when you need to contact County Council as the old 0845 numbers have been switched off – there is no automatic transfer.

P.C.S.O. REPORT

For any advice and further/up-to-date information on incidents please go to the website: www.police.uk. If you are a witness to or the victim of a crime then it is imperative that you report it to the police immediately whether it is during the day or at night. When reporting an incident please telephone either 101 for non-emergencies or 999 for emergencies only.

STOKE ACTIVE WALKERS

Tuesday, 1 December

We begin our last walk of 2015 by going down across the back of Castle Farm to Jubilee Woods, through Jubilee Woods and up Kings Road, past Southcombes Factory and along the bottom of Great Field. We will then follow the footpath to go past West End garage, cross over the road and follow the footpath to Norton. In Norton we will then turn right and follow the road to Creedy Bridge, then left and follow the footpath to cross the Crewkerne road and around the back of Norton to the Lord Nelson for a Christmas lunch.

We meet at 10.30am at Sea Wall, about 50 yards on the Montacute side of Bonnies Lane. Please wear suitable boots or shoes and clothing according to the weather. All our walks are free and we welcome new walkers to our friendly group. Well behaved dogs are also welcome. **ALL WALKS ARE UNDERTAKEN AT THE WALKERS OWN RISK.** For more information please contact Norman on 01935 822792.

STOKE CHARITY SHOP

A lot has been going on this Autumn when our half-price sale week brought many new faces into the shop and thanks to your continued support it was another huge success. Our splendid new graphic has been fitted in the shop window representing the activities of the Sports and Recreation Trust and a community working together it depicts how our local organisations flourish. If you haven't already done so, please call in the shop to see the list of the financial grants that have been awarded by our

group so far. If you would like further information about the grant process or would like to apply for a grant from The Stoke Charity Shop please contact Jane Baker on 825585.

The shop volunteers would like to express our thanks to the Stanchester and Purple Patchers of Ash quilting groups who very kindly supported the shop with a donation of £500 recently following their very successful and colourful exhibition in Martock. This money will be used to improve the facilities within the shop. Once again we are delighted to have been selected as a beneficiary of The Rotary Christmas Raffle and we have tickets for sale in the shop at £1 each. This is an important fundraising exercise for us as the proceeds from all ticket sales come back to the shop so please support it if you can.

Shop opening over Christmas - we will close for the holiday at 1pm on Wednesday 23 December and re-open at 9am on Monday 4 January. The Christmas items are now in the shop so if you want a new table decoration, a last minute gift or a 'little black dress' for a social event look no further than your own Charity Shop. The Shop is a success because you support it so we all look forward to seeing you during the festive season and would like to invite you on the days leading up to Christmas to 'pop in' and join us for a glass of sherry and a mince pie. We would like to wish all our customers a happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

CASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL - COMMUNITY GOVERNORS WANTED

Castle Primary School is looking for members of the local community to join our local advisory board. This rewarding role involves working with the school to ensure that it delivers a quality education. For a few hours a work a month you will be making a positive contribution to children's education in the local community. Please contact the school office on 822342 or email office@castle-pri.somerset.sch.uk for further information.

SOMERSET SIGHT

Happily, the Somerset Sight van is calling at the Memorial Hall car park on the following days in 2016:

25 February, 17 March and 17 November which are all Thursdays and, 16 May and 22 August which are Mondays.

'CELBRATE STOKE' EVENT

Many thanks to the Parish Council for putting on such a marvellous 'get together' for all the village organisations. It is lovely to see that we have so many groups and organisations, many of which are run by volunteers, in our village and, what a great idea it was to have an event to promote them and to enable residents to see what we have on offer. Once again thank you.

Rosemary Thomas

CHRISTMAS PRIZE BINGO

Stoke Working Men's Club Christmas Prize Bingo will be held on Monday, 7 December. Tickets will be on sale from 7pm with eyes down at 7.45pm. This will be a 15 house bingo with lots of good seasonal prizes. Everyone is welcome.

TAI CHI

Shibashi Tai Chi Class at the Stoke Sub Hamdon Memorial Hall, Wednesdays 5.30-6.30 pm £4 per per person. Call Martyn Powell 07717 893 749.

STOKE BAND NEWS

Stoke Band Christmas Concert

The Christmas concert is on Saturday 12 December in the Memorial Hall. Doors open at 7.00pm and the concert will start at 7:30 with the Training Section. Christmas pudding and mince pies will then be served. The main band concert will start at about 8:15pm with a short break at about 9pm. As usual there will be a licensed bar and refreshments. Tickets will cost the same as last year, £6 per person, and are available from Jane & Ralph Herbert on 822402.

Christmas Eve

Weather permitting the band will be carolling in Stoke on Christmas Eve.

Jane Herbert

BOXERCISE CLASS

A new Boxercise class is starting on Wednesdays between 6.30 - 7.30pm at Stoke sub Hamdon Memorial Hall. The first session is free.

Boxercise is a class using boxing pads and gloves (No Body Contact) to do exercise. The class will be a great workout for those who want to get fit fast at a fun and sociable class. For more details contact Martyn on 07717 893 749.

POP- IN ACORN

Programme

December 3 Amanda & Choi

For more information contact Jennifer Kerr 01935 882609

WALKING FOR HEALTH

Can there be anything nicer than walking and talking and appreciating the beautiful autumnal colours around Stoke? Why not come and join us, there are two walks on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month, starting and ending at the Lighthouse café.

The Every Step Counts walk begins at 9.30am and is a lane and pavement walk with one slight incline, lasting 30 to 40 minutes.

The Health Walk starts at 10.30am and use, lanes, fields and footpaths within a 3 mile radius of Stoke and last 90 to 100 minutes.

These walks are open to everyone, friendly, free and have at least two walk leaders, so if someone feels they can't make the whole walk they can return via a shorter route with a leader. Please wear appropriate clothes and footwear for the weather conditions. We look forward to seeing you and if you require any further information please contact Penny 01935 822208 or Mark and Jane at jane.gooch@tesco.net

HAMDON YOUTH GROUP

Hamdon Youth Group is getting ready for Christmas! Lots more people have been coming to our Monday evening sessions and our Youth Worker, Lou, has a couple of great festive sessions to get everyone in the mood before the Christmas break. Any young people Year 6 and above are welcome to join in, 7 to 9 pm at the Methodist Hall in Stoke on 7 December (Christmas decorations) and 14 December (Christmas Party). Monday Youth Club will resume in the New Year on 4 January 2016.

Youth Voice is a group of young people who meet on alternate Wednesdays to consider how they can take part in village life and bring their concerns to attention of

the authorities. They have plans to take part in a number of activities around the villages and also bring issues and reports to Parish Councils. Ask Lou for more details to join.

We are still searching for an alternative venue for our Monday meetings including storage for our equipment. If anyone has ideas on this, or would like to join our band of volunteers please contact Lou.

We wish all our young people a great Christmas and hope even more of you will join us in 2016. For more information please contact Lou Chant on 07402 987921 or Email lou.chant@cyp.me.uk and on Facebook @ Community Youth Project

ROOF AT ST MARY'S

Thanks to all those who have so generously given to support the work of replacing the Nave Roof at St Mary's. You, the people of Stoke, have contributed around £8,000 towards this work. This means, with a couple of other grants, that we have sufficient for the Government's Roof Repair Fund to give us "Permission to Start". It is hoped that the work will be able to be done sometime between February and April (you will appreciate that Spring is a rather better option for removing a roof than the winter!)

CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2015

Your Local Churches would love to welcome all of you to celebrate to birth of Jesus with us at these services.

Sunday December 13 at 4.30pm. Christingle Service – St Mary's, Stoke. Particularly appropriate all children and families

Wednesday December 16 at 2.00pm. Castle School Carol Service – URC, Stoke.

Sunday December 20 at 9.30am. Carol Service – URC, Stoke

Sunday December 20 at 6.30pm. Carol Service – St Mary's, Stoke

Christmas Eve

3.00pm Crib Service–St Mary's, Stoke. Particularly appropriate for all children and families

11.30pm 'Midnight Communion' – St Mary's, Stoke

11.30pm 'Christmas Communion' – URC, Stoke

Christmas Day

9.30am Family Communion– St Mary's, Stoke. All very welcome to celebrate the birth of Jesus

WELCOME TO OUR NEW ASSOCIATE VICAR

I am pleased to announce that the Bishop has invited the Reverend Annie Gurner to become the half-time Associate Vicar across the Ham Hill Villages. Annie will be licensed by the Bishop of Taunton into this new role on January 26 and at the same service, probably at Montacute Church, I will also be licensed as priest in charge of the 7 parishes that will make up the Ham Hill Villages benefice.

Mrs Gurner, who was ordained in 2005, has been the vicar of 4 rural parishes in Cambridgeshire and, recently, has worked in this diocese as a deanery rural life advisor and parish consultant. In recent years she has attended the Honeypot charity breakfast at our Rectory representing the Farming Community Network. She has been a farmer, a research manager (particularly in health areas), a Lay Reader, a youth worker and is a keen gardener.

Annie will have a specific pastoral responsibility for Montacute and Odcombe, and a shared responsibility with me for Stoke sub Hamdon. Annie will continue to live with

her husband, Roger, at their home in Lopen – but will use a local base at the Annexe of Stoke Vicarage. She will be on duty for two days a week and Sunday; although the days may nominally be Monday and Tuesday she is able to be flexible if the need arises

It will be a joy to welcome her to the team which will have three licensed clergy (Annie, Gary Edmunds and myself) and up to 7 Readers, as well as the continued support of a number of retired priests and many others who share the life and ministry of the Churches with their own gifts.

I look forward to welcoming Annie as she comes with God's calling to serve Christ and these villages and work with us for the glory of God's name.

DIARY OF EVENTS:

December

1 st	Stoke Active Walkers
7 th	Christmas Prize Bingo
12 th	Stoke Band Christmas Concert
14 th	Walking for Health
28 th	Walking for Health

January

11 th	Walking for Health
25 th	Walking for Health

February

8 th	Walking for Health
22 nd	Walking for Health
25 th	Somerset Sight