

Anyone wishing to submit articles for the January newsletter, please could you email me or post through my door by the 12 December due to the Christmas break. Many thanks. Sarah Moore, Parish Clerk

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

PARISH COUNCIL

Chair's Update

A number of residents in North Street came to talk to us recently. They have big concerns about the speed of some cars going up and down the top end of North Street, particularly near the entrance to Hamdon Playgroup. Everyone's safety, young and old, is important. Can we all please slow down a bit please!

Methodist Church Update

Contrary to some rumours that may be going round the village, this is still definitely ON! Our village will have a building for our new Youth Centre in 2018. I am afraid that the Church's Head Office Trustees are incredibly slow in the whole legal process, and this is out of our control. We are continuing to push them however on a weekly basis. We will get there. #nevergiveup!

Dog Fouling

Please, please if you see people not picking up their dog's poo from the Recreation Ground, will you help us by reporting them to the Dog Warden on 01935 462462. You can do this anonymously if you wish. Just give the person's name, the date and time you saw the offence, and description of the dog. The large amount of dog poo being left on the Rec nowadays is totally unacceptable and a big health risk. There are three dog poo bins on the Rec; one at the entrance from Matts Lane, one near the entrance from Norton Road and one in the Rec car park off West Street. Not picking up is a criminal offence, with a large fine. If this situation continues dogs may have to be banned from the Ground, which would be a huge pity for the majority of responsible owners.

Village Play

For those of you who got tickets for the Stoke Performing Arts Group's annual plays on 17th and 18th November, what wonderful evenings they were! I haven't laughed so much for ages. And true to form, lots of volunteers from across the village helped SPAG with the evening. A real community event. Brilliant!

Christmas

We are coming to a period which is sometimes very difficult for those who are on their own, or who may have lost someone recently. Can we all reach out in friendship with a card, or an invite to Christmas dinner or a cup of tea and a chat? Means a lot. And you never know, a stranger may become a friend! A very happy Christmas to you, and may the New Year bring good fortune and health to us all.

Contact details: Barbara Brooks, Chair of the Parish Council

Tel: 824432; Email: chairsshpc@hotmail.com

Tamarisk, High St (opp. Working Men's Club)

SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

Dog poisoning at Country Park rumour is unfounded

South Somerset District Council's Ham Hill Ranger Team have spent a number of days following up and investigating worrying claims that dogs have died from poisonings at the Country Park. At the end of last week, a range of posts were circulating on social media claiming that five dogs had died as a result of poisonings at Ham Hill Country Park. After much investigatory work by the site ranger, SSDC can find no evidence that these claims are true.

Site Ranger Paul McNeill said: "I have spoken to two dog owners who confirm that their three dogs have suffered from sickness and are now thankfully recovered. Investigations by their vets have confirmed a viral bug, akin to a human sickness bug, that runs for about three days and is a perfectly normal expectation for this time of the year. I have also spoken to

local veterinary practices and despite much talk of poisonings and illnesses, they confirm they have not treated any suspected cases of poisoning. I am therefore happy to confirm that dogs have not been purposefully poisoned or targeted at the Country Park.”

Katy Menday, SSDC’s Countryside Manager added: “We are grateful to two members of the public for coming forward to speak to us about illnesses that their dogs have suffered over the past fortnight. Paul has worked hard to get to the bottom of the allegations and we want to reassure people that there is no evidence that any dogs have died and no animals have been purposefully poisoned. There are sickness bugs around and, as with any well used site, your pet may pick one up when interacting with other pets on site.”

Councillor Sylvia Seal, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture also said: ““If you have concerns about the Country Park then please talk to us. It has been a worrying few days for pet owners as they see stories posted on social media that they do not know whether to believe.”

If you have concerns about any of South Somerset District Council’s Countryside sites, please contact 01935 462462 and report the details.

STOKE ACTIVE WALKERS

Tuesday, 5th December 2017

For our December walk we begin by going towards East Stoke and up Church Lane to Hedgecock Woods and along towards Montacute. We will take the footpath that leads us up to Batemore Barn, cross the road and go down over Witcombe. From there, we will then follow the lane back past Tinker’s Bubble, through Little Norton to the Lord Nelson for 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

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

What a beautiful morning on the Sunday 12th November despite being extremely windy; we were all glad the rain held off until after the service. Also, what a wonderful setting we have on top of Ham Hill to remember the servicemen and women who have given their lives for our country and for today’s servicemen and women who are currently in action and stationed around the world. Thank you to all who came to the service around the Monument which was again attended by a fantastic gathering of all ages. Many thanks to Brian Shaw for playing the bagpipes at the start of the service, to Anthony Russell for leading the service in such a quiet and sincere way, to Reverend Peter Thomas for his sermon which gave a personal note by recounting the life of one of our fallen men from the First World War, to Stoke Silver Band, to Andy Diplock for playing the Last Post and the Reveille which echoed over the hills to where others stood and, to everyone who laid wreaths and crosses from the Parish Council, British Legion, the Brownies and Guides, Peter Bullock’s family, and many more. Also, thank you to Castle Primary School for involving our children.

I would also like to thank all the businesses who very kindly gave space in their premises for the poppy boxes. I will let you know how much money has been raised for the Royal British Legion in next month’s newsletter.

Jon Moore, Poppy Appeal Organiser

STOKE BAND

Christmas Concert

The Christmas concert will be held on Saturday, 9th December in the Memorial Hall at 7.30pm. The doors will be open at 7.00pm. There will be a licenced bar, puds and pies, refreshments and a raffle. Tickets are £6 each. Please contact Ralph and Jane Herbert on 01460 419317.

Carols on Ham Hill

Please come along and join us for a sing-a-long carols session at the Prince of Wales on Saturday, 16th December at 4.00pm

STOKE WORKING MEN'S CLUB

Christmas Prize Bingo will be on Monday 11th December. Tickets will be on sale from 7.00pm, eyes down at 7.45pm. Come along and play, everyone welcome and there are some good seasonal prizes to be won.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

The Hamdon Pre-School Playgroup and Hamdon Community Arts Project are hosting a Christmas Tree Festival in the old United Reformed Church, North Street from 16th December until 21st December. If you would like to take part and have not been contacted please email hamdonplaygroup@btinternet.com or phone 826832 and ask for Ann or Karon by Friday, 1st December to promote your organisation, business or company.

GARDENING CLUB

Stoke sub Hamdon Gardening Club are delighted to announce that Angie Blackwell of Cottage Flowers, Ilminster will be giving a Christmas Floral demonstration on Wednesday 13th December in Stoke Memorial Hall. Doors open at 7.00pm and the evening will start at 7.30pm. Everyone is very welcome to come to this event; it is free to members of the Garden Club and £2 to visitors. We hope to see as many people as possible, and you can be sure of a fun packed evening. For further information, please contact Sue Winwood 01935 823671.

SPORTS & RECREATION TRUST

Are you a football supporter? The Trust supports adult and junior football teams in the village. The number of junior teams has increased over the last few years which is really good, keeping the youngsters active.

We are looking for someone who would be prepared to undertake the task of painting the white lines for the pitches on a weekly basis, either Friday afternoons or early Saturday mornings (depending on the weather). We are prepared to pay £25 per week, for approximately 3 hours.

If you are interested please contact Neil Raison, neil.raison@googlemail.com who will be able to give you more details.

BROWNIES & GUIDES

We had approximately 100 people who attended The Memorial Hall for The Overcoming Adversity talk in aid of Help for Heroes given by Petty Officer Sean Gaffney on 7th November. Sean entertained us with a variety of tales of his career in the Royal Navy and learnt from his never give up attitude and was an inspiration to us all, young and old! We raised £121.23 on the night. Thank you to all involved.

Jackie Poole & Claire Kelly 1st Montacute Brownies and 2nd Hamdon Guides.

CASTLE SCHOOL OFSTED REPORT 2017

Staff at Castle School are immensely proud that OFSTED has recognised our many strengths. In everything we do, we put the children first and we're delighted that we are now graded as a 'Good' School. The report recognises the school has made a tremendous improvement in the quality of education and care it offers our children.

The key strengths identified were as follows:

- This is a rapidly improving school. Since its re-opening in 2015, leaders have built trust within the community. As a result, parents recognise the positive changes of recent years and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The new head of school, along with the senior leadership team, are ambitious and provide clear direction for improvement.

- The school benefits from sharing good practice with other members of the Redstart Learning Partnership. This has a positive impact on staff development and pupils' progress improves as a result.
- The school's inclusive culture ensures the welfare of vulnerable pupils and those with particular needs.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive and their behaviour reflects the school's successful encouragement of high standards.
- Teachers plan work effectively for pupils who have gaps in their learning. As a result, they catch up quickly.
- Nursery provision is effective. It prepares children well to start school.
- Since 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased at the end of Reception year.
- Good quality teaching has led to improved standards in phonics. Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics check is now well above the national average.
- Current pupils are making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Careful monitoring of the performance of disadvantaged pupils contributes to a large majority of them making good progress.
- The school's successful approach to the teaching of writing means that an increasing number of pupils achieve the standards expected for their age.

I have been enormously impressed with so many aspects of the school since I arrived and it is wonderful to see these reflected in this report. The support from The Trust, Mr Handscomb and the staff's excellent drive and direction since the last inspection has been invaluable. I would also like to say a huge thank you to the whole team of staff and governors who have displayed a fantastic level of hard work, dedication and commitment in order to ensure that we provide the best possible opportunities for the children of Castle School.

This is an exciting time for Castle School. The team and I are dedicated to further raising the quality of education and provision we provide for the children; I look forward to continuing to work closely with everyone involved over the forthcoming years.

Mr G Nation, Head of School

MARIE CURIE

Thank you to everyone in the village who support the Marie Curie Christmas Fair this year which was kindly hosted again by Rachel and the team at the Stoke Working Men's Club. The function room looked so pretty and with mulled cider and hot sausage rolls we raised just over £645 to support local nurses providing end of life care for people in their own homes.

MEMORIAL HALL CRAFT FAIR

Our fundraising Craft Fair on Saturday, 4th November was very well attended. There were over 20 exhibitor tables this year including 5 extra tables over at the Fleur de Lis. The total raised from stalls, raffle and the café was £772, with all funds going towards the main hall and lobby redecoration. A huge thank you to all who attended and supported us.

STOKE SUB HAMDON CALENDARS

We still have some Stoke sub Hamdon village calendars for sale at £5. These contain a series of nostalgic photographs looking at past life in our village and would make a great Christmas gift. The calendars are available to buy from Tomasz's salon on the High Street or please contact Denise on 827793.

STOKE BABY AND TODDLER GROUP CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Stoke Baby and Toddler Group runs every Thursday morning during term time (9.30 – 11.30am) at the Memorial Hall. The first session is free for newcomers and then £2 per

family. This stay and play group welcome all children aged 0 to 5. There are plenty of toys to entertain such as Duplo, dressing up, Brio train tracks and baby toys to name just a few. The weekly fee also includes snacks for the children and hot drink and cake for the adults. In the run up to Christmas we have planned some festive activities. We look forward to welcoming you and meeting some new faces.

30th November – Creating handmade Christmas cards

7th December – Making salt dough Christmas decorations using the children's hand prints

14th December – Christmas Party with craft, games and party food (dress code: festive costumes/Christmas jumpers!)

SOMERSET SIGHT

Happily, the Somerset Sight van is calling at the Memorial Hall car park on the following days in 2018:

15th January, 1st March, 11th June, 25th July, 24th September and 27th November

HAMDON YOUTH GROUP

The Hamdon Youth Group welcomes young people from Stoke, Norton, Chiselborough and West Chinnock. We now have over 60 young people signed up so we now have two sessions in the Lighthouse Café in Stoke on Monday. From 6.30 to 8.00pm Years 6, 7, 8 and 9 are welcome. Year 9s can also choose to join the older young people from 8.00 to 9.30pm.

The programme for December is:

4 th	Christmas decoration/programme planning
11 th	Plan Christmas party
18 th	Christmas party

We then break over Christmas and return at the same times on January 8th. Any queries please contact Lou Chant, our Youth Worker, on 07402 987921 or email lou.chant@cyp.me.uk

The HYG would like to thank Lou for her work, our wonderful volunteers without whom we couldn't run the club and to wish you all, and all our young people, a very Happy Christmas

ST MARY'S CHRISTMAS SERVICES

With this newsletter comes a card from the church community to invite you to share in our Christmas Services 2017. St Mary's, East Stoke would love to welcome all of you to celebrate the birth of Jesus with us at these services

Sunday, 10 th December	4.30pm	Christingle Service. Particularly appropriate for all children and families
Sunday 17 th December	6.30pm	Carol Service
Christmas Eve	11.00 am	Reflective Service for Christmas Eve
	3.00 pm	Crib Service. Particularly appropriate for all children and families
	11.30 pm	Midnight Communion
Christmas Day	9.30 am	Christmas Communion. All very welcome to celebrate the birth of Jesus

On October 29th this year members from all of the churches in the Ham Hill Villages Benefice met together in Stoke for a wonderful service to celebrate Bible Sunday. On December 31st we will all be together again for a 10.00am service at Chiselborough Church - where we will welcome the Archdeacon of Wells. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

COUNTRYSIDE EVENTS

December

<i>Ham Hill Country Park</i>		<i>Yeovil Country Park</i>	
<i>Friday 15th</i>	<i>Carols from Ham Hill</i>	<i>Wednesday 6th & Thursday 7th</i>	<i>Rustic Rudolf</i>

For more details and bookings please visit:

www.southsomersetcountryside.com

Enquiries: countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk or telephone 01935 462282

DIARY OF EVENTS:

December

9 th	Stoke Band Christmas Concert
11 th	Christmas Prize Bingo - SWMC
11 th	Walking for Health
13 th	Christmas Floral Demonstration
16 th	Stoke Band – Carols at the Prince of Wales
16 th – 21 st	Christmas Tree Festival
18 th	Walking for Health