

NETHER STOWEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021

Reports were received from the following organisations:

- o Chairman, Nether Stowey Parish Council
- o Friends of Coleridge
- o Nether Stowey & Fiddington Women's Institutes
- o Nether Stowey Active Living
- o Nether Stowey Allotments Association
- o Nether Stowey CP Footpaths
- o Nether Stowey Recreation Ground and Village Hall
- o Nether Stowey Wednesday Club
- o Stowey Gardeners
- o Stowey Green Spaces
- o Stowey Walking
- o The Reverend Eleanor King, St Marys Church, Nether Stowey
- o Thomas Poole Library, Nether Stowey

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021

Monday 24 May at 7pm at Nether Stowey Village Hall

This being the Annual Parish meeting it is the opportunity to see what village groups and people have been involved in. A number of people and organisations have reported their activities for the past year and these reports and others are on display for you to read. Please help yourself to copies – if we run out we can e-mail one or you can collect from the Parish Office.

It is two years since we held the last Annual Parish Meeting and I do not need to remind everyone what a traumatic and momentous time we've had in between, however adversity has a habit of bringing out the best in people and we saw individuals and groups coming together to help others in their time of need.

At the start of the pandemic we put out a call for volunteers to help those unable to leave their homes or were isolating, this resulted in a good many people coming forward to offer the help, in particular with the collection and delivery of prescriptions from the Quantock Medical Centre: **Our Thanks To All Those Involved.**

As always our village Clock continues to give good service and this is thanks to a dedicated team lead by Tony Edney, who keeps it wound and on time.

Two years ago we reported we had carried out a survey of the upper parts of the clock and found that there is a good deal of restoration work to be done. Unfortunately this was one of the victims of the pandemic and it is hoped this can be completed this year.

The volunteers of Stowey Green Spaces continue to do a great job in and around the village and one project that is ongoing is work to enhance the by-pass, which we are please to say has the backing of county highways and the parish council.

After a forced shut down the volunteers at Stowey Shuttle who help keep villagers on the move so efficiently are back in business, ready to help when needed.

Councillor Colin Falla continues his work as Footpaths Liaison Officer and all the strimming he undertakes to keep the paths clear. Copies of Colin's report can be found on the table.

I would also like to thank Norma Frod who has spent so much time finding out information about events, virtual tours, exhibitions and concerts to keep us all amused and sane during the past year.

One person who deserves a special mention is Helen Stacey our practice manager at the Quantock Medical Centre; Helen has been awarded a Somerset Medal for her work during the pandemic: the "citation" reads,

Helen Stacey is the Practice Manager at Quantock Medical Centre. Whilst all of the practices have worked hard to contribute to the local vaccination hubs, Helen has gone above and beyond for her patients in the rural villages as well as being the lead manager at the North Petherton Vaccination hub far more than her allocation. She has ensured it runs smoothly on the ground and not had a day off for months. Her biggest strength is putting the needs of the patient first – making sure services work around them.

Those of you who like me attended the QMC for your Covid vaccinations would have seen a small part of Helen's working in action.

PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Despite not being able to host face to face meetings the parish Council continued to meet via the ZOOM platform, strangely the number of meetings that councillors have had to attend has increased rather than decreased. EDF, HPC, County Council, Sedgemoor DC are among those we have been meeting and dealing with over the past two years.

Sadly this will be the last meeting we will hold in our village hall for the foreseeable future, in order to have clarity of a venue being available for the future; we will be switching to the Church centre for all forthcoming meetings.

A list of the Parish Council meetings scheduled for the next months is available. The Parish Council is responsible for

- Working with Sedgemoor and SCC to try and achieve quality services.
- Consultation with applicants and Sedgemoor on Planning Applications in the Parish
- Help residents if they have problems especially relating to local government
- Assisting where possible other village organisations and clubs
- Working together with our nearby parishes
- The administration and maintenance the cemetery
- The Parish Council is none political and will not be involved in party politics
- Support for appropriate and sustainable economic development
- The Parish Council will work towards the conservation of the parish
- Speaking for the Parish in statutory consultations
- The Parish Council is responsible for village maintenance,
- Bus shelters and Public Toilets
- Responsible for the provision of allotments, which at the present time appear popular.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Ferriday will provide a report on the neighbourhood plan later in the meeting, but the Parish Council is delighted that the referendum held earlier in the month was successful, and we thank everyone who worked on it and everyone who turned out to vote.

GRANTS

The Parish Council has awarded the following grants since the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2019

Sep 2019	Health Centre	Strimmer	£ 64
Oct 2019	NS Village Hall	Electrical Inspection + part payment of heating/cooling system	£ 1,794
Feb 2020	SGS	Insurance/venue hire	£ 182
Feb 2020	NS Rec Ground	Portakabin repairs	£ 1,800
Jul 2020	TP Library	Running costs	£ 500
Oct 2020	Wednesday Club	Venue hire	£ 100
Oct 2020	NS Rec Ground	Table and benches	£ 1,515
Dec 2020	St Marys PCC	Christmas lunch and hampers	£ 161
May 2021	various groups	Tea + coffee starter kits for groups (ongoing)	

CRICKETER DEVELOPMENT

As you are probably aware demolition work has begun on the Cricketer site prior to building starting, we continue to hold discussions with both the developer and Sedgemoor planners on this development.

HINKLEY POINT PROJECT

Councillors continue to attend numerous meetings organized by EDF and the District Councils to discuss matters concerned with project, and to try to find resolution to the impact that the influx of workers and the increase in transport.

We have built a good relationship with the team who handle the fly parking and this is greatly reduced, where it does occur it is dealt with immediately.

Unfortunately this only applies to Hinkley workers who do not live in the village – and we know that there are quite a few village houses which have been rented as shared houses to several workers and quite a few people who have lodgers in their spare rooms.

However we are working with HPC and Sedgemoor District Council to try and resolve the issues caused by workers living or lodging in the village and are hopeful we can mitigate some of the problems.

The community bus service provided by HPC has restarted and we thank them for stepping in to provide a community bus service when the County Council would not help.

DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL

We continue to work hard with both Councils to try to get the best possible services. Some services that used to be provided by Sedgemoor or Somerset CC have been cut back or are now non-existent. The Parish Council does try to top-up these services, but we do have to pay for them through the precept, which means everyone's Council tax bills. We try to work out what services give the most benefit to the most residents.

We can no longer sit and wait for "them" to do things and I would urge everyone to do what they can – even something as quick and simple as sweeping up the leaves from your front garden trees can help stop drains getting blocked for example.

The question of Local Government reorganisation rolls on, with a poll running until 4 June. Cllr Ferriday has been representing the Parish Council attending the various online meetings. It is not clear what will happen, but it seems likely that more activities will be devolved to Parish Councils.

THE FRIENDS OF COLERIDGE

Report 2020-21

The aim of the Friends of Coleridge Society is to foster interest in the life and works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his circle and in the places associated with them.

The Covid pandemic has somewhat curtailed the activities of the society.

The Coleridge Conference, which was to have been held in the Lake District in the summer of 2020, had to be cancelled. It was decided not to re-arrange the conference for 2021, since lockdown and travel bans were in place, and universities were withholding travel funds. Having a virtual conference was considered and rejected. The intention is to reconvene in summer 2022.

The Autumn Study Weekend is now without a venue: Halsway Manor, our venue for many years, changed its policy on lets at very short notice, in order to focus on its activities as a national centre for folk arts. We are looking for an alternative venue in or near the Quantocks. We will not be able to hold the Autumn Study Weekend in its usual residential form this year, given the continuing uncertainty caused by the pandemic. We plan to invite participants to an autumn walking weekend in the Quantocks, with attendees booking their own accommodation and meals. The Friends would organise a walk for Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning – and perhaps hire a venue for a talk by a suitable guest on the Saturday evening.

The Coleridge Bulletin (two editions a year) has been published to its usual high standard, with fine contributions from distinguished scholars.

The website is in process of being updated to a more user-friendly format.

Activities at other places associated with Coleridge (Highgate, Calne, Ottery St Mary, for instance) have not taken place, thanks to the pandemic, but contact has been maintained.

The Friends hope to institute a biennial Coleridge Prize in two categories: Poetry and Essay. The first competition could be held in 2022 as part of the 250th anniversary celebrations of Coleridge's birth.

If you would like to join the Friends of Coleridge, or to find out more about the society and its activities, do visit our website:

www.friendsofcoleridge.com

Eliza Sackett, Hon Sec
elizasackett@yahoo.co.uk

Nether Stowey & Fiddington WI Report

To Nether Stowey Parish Council

24th May 2021

We have all been through unprecedented times, lockdown, social distancing, and unable to see friends and family. This has been a particularly difficult time for our ladies and has meant isolation and a very different way of life.

Like all other organisations we have been unable to hold meetings but we have been able to knock on doors and deliver our monthly magazines to keep in touch as Zoom meetings are only possible if you have the equipment and knowledge to use them something we have struggled to accommodate.

Our last meeting was on the 6th February 2020 when we met at the Thomas Poole Library, with a committee meeting on the 4th March 2020 where plans for future outings and programme activities were discussed. The only other meeting was a further committee meeting on the 15th September 2020 to review the situation but due to the ongoing restrictions no future date was set.

We entered a new year and it was confirmed that our Somerset County Federation Office in Taunton had been sold and new premises in Bridgwater purchased. This new headquarters will provide better facilities, access and parking.

In April we were delighted to welcome the ladies of Fiddington WI in joining us. As longstanding WIs we did not want to lose our identities so we have become the Nether Stowey and Fiddington WI.

In a covid safe environment with social distancing, all risk assessments, contact and trace paperwork in place we held a very successful Meet & Greet on the 20th May at the Church Centre as with our growing membership the Library could no longer accommodate the increased membership. I would like to thank all at the library for their kindness and support during our time there.

At 98 years young we are looking to the future with a full programme of speakers and entertainers, and are supporting our national resolution this coming year 'To increase awareness of the

subtle signs of ovarian cancer. It is with great pride that our previous campaign on Plastic Soup was groundbreaking and significant as in August 2020 the National Federation worked with Alberto Costa MP to set up a new all party Parliamentary group on Microplastics (APPG). The NFWI Public Affairs team will be acting as its Secretariat. In its 105-year history this is a first for the National Federation WI demonstrating how we are moving forward as a voice to be heard.

But at grass root level we will continue to offer friendship and support to our members whilst enjoying each others company and having fun whilst offering opportunities to learn new skills, visit local places of interest and of course eating and shopping.

We meet every 2nd Thursday of the month at the Church Centre from 2pm – 4pm all are welcome.

Terry Binding

President Nether Stowey & Fiddington WI

Nether Stowey & Fiddington WI Programme

For

2021 – 2022

24th June Annual Meeting

8th July. Musical Quiz with Adelaide and Claire

12th August Can you hear me at the back? With Michael Malaghan

9th September Driftwood Art with Emma Duke

14th October Marie Antoinette's Guide to Farming with
Sarah Harris

11th November Christmas theme Decorations with Jenny Barham

9th December Christmas Celebrations with Jan McNeill

2022

13th January Afternoon tea and Beetledrive

10th February What's my fish with Kevin Little

10th March Annual Meeting

Active Living:-

Active Living is a village organization open to all over fifties.

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday in the month in the Nether Stowey Church Hall. St Mary's Street.

There is an admission fee of £2.00 which gets you tea and cake.

We have a varied program of events from talks and demonstrations on interesting topics, to quizzes etc.

The events take place during February to July and September to November, (November is usually our Christmas celebration meeting).

All welcome, come and join in meet the new neighbours.

Sadly due to the Coronavirus situation meetings are suspended at present.

We are proposing to open Active Living again in February 2022 to give plenty of time for restrictions and/or levels of transmission to abate.

We are very keen to welcome you all back and hopefully to welcome newcomers and new residents in the village and surrounding area.

2019/2020 Report of the Nether Stowey Allotment Association (NSAA)

As it approaches its sixtieth year the NSAA has witnessed many changes from the early 1960's when it was just a group of individuals who came together as a seed purchasing group.

The people that take on an allotment nowadays do so for varying reasons and not just for growing their own food as the original plot holders did. The past year has seen an increase in the number of plot holders who are looking for somewhere to grow flowers as well as vegetables. This situation is nationwide and not just for the Nether Stowey site. The covid lockdown has affected many people who are now re-evaluating their lives and want a space where they can relax and have a period of outside fresh air and exercise. Homes with small or no gardens and apartments with no access to nearby green growing space are often the reason we hear from applicants for a plot on our site. We are seeing younger people wanting an allotment so they can teach their children how to grow their own food as well as bringing new ideas to the site. The past two to three years has seen the average age of plot holders dropping on the Nether Stowey site and more women are taking up plots. There is a growing trend to the idea of no-dig vegetable growing as well as the practice of feeding the soil and not the plant. We still have a number of plot holders who grow the way that they and their parents have always done but are open to the growing scientific evidence constantly being updated as well as the methods being introduced by the newbies.

The soil on site is heavy brown clay and an analysis carried out by a soil laboratory has given us information that is being used to improve the methods of getting the best results possible from our plots. Plot holders are constantly aware of the needs of wildlife and insects on site and areas are often left untouched for them to feed and enrich our site.

We are seeing more experimenting with different varieties of vegetables on site as the noticeable change in climate and weather patterns are taking effect. In fact some crops have been grown outdoors without cover due to the hot summers we have experienced recently.

For the first time in years we have a growing waiting list of men and women wanting an allotment and one published report suggested that nationally the waiting lists amounted to more than seventy six thousand applicants. Most days we see walkers and passers-by stop at the entrance gate some to just look, talk to plot holders, and often enquire if there are any spare plots. We have several half plots with existing plot holders who feel that they are now ready to take on full plots.

The site maintenance is carried out by the plot holders and the work involves and encourages the increase of acquiring new skills in land management in a small way. Many in some way enjoy the physical aspect of maintaining a plot even though it leads to a few aches and pains along the way but all admit to feeling better for it, especially at harvest time.



Parish Report May 2021 Nether Stowey CP. Paths

One of the consequences of enforced or advised “Stay at Home” initiatives is that many more locals have discovered and are regularly enjoying our path networks.

There are 29 rights of way paths, wholly or partially within our Parish. These are foot access only and not bridleways. Also there are paths which have been developed by continual usage but are not defined on the definitive rights of way map.

For obvious reasons it has been a challenging year to keep the paths maintained, with volunteer work strictly reduced. However all of our paths have remained open and are rated as completely clear or passable. There are currently only two faults logged. One is a minor fault concerning a fallen fingerpost which doesn't cause any problems. The other concerns BW22/23 where the definitive path cannot be followed. This is a long running problem with a lack of a suitable response from the landowner. Also there are a small number of suggested improvements logged. These do not inhibit passage but would help if they were implemented.

Over the year there have been a number of improvements involving path furniture and a significant amount of clearance has been done on the Mount which effectively clears most of BW22/8. The promoted “Castles and Coast Way” is now fully waymarked.

On a national level, DEFRA in conjunction with other agencies has launched a revised Countryside Code. The underlying

principles remain the same but the new code better reflects contemporary use. Regular users of paths and open access areas are advised to read the document.

One aspect of the guide is very relevant to our Parish. This is the guidance to dog owners. Without doubt the largest number of complaints received from landowners or tenants relate to irresponsible dog owners. It is not responsible behaviour to allow dogs to roam freely away from the defined routes. It is vital that all dog waste is collected and removed even from what seems like open land. Collecting the waste and leaving the bags by stiles or gates, is in no way responsible behaviour. Finally, there are myths about degradable dog waste bags. These bags do not degrade at normal temperatures under normal conditions. The only responsible action is to bag it and remove it.

There are some misconceptions regarding rights of way. Path users should recognise that there are limitations as to what they should expect. A public footpath is permitted access to a defined route. Landowners cannot obstruct a path or deliberately restrict access – e.g. with electric fencing or a crop, and they have to leave a minimum width of passage, but they are not required to do more. They are not expected to cut back naturally growing surface vegetation on the path and are certainly not required to provide a manicured grassy park-like path. Walkers should recognise that we are a rural parish. It is expect to be able to walk a path in boots and trousers, but not necessarily less.

Finally, I would again encourage everyone to use the paths as often as possible. This is the most assured way of maintaining them. Any information concerning village rights of way, please contact the parish office. If problems are encountered they may be logged on the SCC rights of way map or reported via the Parish office.

Colin Falla
Path Liaison Officer

Nether Stowey Village Hall & Recreation Ground CIO (No.1176413)

Report to the Parish Council May 2021

Thank you to the Parish Council for providing grant funding over the last 2 years to enable the Village Hall to install a heater/air conditioning unit which has made a huge difference to users.

Also to for contributing to the cost of essential repairs to the portacabin on the playing field as well as buying new seats & a picnic bench.



The trustees of the charity are making good progress behind the scenes on the proposed new building & the sub-committees & volunteers continue to manage (following COVID guidelines) & maintain both existing facilities to as high a standard as possible. A new website is being built, a new logo has been created & thanks to COVID grants from Sedgemoor District Council all bills are up to date. It cost us £4,266.63 from October 2020 to April 2021 to keep the Village Hall closed!

Our annual Party in the Park is planned for Saturday 3rd July 3-11pm & will be a free event, bringing the community back together.

Sharon Mayell – Treasurer & trustee.

WEDNESDAY CLUB REPORT TO NETHER STOWEY PARISH COUNCIL

MAY 2021

The Wednesday Club Committee would like to thank the Parish Council for their generous grant of £100 kindly given to the Club in October 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The money was used to offset the cost of hiring the Church Centre in October and November. At that time, the Club was partially open in order to provide a covid-safe environment for the Members when coffee and biscuits were served. A limited number of members were able to attend each week in order to enjoy a much needed socially distanced face to face conversation and most of all some laughter. Following a period of isolation and loneliness this helped to improve their mental state and gave them hope for the future.

What has been very poignant is that two of those members have recently passed away but they and the rest of us were so grateful for the opportunity to get together and enjoy each other's company.

The Club will be re-opening for coffee mornings from 19th May under the same restrictions to try and ease the loneliness of our members during the past six months.

Barbara Beer

Affiliated to
The Royal Horticultural Society



2021

PRESIDENT

Nick Rigden

VICE PRESIDENT

Angela Lampson

CHAIRMAN

Juliet Harkness - 733245

SECRETARY

Lucy Haswell - 671289

TREASURER

Jenny Kinahan - 732190

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jean Deakin - 671200
Freda Williams – 732768
Caroline Norris – 734537
Judith Harvey – 671353

<https://sites.google.com/site/stoweygardeners/>



2021 PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Nether Stowey Church Centre – 7.30pm unless otherwise noted

All meetings to be held on the 3rd Thursday in the month except August, car visits and the Christmas party

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|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| May 11th | Car visit to Burrow Farm Gardens, Dalwood, Axminster EX13 7ET | July 20th | Coach visit to The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton PL20 7LQ |
| May 18th | Car visit to the Court House, East Quantoxhead TA5 1EJ | Aug 5th | MEMBERS' GARDEN PARTY |
| May 20st | AGM
Creating a Show Garden for Taunton Flower Show as Amateurs - a talk by Pat & Bill Wilson, Venn Cross | Sept 16th | Seed Saving made simple – a talk by Adam Alexander |
| May 25th | Car visit to Greencombe Gardens, Porlock, TA24 8NU | Sept 21st | Car visit to Batcombe House, Gold Hill, Batcombe, Shepton Mallet BA4 6HF |
| June 24th | 'Unusual Plants' – a talk by Paul Green | Oct 21st | 'Unusual Trees' – a talk by Sarah Holmes |
| July 6th | Car visit to Mill Cottage Plants (Sally Gregson) at Henley Mill, Wookey BA5 1AW | Oct 26th | Car visit to Minterne Gardens, Minterne Magna, Dorchester DT2 7AU |
| July 15th | 'The Bishops Palace Gardens' - a talk by James Cross | Nov 18th | Christmas Wreath making – a workshop/demonstration by Jan Johnston |
| | | Dec 10th | MEMBERS CHRISTMAS PARTY |

MINUTES AGM year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

TUESDAY 18 May 2021 in Nether Stowey Village Hall 2.30 p.m.

Present: Roy Osborne, Terry Abbiss, Paul Brierley, Terry Sackett, Sandra Sidaway, Peter Greig, Judith Greig.

The meeting started at 2.33 p.m. The full Annual Report and Accounts had been circulated to members in advance.

1 Apologies: Geraldine Mayell, Ron and Lynn Scales, Sue Aubrey, Ros Keep, Roger and Pat Stacey, Katy and Nick Hancock

2 Chairman's Report - Roy Osborne having taken over informally in December 2020 from Richard Ince:

Roy thanked all the people who have helped our various projects and activities and particularly Judith for recording the minutes and writing the Annual Report, Terry A. for the treasury work, Terry S. for all the work involved in design and execution of the new signage and Sue for coordinating work on The Mount.

Our group has been fortunate to be able to continue working over this past COVID-19 regulated year.

Although we are a small group (30 or so active Green Spaces members) we have a record of getting things done and believe we have a good profile as a community organisation. We have also been helped by the AONB and their Countryside Volunteers, the Taunton Midweek Volunteers and Sedgemoor Clean Surroundings. Our usual work with the NS Primary School and Nettlecombe Court Field Centre was put on hold, as was a new relationship with EDF/HPC Community Days but we are hopeful for the forthcoming year.

Remke Cool and Richard Plowright of Stowey Rocks Farm have been sympathetic to our work to date and developments with all our neighbouring landowners – particularly Cricketer housing, Stowey Rocks and New Stowey Farms – will impact on us in the coming years, presenting challenges and opportunities.

Our project for interpretive signage in the Millennium/Jubilee Woods, Stowey Wood, The Mount and on the Recreation Ground is expected to be complete with final installation in June.

Over the year we have worked on the Recreation Ground, The Mount and the Bypass Verge/Wood and in particular the Millennium and Stowey Woods where our involvement has led to a notable increase in biodiversity. The path through those woods has been much appreciated by COVID-regulated walkers where a dozen or more walkers have been seen at times.

We have had a successful year with funding from the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, Nether Stowey Parish Council and The Somerset Fund. Iain Porter of the AONB has suggested we may wish to take an interest in Highways plans for tree funding.

We have major and ambitious plans for the next stage of Stowey Wood development and hope to reduce the Sitka spruce (about 140 of them) by a third or so, creating halos around the good remaining Sitka to form glades. On 8 June Richard and Roy will be meeting a logging specialist to price the work, using horses to remove the felled trees. A funding proposal can then be put in to Iain Porter of the AONB. Otherwise, we have been creeping outside the Wood with an extension onto a Stowey Rocks Farm slope and hopes for the future use of some of the many cherry saplings that are growing to the south of Stowey Wood.

Our litter picking activities have continued to go well and we look forward to the return of Sedgemoor Clean Surroundings for the monthly pick-ups from Parsonage Farm once COVID-19 permits.

Once again, we are submitting a Report to the Annual Parish Meetings – Nether Stowey being on 24th May.

We have had a good year. We hope that we shall be able to invite representatives of the organisations with which we have been working to next year's AGM.

3 Treasurer's Report – Terry Abbiss

In round figures, we started the year with Green Spaces funds of £460 and finished with £362. Grant funds opened at £676 and closed at £472. Overall closing balance was therefore £834. Peter Greig agreed to examine the accounts.

We hope to be able to make use of hired mechanised help to increase our output in future and in particular on the Bypass area where the £300 balance of The Somerset Fund £500 grant can be invested.

Nether Stowey Parish Council grant of £182 in February 2020 had a balance of £176 at the beginning of this financial year. Expenditure of £99.31 on public liability insurance and £11 on hire of the Village Hall in October, when the Portacabin was unavailable because of COVID regulations and before Zoom became the meetings venue, leaves a balance of £65.69. Insurance and meeting venue hire in the forthcoming year will exceed this balance.

A donation of grass/flower seed from Nether Stowey Parish Council has been used on the Recreation Ground land next to the watercourse.

Roy has further pointed out that we hope for income from sale of timber under the plans for Stowey Wood development.

4 Election of officers

Chairman – Roy Osborne, proposed Terry A. and seconded by Paul

Treasurer – Terry Abbiss, proposed Judith and seconded by Roy

Deputy chairman – Paul Brierley, proposed Roy and seconded Terry

Secretary – Judith Greig

All agreed

5 Any Other Business

- Litter picking: Terry agreed with Judith that funding the litter-picking accessories was relatively costly - £130 over the past two years and it was suggested that grants may be available, possibly including from EDF/HPC sources.
- Ponds: Terry Sackett asked if we could consider clearing the quarry pond or ponds at the top of Stowey Wood, in particular the one on the left that is so overhung by trees and overgrown that very little life could exist in it. Agreed that this would be a major project requiring considerable and careful advance planning. Roy will ask Nigel to have a look at the issue. Judith pointed out that this is an item on the outstanding 'help wanted' list that is being considered by EDF/HPC Community Days team.
- Party in the Park: We are taking a stall at the Party in the Park on Saturday 3 July. Terry A. volunteered to create a display board; Sandra volunteered to help on the day.
- Village flower show 21 August: As a result of Paul's suggestion, it was agreed that we should take a table at the proposed Village Hall Flower Show on 21st August. Sandra is willing to help again.
- Bypass Wood: In response to a question, Roy explained that we have Land Registry proof that the area belongs entirely to Somerset County Council. Judith said that the Parish Council is aware that some of the owners of neighbouring properties are expanding onto the County Council land. Some fly tipping in the wooded area is on our to-do list.
- Local Authority Treescapes Fund: Paul suggested that we look for areas to specify as suitable for further tree planting.

There being no further business, the AGM closed at 3:27 p.m.



Stowey Walking

Stowey Walking is the **Walkers are Welcome** group for Nether Stowey and Over Stowey. Walkers are Welcome is a community led national accreditation of villages and towns that go that extra mile to welcome walkers to their town or village for the benefit of the local economy.

There are a wealth of wonderful walks to be discovered close by to our two villages. We are at the foot of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the local Somerset coast abounds with Jurassic fossils at Kilve and new wetland habitats for migratory birds and other animals at Steart Marshes.

Stowey Walking promotes walking for both local residents and visitors. We liaise regularly with Somerset County Council Rights of Way and the Quantock Hills AONB to ensure footpaths are maintained and improved. Our website; stoweywalking.co.uk has a wealth of information on local walks and other local facilities such as shops and pubs and a page of nine downloadable walks in the local area. The walk leaflets are also available for a small donation at Nether Stowey Post Office, The Thomas Poole Library in Nether Stowey and the Nether Stowey Parish Council office.

We also run weekly Health Walks in conjunction with the Quantock Medical Centre and Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership. The Health Walks are open to anyone who would like to go for regular, gentle guided walks with others.

In the summer we run an annual walking festival, The Quantock Hills Walking Festival. A variety of walks are available led by volunteers from different local organisations such as the Quantock Hills AONB Service and Sedgemoor Ramblers. What better way to get to know our beautiful local countryside with the help of experienced local guides.

If you are interested in helping us with our activities or would like to know more please e-mail us at enquiries@stoweywalking.co.uk

St Mary's Church, Nether Stowey, Report for 2020

- **Closure:**
Churches across the country were closed just before Easter. All plans for services had to be cancelled or changed.
- **Restoration:**
All plans for restoration and maintenance were also put on hold, although the new soakaways were completed and rugged matting laid either side of the main door for disabled parking without creating muddy areas. New toilet and boiler room doors were also completed.
- **Private prayer times:**
As soon as churches were allowed to re-open in part, times were set aside for anyone who wished to visit for private prayer. Hand sanitiser, the QR code, separated pews and regular cleaning were in place while face masks and social distancing were, and still are, expected.
- **Online services:**
The Easter Service was put together with the help of Sarah King, photos from the congregation and contributions from the Ministry team, so that as many people as possible were able to access a service for the Easter celebrations. Since then, with Sarah's compilation, there has been an online service every week – sometimes an Evensong as well.
- **All Souls';**
A special prayer time was set aside with candles to be lit by relatives for those who had departed this life in the previous year and earlier. It was not quite as in previous years but offered the same chance for memory and thoughtfulness.
- **Remembrance:**
The main service was also an online service, but the Reverend Eleanor gave a short remembrance at the memorial on the Cross at 11.00am. A number of households in the surrounding roads stepped onto their doorsteps to hear the sound of the Bugle playing the Last Post and Reveille. Some painted poppies on stones could be seen around the village.
- **Carols-Not-on-the Cross and Carol Singing in the car park:**
A delightful video was made of schoolchildren dressed as the characters from the Nativity walking around the village acting the part of the story for us all to enjoy.
- **Home Groups:**
One or two of the home groups managed to meet outside occasionally during the summer months but not being able to visit in homes made this particularly difficult for many.
- **Alpha:**
An Alpha course had begun in the early part of the year and continued online with a number of people interested in learning a bit more about Jesus Christ.
- **Keeping Up to Date:**
Rev'd Eleanor has worked hard at keeping all churches up to date with changing rules and guidance. At times these have changed daily so it's been an added aspect to the challenging pandemic times.
- **Weddings:**
Most of these have been postponed for at least one year as numbers of guests permitted has been severely limited.
- **Funerals:**
This was even harder for people to bear when too few family and friends were able to say farewell to their loved ones. It was especially hard for families who had not been able to visit either in hospital or in care homes. The church would like to offer the possibility of later

Memorial services for people who wish to have a delayed farewell with memories of their loved ones who died during 2020.

- **Phone network for those alone:**

Parishioners have been keeping up contact with those who live alone by telephone as well as sometimes by Zoom. They have tried to reach out to as many people as possible who have been known or recommended to them.

- **Lent lunches:**

Lent lunches were held in the Church Centre every week in February and early March, but we have not been able to enjoy the Coffee mornings or social events since then.

- **Free Summer Children's Breakfasts:**

Twice weekly breakfasts were on offer to local children during the summer holidays. Where the offer was not taken up families were able to come and collect a pack of breakfasts to take home instead.

- **Harvest and Christmas lunches:**

A free cooked lunch and sweet course were given out to local people who had booked a meal for both a Harvest lunch and also a full turkey meal a few days before Christmas (67 people in all). Donations from people receiving the meals were given to homeless charities and the food bank.

- **Hampers:**

Christmas hampers with all that was needed for a full Christmas meal for 4-5 people were given out through the school to families who might otherwise find producing such a meal difficult to achieve in the current economic climate.

Many thanks to Faun's, Sainsbury's and Morrisons as well as other local services, the school and the parish council for helping to make these meals happen.

- **Food bank:**

The food bank contributions from the village, taken to the Church Centre on Monday mornings, have increased considerably over the year and are now taken every week to Quantock Food Bank in Watchet, where the needs have also grown several times over during 2020. Many thanks go to everyone who has donated food throughout the year.

- **Meetings by Zoom:**

This is a new phenomenon to us all but we seem to have become quite proficient at it although looking forward to meeting in person again in 2021. All PCC and other meetings have been conducted through Zoom including a Benefice Quiz before Christmas. Coffee mornings may not be able to happen but we have been able to get together for pre-lunch drinks on a Sunday by Zoom, enjoying chats in the break out rooms. We have got used to seeing people from the waist up only.

- **Re-opening in September:**

Re-opening for service was possible for six weeks in the autumn and then again for Advent and Christmas. Sadly, though no singing was allowed, no shaking of hands or hugging and no coffee afterwards. Those who felt able to come back wore masks, and kept socially distanced but many still shielding for the rest of the year.

- **Flowers:**

Baskets of flowers were kindly provided by the flower arranging team so that the church looked more lived in.

- **Cleaning:**

Cleaning is kept up on a regular basis especially before services and funerals to ensure a Covid-secure atmosphere.

- **Churchyard:**
A working party cleaned all the surrounding walls of debris and Sedgemoor (who now look after the churchyard) came to trim all the trees and take down the dead branches, making it an attractive place to visit.
- **Church Centre:**
During the year the team that run the Church Centre have taken the opportunity to re-new the hall carpet, give the floors an excellent polish, re-do the various cupboards and storage as well as insulation of the roof. They are now working on updating some of the toilet facilities before re-opening. One occupation that has been able to continue during the lockdown is that our local podiatrist, Nick Tester, has been using the lounge while the Medical Centre is in need of extra secure space.
- **Charity Giving:**
During 2020 the following charities were supported; many in response to the needs arising from the Corona virus and some local charities as a result of profits from the Quantock Messenger:

INTERNATIONAL

Signpost International	£332
Tearfund	£580
Shelter Box	£140

NATIONAL

The Children's Society	£500
Shelter	£300
Crisis	£300

LOCAL

ARC	£500
Dorset & Somerset Air Amb.	£300
MIND in Somerset	£500
Nelson Trust	£870
Open Door	£280
Quantock Food Bank	£305
Salvation Army	£500
St Margaret's Hospice	<u>£300</u>

Total **£5,707**

Many thanks go to everyone, especially Reverend Eleanor and the Ministry team, who have helped to keep the church and its activities going throughout the year: particularly for the creation of the online services, for the gifts of food and for the donations to the charities we've subsequently been able to support.

www.quantockvillagesbenefice.org.uk

GW May 2021

THE THOMAS POOLE LIBRARY NETHER STOWEY

REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021

In accordance with Government and Somerset County Library Service guidance, the Library closed its doors on 18th March 2020 and did not reopen until 17th August. At first only Order and Collect was allowed, with readers ordering books from Nether Stowey stock only, and then having their books passed to them in a brown paper bag. This continued until 28th September, when browsing was again allowed. On 5th November a second lockdown began but libraries were allowed to remain open for Order and Collect, and from 2nd December browsing was again allowed. The Library remained open until 6th January this year, when along with the rest of the country we deemed it unsafe to continue. We remained closed until 15th March when we reopened and on 12th April browsing was again allowed.

During all of this time, whenever it has been possible to be open, readers have been served by the same dedicated 11 volunteers who work in teams of 2 or 3 on the same day every week. When we were open over Christmas and into New Year we were the only Community Library Partnership in the County to do so. Opening hours have been reduced to mornings only but will be extended when more users return.

Library use has understandably fallen, but has recently been increasing.

Strict hygiene protocols have been observed, with one way systems in place in the building, hand sanitisers readily available, surfaces constantly wiped down and facemasks worn. Returned books have been, and are still, placed in boxes and only processed after 72 hours.

Even during the closed periods the Library Service has continued to send new books to the Library at weekly intervals. These have had to be processed, and with no books being sent out, for obvious reasons, the shelves began to overflow. It is only recently that we have begun to stabilise the stock with the help of various Library Service procedures.

We have been fortunate to have been in receipt of financial support for Small Businesses via the government's scheme administered by Sedgemoor District Council. This has covered our loss of income from Library related activities.

During the past year we have had to update our security system and replace the automatic sensor for the entrance door, at a combined cost of £1700. We have also replaced the rotten ledged and braced door into the small yard at the back of the Library, and the rotten window to the Store adjacent to the yard.

Our Membership Secretary has provided countless email updates and information to Members, and all of the Trustees and Committee have remained active in their roles.

All of our regular activities have ceased for over a year – knit and natter, play reading, mahjong, evening talks, children's activities, Friday afternoon reading to classes from the School, Reading Challenge and others. We look forward to the return of them all.

17th May 2021

Editor's Note: Parish Council provided a grant of £500 towards running costs in July 2020